A Mortgage Lenders Guide to Success:

Observations of Validated Strategy, Authentic Leadership, and Vibrant Culture.

Dr. Schell's Whitepaper Series

eBook of Strategy

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- **Strategy** is the map to the destination.
  - **Leadership** is the guide along the path.
    - The guide should be *trustworthy and listen*.
      - The guide should make *good decisions*.
        - **Culture** is how the leader and the group treat each other.

Strategy, leadership, and culture together reflect
the essence of a business and are the
primary factors that determine success.
Dr. Andy Schell, Ph.D.

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- *Implementing Change – It's a Process*
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Author’s Note: The Mortgage CEO

My firm and I support mortgage lenders of all shapes and sizes. Some lenders are depository mortgage lenders, and some are independent mortgage companies. Some exceed $40 billion in annual volume, but most are $5 billion and less. Some clients are top mortgage originators or mortgage brokers who desire to become the CEO of a mortgage bank they own. Those who envision themselves as the CEO of their national mortgage bank are the target audience I had in mind when selecting this whitepaper's content and complexity. One of the fundamental principles for success is that there is a minimum standard of sophistication for sustainable success, which this whitepaper attempts to exemplify. That said, the elements of strategy, leadership, and culture described here, particularly the sections on self-denial and decision making, are universally applicable.

Preamble

The terms strategy, leadership, and culture are often discussed independently, interchangeably, and often with little definitional clarity. For decades, business scholars and behavioral scientists have scoured the success of companies across the country to examine the elements of strategy, leadership, and culture. These behavioral explorers applied statistically founded root cause analysis to dissect the definitions of these terms. Within this whitepaper, I reference the works and findings of many notable scholars, including:

- Dr. Bernard Bass — Expert on Leadership: Transformation, Transactional, Charismatic
- Dr. Michael Porter — Expert on Strategy, Creator of Five Forces Model
- Dr. Peter Drucker — Expert on Culture, Creator of Management by Objectives
- Dr. Kurt Lewin — Expert on Behavioral Science, Creator of Change Model Theory
- Dr. W. E. Deming — Expert on Psychodynamic Theory, Creator of Total Quality Management
- Dr. Jeanne Liedtka — Expert on Strategy, Leadership Authenticity, and Design Thinking
- Dr. Cam Caldwell — Expert on Mortal Leadership, Business Ethics, and Self-deception

These exceptional thinkers' discoveries extend from their advanced research efforts that provide much of the structural foundation for this whitepaper's content, which is further augmented by thousands of research publications I examined during and after my doctoral programs. These scholars help to bring clarity and understanding to the terms, strategy, leadership, and culture. I’ve assembled an explanation of these terms in this whitepaper in the hope of enabling mortgage lenders to understand and apply the value of these concepts to achieve sustainable profitability. This whitepaper excludes the use of non-scientific articles or books in favor of reliance on statistically validated findings examined and published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals by Ph.D. authors.

Introduction

Strategy Summary

Strategy identifies a company's future, the resources and capabilities required to deliver a product or service to the market successfully, and the steps needed to generate a profit from the strategic activity. The sustainability of any business depends on achieving profitability and the generation of an acceptable return on investment (ROI) for the owner/manager and any non-management equity investors. This is the result of a validated strategy. The following list briefly encapsulates the essential elements of strategy:

- Strategy defines where you are going (vision)
- Strategy describes what you do (mission)
- Strategy establishes how you behave, which forms culture (values)
- Strategy examines how sales activity will be generated (marketing plan)
- Strategy creates the financial forecast based on the marketing plan (business plan)
- Strategy provides the basis for organizational design (organizational design)
- Strategy identifies the best-fit leadership style and structure (leadership design)
- Strategy examines your ability to accomplish the objectives (self-assessment)
- Strategy identifies how you will get there (objectives)
- Strategy implements the objectives to fulfill the mission (execution)
- Strategy creates a mechanism for staff to accept the change (change management)
- Strategy adjusts to feedback to embrace your market dynamics (feedback-loop)

Leadership Summary

Leadership is an extension of strategy as the leadership role must embrace and embody the elements of strategy. The leadership style that effectively directs a construction crew's activity is different from the leadership style to inspire a group of software designers. It is also best for the leader's personality to align with the leadership style best suited to address the strategic plan. It is common for a management team to form based on the different skills and leadership styles required to achieve the plan. When employees are heard and appreciated by their leaders, they are more likely to engage openly and honestly. This is evidence of authentic leadership and will likely lead to sustainable comradeship built on mutual trust and respect. The following list briefly encapsulates the essential elements of leadership:

- A leader inspires the staff to believe the firm's vision
- A leader listens to the staff and develops trust among the staff
- A leader informs the staff about the firm's objectives
- A leader encourages staff to accomplish the objective
- A leader teaches the staff how to perform all functions

- A leader orchestrates the activities of the staff
- A leader measures the firm's output and adjusts behavior when required
- A leader makes data-driven decisions to adapt to market dynamics
- A leader perpetuates culture by embracing and exhibiting the firm's values

Culture Summary

Culture is formed from the interplay of strategy and leadership as managers and employees interact to accomplish the strategic plan's objectives. Although the strategic values will define how individuals should behave, it is the actual behavior of leaders and assertive employees that drive the formation and preservation of culture. From incubation to maturity, forming a stable corporate culture may take many months and likely years for culture to solidify as people begin to embrace and replicate culture to others.

An employee who feels mistreated and ignored will likely create challenges for leaders. Outbursts of yelling and similarly divergent behavior by employees and leaders undermine attempts to implement a vibrant and consistent corporate culture. Within an office where yelling and screaming are commonplace, the pervasive culture is one of fear and intimidation, which research has repeatedly demonstrated is counterproductive to an efficient operation. Unfortunately, such detrimental practices continue to persist in mortgage lending, likely, in part, due to the self-denial cognitive dissonance discussed in the leadership section below.

The following list briefly encapsulates the essential elements of culture:

- Culturally accepted behavior is identified in the values statement
- Culture forms over time and is more vulnerable in smaller companies
- Culture is reinforced by the behavior of leaders and employees
- Culture is dramatically impacted by a firm's hiring practices
- Culture is diminished when a branch that does not share the firm's values
- Culture is impacted by forceful and verbose employees
- Culture is impacted by a leader's tolerance of behavioral violations
- Culture is how a firm's employees behave irrespective of a leader's statements

Strategy, Leadership, Culture balanced

Strategy
Mission, Vision, Values,
Self-assessment, Objectives

Leadership
Coach, Manager, Leader
Inspire, Direct, Measure

Culture
From Strategy & Leadership
Behaviorally reinforced

Application of Strategy, Leadership, and Culture

A fantastic strategy that leverages a market opportunity and is supported by a firm's validated strengths is likely to succeed irrespective of authentic leadership or vibrant culture.

A high-demand product will generate sales regardless of other factors, just as mortgage lenders experienced during 2020. A rising tide floats all boats.

The key is to achieve sustainable profitability over decades, not a single event or short-term win. Over time, a firm that implements a values statement championed by competent leadership as well as all strategic planning elements, including the self-assessment (SWOT), and employee-focused change management, is likely to achieve long-term profitability.

The best outcome for a firm's shareholders and stakeholders, including its employees, is to achieve the trifecta of validated strategy with authentic leadership and vibrant culture.

Research indicates that it is difficult to accomplish this outcome. That being said, this whitepaper attempts to equip its readers with a plan of action to achieve exactly that.

Validated Strategy

A strategic plan defines the roadmap to a company's future, which includes the resources and capabilities required to deliver a product or service to the market successfully and the steps needed to generate a profit from the strategic activity. *A validated strategy follows an honest and transparent strategic self-assessment of the firm's capabilities.* When the open internal assessment of a company's capabilities determines that the firm's staff is highly competent, it is likely that the strategic plan will likely be implemented successfully. The self-assessment also examines the firm's leadership structure, which includes a transparent consideration of leadership's ability to direct its activity. It is sometimes helpful to consider the validation process as an internal M&A due diligence review to determine which company elements present the highest value and warrant preservation as part of the strategic plan.

What is Strategy?

Dr. Porter defined strategy as the road map a company follows to achieve success and sustainable profitability. A company's strategic plan includes several elements. Each element is carefully created and contains a values statement, a vision and mission statement, a business plan, a list of objectives, a self-assessment document, and a market assessment. Each component of a strategic plan is part of an interrelated continuous feedback loop that results in the constant adjustment of strategic elements. For example, a firm with an efficient production operation and a dynamic marketing plan may fail if the product becomes obsolete. What happened to the buggy whip companies when the automobile replaced the horse-drawn carriage as the primary means of transportation. A strategy that was successful last year may not be successful in the future. There is no assurance of continuity. There is an assurance of constant change. A successful strategy includes adjusting direction and changing tactics based on updated information about market dynamics. A firm's market assessment process within the strategic plan feedback loop should identify the risk from technological innovation as the car replaced the horse. A responsive buggy whip manufacturer would have adapted to produce automobile seats. A company's continuous feedback loop will adjust to the changing market conditions.

A strategic plan includes a company's overtly planned actions to improve its market share and profitability through a series of tactical responses to changing market forces. It is difficult to anticipate how macro-economic forces will impact a company; therefore, a company's plan should be sufficiently dynamic to embrace the adjustments identified during the feedback loop process. *This is known as an adaptive strategic plan, and it is an essential tool that enables a company to achieve success.* Business is never static. The dynamic nature of the U.S. business environment must be considered when preparing the strategic planning elements, without which managers are required to guess how to respond to market dynamics. An adaptive strategic plan will identify the tactical response to most challenges, given the feedback loop's perpetual nature.

Thinking again of a buggy whip maker mentioned above, what if the sales objective is to increase volume by 15%, the operation's objective may be to reduce cost by 10%, and the financial objective to increase profit by 20%. How are these aligned? What happens if the price of leather changes? What happens if the workers go on strike? What happens if a new competitor enters the market selling whips at a lower price? What happens when the carriage is replaced by the car? Each of these risks considers both internal and external forces and impacts the ability to achieve the firm's objective. These and other forces are applicable to any business at any time.

Why have a Strategy?

When a person with an idea for a company starts out, they become a business owner. The business owner knows why they formed the company. Will this reason be enough to lead the business to long-term financial success? The Small Business Administration (SBA) reports that over 95% of new businesses fail within five years unless they have a robust financial and strategic plan. The primary reason for the reported failures is a lack of financial management. If sales are less than expected or costs are more than expected, a business will likely fail if the financial performance of the company is not adaptable. When a business owner has a winning strategy but cannot explain it to the employees, the plan is likely to fail. If the owner's personality inhibits information transfer, the strategy is likely to fail. These statistics suggest that successful businesses need both a strategic plan and a leader capable of communicating effectively with the staff.

A strategic plan supports two essential elements of success.

1. Analysis of the firm's purpose to confirm that its efforts will lead to the creation of a customer value proposition delivered in a manner resulting in financial success.
2. Creation of the mechanism to communicate the anticipated future actions to others.

If a one-person company wants to borrow money from a bank, they must describe how the company will generate a profit. If a one-person company becomes a 50-person company, the manner by which the company's actions are performed will be communicated via a strategic plan. How the strategic plan actions result in delivering a customer's value proposition and achieve the profit formula are explored in the firm's business plan, which incorporates the strategic plan components.

Every company has a strategic plan, even if the plan is not documented. When a business owner forms a business, their motivation to create a new business is the strategy they intend to implement. The classical method of structuring a strategic plan with the elements identified above helps to bring consistency, order, and structure to the process. When there is a single person who operates the business, the strategy is known by all employees. A strategic plan structure creates the foundation to communicate the plan effectively and gain alignment among all employees.

Strategic Plan Components

Values

A values statement identifies how a firm treats its customers, employees, vendors, and capital partners. Values are unchanging and, ideally, are personally embraced by the staff based on each person's worldview and not solely as a means of compliance. A list of values may also reflect ethics and is tailored to identify how a specific firm conducts its activities.

This list may include:

- We do not lie, cheat, or steal
- We treat each other with respect
- We do not yell at or harass other employees

At our firm, we listen when others speak and do not interrupt each other. An internet search result of “values statement” will provide many examples.

Vision

A vision statement identifies A company’s trajectory. It is the long-term goal and is generally a stable element that does not change quickly or needlessly.

Mission

A mission statement identifies what a company does to provide a value-added product resulting in a positive customer experience and a profitable business result. A mission may require periodic adjustments based on the content of the strategic feedback loop.

Self-assessment & SWOT

A self-assessment is an honest and open internal evaluation of a company's capabilities. A company’s capability is a function of the employee’s capability, which may be categorized by separating groups and individuals based on their respective knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA). Through a capability assessment, a firm's leadership must honestly analyze its ability to achieve its mission via successfully implementing its objectives. For example, if a firm's head of IT cannot ensure system access, this weakness must be identified as a skill-set shortfall. Conversely, if a firm's IT group is able to excel at providing system access, then technology may be a highly developed strength. The firm's strengths and weaknesses are related to internal capabilities as part of a ‘strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats (SWOT) analysis.

Strength and weakness relate to the firm’s internal capability, while opportunity and threats relate to the external environment to which the firm must adapt. During 2020, falling interest rates created a refinance boom that created an external opportunity that may expose the firm’s internal weakness related to the ability to deploy increased capacity rapidly. SWOT is a standard tool used to evaluate a firm's internal and external capabilities.

Business Plan Components

The business plan identifies the basis for the strategic objectives. The business plan includes a **marketing plan** that identifies anticipated sales over the next 12 to 24 months. The marketing plan identifies how the firm reaches customers and how the firm attracts new staff members to generate and support the anticipated sales volume. The **marketing plan** also drives the organization’s size and staffing composition based on a staff capacity model.

A **staff capacity model** is used based on examining the operational workflows and technology design to estimate the number of employees required in each position based on the marketing plan’s activity forecast. The **financial forecast** then identifies the revenue given the sales forecast and the costs associated with the activity and staffing complement to support the sales activity. The costs are based on the past financial results and the staffing capacity calculator given the anticipated sales or volume activity. A **cash flow estimate** is created from the financial forecast to identify the amount of working capital required to support the organization based on the anticipated sales activity.

Combining the marketing plan, the capacity plan, the financial forecast, and the cash flow estimate becomes the firm’s business plan. The tasks required to implement the business plan create the strategic objectives needed to achieve the company's Vision and Mission implemented consistent with the firm's Values.

Objectives

Objectives are the series of tasks that transform the company’s vision and mission into performance benchmarks. These are used to measure success by identifying actions that must be achieved to fulfill the mission in a manner consistent with the firm’s values. A company exhibits strategic intent when it actively and perpetually pursues its strategic objectives by directing its resources and competitive actions to achieve each objective. Objectives are most likely to be adjusted based on the strategic feedback loop, which provide measurement.

Change Management

Dr. Lewin examined behavioral dynamics to identify how employees accept change. Strategic planners know that strategy implementation requires achieving the objectives identified to accomplish the firm's mission. A firm's strategic plan might identify the need to change how products or services are delivered to customers. The firm's subsequent efforts to implement this change (strategic tasks) may require employees to alter their behavior, which is commonly met with resistance.

The methods used to encourage and persuade employees to accept a new job function or a new way of completing tasks begin with inclusion. Employees are more likely to embrace change and accept a new process when they are part of the strategic discussion as well as the solution. Many books focus solely on change acceptance strategies to help leaders implement the alterations required by their strategic plan, including Dr. Lewin’s Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze management model.

Change Management and Leadership

Changing employee behavior is enhanced when the employees trust the leader. Trust is enhanced when there is authentic communication between employees and leadership. Communication is more than a periodic memo or a presentation to the whole company. Authentic communication occurs when employees can share their thoughts honestly, and leadership listens actively. One of the best ways to demonstrate active listening is to ask clarifying follow-up questions to employees, so they are able to present their points of view.

Feedback Loop - Measurement

The feedback loop is a circle of self-assessment and market assessment, implemented perpetually, which significantly impacts the objectives and may touch the firm's vision and mission. Every objective is measured frequently. Think of each objective as a task within a self-improvement project plan (strategic plan) where progress is measured daily, weekly, or monthly based on the progress of each task.

Launching strategic objectives without measurement is like driving a car without a speedometer or a gas gauge. Measurement and adjustment are the foundational tools used to fine-tune the strategic initiative. When the market changes, it is pointless to be an amazing buggy whip maker when there are no buggies.

Application

The actual effort to address the strategic planning process is endless, with each year's reassessment and plan update requiring months of effort. Most sophisticated companies begin the strategic planning process in October for launch with the new year. *The annual tasks to complete the self-assessment, SWOT, marketing plan, staff capacity assessment, and financial plan require all the leaders' and staff members' participation.* The objectives are established after the business plan components are complete. It is best not to head down the road until the route and destination are identified. Avoid the pressure to jump ahead or complete the planning process out of order as each element leverages the prior activity.

Given the reliance on data-driven estimates of future activity and the decision tools noted below, research has demonstrated that, when the strategic planning process is implemented correctly, a firm's probability of success increases significantly. It is noteworthy to consider the variability of the estimates by establishing a worst-case, base-case, and best-case marketing plan and financial forecast with the difference in the three scenarios used to create solutions based on the defined potential outcomes.

If the planning process seems like a daunting task, then hire a facilitator to help bring clarity to the activity and guide the team to launch the SWOT, the business plan components, and then orchestrate the formulation of objectives.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership implements the firm’s strategic objectives and inspires a vibrant culture among the employees. *Authentic leaders are self-aware and possess a high degree of emotional intelligence that enables them to interact empathetically and reasonably with their employees.* Authentic leaders build trust with employees by communicating openly and behaving in a fashion that is consistent with the firm’s strategic values.

Leadership Overview

Leadership is responsible for implementing the strategic plan and is highly impactful in the formation of culture. Dr. Bass identified varying leadership styles and observed that they suit contrasting workplaces in differing manners. The following section presents an overview of the dynamics between leader, manager, and coach and the best methods for group function and collaborative communication.

Leader, Manager, and Coach

Discussions of leadership are often over-analyzed and misunderstood. In academic circles, the term "leader" and "manager" are segmented and precisely defined as unique terms. Scholars would say that leadership is the ability to inspire others to action, while management is the ability to coordinate others' activities. Rarely are these two functions disconnected from one another. Leaders manage, and managers lead.

There are specific skills associated with leadership. A leader must be able to inspire. To be inspirational, a leader must be trusted. To be trusted, a leader must listen to the staff, understand the staff's comments and concerns, and thereafter authentically engage with the staff. The quandary surfaces as the "traits of a natural" leader often do not support effective listening nor authentic engagement. A manager must be organized and have the ability to orchestrate the staff's activities to complete the objectives. They must also understand the staff's functional role to direct the outcome effectively. The quandary surfaces as managerial knowledge may fail if functional knowledge is not sufficiently present.

Although there are several common traits between a leader and a manager, it is possible for a manager to be a leader and for a leader to be a manager. In a business setting, a successful leader-manager can fulfill the functions of both a leader and a manager in the same manner as performed by a coach. In many respects, a coach is a more accurate description of the leader-manager position given that its role is to inspire, listen, organize, and orchestrate the team's activities to achieve success.

The Coach

The coach of a sports team creates the strategy that leads the team to victory. The elements of this strategy are similar to that of a business and include the team's vision, mission values, capability assessment of each function, and an analysis of its competitive strengths and weaknesses. Given this information, the team's coach will identify the structure best suited to win the game, just as the business strategy should best accomplish the group's near-term objective. An objective could be to increase sales volume 10%, produce financial results in 15 days, add five new branches, or launch a new division. Regardless of the goal, the leaders within the business play a crucial role in absorbing information as well as creating and implementing the plan to achieve their objectives.

Successful Teams

The coach skill-set is typically required for an individual to be effective in a C-Level business position. Any person that possesses the complete skill-set of a coach is likely to drive progress for a group of employees. In business, 6 elements are exhibited by successful teams. *A team or group of employees are likely to complete the objective successfully when they embrace the following 6 elements, including purpose, priority, duties, communication, dynamics, and measurement of success.* Academic research has demonstrated the importance of each of these components.

Purpose

Purpose defines the group's existence and creates the group member's shared sense of "why" aligned with a firm's vision and mission.

Priority

Priority identifies the order by which the group's tasks are organized. The sequencing of the events is of critical importance to ensure group success. It is important to roll up the window before driving into the car wash. While this example seems obvious, it magnifies the importance of defined order and attention to the sequence of tasks to drive success.

Duties

Duties include the division of labor and the decision structure for the group. The division of labor is related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the group's members and is the basis from which the member's tasks are assigned. Given that the task assignments are based on member competency, if necessary and based on progress measurement, task assignments may be reallocated to other group members, or group members may receive additional training. The division of labor will also identify an organizational structure and create the basis for decision-making, which may follow assigned authority lines.

Communication

Communication relates to the communication protocol and frequency as well as how conflict is explored and resolved. The communication protocol identifies how and in what form or multiple forms, communication will occur. Frequency explores the periods between communication events. It could be that communication is perpetual, or daily, or weekly, depending upon the circumstances. Conflict is inevitable among groups of people working together as each member is unique and certain personalities will clash with others. Conflict alone is not destructive and is simply part of being human. How conflict is resolved is the critical variable. The identification of and how the resolution of conflict occurs is an essential component of a successful project. The differences among people should be leveraged and celebrated to identify creative solutions to complex problems, including interpersonal conflict.

Dynamics

Dynamics in a business occurs for a number of reasons, one of which is because of the uniqueness of each individual. Every person is different such that every group of people is unique. This diversity must be explored. People have feelings, unique personalities, and various degrees of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Identifying the interpersonal behavioral dynamics is essential to fostering bidirection appreciation among participants and leaders. The exploration of the group's behavioral dynamic will result in group norms that build cohesiveness among the group.

During this formative process, when a group's norms are created, if an oppressive personality type is present, it should be overtly restrained to allow any timid group members to form transparent connections among the team. During the formation of group norms, the team either learns to tell the leader the truth or concludes that transparency is dangerous. Leadership personalities impact the formation of truth-telling norms within a group. If the leader has a narcissistic personality type that impedes the ability to listen well, such that information exchange seems only to go one way, employees will likely decide that telling the truth is not useful as nothing comes from them voicing their comments or concerns. *Additionally, if a controlling leader "shoots the messenger" via some retaliatory means because they believe that any type of bad information is not acceptable, group members will similarly realize that speaking up could have consequences and be less forthcoming with their honest opinions*. These circumstances occur at the opposite ends of the leader personality trait spectrum and frequently result in catastrophe. This dynamic interaction between the leader and the group contributes to communication ineffectiveness in all forms. A well-structured, agenda-driven meeting where bidirectional dialogue occurs is a sign of a healthy group.

Measurement

Measurement of success means knowing when to change or stop. Success is achieved when the purpose of any given project has been fulfilled. It is essential to identify the completion point when the group is formed to determine the path forward and to give the group a sense of success when the purpose is fulfilled. Another element within the framework of success to consider is the question of how good is good enough.

When a group completes a task, a post-mortem assessment is useful to identify how to improve the subsequent processes. It is also important to celebrate the completion of the task and the group's success. The "how'd we do" assessment is an opportunity to provide feedback across the group to help improve the subsequent result. This is also a time to identify training opportunities as all group members perpetually enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The concept of Kaizen or continual improvement is essential here to protect the success.

Summary

The role of a leader-manager is essential to drive success, but rarely will competent management overcome a failed strategy. Similarly, a great strategy can be diminished by poor leadership. The combination of a well-reasoned strategy implemented by a proficient leader-manager will frequently result in success.

Application

A firm's product or service drives the organizational structure, which defines the requirements of the persons in leadership roles. As a contrasting example, what do the nuclear plant technician and a bank teller have in common? They are both within a highly controlled, hierarchical design due to the risk of being wrong. At the opposite end of the spectrum, what does a Google developer and an NFL Quarterback have in common? They are both parts of a horizontal team where there is a significant degree of autonomy to address circumstances.

The leader-manager dynamic must adapt depending upon the high control vs low control organization structure. Additionally, the organizational oversight of a branch may be different from the oversight of the underwriting function. *In every case, the leader-manager must adapt their behavior to meet the employees' needs with the organizational design.*

Every leader's unique personality enhances or detracts from their effectiveness as a leader. A person that is timid and detailed may struggle to inspire the employees. A gregarious and boisterous person may experience a challenge addressing operational details. There is no perfect leader, and every leader may struggle with elements of the position.

The key is to identify the traits of a successful leader, given the circumstances within the firm. *The successful sales team leader may possess different characteristics compared to the leader of operations or underwriting.* The extent to which there is an association between a boisterous personality being less detailed and an introverted personality being less inspirational has been researched extensively. *The essential point is to identify the traits that drive success and place the person with the skills to match the requirement of the position.* That said, everyone can learn, and it is possible to teach a dominant personality to be quieter and teach a quiet personality to be heard.

Strategy vs Culture: The Leader's Impact

If an organization has a well-defined strategy that includes a detailed vision, mission, values, business plan, self-assessment (SWOT), and a well-structured list of objectives, the leader's personality is likely to have a less impactful presence. In most cases, it is possible to teach a quiet person to act outgoing. Behavioral research concluded that in most cases, it is often problematic to teach an egomaniacal narcissist to consider others.

In all the discussion about group structure and group dynamics, it is crucial not to be fooled by sales speak and hyperbole. Don't drink the Kool-Aid without validating the truth or be fooled by a false premise through faulty inductive reasoning. (See decision making*) Always focus on setting a path that is rooted in fact and reason. Every business must create value while delivering a product or service to a customer. The leader-manager must honestly validate their firm's value proposition.*

Authors Note about Successful Teams

It is interesting to observe the importance of communication and interpersonal dynamics when examining successful teams. Far too often, activities fail because of poor communication and a weak understanding of behavioral and organizational dynamics. Communication is more than posting a sales goal. A leader with a dynamic personality may be adept at one-way communication but not possess the ability to listen. Communication requires authentic interaction among managers and employees to develop a shared alignment, trust, and a unified commitment to accomplish the goal.

Strategy, Leadership and Hiring the Right People

People are essential to implement a well-designed strategy. The strategic objectives must be understood and applied by the employees responsible for completing the task under the supervision of leadership. *Both leadership and the employee must be able to understand the complexity of completing the tasks and be able to actually implement the task.* The essence of internal assessment is to identify the knowledge skills and ability present within the firm to accomplish the objectives. If the existing staff does not have the capability to achieve the goals, then the leadership must identify the right person's composition to enable the firm to complete the task.

The right person is typically considered based on a functional skill-set. Yet researchers have concluded that finding the right person is best addressed by identifying new employees who innately embrace a philosophical alignment where the prospective employee shares the firm's value statement. To achieve long-term profitability, the capability of the staff to accomplish the task's requirement is a broader assessment than simply an exact skill-set alignment. *Hiring the wrong person that is good at the job but mis-aligned with the firm's values and culture is likely to create a cancerous result.*

The components of the right person include aptitude, attitude, and ability. Aptitude is generally a reflection of intelligence such that a person with a strong aptitude is likely to learn any skill. Attitude is considered a function of the person's worldview. A firm's values statement represents its worldview. The extent to which a person intrinsically embraces the firm's values statement, the higher the degree of attitude alignment. A person with an attitude aligned with the firm's value statement is likely to fit philosophically within the firm. Ability is the knowledge and skill to complete a task without additional instruction. A person with an aligned attitude and a strong aptitude is likely to learn any skill required to complete the job.

It is generally best to hire the right people (Attitude, Aptitude, Abilities) then put them in the best position, provided leadership is able to provide instruction as needed. It is this priority of hiring the right person that has helped to make Southwest Airlines a national success.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a measure of the extent to which a leader embraces the ability to process their own emotions as well as identify other's emotions. Emotional intelligence includes thinking rationally about decisions and refusing to react impulsively in high-pressure situations. Just because an emotion is experienced does not mean it is required to act upon the emotion*. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are self-aware and not blinded by self-deception, enabling them to build trust and authentic communication with employees.*

Leadership's behavior matters. The little things may become the big things that either enhance or destroy a vibrant culture. Successful companies share common traits that include deploying a comprehensive strategic plan, a leadership team that understands the strategy, and can inspire the staff to excel.

Self-Awareness

Dr. Caldwell has researched leadership and emotional intelligence extensively and noted that the ability to think rationally and deny the erratic compulsions to behave impulsively enables leaders to build trust with employees. Leaders must acknowledge a sensitivity to the inner voice of self-deception and rely on principles related to values and personal competence to ultimately form the basis of how to live authentically. Self-awareness involves having a deep awareness of one's emotions, strengths, and limitations, including a keen understanding of one's values and motives. Self-awareness theory suggests that individuals who are more cognizant of how others perceive them can implement a more accurate self-appraisal. Someone's ability to honestly view their behavior through the lens of others may then initiate behavioral change.

Hearing one's inner voice allows for the implementation of continuous personal improvement that enables behavioral adjustment based on the internal feedback loop that transmits information to silent cognitive thought creating a Personal Kaizen. Self-aware leaders carefully examine their behavioral consistency given the attributes defined in the firm's values statements and the leader's convictions. A corporate value to respect each other is defeated when a leader yells at an employee. A self-aware leader would see the behavioral impact of their words and actions and take corrective measures to make things right with the affected employee and take steps to extinguish the behavior.

Introspective leaders are more effective when they demonstrate that they are receptive to feedback from others. Self-awareness is a fundamental element of emotional intelligence and is critical to our ability to communicate with and build relationships of trust with others*. Research demonstrates that individuals who possess a high degree of self-awareness are skilled at self-monitoring and adapting their behaviors to relate effectively with others.*

Self-awareness incorporates a capacity for self-reflection and thoughtfulness, which enables rational thinking. Self-awareness will help to mitigate impulsivity, which, when unchecked, may result in dangerous consequences. The goal is awareness, not perfection. When they fail, authentic leaders apologize.

Self-deception

The elements of leadership are definable, and yet, it may be challenging for a person to become an effective leader. One impediment to leadership is self-deception, which stems from unidentified behavioral challenges that are seen by others but not by the person.

Dr. Caldwell identified self-deception as a discrepancy between the way in which one knows to act and how one actually behaves. When one acts in a manner that is inconsistent with the intended behavior, cognitive dissonance surfaces as the disparity between intended and actual action surfaces causes remorse. We did what we shouldn't do. When this occurs, self-deception may manifest as a defense mechanism that results in aberrant behavior such as projection, displacement, undoing, isolation, sublimation, and denial. These behaviors are a universal observed phenomenon and may lead to the leader implementing feedback-avoiding behavior to soften the scream of cognitive dissonance. *They ignore the little voice of truth in their inner ear to accept a lie of self-reinforcement as a symptom of self-deception.*

Megalomania

A self-deceived leader may ignore input from others and deploy projection or blaming others for their failure as a tactic to avoid feedback that reflects poorly on them. Many political leaders come to mind. *This level of feedback avoidance is known as megalomania, where the self-deceived leader disconnects from reality and rejects any input that is inconsistent with their view of themselves.* This is also when the failure of inductive reasoning is most present. (See Inductive Reasoning below)

Even skilled leaders who recognize the importance of carefully preserving the subtle elements of interpersonal relationships fall prey to the uncontrollable situations that hijack our physiological responses, which exponentially increase stress and cause inevitable self-awareness dysfunction. The loan did not close, so we yell at the processor, the underwriter, and the dog, regardless of whether or not they contributed to an uncontrollable outcome.

Ego-driven Self-protection

The other issue surfaces when ego-driven self-protection prevents the cognitive dissonance feedback loop from activating. In short, we may know we behaved as we shouldn't, and we don't care. *When self-deception acts as an ego defense mechanism to maintain self-esteem without regard to others, the leader ignores their behavior to preserve their appearance, yet they fail as a leader.* The leader's behavior is all that matters, and few words can repair the employee's observation of the leader's duality, where the employees experience the leader's blindness to their bad behavior. This is particularly detrimental when the leader reprimands their employees for the same behaviors they ignore in themselves as it reveals a double standard.

At this time, the leader has lost the employees' trust, and the office becomes an emotional wasteland that is the antithesis of the sought-after vibrant culture. All of this resulted from a leader's self-deception. If the leader believes it is acceptable to yell and swear at the processor because the leader's sales activity created the job, then the leader exists in a fantasy world of self-deception that is not sustainable.

As an example, when an apology does not follow the accidental shopping cart bump by a stranger in the grocery store line, emotion stirs. This same "they didn’t apologize" feeling is felt by the staff when the leader acts inappropriately without remorse. The key to a vibrant culture is for leaders to embrace the occurrence of self-deception's inappropriate action with remorse. When stress leads to inappropriate expression occurs, the leader should feel remorse and apologize.

When leaders experience remorse and communicate an apology, a Vibrant Culture is possible.

Decision Making as a Leader

Decision-making is an often-underestimated component of leadership, and yet, it is likely one of the most critical functions. Decisions related to hiring impact operational efficiency and culture. Decisions about purchasing equipment may improve throughput but consume cash. To make decisions, a leader relies on their critical thinking capability, which leverages history, data, and alignment with the strategic plan to support the decision. Several decision support tools are presented here, including the double movement of reflective thought and design thinking, both of which enhance critical thinking.

It is essential to point out that emotional decision-making or relying on a "manager's intuition" is not applying critical thinking. Decisions must rely on empirical data, not feelings or emotions, to the extent possible. There are times when a leader must decide with incomplete data, in which case, reliance on the following decision tools may help support decision-making.

When a leader develops an awareness of inductive reasoning's potential fallacy, the ability to avoid emotional decision-making is enhanced. Inductive reasoning is discussed next.

Double Movement of Reflective Thought

In 1910, John Dewey observed the double movement of reflective thought as decision-making moves from inductive to deductive processes to examine a circumstance or phenomena, repeatedly exploring all variants to identify the best solution. Dewey observed the validity of combining inductive and deductive reasoning to explore the best option in business decision-making. He denoted the movement from induction to deduction and back as the double movement of reflective thought.

This double movement of reflective thought involves a cyclical and iterative process of induction and deduction and is used to define the basis from which managers are able to explore the relationships between and among multiple business variables. The intent from the double movement is to expose meaning and bring definition between the movement from technical to practical and conceptual levels of thinking about options and outcomes.

Between the two methods, the reasoning process occurs in opposite directions: specific to general vs general to specific. In deductive reasoning, the conclusion is certain because it flows from a valid general and minor premise, provided the general and minor premise are both true. In contrast to inductive reasoning, which flows from a series of random observations to reach a generalization, deductive reasoning flows from a valid general and minor premise.

Inductive Reasoning
An inductive argument may be called possible, probable, reasonable, or likely, but never certain. When using inductive reasoning, there is no premise from which certainty is found. Uncertainty is the enemy of business decision-making. Achieving decision certainty requires statistical Causation. Causation results from deductive reasoning that is dependable and reliable. Inductive reasoning results in Correlation, which reflects similarity but not a certainty.

Inductive reasoning uses a minor premise with a minor premise to reach a conclusion that is frequently false.

- Aristotle had arms, monkeys have arms, therefore Aristotle was a monkey.
- My wife's name is Ann, Ann is a woman, therefore all women are named Ann.
- Branch A grew 10%, branch B grew 10%, therefore all branches grew 10%.

These examples of invalid syllogisms do not always mean inductive reasoning is bad, provided it is used properly to explore ideas or to make generalizations. *The common pitfall is when leaders try to extrapolate with too little information that results in flawed decisions that could have been avoided had deductive reasoning been applied.*

Proper deductive logic results from a valid general premise that includes the minor premise. Think of a circle within a circle.

- Men in the NBA are tall, Kobe was in the NBA, therefore Kobe was tall
- All IMBs can make loans, ABC is an IMB, therefore ABC can make loans

Inductive reasoning may sound reasonable, but if there are two minor premises upon which the argument lies, the logic remains faulty.

As an example of inductive logic:

- ABC mortgage closes loans in 10 days (small circle)
- My firm is a mortgage lender (small circle)
- Therefore, my firm should close in 10 days. (invalid)

This may seem reasonable, but this is flaunty inductive reasoning because two minor premises are used to form the logic. Remember the circle within a circle.

Here is the same argument as deductive reasoning:

- All mortgage companies close loan in 10 days (big circle)
- My firm is a mortgage lender (small circle within a big circle)
- Therefore, my firm should close in 10 days. (valid)

While the potential for decision error using inductive reasoning is high, the value of inductive reasoning is to explore possibilities and then use the iterative double movement of reflective thought to test all variables. The process of implementing reflective inductive and deductive reasoning processes is likely to enhance the decision-making process and lead to effective business decisions.

This is a difficult concept, *but all leaders must embrace, understand, and deploy data-driven and logic-based decisions to run a company effectively.*

Design Thinking & Thinking Tools

Dr. Liedika examined design thinking to create thinking tools. Design thinking is similar to the double movement of reflective thought but with a more structured approach attributed to the movement process. Design thinking enhances the examination process by forming a temporary solution pending validity testing. In design thinking, the first step is to understand the problem, followed by examining a vast array of possible solutions. It is the pursuit of a variety of solutions that replaces the double movement iterative process. The next step in design thinking is to iterate extensively through prototyping and testing and then implement the solution through the standard deployment mechanisms while remaining cognizant of the change management protocol. How a project is implemented will impact its viability. The behavioral science researcher, Dr. Kurt Lewin, identified the human behavioral change process known as Unfreeze, Change, and Refreeze as a means to accomplish the reconstituted behavioral state.

The design thinking foundation extends from the premise that learning is enhanced when we separate our thinking from the familiar and accept the uncertainty that inevitably accompanies new experiences. Innovative thinking requires moving into the realm of uncertainty. The following tools may help to pursue uncertainty to find a better solution to a problem. When running with a prototype idea, expect to make mistakes and fail, but learn from the experiment. With each iterative idea, test the reality of implementation and the risks associated with proceeding, and the best decision given the circumstance and data will surface.

Design Thinking Tools

Visualization

Visualization is the process of imagining the decision through imagery that may include using charts and graphs. It is common to use metaphors and analogies to capture the ideas on a market board, note cards, or yellow sticky pads. The idea is to create a mind map of the ideas that solve the problem.

Collaboration

Structured collaboration extends the mind mapping to facilitate team-based engagement of crafting imagery as the collaboration group attempts to find the path to a solution. Collaborative brainstorming, aka "ideation," is a process to develop concepts and generate potential solutions, aka "hypotheses" around the possible solution. In these collaboration discussions, it is essential not to criticize or judge other ideas and avoid rising tension in an effort to free the mind to explore creativity and identify new thought solutions.

Prototyping

Prototyping techniques facilitate turning the abstract ideas from ideation into tangible solutions that may solve the problem. Prototyping may include storyboarding, swim lanes, experience journeys, and business concept illustrations to bring definition to the idea.

Reality Check
Not long ago, in mortgage lending land, there was no pre-underwriting review. That's right. Creating a pre-underwriting review step broke the long-standing workflow. This new design was a result of design thinking as leaders created the new from nothing.

Critical Thinking

All decision elements and tools discussed lead to critical thinking. Think about a solution, turn it upside down and right side out, and reconsider all variables. In critical thinking, the intent is to collect input from varied perspectives, gather as much data as possible, consider all possibilities collaboratively, and then decide the best course of action given the circumstance.

Critical thinking is not emotion or intuition. Critical thinking is clear-headed contemplation. There may be a circumstance wherein there is very little input from others, there is no data available, and the design thinking tools are administered, in which case the leader's judgment results in a decision. Still, this process is not a guess; this is an extension of critical thinking.

Application

The leader's skillset is complex and comprised of all of the elements discussed above. *The leader's personality impacts leadership style but need not define the capability of the leader given the vast array of components that identify leadership success.* A leader must understand the dynamics of their behavior and how emotion can drive both action and decision. The exposure of these factors enables the process to pursue leadership development to expand the capability of all leaders.

If the leader assessment or development activity is beyond the scope of the firm's HR department, then hire an executive coach to help create a leader capable of orchestrating the firm's future success.

Vibrant Culture

Dr. Drucker noted that every firm had a culture, and most high-performing companies had a vibrant culture. Researchers pointed out that a leader consumed by self-deception (toxic leader) is likely to impact strategy and culture, but the impact depends on several factors. A toxic leader may cause a well-crafted strategy to be less effective, while an authentic leader may help a poorly crafted strategy succeed. Additionally, a toxic leader's impact on vibrant culture is minimized when the firm is large, and the culture is well established. The opposite is true as well.

Researchers identify culture as a business's operating system (OS) and as the emotional and behavioral infrastructure that enables coordinated and predictable movement. Leaders must have the ability to coordinate the activity of employees to succeed. Leaders must have the confidence to predict that objectives will be implemented as designed is critical for success. As in the operating system example, the ability to think occurs because of the OS connectivity.

People are culture. The employees of Southwest Airlines perpetuate its culture. The culture at Southwest is not random; it is designed, defined, and nurtured. Southwest implements an expansive and rigorous new employee screening and personality alignment testing process before new employees are hired because they know that employees represent their culture to customers.

The challenge for any company is that human behavior reinforces, perpetuates, and potentially alters the culture. To preserve culture, a company must hire the right people who embrace the culture, avoid the wrong people who would destroy culture, and focus on the best employees that will replicate culture.

As a point of caution, when the leader of a mortgage company randomly adds new branches to pursue volume without regard for culture, the result will likely be an unpredictable operational outcome because there is no cultural alignment among managers and no culturally created operating system through which behavior is controlled and direction implemented.

In an M&A transaction, cultural and philosophical alignment are the most critical factor that drives success. If the culture was never overtly defined or leadership violates behavioral values, then culture will become random, decentralized, and susceptible to redefinition by employees with strong personalities.

Strategy and leadership may overtly define culture, but employee's actions reflect the actual culture. Leadership must hire culturally aligned employees and then communicate the values-based culture throughout the organization, all of which may lead to creating and then preserving a vibrant culture.

Authenticity

Dr. Liedika noted a continuum within persuasion when the recipient's benefit is replaced by the persuader's drive to succeed. This is an inauthentic event. For example, a successful salesperson could trigger a commission payment resulting from a transaction that is not in the customer's best interest: An inauthentic sale. A business leader may choose a course of action that the employees do not accept. When this occurs, the leader may attempt coercive or manipulative tactics. The leader could also explain the rationale and justification for the decision to achieve an acceptance of the direction. *There is the tipping point in leadership when communication may progress from explanation to manipulation and trigger the transformation from authentic to inauthentic behavior.*

The recipient of manipulative communication may not immediately realize they've been manipulated, but frequently, they will eventually experience remorse and abandonment from the manipulation. A leader in a company with an authentic culture does not manipulate employees. *An authentic leader presents facts, data, and the truth about the circumstance to enable the employee to understand the required course of action.* This level of transparency will instill trust and perpetuate an authentic culture.

To create authentic leadership, a leader must possess the ability to be authentic.

Dr. Liedika observed that an employee's active participation in decision-making lies at the heart of authenticity. She noted that employees who strongly identify with their organizational roles feel more authentic and possess a strong employer identity. An employee who is deeply engaged with their employer is more likely to embrace and adopt the strategic plan's impacts even if the impact is adverse to the employee. Once the strategic plan is announced and the employee's engagement is assessed, Dr. Lewin's research may be applied to help employees accept the new workflow or task alignment if needed.

Respect, Communication, & Control

Respect, communication, and control are hallmarks of a vibrant culture. It may seem inconsistent to include control among respect and communication; however, leadership is accountable for generating the strategic outcome, which requires controlling the organization. A vibrant culture is responsive to leadership's direction and reinforces management's ability to control the company's direction through culture.

In a vibrant culture, communication is overtly bidirectional, proceeding from leadership to employees and from employees to leadership in an active feedback loop that ensures broad-scope awareness. In a vibrant culture, employees are heard, respected, and not manipulated. The employees in a vibrant culture are not verbally abused nor abused in any other fashion.

The avoidance of verbal abuse seems unusually difficult for mortgage companies where the branch managers may feel justified to express their frustration in a hostile manner. *A leader never has the right to scream at an employee just because the leader has the power to fire the employee or because the firm needs the leader's transaction volume*. In short, every manager is a leader, but not every leader creates a vibrant culture even though it is essential for sustainable profitability. Research repeatedly demonstrates that happy employees are productive, and employees working in a vibrant culture are likely to thrive.

Growing Culture

Culture is made up of deeply rooted behaviors and traditions that, once established, are difficult to change significantly. The larger the spread of culture among employees, the more resilient it becomes. A shared culture among 100,000 employees is more sustainable than a firm's culture with 1,000 or 100 employees. The smaller the company and the fewer employees, the more susceptible the culture is to change, and the more vigilantly leadership must act to create and preserve culture.

As previously mentioned, culture is an extension of the strategic values and the leadership's behavior. The smaller the company, the more impactful a leader's behavior will be on culture. *This is how a mortgage branch manager is likely to change a company's culture to comply with the branch's culture rather than the inverse. In short, culture becomes as leadership behaves.*

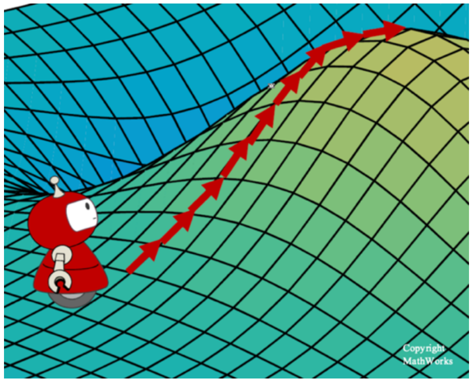
Culture is an extension of a firm's strategic values and its leadership's ability to represent and disseminate the strategic values across the organization. *A vibrant culture may form when leadership embraces the behaviors encapsulated in the value statement and hires people that are philosophically aligned with the values before they are hired.* When the forces that lead to a vibrant culture are present, including a firm's leadership representing authentic behavior, vibrant culture will likely form.

Conclusion

When a strategic plan is implemented based on all of the characteristics identified in this paper, and leadership embodies the elements of self-awareness, orchestration fluency, and inspirational communication, a vibrant culture and business success follows. This is easier said than done. The simultaneous implementation of all of these components is very difficult to achieve.

It is common for a firm to struggle to accurately implement a SWOT analysis because it is both complex and unpleasant to identify its weakness honestly. Many leaders would rather just hope it will be OK. Some will think that there is no reason to plan because predicting the future is impossible. Planning is not about knowing the future; it anticipates various outcomes based on a data-driven estimate or an educated guess and then identifies how to respond to the variables. Accountants struggle to create a cash flow forecast because it is always wrong. Exactly, it will always be wrong to the penny, but the idea is to be close and then to adjust given different new input variables as they surface. It is attributed to Winston Churchill the phrase "failing to plan is a plan to fail."

The other challenge frequently faced by a leadership team is implementing strategic change and achieving functional alignment to the change among the employees. A change could be redesigned desks, or a change in workflow, or a new computer system. It is never enough to send a memo about the change. *Change is an emotional event that must be embraced by leadership, which includes providing coaching support or psychological support of the employees*. When employees fill in powered by inclusion in the change implementation discussion, they are more likely to embrace the change. In all cases, leadership must embrace the dynamics of emotion when considering change management. *Underestimated change implementation complexity is one of the key contributing factors to strategy implementation failure.*



Leadership that embraces self-awareness will be self-aware. Leadership that does not understand the concept of self-awareness likely is not. The consequence of a non-self-aware leader could result in communication issues and decision-making challenges from the emotional and erratic decision process. A person that does not appreciate self-awareness may be successful in a position where the ability to receive repeated criticism is valuable. The persuasive manipulator rarely has long-term success when repeatedly interacting with the same people. People will feel manipulation and eventually revolt.

It is rare that a persuasive manipulator transitions successfully to the CEO position, although they may do well in politics. Just as the star wide receiver is rarely a good coach and rare for a fighter pilot to become management, the persuasive manipulator is rarely an effective CEO because of the inability to impart empathy and develop trust. It may seem odd, backward or incongruent that a persuasive manipulator is not effective in leadership. After all, a leader should inspire the staff. *Research shows that those manipulated will eventually feel violated and lose trust. The fact remains, active listening and empathy with an emotional alignment with the staff are essential to building employee trust, which is required to form effective leadership and is often difficult to achieve without possessing transparent self-awareness.*

Another challenge for a mortgage company is the divergent structures within one company. Recall the discussion about a group of Google programmers with a low-control design and the staff running a nuclear plant with a high-control design. These vastly different organizational structures require different leadership styles and tactics, yet, both designs are present within a mortgage company between sales and operations. This is a challenge for the mortgage CEO, who must orchestrate both organizational scenarios simultaneously and measure each based on the design, which for the programmers is daily.

When a firm's strategy is based on market opportunity, the firm's capability is honestly validated, the leadership team is appropriately qualified for the various functional requirements, all leaders embrace the strategy and appreciate self-awareness, then the probability of achieving a vibrant culture is high and the likelihood of achieving long-term profitability virtually certain. Research has conclusively demonstrated that when the factors of business success are analyzed, *the undeniable conclusion is that strategy, leadership, and culture together reflect the essence of a business and are the primary factors that determine success.*

eBook of Strategy
By: Dr. Andy Schell.

About Dr. Schell:

Dr. Andy Schell, Ph.D., DBA/MBA, MSML, CPA/CFF, CMB

Dr. Schell is an expert in the design and implementation of strategy with experience creating multiple national companies and directing the activities of hundreds of employees. He has 4 decades of experience as a leader/manager/coach directing the activity of both small and large groups of employees, including mortgage lending activity at Bank of America. His leadership knowledge extends from his hands-on experience and his doctoral academic pursuits in communication, strategy, and finance.

Dr. Schell is presently CEO, Managing Partner, and Co-Founder of Mortgage Banking Solutions and MBS Financial Services ("MBS"), based in Austin, Texas. Dr. Schell is known for his ability to turn "vision into reality" and "chaos into order" as he finds creative solutions to his client's challenges, including revenue stability, technology enhancement, financial management, workflow efficiency, and employee morale.

Dr. Schell and his team at MBS offer services in the following areas:

- Growth Strategy – Dr. Schell can help you plan and execute a growth strategy.
- Executive coaching - Leadership is a learned skill. Dr. Schell can teach you to be an amazing leader, an effective manager, and an inspiring coach that can foster a vibrant culture.
- Accounting & Technology Services – Dr. Andy Schell, CPA, leads the accounting services team to become your outsourced accounting department along with MBS' CIO, Theresa Marie to support your IT infrastructure requirements.

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