

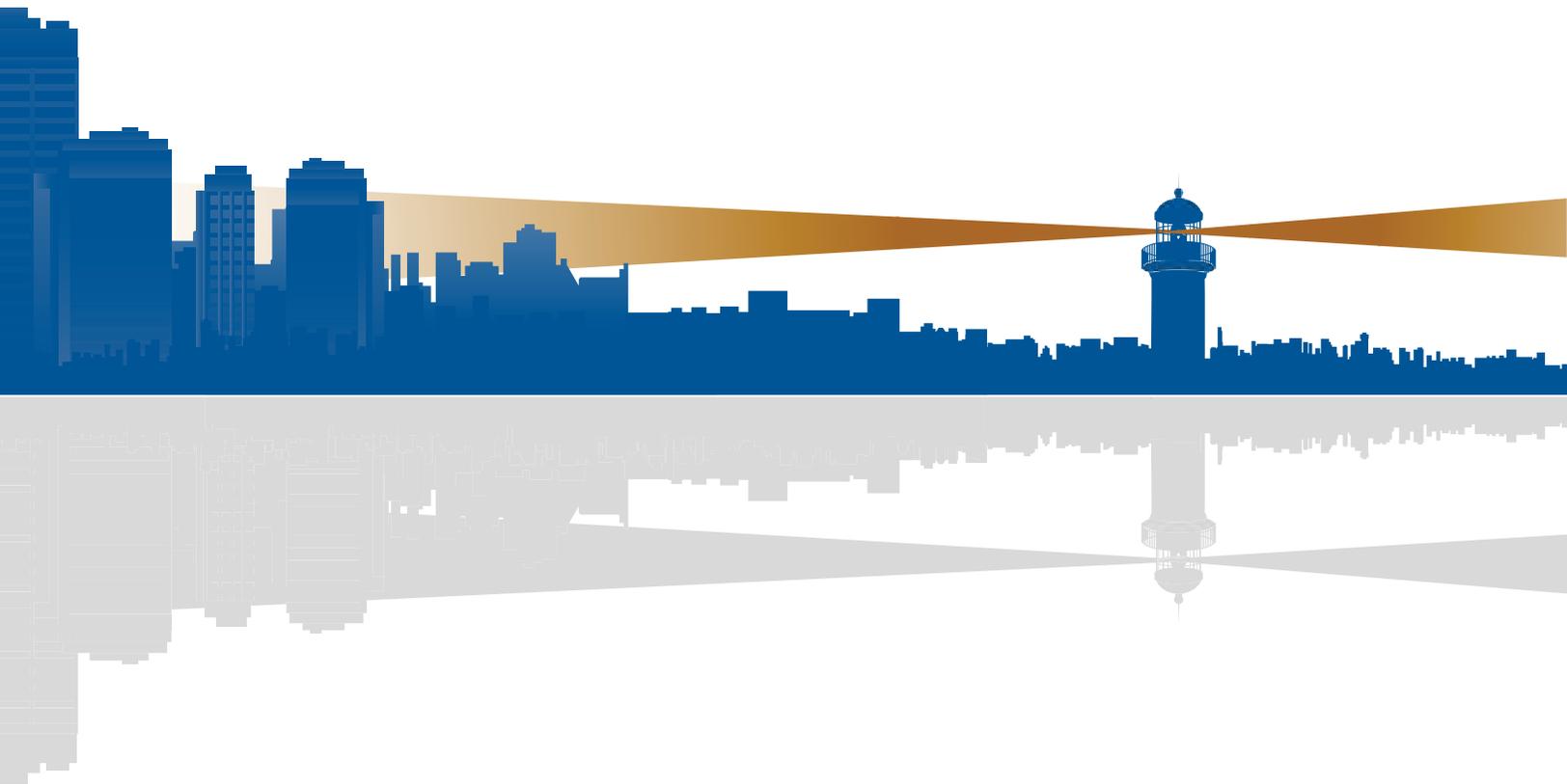


THE BEACON GROUP

Navigate the Future™

“Lessons in Team Leadership from Sochi”

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Executive Report on Leadership & Business Strategy



In Our View ...

Sports are a passionate obsession for some, and a total mystery to others, but when the Olympic Games roll by, even the marginal spectator can feel the "buzz" the rest of us feel all the time. Buried deep in the nationalistic pride of the Olympics are some practical lessons we can take away to apply in our less glamorous day to day roles as leaders in the organizations for whom we toil.

Business leaders are often guilty of looking for the "secret sauce" to serial success when they would be much better advised to just apply some of the common sense lessons about teamwork, passion and personal accountability we see from athletes. The simple fact of the matter is, we have allowed machismo and intellect to overpower the subtle advantages provided through heart, effort and passion.

The so called "soft side" of leadership has been forced to take a back seat because too many leaders are afraid to admit the old recipe no longer applies in a world where fundamental changes in society and technology have leveled the playing field like never before. It's wake up time!

We need to embrace some of the valuable lessons from Olympic competition and begin to apply them in the organizations we lead. The lessons about selfless team play, the lessons about heart and determination, and the lessons about effort.

Yours truly,

R. Douglas Williamson
Chief Executive Officer



Drafting a Winning Team ...

Seldom is success a solitary effort. Even in those sports which appear to be individual in nature, there is a background team of trainers, nutritionists and psychologists - all of whom contribute. In business, the same can be said, but seldom is the same degree of care put into developing the "right" business leadership team.

It's all too common to hear complaints (sometimes verging on adult whining) about lack of alignment and inadequate collaboration as the source for under performance. Why do so many leaders seem mystified by the mechanics of team work, and fail to understand they control their choices and, therefore, the outcomes?

Let's look at some facts:

- Teams are built through hard work over time
- Teams require clear roles and responsibilities to succeed
- Teams need to understand the "decision rights" within the team
- Teams are based on a mix of individual and collective accountabilities

We have largely failed to make the science of building a winning team a critical leadership competency. Instead, we continue to rely upon broken systems and practices that lead to teams that are set up for underperformance from the get go.

Meticulous Preparation ...

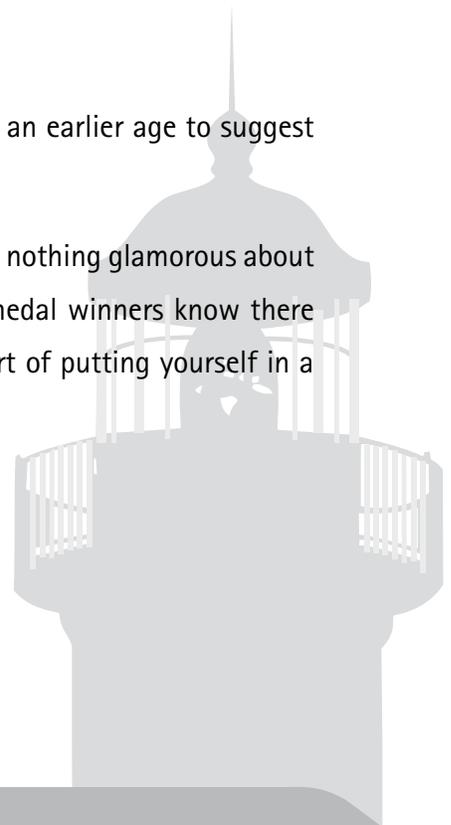
Success comes from a combination of different sources, typically a cocktail that includes equal parts hard work, effort, timing and luck. The first two ingredients set the groundwork for the moment when opportunity presents itself and the organization and its leaders swing into action. In sports and business "getting ready to win" is as important to ultimate victory as playing the game itself. Despite this, leadership teams rarely prepare in the way they should.

Just ask yourself the following questions:

- How much practice time does your team allocate?
- How well organized and planned are the practices you do hold?
- How much do you work on perfecting your "special teams" and "plays"?
- How fit is the team, and what are you doing to improve the level of fitness?

It might seem like a throwback to the values and beliefs of an earlier age to suggest that hard work matters, but the truth is - it does!

Successful teams prepare to be successful and, while there is nothing glamorous about the preparation phase of the journey to victory, the gold medal winners know there are no shortcuts. The gruelling, boring preparation is all part of putting yourself in a position to excel when it really matters.



The Role of Culture ...

A study of serially successful winning teams will quickly and convincingly reveal the importance culture and chemistry play in ensuring victory. These are not mysterious secrets locked deep in an underground vault. Simply put, they are the basic, common sense rules of success.

Culture matters, despite how often it is ignored or dismissed by leaders who look down their nose at the "soft skills", and prefer instead to puff up their egos with macho locker room banter about the value of the "hard stuff". It is disturbing to witness the naïve talk of leaders who refuse to accept that success occurs within a context, and is the direct result of time spent creating the "winning conditions". Success is the outcome - culture, chemistry and the other "soft skills" are all part of the inputs. Garbage in - garbage out!

The external market conditions, the pace of technological change and the nature of societal and demographic change all conspire to make organizational culture an even bigger and more important priority than ever before. Leaders need to revisit their understanding of what culture means and the role it plays. Some common myths need to be punctured.

- The myth that culture is something HR looks after - wrong
- The myth that culture is about employee engagement - wrong
- The myth that culture is linked to compensation and benefits - wrong
- The myth that culture is elusive and cannot be proactively shaped - wrong

It's time to grow up and place the elephant of culture on the leadership table.

Heart as Human Jet Fuel ...

We seem to have come to the mistaken belief emotion has no place in the workplace and must be banished. This absolves too many leaders of the need to hone their skills of managing emotions, both their own and those of their teams. It provides a convenient excuse behind which some leaders hide. In the process, it deprives their organizations of a source of positive energy that can be put to very good use.

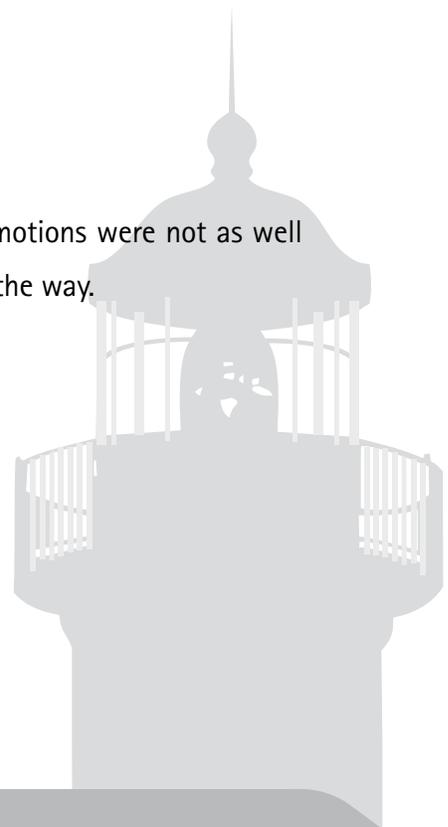
Emotions matter - in both business and sport!

In fact, emotions, including passion, drive, competitive spirit and determination, are all necessary ingredients for success for any endeavour in which there are obstacles to overcome and challenges to meet. If you disagree, then ask yourself why both the American men's and women's hockey teams wilted under the pressure of important games in the recent Sochi Olympics.

- Were they less talented? Not likely.
- Were they less prepared? No, they were not.
- Were they less well coached? Very, very unlikely.

They wilted because their heart was not as big and their emotions were not as well channeled - especially when they met some adversity along the way.

Heart matters - especially when you are tested.



The Power of Determination ...



There are several important behaviors which leaders can leverage to get things done, to drive change and to overcome obstacles. However, the subject of determination, as an essential leadership trait, has not been studied in the way it deserves. The most important insights in this regard come from the work of Dr. Angela Duckworth at The University of Pennsylvania and her research into what she calls "grit" (and others might simply call determination).

Professor Duckworth has identified an important breakthrough in our understanding of performance and what distinguishes one person over another. She reminds us that "smarts" on their own are not enough to drive success. The "grit" she talks about is something that is hard to define, but you know it when you see it!

Associated with "grit" are the twin concepts of self-control and conscientiousness.

Dr. Duckworth describes "grit" as the tendency of a person to sustain interest in, and effort toward, very long-term goals. Self-control is described as the voluntary regulation of behavioral, emotional, and attentional impulses in the presence of momentarily gratifying temptations or diversions.

This powerful combination of personal attributes is what allows some people to push harder, strive higher and remain committed in the face of adversity. In today's world of short-term thinking and endless distractions, these traits are perhaps the answer to managing some of the stresses we feel. They speak to the character of the leader and, while hard to measure empirically, they represent the intangibles that separate good from great, and success from mediocrity.

Never Underestimate Lady Luck ...

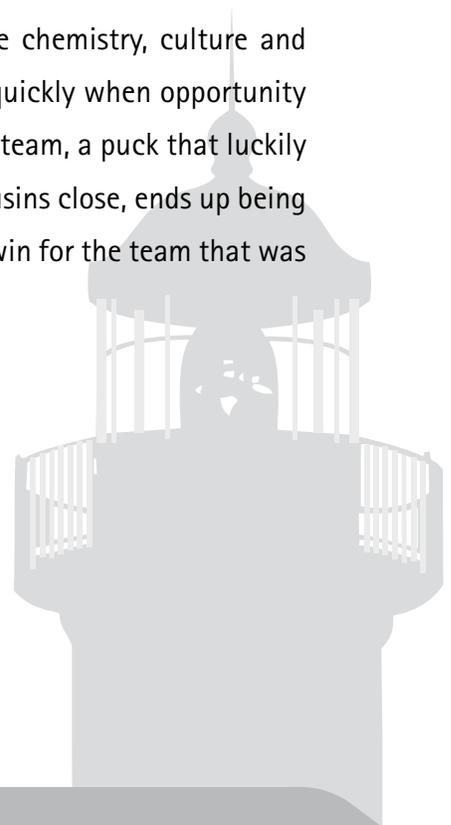
All of the great leaders and leadership teams I have known, over thirty plus years, have benefitted from their share of good luck. In fact, if anyone ever tells you that there have not been times when they got a break, they are probably lying to you or are deluding themselves. Luck in business is about seizing opportunity when it presents itself.

The great leadership teams we know and have studied over time have worked hard, every day, to make sure they are ready to grab opportunity from the table when it presents itself.

- They have done the small things.
- They have stuck to some core beliefs.
- They have ground it out in the trenches, over and over again.

Having done so, and having paid careful attention to the chemistry, culture and character of their leaders, they have been able to pounce quickly when opportunity presents itself. In the case of our women's Olympic hockey team, a puck that luckily hits a goal post to keep the game against our American cousins close, ends up being the turning point that shifted the momentum and led to a win for the team that was behind going into the third period.

As always, luck comes to those who are well prepared.



Lessons from Adversity ...

■ Setbacks are a part of business life – some would argue a necessary part, if you believe we learn more from our failures than our success. Setbacks come in all sizes, shapes and forms, and they tend to present themselves at the most inopportune and inconvenient of times. Leaders can't prevent surprises and setbacks, no matter how hard they try or how many processes, policies and procedures they put in place. Leaders are much better advised to build organizations that can bounce back from adversity quickly, rather than pretend they can erect walls to prevent setbacks.

Resilience is a positive organizational trait, and you can build resilience into your organization in several different ways. The most important of these is instilling confidence in people that they will not be punished for their errors of either commission or omission. We can go even further and suggest that since mistakes and setbacks are inevitable, you should make them sooner rather than later in order to provide valuable learning and insights that can be built into the organizational architecture.

To face adversity is to face the world as it is – imperfect, random and oftentimes paradoxical. Leaders who hesitate or, even worse, freeze in the face of adversity, are not likely to succeed in the long-term, because they create organizations which lack the resilience necessary to carry on. The author Seth Godin refers to these moments as "dips", which represent the necessary tests along the road to success and serve to separate the worthy from the pretenders.

Coaching from the Bench ...

Standing behind the bench of any great team is a great coach. Notice, they are found behind the bench (in support of their players), not in front, where the players deserve to be! If you had carefully watched both Mike Babcock and Kevin Dineen (the coaches of our two gold medal winning Team Canada hockey squads) as they skillfully guided their teams through the Olympic experience, you will have seen two leaders who never got too high and never got too low. In fact, their emotional tone and demeanor could have even been described as coldly neutral, but without doubt, they both feel something inside. It's a matter of emotional control and perspective, two things that business leaders could learn to embrace.

In addition, both of these coaches had confidence in their teams and a quiet confidence in the preparation leading up to important games. They understand that preparation matters, and that doing the hard work of "getting ready" is vitally important. Seldom do our business leaders commit to the same intensity of the preparation phase of work in the way they should.

To make matters worse, they don't always know how to manage the bench during the game. They are not attuned to the subtle signals which their players emit, and seldom do they trust their intuition on who to put into the game at just the right moment.

Business leaders should act more like hockey coaches than commanding officers.



Steps to Take :: Actions to Consider

Canadians all across the country once again felt the pride of Vancouver 2010 as they watched Sochi unfold on their TV screens and web browsers. They marvelled at the success of athletes from all of the various winter sports (captured in the Twitter hashtag #we are winter), whether they were Canadian or otherwise. But, as always, we reserve our biggest boasts for hockey.

We can honour all athletes by taking away lessons which can be applied in business just as well as they can on the snow or the ice. Lessons born not from academic textbooks, but rather lessons drawn from the well of common sense.

The following are just some of those lessons.

Build Teams of Leaders

We have become infatuated with the cult of the superstar leader, the hero, the mythical men and women of unbounded charisma. The best organizations, however, focus on building a pipeline of leaders who know how to play on teams and who respect the name on the front of the jersey, not the name on the back.

Get the Chemistry Right

Too little attention is paid to the importance of chemistry when building teams. The collective result is what matters, and a team of A players does not always win over a team of B players who play with heart, pride and passion.



Practice Hard – Practice Often

Greatness does not just happen, it is built and earned through hard work and the constant search for mastery, which come from deep within. The great players always take practice seriously and, yet, in business, it is always the solitary superstars who refuse to practice with the team and see it as a waste of their time.

Focus on Potential

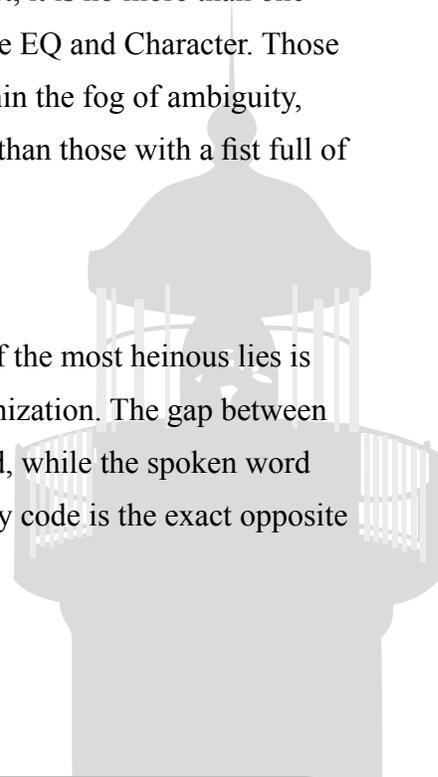
There are not very many superstars who are born – the majority are made! They evolve over time, based on a certain innate capability, but it has always been baked into them by parents, teachers, coaches and life experiences. Business leaders need to stop looking for the Sidney Crosby types and, instead, look for those who have the potential, but who need someone to help release it.

Hire for Heart, Grit and Determination

IQ is overrated as a determinant of success! At best, it is no more than one third of the total success equation, sitting alongside EQ and Character. Those leaders who perform best under pressure, and within the fog of ambiguity, tend to be those with more grit and determination than those with a fist full of degrees from Western, McGill or Harvard.

Commit to Learning from Setbacks

You can tell when a leader lies or misleads. One of the most heinous lies is about how mistakes are treated in the typical organization. The gap between rhetoric and reality in this domain can be huge and, while the spoken word says “stick your neck out and take a risk”, the daily code is the exact opposite and only the CEO is blind to the reality.





The Beacon Group is ...

The Beacon Group is a Canadian-based professional services firm supporting clients throughout North America and around the world. We work with organizations in all sectors and industries in the development of their business strategies and in leveraging their investment in human capital. Our full line of service offerings ensures we are not only able to help leaders understand the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of their organization, but also develop and deliver programs that address their key areas of concern.



Our Core Values

In all aspects of our client relationships we commit to being:

Progressive - Forward thinking | Pragmatically radical

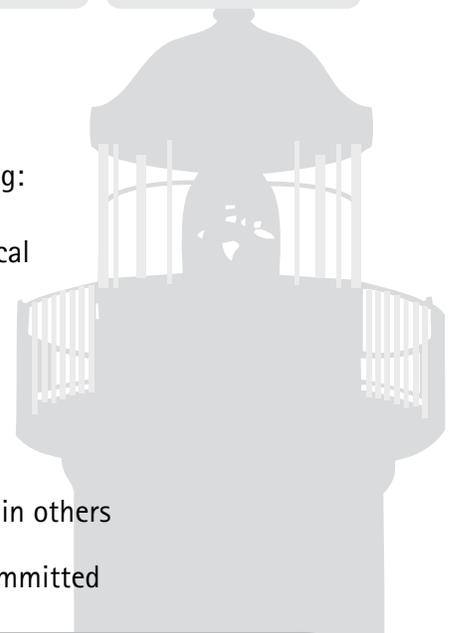
Thought Leaders - Innovative | Audacious

Responsive - Fast acting | In touch

Agile - Enthusiastic | Nimble

Passionate - Loving what we do | Creating passion in others

Customer Driven - Dedicated, involved | Totally committed



The Beacon Group is represented by a diverse group of talented individuals who come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds. This breadth of knowledge and experience is what we believe sets us apart.

Our essential goal is to assist senior leadership teams in their efforts to:

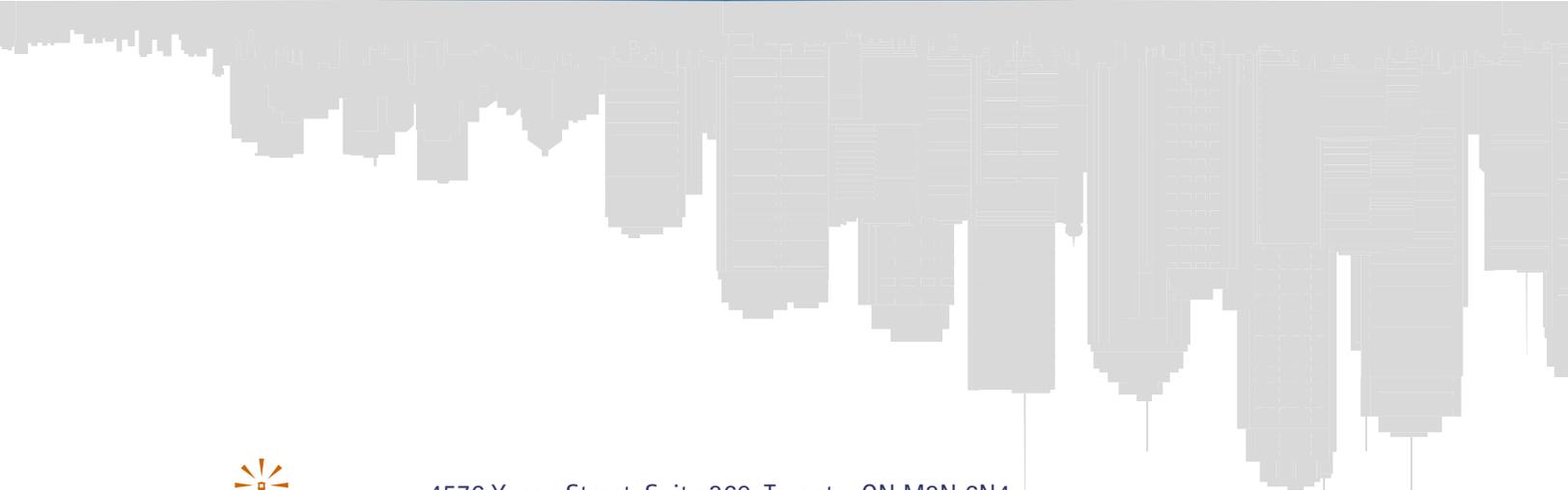
- **Optimize** – their strategic positioning and market opportunities.
- **Maximize** – long-term organizational health and effectiveness.
- **Develop** – overall leadership competency and fitness.
- **Create** – sustainable levels of superior performance.

We do this by partnering closely with our clients to ensure their strategic business objectives are fully and adequately aligned with the capacity and capability of their people.

Our ultimate aim is to ensure leaders, at all levels within an organization, are better able to understand the world in which they live, better able to make sense of the conditions they face and better equipped to deal with challenges as they arise. As a result, we ensure they are better able to influence their future and realize their potential.



Strategy | Culture | Talent | Leadership



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