

The Mansis Update

Requisite Responsibilities of All Organizational Leaders

Robert H. Kent, Ph.D.

Job Descriptions for an Organizational Leader (President, CEO, Executive Director, Owner/Operator, even a Prime Minister) are not all the same, but they do share some core activities that unfortunately are rarely addressed. This article is about a few of those fundamentals. In hindsight they all seem to be common sense, yet they are not commonly acknowledged in the management literature nor practiced by many Organizational Leaders. However, consciously including these in the Leader's activities will make the role of a Leader clearer, and make both the Leader and the organization much more effective, productive and less stressful.



Three Fundamental Responsibilities of an Organization Leader

[1] Organizational Change

Organizational Change and basic organization direction (i.e. whether the organization keeps on the same course or changes direction) is a critical responsibility of the Leader. Any change in an organization must ultimately be translated into the new behaviors required from the effected members of the organization. If no one is doing anything differently, then there has been no change. This is true whether the change initiative is a new product or service, or a new philosophy, strategic plan or organizational value. Consequently, to successfully implement any change, the CEO needs to be able to ensure that the organization can consistently achieve three goals or challenges: see Table 1.

Goal 1	Everyone continuously knows what to do and how to do it.
Goal 2	Everyone receives support to make them successful in their respective activities.
Goal 3	Everyone follows through and is accountable for meeting their performance expectations and obligations.

[2] Managing the Organization's Culture

Since the emergence of Organizational Psychology over 50 years ago, it has been known how significant the impact can be of an organization's culture on the activities and

lives of its members. Operationally, the culture can be defined simply as "the way things are done" in an organization; created in part by the history, traditions, and members, currently and in the past. And the culture can be quite a powerful influence over the organization. When there is a clash between what management wants to have happen and what the culture will accept, the culture frequently wins. That is, when the organization lets that happen!

But it has been shown for many years that the role of an effective Leader is to manage the culture. Leaders must be able to influence the culture so that members of the organization perform their jobs in the required way because that's what the culture expects them to do. Since the Leader cannot be with every member of the organization all the time to ensure that work is performed correctly, the Leader needs to be able to re-define and modify the "way things are done here" so that the culture complements both the Leader's and the organization's objectives.

To do this, the Leader needs to achieve three goals or challenges: see Table 1 (again).

[3] Making Sure the Organization Works

The experience, skills, personality and other competencies of a Leader are only part of the equation for the Leader's success. Too often forgotten is the structure of the organization itself; whether all the required systems are present and functioning; in other words, whether the organization works. Often, potentially successful Leaders have been recruited

into an organization that is structurally flawed and no amount of hard work by the Leader will make it successful. The operation fails and the unlucky Leader takes the blame. However, it is the Leader's responsibility to make sure the organization works.

But what is really meant by "organization"? If 50 random people meet in a room and someone suggests to the crowd, let's organize a Club, or let's organize a restaurant, what are they really asking for? Fundamentally, what the group is looking for is someone to develop ways and means to achieve the three goals in Table 1 (once again).

Discussion

All three core responsibilities of the role of an Organizational Leader (to manage organizational change, to manage the culture and to make sure that the organization structure works) are answered by achieving the same three organizational goals that are outlined in Table 1. However, the three goals in Table 1 are *exactly the same* as the objectives of an effective **Performance Management System**.

Consequently, and logically, a Performance Management System ought to be the operating tool for the organization Leader to fulfill these three fundamental responsibilities. As well, the control and responsibility for Performance Management is in the role of the President; it is not an HR Department function.

And so if you're a President or Organizational Leader, you need to ask yourself the following three questions:

What does my **organization** do (and where's the evidence) to ensure that:

- 1) Everyone (top to bottom) knows what to do and how to do it;
- 2) Everyone receives support to make them successful in their respective jobs; and
- 3) Everyone follows through and is accountable for meeting their performance expectations and obligations.

If you are new to a company or to the President's job, you could use these questions as part of your initial audit to help assess whether the organization works. Maybe that's why the last incumbent left – because the *organization* just didn't work. There was a significant piece of the structure missing (most commonly an effective Performance Management System) and that's what defeated the last person.

If you feel confident that your organization is effective in all three of these areas, you likely have a very successful organization. But if any of these three areas is weak, it's the President's job to see that they are strengthened as quickly as possible. If not, you'll never have enough time to manage as a President.

Without these three tasks built into the organization's operating structure by means of an effective **Performance Management System**, the Leader cannot successfully implement organizational change, cannot manage the organization's culture and will, as a consequence, be drawn into activities that should be handled by the President's direct reports or by others in the organization (because everyone knows *that's the way things are done*). The cause of this serious problem is an organizational design flaw, and not a deficiency in the President.

Like driving a racing car, no matter how skillful and experienced the driver is, if the car is broken, if it's missing a critical part of its engine, if it doesn't work, then the driver won't succeed either. Improving the driver's driving skills or replacing the driver gets you nowhere. What the driver needs to know is that the machine needs fixing, and then to get it fixed. Sometimes organizations need to be fixed. It may not be the President's fault, but fixing it is the President's responsibility.

The solution is not that complex. It takes work, no doubt, but asking and answering those three questions needs to be a key part of what an Organization's Leader should be doing.

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***The Mansis Centre for
Management Training and
Organizational Development***

Telephone: (204) 770-2184

e-mail: information@mansis.com

See our Web Site: <http://www.mansis.com>