

Thinking Dimensions Global

QUARTERLY

CEO P.O.V.

Everybody is the President of Something

Aligning your people for performance and accountability

EVERYBODY IS THE PRESIDENT OF SOMETHING

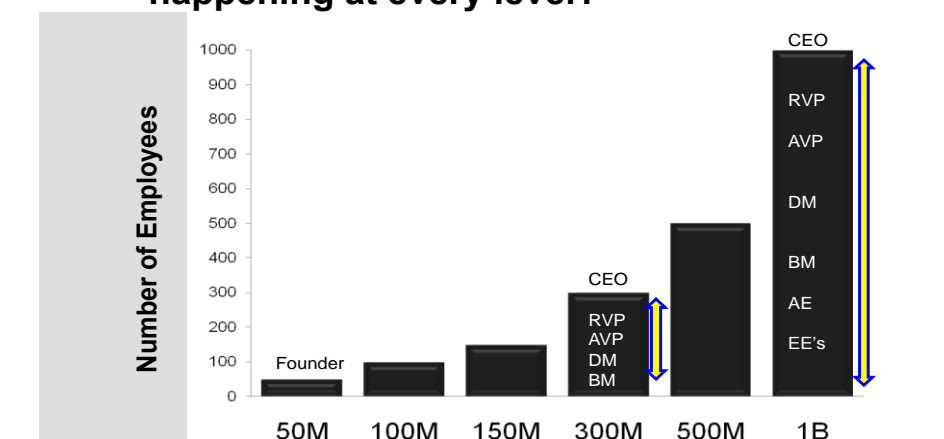
CREATING ALIGNMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

POV of article: CEO's and Senior Leadership must have a defined process in place that allows employees to take ownership for their area of responsibility, while guaranteeing alignment with key company goals.

Imagine you started a company several years ago with yourself and two other people. Now imagine that under your watch as CEO, the company has grown to a billion dollar enterprise with 1,000 employees and locations on 3 continents. Sounds good doesn't it?

But what keeps you up at night is wondering if the very real competitive advantages that helped grow the company can be sustained. After all, it used to be three people, now it's over 1,000...so you take out a pen and paper and ask yourself the following question outlined in the illustration below:

As the CEO of the company on the far right, what would you want to be sure was happening at every level?



When everyone in the company shares the same basic criteria for what is needed to manage a successful company, they can take ownership for their area and run it just like their own company...so identifying those few criteria and putting the processes in place to imbed them is critical.

While you may imagine the list of answers is endless, quite remarkably, TD's experience has shown that there is modicum of common sense that takes hold and CEOs and line workers alike tend to agree on a handful of items. Which also means that if you can identify those common elements for everyone and put the processes in place to make sure they are imbedded, then everyone at every level will be operating with exactly the same criteria for the company's success as yours. They are in fact mirroring your model for success.

I. Identifying the common criteria for success throughout the company

It's a question we ask clients continually and, while the range of answers is fairly consistent, it is vital that the senior team is in complete alignment with those answers. As a starting point, ask the question of your management team and check alignment at the top.

So, what are the most common answers given to the question?

1. *All our people know what our company goals are*
2. *Everyone knows what their role is in helping us achieve those goals and is held accountable for results*
3. *Everyone knows what we stand for as a company and acts accordingly*
4. *There is communication throughout the company*
5. *I'm getting the feedback I need so I know what's going on*

II. Creating the processes to make it happen

Once there is agreement on the answers to the question, it then is critical that processes are in place to make sure everyone throughout the company is in alignment with those answers. Allowing someone four levels down to determine their own answers and act accordingly is self-defeating.

The quickest way to identify shortcomings in processes is to ask the question "How is that happening?" after each of the points above.

1. All our people know what our company goals are
"How is that happening?"

*What CEOs
Want to Make
Sure is
Happening at
Every Level*

1. *Company goals are known by all*
2. *Everyone knows their role in achieving those goals and is held accountable*
3. *Company core values are known and followed by all*
4. *There is communication throughout the company*
5. *I'm getting feedback so I know what's going on*

2. Everyone knows what their role is and is held accountable for results
“How is that happening?”
3. Company core Values are known and followed by all
“How is that happening?”

You will probably find that it isn't happening...and there is reason to lose sleep.

III. Five steps to make sure processes are established

1. *All our people know what our company goals are*
 - The only way to make this happen is to establish the goals and **clearly communicate them to everyone**. It is one of CEOs primary jobs. Everything else flows from this.
2. *Everyone knows what their role is in helping us to achieve those goals and is held accountable for results*
 - This is where many companies fall short. **Start by asking your senior team what they see as their specific role in making the goals happen**...there needs to be agreement at the top before the individual pieces can cascade any further. And without clearly defined roles, there is no chance for accountability.
3. *Company Core Values are known and followed by all*
 - **Known is one thing...followed by all is quite another.** Core values guide behavior and are as vital to what makes a company unique as the products they offer. To move core values from the poster on the wall to actually guiding behavior, compare your list of core values to your employee *performance appraisal* form. **You should be able to find every core value represented in some manner on your appraisal form. If you don't, either add it to the form or get rid of it as a core value.**

4. *There is communication throughout the company*
 - Any employee survey ever conducted will identify *more communication* as a need and desire on everyone's part. Which simply means you can never communicate too much. **People want to know how their company is doing...whether you are winning or losing...and that someone is keeping score.** Start by making sure that at least quarterly you communicate the progress toward the company goals **to everyone** in the company.

5. *I'm getting feedback so I know what's going on*
 - One of the challenges a CEO faces is getting unfiltered feedback. **As information flows up, it is not uncommon for bad news to get filtered out.** For the good of the company, there has to be a process in place to feed you and your senior team information that your employees know, but you don't. **Without real feedback, you are operating in the dark, no matter what the numbers are saying.**

Whether there are 50 or 10,000 employees in your company, these five essential elements are needed to grow the company. When every manager knows what the company goals are, what their part is in meeting those goals and know they and everyone else will be held accountable for living the company's core values, you can get out of the way. They can operate as the president of their area and you can rest easy knowing that the same things you'd want to be happening throughout the company *are* happening.

This article was authored by John Case, Partner in the Global Strategy and Implementation Practice.

Thinking Dimensions is a global consultancy that assists clients in resolving strategic and operational issues.

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