



Achieving More With Less

By Mark D. Sauter, author, *Bringing Meaning into Monday™*

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”

– Albert Einstein

Consider for a minute a fully expanded balloon where adding more air would cause it to burst. New air, fresh air, cannot enter until some of the stale air is first removed. This analogy applies to many organizations. People for the most part are working hard, yet in many cases they may be working on activities that no longer deliver the same degree of value they once did. The stale work remains, yet the *value* the employee and recipients derive from the work is gone.

Many employees and organizations are dealing with stale air. Inconsistent agendas, different interpretations of customer or coworker needs, and lack of prioritization and focus insidiously erodes financial performance, creativity, relationship quality and energy levels, in and outside of work.

Suffice to say, most people have good intentions. They go to work with the desire to work hard and get along with others. They want to contribute and use their time constructively. Yet, with that said, many people are over-worked and/or possibly, under-utilized.

They are unable to keep up, not necessarily due to lack of commitment, but instead due to lack of focus and prioritization ... knowing what work to do. What activities are important, which aren't?

The inability to answer this question leads to poor performance, frustration, cynicism, apathy, stress, and in turn, a host of health related consequences. To address this, organizational leaders must be capable of establishing a sense of shared purpose (the path) and streamlining systems and services (determining what work is on the path) in order to eliminate stale air – misaligned or low-value activities – and add fresh, value-added air. Activities that lie on the path can be accelerated, activities that lie outside the path eliminated, and activities partially on the path can be optimized. Teamwork, trust and accountability – given this clear and shared direction – will improve, as will margins, creativity, productivity, responsiveness, client satisfaction

and employee health and morale. Leaders will be in a better position to tap the diverse talents of the workforce; given the fact that ideas and/or potential solutions can now be offered in the context of how they help achieve the goals of the organization.

Historically, establishing a vision, mission, core values and strategic objectives have provided a sense of shared purpose and been used to streamline decisions and resources. Although somewhat static, this is an excellent place to start. However, in order to achieve workforce alignment with the ever-changing needs and pace of today's marketplace, leaders must also align their workforce with the needs and priorities of those they serve, how they deliver value to internal or external clients or customers.

Creating Value

Many organizations or work units are attempting to be everything to everybody. They are unable to assess importance and differentiate between high- or low-value requests. Not all requests or demands are of equal value, nor are all requestors of equal importance. Similarly, not all customers or coworkers want the same thing or to be treated the same way. Creating value does not imply doing everything for everybody. Instead, it's a proactive way to plan ahead, aligning strategies, resources and people in the most effective and efficient fashion. People require the ability to make consistent and timely trade-off decisions. Leaders' have to enable this to occur.

In today's turbulent world, people cannot do everything, nor in fact, should they. Having good people does not guarantee a strong organization; ensuring good people are focused on the right things does. *Bringing Meaning into Monday™* offers a process that can help organizations achieve it.

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