
Success-ions (Liberation)

Liberation is the fourth critical element in our Success-ion series. The dictionary provides the following definition, for 'liberation':

- the act of setting someone free from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression; to release.

In terms of success, liberation means freeing people to use their skills, talents, creativity, and existing resources to their full potential. What it doesn't mean is that everyone in your organization gets to go off willy

nilly on their own agenda. To the contrary, as Martha Graham, president of the American Ballet, puts it, "With discipline comes freedom."

So how does this relate to success? Think about the foundation we laid with the first four Success-ions:

1. **Vision:** A crystalized picture of the future that inspires, the direction, along with the boundaries (values) that will guide decision making.
2. **Mission:** The tactical objectives to be achieved in the next 12-18 months that will move the organization forward towards the vision.
3. **Communication:** Clear and consistent articulation at all levels through a broad spectrum of mediums.
4. **Education:** Creating opportunity the mechanisms to help people develop the understanding, knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to achieve the mission and, subsequently, the vision.



If you have done the previous four steps well; you have created the direction, identified your guiding principles (values), established the necessary action steps, informed everyone of where the organization is going, how you are going to get there, and why, and you've prepared everyone for success, it is time to set your people free.

Liberation is perhaps the most difficult step for management to take. Most of the time, this is due to the lack of discipline by leadership in completing the steps necessary to be able to turn loose of the reins. By investing time and effort to set the direction and boundaries for the organization, and consistently living within those themselves, leaders provide the framework in which their people can excel. Without that framework, management must spend their time, energy, and effort controlling and directing the minutia of day to day operations, and fill volumes with policies and procedures that few read and nobody follows.

I am reminded of one of my first executive level assignments years ago. It was a relatively large operation (800 people) that had been very successful for decades, until the market and the competition changed... and they didn't. So how do you take an entrenched organization with a culture of command and control and make it a market leader in less than a year? How do you go from \$4M net profit to \$23M in 18 months with the same products, customers, contracts, pricing, people, vendors, and facility? One of the key actions we took was reducing six volumes of policies and procedure manuals, each five inches thick, to a single two-inch binder.

Just like like government regulations, however well intended, will stifle business creativity and success, so too do most P&P's that have been generated by countless organizations. Let's face it, few people actually read them, and by the time they are published they are already obsolete, so any reasonable person won't follow them. To be sure, they are a necessary part of business, but when they cross the line from being guiding principles to centralized control, your'e in trouble.

Your challenge is focusing helping people discover for themselves the answer to the most powerful organizational question of all time; "What's In It For Me". Once they have come to that conclusion on their own terms, your next greatest challenge will be getting out of their way.

Go ahead, do what is necessary to set the stage to liberate your people and let them show you just how much they can accomplish!

