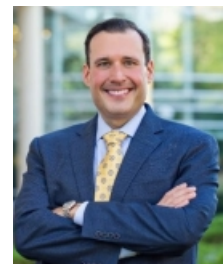




Guiding Principles for a People Strategy

Posted by Joe Fournier

This week marks 17 years from the tragic events of September 11, 2001. That day and the weeks and years to follow changed the lives of all Americans forever. Just a few months later, I entered active duty as a U.S. Air Force officer in January 2002. I realized quickly that I had entered a world filled with some of the bravest, most compassionate, and dedicated people that I could ever imagine. With sincere gratitude, I acknowledge the thousands of courageous men and women in uniform who served and continue to serve our country courageously to protect the truly amazing ideals of freedom, justice and equality.



Now, years later as a civilian, I think often about the unwavering courage, discipline, patience and commitment that many of our leaders displayed during my time in the military. I see many of those traits in the leaders I have met and worked with in health care industry over the past several years. Robert Greenleaf wrote "The servant-leader is a servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first." When I think about how leaders of highly effective organizations serve, I believe we are here to serve our mission and our people, so that they can lead fulfilling personal and professional lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

In my last blog, I discussed the significance of architecting a talent blueprint. As a key component of a people strategy, the talent blueprint should be tied to a well-defined and articulated business strategy. It starts with enacting the leadership characteristics described above and then quickly gaining consensus on the guiding principles.

Based on my experience working with successful health care enterprises, I've outlined a few key principles below:

- 1. We are all one.** Every executive comes to the table as a leader of the organization--not of an independent function. First and foremost, our loyalty is to our organization, its mission and our people. This implies that we leaders must consider what is best for the entire organization and its people. It is essential to put personal opinions and interests aside when developing a talent blueprint.
- 2. People strategy = Business strategy.** Strategy is a deliberate decision to orient your organization and its people toward the future. People are the engine of your organization; every decision made about people will impact your operations as it propels you forward.
- 3. Talent is flexible and fluid.** Over the years, I've learned that talent is dynamic, not static. Have you heard leaders say that another department or part of the organization is stealing "their people?" Everyone has the freedom to decide how they want to live their lives and develop their careers. Plain and simple, people want to feel good about their work—and if they don't, they will make a change.
- 4. Form follows function.** Building a people strategy is not about just re-drawing an organizational chart. I can't tell you how many times I've been asked to refresh an organizational chart over the years as a Chief Human Resources Officer. The work you pursue as an institution – patient care, research, education and population and community health – will govern your organizational structure. The supply and demand of people to serve in different parts of your organization changes as do the capabilities (talent) your people need for the future. Organizational charts are important—and they are governed first by the work.
- 5. If the work doesn't change, the results won't change.** Past success can be an obstacle or a springboard for your organization. In other words, just because people have led successfully or used processes that were effective in the past,

does not guarantee they will succeed or work well in the future. My colleagues in the finance industry often say, "past performance is no guarantee of future results." Innovation at the leadership level and on the front line every day is the key to preparing for the future, especially in health care.

6. If behavior doesn't change, the results won't change. So, you've defined the work and you've re-drawn the organization chart. Now what? Despite being in a new structure, the same people doing the same or slightly different work are likely to fall back instead of spring forward. Unfortunately, old habits die hard. Beliefs drive behaviors, and behaviors drive actions that define your culture. Consider the core values that your organization, its leaders and people need to exhibit to achieve real success in the future.

These are just a few of the key principles to consider as you start your journey to build a transformational people strategy and craft a talent blueprint. To learn more about additional principles, or if you would like more information on developing a talent blueprint, please drop me an email at fournierj@inveniaspartners.com and we can exchange notes.

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