



TrainUtopia

31012 La Quinta Drive
Georgetown, TX 78628
Office: 512-423-5416, Fax: 253-369-6205
Website: www.trainutopia.com

ARTICLE OF INTEREST

BUILDING LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR 2005

Each new year brings with it the inevitable resolution-making—but not just by individuals. Organizations are busy creating goals and highlighting areas for development, as well as planning budgets and strategies to guide enterprise activities in the coming months. According to a poll conducted by Ninth House Inc., there are five executive skill areas that will be hot in 2005. Senior-level executives will be required to master these five areas that will be considered “make it or break it” management skills, and learning executives should prepare organizations to address them expeditiously.

Create a Compelling Organizational Vision

Organizations need to analyze their current state of involvement versus that from the past three or four years. “Since the dot-com bust in March of 2000, most organizations have been very introspective,” said, Jeff Snipes, CEO and co-founder, Ninth House Inc. “They’ve been focused internally on cutting costs, and they’ve been looking for ways to maintain. A lot have gone through re-orgs and downsizing so there’s been a lot of navel-gazing. Now the sun’s coming out a little bit, and it’s time to have a vision for where you want to go next. It’s not enough anymore to just maintain the status quo. It’s time for organizations to paint a broad new vision of where they want to go.”

Understand and Cope With a Constantly Changing Economic Environment

Economics and other factors led organizations to believe they could do anything four or five years ago, said Snipes, including make acquisitions and grow at a ridiculous pace. Now, however, organizations and the senior executives who lead them have realized they must survive in a constantly changing economic environment, accept change, exercise discipline and take the time to assimilate transitions. Slowing down, said Snipes, means uncovering the needs masked by periods of fast growth. “(Ninth House faculty member) Bill Bridges is really an expert at talking about how to help people through the transitions up or down and the natural change processes that have to happen inside of an organization,” Snipes said. “How do you basically internalize and integrate if you decide to make a massive one-time change like an acquisition? You have years afterward of integrating cultures and processes and systems and tools, and I think this is really expressed today. We have a much more sensitive environment than we did four or five years ago.”

Develop and Mentor Employees

Taking a closer and more careful look at an organization’s underbelly brings with it an increased awareness of the need to nurture employees. Economic recovery means that employees have more choices today than they had in the past few years. Job banks are hot again, recruiters are buzzing with business and people are leaving for new opportunities. “People are starting to pick up their heads and look around,” Snipes said. “They’ve had three or four years of pent-up frustration about working in a situation where they didn’t feel like they had any options to get out, and in 2005, you’re going to hear a lot of people say, ‘This is my chance to break clean and try something else and make a fresh start because the market’s back.’ In a market like that, if you’re the employing organization, it’s more critical than ever to really focus on developing and mentoring your employees. The only way you’re going to

keep those top performers after really beating the heck out of them the last four years is if you invest heavily this year in developing them.”

Build a Workplace Community

Part of that employee development means building a place where employees really care about where they work and who they work with. “At its heart, it’s about creating a place where you feel a sense of belonging,” Snipes said. “This has become more and more difficult over the last 10 years as corporations have moved to an outsourcing model and they’ve moved to using a lot of remote employees. A lot of organizations cite increases in absenteeism, increases in sick days and significant drops in productivity with people working at home, and a lot of that they trace back to not feeling a part of anything. The people feel isolated and disconnected from their organization.”

Negotiate and Manage Critical Relationships

This skill is vital for senior leaders who want to avoid feeling isolated and having to mend disconnected fences. “Internal partnerships are usually leveraged best when you’re trying to get different departments or divisions to work together,” Snipes said. “If you’re trying to structure cross-functional teams or get departments to leverage each other’s customer base, for example, it’s all about aligning and partnering inside an organization. Externally it’s about how do you partner with your alliances. The critical thing here in ’05 is to acknowledge that as organizations have outsourced, as they’ve streamlined and focused on their core competencies, their ability to partner with people that provide the services they no longer do themselves is absolutely critical.”

Take A Holistic Approach

To maximize assets and resources in 2005, senior-level learning leaders must focus on a holistic treatment of their organizations and the workforce as a whole. “I think that the good senior learning people know that they need to pick a theme,” Snipes said. “You can’t have five or six or 10 major initiatives going on with any success. There needs to be a common theme that ties everything together in order to get people to rally behind it. That theme must be aligned with a business objective. It must support the CEO’s agenda. Once you’ve picked a theme and aligned it with a business driver, there needs to be a holistic objective. It needs to touch all parts of the organization and acknowledge that there are different global subcomponents of that organization. It needs to be realistic about the fact that people have gone through a lot of change and that’s painful.”

Today’s forward-thinking organization will acknowledge that people have the choice to walk out the door, said Snipes, and will focus on the human side a little bit more. “I think if you want to improve productivity and keep the best people that you have, you really need to have a chance for people to heal.”

