

Episode #36: How to Turn Your Organization Into a Competitive Advantage In 2021

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. Today I will share a model that will help you turn your organization into a competitive advantage in 2021.

I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I invited you to make 2021 your best year yet, despite the pandemic challenges still present around us. I shared five suggestions to accomplish this:

1. Choose between being a victim or assuming 100 percent accountability for your life, for the rest of your life.
2. If you haven't done so, develop or update your personal mission statement.
3. Know what you want to prioritize for 2021.
4. Start a habit of scheduling 15 minutes for a weekly planning and review session.
5. Make a habit of scheduling five minutes at the beginning of each day for your daily planning and review session.

These five suggestions not only should get you started on the right foot in 2021, but they should allow you to focus on what you have defined as important in your life throughout the entire year.

If one of your 2021 goals is to make a positive impact in your workplace, this and the next two podcasts will help you accomplish your goal.

Whether you lead a company, a division, an operation, or a small team of individual contributors, you likely work through some type of business planning process at the beginning of the year. Depending on your industry and type of work, you may have one or more strategic elements that form part of your yearly plan. I'm referring to products, services, pricing, marketing budgets, cost structure and the like. They may or may not represent competitive advantages for your team or be within your reach to turn them into competitive advantages during the year.

There is however one variable within your circle of influence: your team. Would you like to turn your team into a competitive advantage? I'm not suggesting you fire everybody and hire only superstars. I'm recommending you leverage the talent you have today in your organization, regardless of its size, and elevate it to high performance levels.

To help you achieve this, I'm going to once again leverage one of Patrick Lencioni's programs, which he calls "Organizational Health", outlined in his book *The Advantage*.

A healthy organization is one that has minimized politics and confusion. This translates into higher productivity and employee morale, and lower attrition of good people. Beware that even the smartest organizations can eventually fail if they are unhealthy. Conversely, a healthy

organization will always find a way to succeed, because without politics and confusion, it will inevitably become smarter and tap into every bit of intelligence and talent it has.

Probably the biggest reason that organizational health remains unexploited is it requires hard work and courage. You, as a leader, must be willing to confront yourself, your peers and the dysfunctions within your organization with an uncommon level of honesty and persistence. You must be prepared to walk straight into uncomfortable situations and address issues that prevent you from realizing the potential that eludes you and your team.

What does an organization have to do to get healthy? There are four steps:

1. **The first one is to achieve behavioral alignment within the Leadership Team to operate in a functional and cohesive way.** If the people responsible for running an organization, whether it's a corporation, a department within that corporation or a start-up company, are behaving in dysfunctional ways, then that dysfunction will cascade into the rest of the organization and prevent organizational health.

There are five concrete dysfunctional behaviors that a leadership team can avoid, which I have outlined in previous podcasts. Here's a quick summary:

The first one is to achieve vulnerability-based trust, where every team member has to be comfortable asking for help, such as saying I don't know the answer, I'm not very good at doing this...

Trust enables us to overcome the second dysfunction, which is the absence of conflict. If there's trust, each team member can engage in productive and unfiltered debate around the different alternatives being evaluated. In the absence of trust and conflict, your team will not reach the best possible decision.

Conflict is important because it enables us to overcome the third dysfunction: the lack of commitment. We shouldn't passively commit to a decision through a timid okay. Instead, every person should feel they have been listened to. They should know that they have given their point of view, it has been debated, and they can confidently walk out of the meeting, physical or virtual, 100% committed and aligned to the decision that was made by the team.

Commitment is critical because without it, members of the team will hesitate to hold each other accountable. This unwillingness to hold team members accountable is the fourth dysfunction, and it's typically the most difficult to address. Simply put, if team members are NOT truly and fully committed, they're not going to hold their team peers accountable.

The final dysfunction is the inattention to the collective results of the team, as opposed to the results of your department or your own career or personal interests.

2. **The second step for building a healthy organization is ensuring that members of the leadership team are crystal clear and 100% intellectually aligned around six simple but critical questions.** Healthy organizations minimize the potential for confusion by clarifying the following topics:

- a. Why do we exist?
 - b. How do we behave? What are the core values displayed by our behaviors?
 - c. What do we do?
 - d. How will we succeed? This is about defining our key strategic choices.
 - e. What is most important right now, for the whole team?
 - f. Who must do what?
3. **The third step is over-communicating the answers to the six questions.** This can only happen after the first two steps in this process, behavioral and intellectual alignment, have been achieved. Leaders of a healthy organization constantly repeat themselves and reinforce what is true and important. They always err on the side of reiteration, rather than sharing their message once or twice. This quality alone sets leaders of healthy organizations apart from others.
 4. **Finally, in addition to over-communicating, leaders must ensure that the answers to the six critical questions are reinforced repeatedly using simple human and business systems.** All those processes which involve people, such as hiring, firing, performance management and decision-making, should support and emphasize the uniqueness of the organization. Additionally, and as covered in recent podcasts, the business tracking process and related meetings should also be aligned with the six questions in step 2.

Summarizing, there are four steps any organization, large or small, can undertake to become a competitive advantage. They are:

1. Achieving behavioral alignment within the Leadership Team in order to operate in a functional and cohesive way.
2. Ensuring that leadership team members are crystal clear and 100% intellectually aligned around six simple but critical questions.
3. Over-communicating the answers to the six questions.
4. Ensuring that the answers to the six critical questions are reinforced repeatedly using simple human and business tracking systems.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will provide more detail on step number two of this model: achieving full clarity and 100% intellectual alignment by all leadership team members on the six critical questions.

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This is coach Percy Cannon, working to help you *make the rest of your life...the best of your life*®.

Percy's BIO

Percy has been helping hundreds of corporate executives and their teams boost their leadership and teamwork capabilities over the past ten years.

Before this, Percy spent close to three decades working for three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, in the United States and across several countries in Latin America.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC", a Certified Go-Giver Speaker & Coach, and a practitioner of several methodologies from best-seller author Patrick Lencioni (e.g., "The Ideal Team Player", "The 6 Types of Working Genius", "Organizational Health" and others).

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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