

## Episode #45: Is Your Team Aligned Behind a Common Strategic Choice?

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

In today's podcast I invite you to choose from three different strategic options to steer your business toward market leadership.

I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I shared three tips that can help you identify *the elephant in the room*:

1. **Be proactive.** Always be on the look-out for *the elephant in the room*. Be humble enough to let your team members feel comfortable in bringing any *elephant in the room* to your attention.
2. If your team members have two bosses, one "solid line" and another a "dotted line," **probe into potential silo situations.** Ensure your team is clear and aligned on their number-one priority: a collective goal shared by all of them.
3. Even when you have a stated collective priority, **double-check on how accountable every team member feels about the overall goal.** There may be a silo situation that needs to be addressed.

I also mentioned that once you have identified *the elephant in the room*, you should bring it out in the open. Practice moving those "hidden" issues from the background to the foreground. Beware that ignoring *the elephant in the room* can seriously damage the trust level and overall performance of employees. They can become cynical about your leadership and fail to perform at their best.

Moving to today's content, I want to pose a question to you first. Are your team members aligned behind a common strategic choice, or is each one of them prioritizing their own personal goals? If it's the former, then please continue listening. If it's the latter, you are not alone.... Still, I hope you also continue listening and consider choosing one of the three disciplines that I will share today as the most important priority for each member of your team.

These three strategic choices come from the book *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, by Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema.

The basic premise from the authors is that you cannot be everything to every potential customer. You need to choose a winning business model that will unify the disciplines represented in your team. It doesn't mean that you will be good in one discipline and mediocre in the other two. It does mean that you will choose one discipline where you will aim to be great, better than your competitors, and that you'll continue to get better and better in it as time goes by.

1. **The first discipline is Operational Excellence.** The key characteristic of this discipline is to have efficient internal and external operating procedures. How can you make your operating model more efficient? One way is to have standardized products and services. For example,

unlike most other airlines, Southwest's airplane fleet is composed only of Boeing 737s. This helps them optimize, among others, parts inventories and crew training.

Organizations following this discipline usually display a culture that focuses on team goals versus individual ones: Teamwork is recognized more than individual contributions.

Another characteristic of these companies is the use of information technology to optimize internal and external transactions, which helps them offer, among other things, superior customer service.

Two decades ago, I was fortunate to have a first-hand experience with a company that successfully implements this strategy: WalMart. Its business model is all about efficiency and optimizing its cost structure. Back then, WalMart and Procter & Gamble, one of its large clients, had set up a group of employees from both companies to work co-located in WalMart's headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas. Using information technology, they established a seamless process to leverage their respective supply chains. As a result of this coordinated effort, over the years both companies optimized their inventory levels and their sales ordering and delivery processes.

Would this discipline fit your company?

2. **The second discipline is Product Leaders.** Companies following this discipline show the ability and determination to make products and services that customers clearly perceive as delivering superior benefits. Unlike companies that may offer "one-hit wonders," Product Leaders create a steady stream of stand-out products and services that keep their customers buzzing with anticipation. Some of them, like Nike and Harley Davidson, have also successfully leveraged experiential and emotional impact as a way to increase the perceived value of their products and services.

One key characteristic of the operational model of Product Leaders is that they manage a portfolio of development activities, allocating talent and investments to a small number of big and small bets.

In one of my international jobs working for a company following this discipline, I remember developing a "three-year product plan." As its name indicates, I would map out by quarter the different product initiatives we planned to launch into our local market. It helped us maintain a continuous dialogue with senior leadership on where we planned to place our resources. It also helped us reach alignment on where to allocate the talent and funds within the different disciplines, such as sales, marketing, product supply, and finance.

Could this be the model to follow for your organization?

3. **The third discipline is Customer Intimacy.** Companies choosing to follow this discipline offer a unique range of superior services, such as the one that would represent the best total solution for their respective customers.

These companies offer expertise that drives concrete business results for their clients. They are not shy in sharing their clients' risks, and they usually personalize and customize their products and services to meet the unique needs of their customers. They are constantly looking for new clients with whom they can develop deep relationships and to whom they can offer their expertise.

As is the case with the other two disciplines, Customer Intimacy companies rely heavily on the right type of talent, especially those who can effect change within their clients' organizations.

Could this be the right model for your business?

So, how will you compete to win in your respective market? The authors of the book recommend focusing on one of these three disciplines, and to do so by answering questions such as:

1. What drives value to your customers, and how do you stack up versus your competition?
2. Can you come up with a short list of potential value propositions for your customers and a draft of the business model to drive them?
3. How will the operating model behind the discipline you choose produce superior value for your customer?

In closing, whatever discipline you choose, I want to emphasize and reemphasize the importance of having true customer centricity as one of the core values in your organization. Use it as a cultural checkpoint for the type of employees you want to have in your team.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will share insights on how to apply the concept of "deliberate practice" to your work.

Like what you heard today? Please rate, subscribe or follow this podcast and share it with your coworkers and friends. Open to a free coaching call with me? Visit my website at [www.cannon.consulting](http://www.cannon.consulting), or use the links provided in the notes section.

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

## Percy's BIO

Are you an executive or manager in a large corporation who wants to accelerate your career growth and promotability? Percy provides corporate executives, managers and leadership teams with customized coaching programs that help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to significantly increase their business results through others and accelerate their career growth.

Percy is an “alumnus” from three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, with whom he spent close to three decades. Since 2011 he has been helping corporate executives, managers and employees *make the rest of their life...the best of their life*®.

Percy has worked in the United States and across several countries in Latin America as an Executive Coach, Leadership Team Consultant and Keynote Speaker, serving companies such as Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Tiffany, DSM, Farmatodo & Avianca.

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 CAPA PRO member, the official consultant and practitioner alliance for several methodologies from best-seller author Patrick Lencioni (e.g., “Organizational Health”, “The Ideal Team Player”, “The 6 Types of Working Genius”, “The Truth About Employee Engagement” and others).

Percy 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*). He launched his first iPhone & iPad application, *LifePlan*, in English & Spanish, in 2016, and his podcast, [\*The Career Accelerator\*](#), in May 2020.

He is a consulting partner at 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.

**He can be reached at [percy@cannon.consulting](mailto:percy@cannon.consulting).**