

## Goal/Skill #1: The “Adaptive” Organization

There is a lot of talk about “adaptive organizations,” as there should be. In these perilous and fast-changing times, adaptivity is arguably Skill/Goal #1—and the bones of those, old and young, who failed to adapt litter the landscape.

Books can be and have been and will be written about the topic. Dozens of ’em. But I want to pound a stake into the ground. I doubtless wildly over-simplify, but I insist that there is a *one*-variable answer to the adaptivity issue—moreover, treatment of that variable is “the” answer to this conundrum and it has been with us, unchanged, for eons. It has been the determining success-fail, life-death factor for companies and armies alike.

*In short: Adaptivity is more or less a 100% function of the workforce and how it is recruited and developed and encouraged and appreciated—or not.*

Adaptive organizations will have workforces which ...

- \*Are hired for *attitude* and *character* and proven *teamwork* as much or more than for skill
- \*Are *respected* and *trusted* and visibly *appreciated* and *celebrated*
- \*Are in on pretty much everything in an environment of information sharing and transparency
- \*Are trained and re-trained *ad infinitum*—*you can, in effect, never spend too much time or money on training and re-training*
- \*Treat “learning new stuff”—each and every day—as a near holy responsibility

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- \*Believe that every one of us and every outsider has something worthy to teach us
- \*Are routinely exposed to an “insane” variety of outsiders who offer constant stimulation and direct challenges to conventional organizational/marketplace wisdom
- \*Are given the autonomy (with concomitant accountability) to and encouragement to “try it,” almost any “it,” at the drop of a hat—and then try it and try it again and again

- \*Are guaranteed that “useful failures” are cheered rather than jeered
- \*Are bound by a coda that shouts “good enough is never good enough”
- \*Are all “*dreamers with deadlines*,” committed to pursuit of the novel and disruptive—and equally committed to flawless and timely execution
- \*Laugh a lot at themselves and their foibles and pratfalls
- \*Are, while civil to a fault, *irreverent* about damn near anything other than integrity and decency
- \*Are responsible for each other’s mentoring and growth
- \*Believe that their role—each and everyone—is to *serve*, to serve each other and to serve each member of our family of organizations (vendors, customers, communities, etc.)

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- \*Are *diverse* to a fault—not legalistically diverse, but from every background imaginable
- \*Are insistent that each and every one is treated as an utterly indispensable member of the team—there are *no* bit players
- \*Relentlessly pursue no less than *EXCELLENCE* in all we do, in tough times even more than in times of economic good health

And that’s it!  
(Or some list more or less like this.)

Of course the above requires inspired leadership which truly puts people first.  
Blah.  
Blah.  
Blah.

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Bottom line: If the workforce encapsulates the above ideas—adaptivity will be virtually automatic and a walk in the park.\* (\*Of course it won't be any such thing—but presumably you get the drift.)

FYI/I repeat: *This is an incredibly un-new idea.* (It's achievement is, alas, exceedingly unusual—but it has unmistakably been “the secret” for ages.)

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Translation (if I was unclear):

A soaring vision is desirable.  
An effective strategy is important.  
Super-processes are a necessity.

**But in the end, it's all about  
... **THE PEOPLE!**\***

**\*It's *ALWAYS* all about  
... **THE PEOPLE!****

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