

CUTTINGS...

Number 155 July 2021

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Welcome to summer vacation time - though for many of us, that does not yet mean freedom to travel to where we would like to go. But there are signs of some return to a sense of normality, though the 'new normal' will not be anything like the 'old normal'. So, in this edition, there is a short reminder of how to use the Circle of Influence to focus on what is productive and lessens anxiety and energy wasting as we emerge from lockdowns and cope with the changing world around us.

Other articles that I noticed recently were from the excellent *strategy+business* and the ever useful *Harvard Business Review*. As we move to a 'new normal', it is worth revisiting the purpose statements that - if well constructed and authentic - do so much to foster employee engagement. Research suggests that the vast majority of corporate statements fail to deliver the sense of purpose which was their intention, so are in desperate need of revision. And, supporting this, analysis quoted in HBR supports the projection of warmth as a leadership trait that is more effective than projecting strength. So more focus is needed on the why we do things and the relationships needed to do them than platitudes or generalities.

If you would like a downloadable pdf of this edition. it is published on my website, along with copies of all past editions, [click here](#).

Enjoy, and stay healthy and safe...

Geof Cox

Corporate purpose statements often miss their mark

A lot has been written about the importance of purpose in past years, and it is the subject of a recent article in *strategy+business*. Research on motivation suggests that communicating why companies do things ("respecting the environment and protecting natural resources") is more effective than merely emphasising what they do ("produce high-quality and low-cost motor parts") or how they do them ("through innovation"). And as attitudes to business broaden from a focus on shareholder value to the need to also contribute to society, and employees often prioritise meaning over money, a purpose statement becomes essential for success. Unfortunately, the reality is that most purpose statements fall short: They rely on platitudes, fail to connect with an audience or beneficiary, or lack balance between being abstract or specific.

In this edition

Corporate purpose statements often miss their mark: research of 2000 corporate purpose statements from around the world finds that the majority fall short.

Connect, then lead projecting warmth first is a more effective leadership trait than projecting strength

Using the Circle of Influence to build resilience A reminder of Stephen Covey's model and its use in the current crisis.

Plus, a collection of **Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection and details of **Book Sales** from our online shop

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"Nothing is impossible; the word itself says 'I'm possible.'"

Audrey Hepburn

"Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it."

Charles Swindoll

"If you collect 100 black ants and 100 red ants and put them in a glass jar, nothing will happen. But if you take the jar and shake it violently, the ants

An analysis of 2,000 purpose statements from companies of diverse size and industry representation, and from different regions around the world found that 93 percent failed to state why their company is in business. In other words: Most purpose statements lack any meaningful sense of purpose.

The authors compare the potential impact of two of the purpose statements from the research: an inspiring statement from an environmental service company “to create daylight, fresh air, and a better environment for people’s everyday lives” and a practical but uninspiring “to produce goods of as a high a quality as possible, with as low as possible production costs.”

As well as a failure to answer ‘why’ the authors found that 77% of purpose statements alluded at least generally to some information about their products and services. But 95% neglected to mention the purpose for which their organisation exists or why it was founded. 51% failed to mention any beneficiaries (the who). Other purpose statements focused entirely on one beneficiary, the shareholder, by only looking at financial value creation. Only 23% explained the ‘how’, so most fail to describe the way they do business or reference values they prioritise, such as integrity and trust, or valuable assets they seek to protect, such as the environment.

So, how do you infuse purpose statements with strength and meaning?

1. Clearly state the company’s reason for being. Purpose is ultimately about why — and its connection to what, how, and who. Why should also go beyond financial performance, which is increasingly understood to be a means to business success but not an end in and of itself.

2. Identify the primary beneficiaries of the organisation’s work. Stakeholders not just shareholders should be at the forefront, showing how the organisation’s work benefits those beneficiaries.

3. Ensure the purpose statement is balanced. Statements of purpose typically range from overly abstract (“creating a world-class organisation”) to overly specific (“to deliver steel structures for the [regional] market”). Those that find the golden mean (“designing buildings and cities to allow society to develop responsibly and economically” or “to provide choice and affordability to meet our customers’ evolving energy needs”) between these extremes are likely to be more successful.

But, always remember that even the strongest purpose statements must be authentic - reflecting organisational actions that walk the talk.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete article in **strategy+business**

New Directions offer consultancy and training on strategy and leadership. For more information [Click here](#)

will start killing themselves. Red believes that black is the enemy, while black believes that red is the enemy, when the real enemy is the person who shook the jar.

The same is true of society.

Men vs Women

Black vs White

Faith vs Science

Young vs Old

Etc ...

Before we fight each other, we just ask ourselves: Who shook the jar? “

Sir David Attenborough

“If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”

Booker T. Washington

“Any sufficiently advanced political correctness is indistinguishable from irony.”

Jane Hawkins

“You may think I am a dreamer. But without the dream you do not get anything done.”

Kofi Annan

“The only happy people I know are the ones who are working well at something they consider important.”

Abraham Maslow

“To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk.”

Thomas Edison

“Where we all think alike, no one thinks very much.”

Walter Lippmann

“When it sounds good, it is good.”

Duke Ellington

“Think strategically, act primitively.”

René Clair

Connect, then Lead

Using the Circle of Influence to Build Resilience

<p>Niccolò Machiavelli 500 years ago decided that "...because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved." Now behavioural science is suggesting the opposite balance.</p>	<p>Cranfield Trust volunteer Dr Elouise Leonard-Cross reminds us of the usefulness of the Circle of Influence model in the current crisis.</p>
<p>When we judge others—especially our leaders—we look first at two characteristics: how lovable they are (their warmth, communion, or trustworthiness) and how fearsome they are (their strength, agency, or competence). These traits answer two critical questions: "What are this person's intentions toward me?" and "Is he or she capable of acting on those intentions?" These two dimensions alone account for more than 90% of the variance in our positive or negative impressions of people.</p>	<p>Developed by Stephen Covey in the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, it is a simple tool that categorises concerns and helps us to focus on the right things. It uses three concentric circles to represent the zones we can put our focus and attention:</p>
<p>Most leaders today tend to emphasise their strength, competence, and credentials in the workplace, but that is exactly the wrong approach. Leaders who project strength before establishing trust run the risk of eliciting fear, which can undermine cognitive potential, creativity, and problem solving, and cause employees to get stuck and even disengage. According to research, the chances that a manager who is strongly disliked will be considered a good leader are only about one in 2,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The circle of concern is the large outside circle and represents all the things you care about • Within the circle of concern sits the circle of influence, this contains the things you have direct influence over • Within the circle of influence sits the circle of control, this contains all the things you have direct and full control over, things like your actions and your responses to adversity and opportunities.
<p>A growing body of research suggests that the way to influence—and to lead—is to begin with warmth. It facilitates trust and the communication and absorption of ideas. Even a few small nonverbal signals—a nod, a smile, an open gesture—can show people that you're pleased to be in their company and attentive to their concerns. Prioritising warmth helps you connect immediately with those around you, demonstrating that you hear them, understand them, and can be trusted by them.</p>	<p>Too often, particularly at times like this, we focus on the circle of concern and become fixated on things outside of our control which increases our anxiety and wastes time. Covey highlights that highly effective people actually focus most energy on the middle circle, the circle of influence.</p>
<p>So, how to project warmth?</p> <p>Trying to appear warm and trustworthy by consciously controlling your nonverbal signals can be seen as inauthentic so: Don't over-exaggerate the enthusiasm in your voice, it suggests that you're faking it or that you fawn over everyone indiscriminately. Create vocal warmth by speaking with lower pitch and volume, as you would if you were comforting a friend. That way, you signal that you trust those you're talking with to handle things the right way.</p>	<p>When people decide what they think of your message, they decide what they think of you. If you show your employees that you hold roughly the same worldview they do, you demonstrate not only empathy but, in their eyes, common sense—the ultimate qualification for being listened to. So if you want colleagues to listen and agree with you, first agree with them.</p>
<p>Smile - and mean it. Warmth is self-reinforcing: Feeling happy makes us smile, and smiling makes us happy. Smiling is also contagious. We tend to mirror one another's nonverbal expressions and emotions, so when we see someone emanating genuine warmth, we can't resist smiling ourselves.</p>	<p>When we focus effort on the things we cannot control, like global issues, we have less time and energy to spend on things we can influence. Consequently, the circle of influence becomes smaller. When we focus on things we can influence we expand our knowledge and experience, and the circle of influence increases.</p>
<p>Warmth is not easy to fake: to project warmth, you have to genuinely feel it. So find some reason to feel happy, then channel that sense of warmth you feel with your team. One thing to avoid: smiling with your eyebrows raised at anyone over the age of five. This suggests that you are overly eager to please and be liked. It also signals anxiety, which, like warmth, is contagious.</p>	<p>So, we need to work out what part of the big concern can move in to our circle of influence - what action, however small, can we take to influence within the situation. When we do this we often realise we can</p>

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article from HBR

New Directions offers consultancy and workshops on leadership. For more information [Click here](#)

Book sales at lower than Amazon prices!

"A hands-on guide that will help you become a more effective leader and manager."

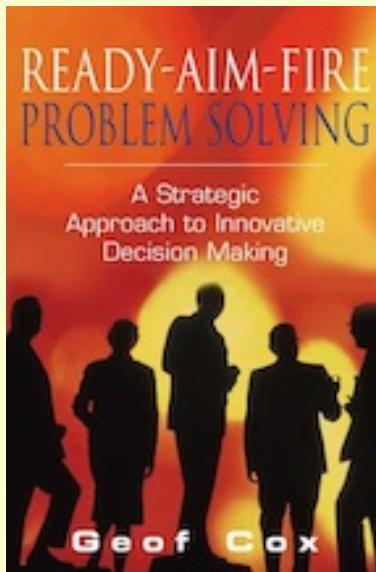
John Baldoni, author of 'Lead Your Boss: The Subtle Art of Managing Up'

GETTING RESULTS WITHOUT AUTHORITY



THE NEW RULES OF ORGANISATIONAL INFLUENCE

GEOF COX



Getting Results Without Authority

£8.00

Bundle both titles for £12.00

Price includes p&p in the UK, for deliveries outside the UK add £1.00.

[Click here to go to the secure Online Shop.](#)

Ready-Aim-Fire Problem Solving

£5.00

influence more than we think and build resilience.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article from Cranfield Trust blog

Cuttings

Cuttings is a bi-monthly collection of ideas and comments published elsewhere which have attracted my attention over the past couple of months. It is designed for readers who are interested in individual, organisation and management development and is free.

It has been published continuously for more than 30 years by *New Directions*, an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

USEFUL LINKS

[Past issues of Cuttings](#)

[New Directions website](#)

[Getting Results Without Authority](#)

Contact details

Phone: +44 (0)7753 626284

Skype: GeofCox.NewDirections

Email: geofcox@newdirections.uk.com

Post: 26a Downleaze, Bristol BS9 1LZ, UK

© Copyright 2021 by New Directions Ltd. The contents are the property of the publisher but may be used if the publisher is identified and if copies of such use are sent to the publisher. This message was sent to [email address] as you have either requested a copy or attended one of our courses.

Note for data protection legislation purposes: your details are stored on a database which is used solely for the mailing of this newsletter. By subscribing you are agreeing to your data being stored and used in this way. The database is not used for any other communication or marketing purpose, and third party access is not allowed. You have a right of access and of rectification of your data, and a right for your data to be removed at any time. If you do not wish to receive future communications, or to remove your data from the database, reply with an "UNSUBSCRIBE" message and you will be permanently removed from this database.