Center for World-Changing Organizations

Strengthening organizations that make the world better

The Manager's Survival Guide

Five Keys to Guide World-Changing Staff and Projects

By Jonathan Reed, PhD

We specialize in helping organizations that make a difference in the world:

- **Design ingenious ways to accomplish their missions**—through our innovative approach to *strategic planning.*

- **Increase revenues and funding**—through *strategic marketing* designed for their unique financial challenges.

- **Create great places to work**—through *organizational development* tailored to their values-driven missions and unconventional staff.

We've written *eight leadership guides* on these subjects, which you can download at www.wcorgs.com. They describe how we adapt *corporate* planning, marketing, and organizational development to meet the challenges these organizations face.

Our clients include local-to-global nonprofits, government agencies, and companies in the U.S. and abroad. As subject-matter experts with extensive consulting experience, we offer high return-on-investment consulting, training, and other services.

JONATHAN REED, PH.D., the Center's founder, has an unusual background for a management consultant. He received his doctorate in the biological sciences at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, where he subsequently served as Lecturer and Honorary Fellow. His research took him far afield: 500 miles north of the Arctic Circle, four field seasons in Kauai, Hawaii, and to Panama as a Smithsonian Tropical Research Fellow.

He then founded The University Group in 1988, a private consulting firm representing 65 leading faculty at UW—Madison. It transferred the latest advances in management and technology from universities to corporations such as General Electric and Johnson Controls.

When clients began asking for his advice, he found he preferred consulting to trying to manage professors. So he started consulting for corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies on his own. One of his projects received a National Quality Award.

He has co-authored *A Systems Handbook: An Introduction to the Systems Age for GE Medical Systems,* consulted for federal Science Centers for seven consecutive years, and helped lead the Conservation Science Division of The Nature Conservancy.

He served as a consultant to the U.S. Agency for International Development in Afghanistan and the former Soviet Union Republic of Georgia, and the Inter-American Development Bank in Trinidad and Tobago. He also has taught mindfulness meditation at maximum-security prisons.

To see the results his clients achieved and read their testimonials, see the Experience section of our website.

#8 The Manager's Survival Guide
Five Keys to Guide World-Changing Staff and Projects

Most managers in world-changing organizations[1] are expected to run complex programs, manage bright and unconventional employees, and complete their own full-time projects. As far as we know, no one has developed a set of management practices to help them accomplish these ambitious feats. This guide describes our attempt to do so.

It outlines management practices to empower employees, develop strong teams, and build successful programs. It also frees managers of the most time-consuming managerial responsibilities, so they have more time to work on their projects.

This *participative management model* meets the unique management challenges of local-to-global corporations, nonprofit organizations, and public institutions striving to make the world a better place. We built it on five management themes we believe are critical to world-changing success: *clarity of mission, talent, empowerment, teams, and performance.*

We've found that neither the current plan-organize-lead-control management system nor a more hands-off, laissez-faire management approach is appropriate in these organizations. Conscience-driven, authority-averse employees bristle under command-and-control management systems.

But, if left alone, they tend to pursue projects most interesting to them instead of most crucial to their organization. The participative management model described in this guide charts a middle path between these two approaches.

This is the eighth in our *Guides and Workbooks Series* to help you build a more successful and prosperous organization. Subjects include *strategic planning, strategic marketing, and organizational development*. We list them on the back cover. See this endnote for permission to use them.[2]

They are based on our research and work with many organizations of different sizes and in various fields, including General Electric Medical Systems, Rexnord Aerospace, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Geological Survey, and U.S. Agency for International Development—as well as many smaller organizations.

By Jonathan Reed, PhD
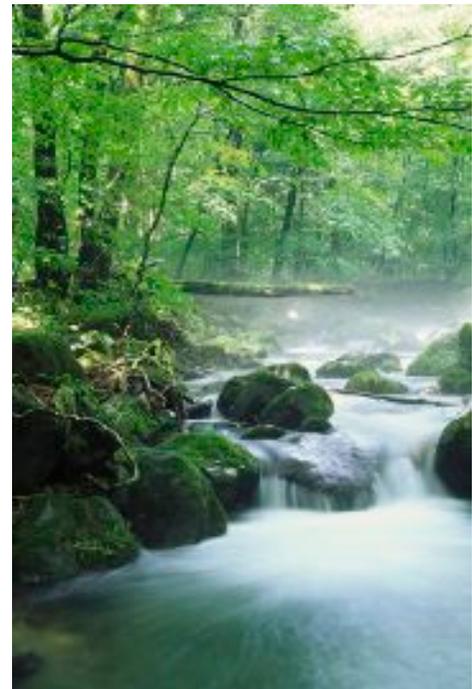
Five key management themes

1. Clarify your unit's mission and how it measures success. If you are a supervisor or manager in a world-changing organization and haven't done so already, define your unit's mission and measures of success. A clearly defined mission statement will help your direct reports understand your unit's purpose. And explicit measures of success will focus their efforts on what's critical to the unit's success. This management theme clarifies what "success" means for everyone in your group. It also takes the onus off you for having to regularly explain what your direct reports should be working on and how to assess their performance.

2. Help your staff develop their natural abilities into talents. There is growing evidence that *talent*, which we define as *the capacity to excel at something*, is more critical to job performance than skill, experience, or knowledge. When you understand the natural abilities required to succeed in the positions you oversee, staff them with people who have those abilities, and then help them develop their native capabilities into talents they can excel at— everyone benefits.

By doing so, employees thrive in their positions, programs are more successful, and you'll have more time to work on your projects. Managers who recognize the native abilities of their direct reports, and help them turn those abilities into talents, report: 1) higher job satisfaction, 2) fewer management problems, and 3) better-performing units.

3. Empower and coach your direct reports. This theme combines employee empowerment with personal accountability for performance. You begin by jointly setting individual performance goals with your direct reports directly tied to your unit's success. Next, you empower them to achieve their goals. Then you coach them on how best to use their talents to accomplish their goals.

By doing these three things, you shift your role from a traditional manager to a performance coach. Through goal setting and empowerment, your employees will know what both you and they expect of themselves. Thus, they'll be motivated to develop their full potential to achieve their goals.

4. Build a collaborative and team-based work environment. Values-driven organizations often work on complex issues requiring close collaboration and a broad range of expertise.

One of the best ways to create a collaborative work environment if you have a large unit is to split your unit into teams.

Though dividing your unit into teams by function might be the easiest way to do it, it's often not the best way. We've found that splitting a unit into cross-functional teams, each capable of providing the full complement of the unit's services, is often better.

Regardless of how you organize your teams, both you and team members should receive training on how teams function, team-building skills, and communication skills. Once you and they have acquired this knowledge and skills, you—with team members' input—should set goals for each team. Next, empower them to use their collective talents to achieve their goals. Then coach them on how to use their collaborative power to reach new performance levels.

As teams improve their performance, you might decide to shift even more managerial responsibilities to them. Several ways to do this is to grant them more responsibility for setting both individual and team performance goals and participate in hiring new team members. Building high-performance teams can improve the unit's performance, increase client satisfaction, and reduce your oversight responsibilities.
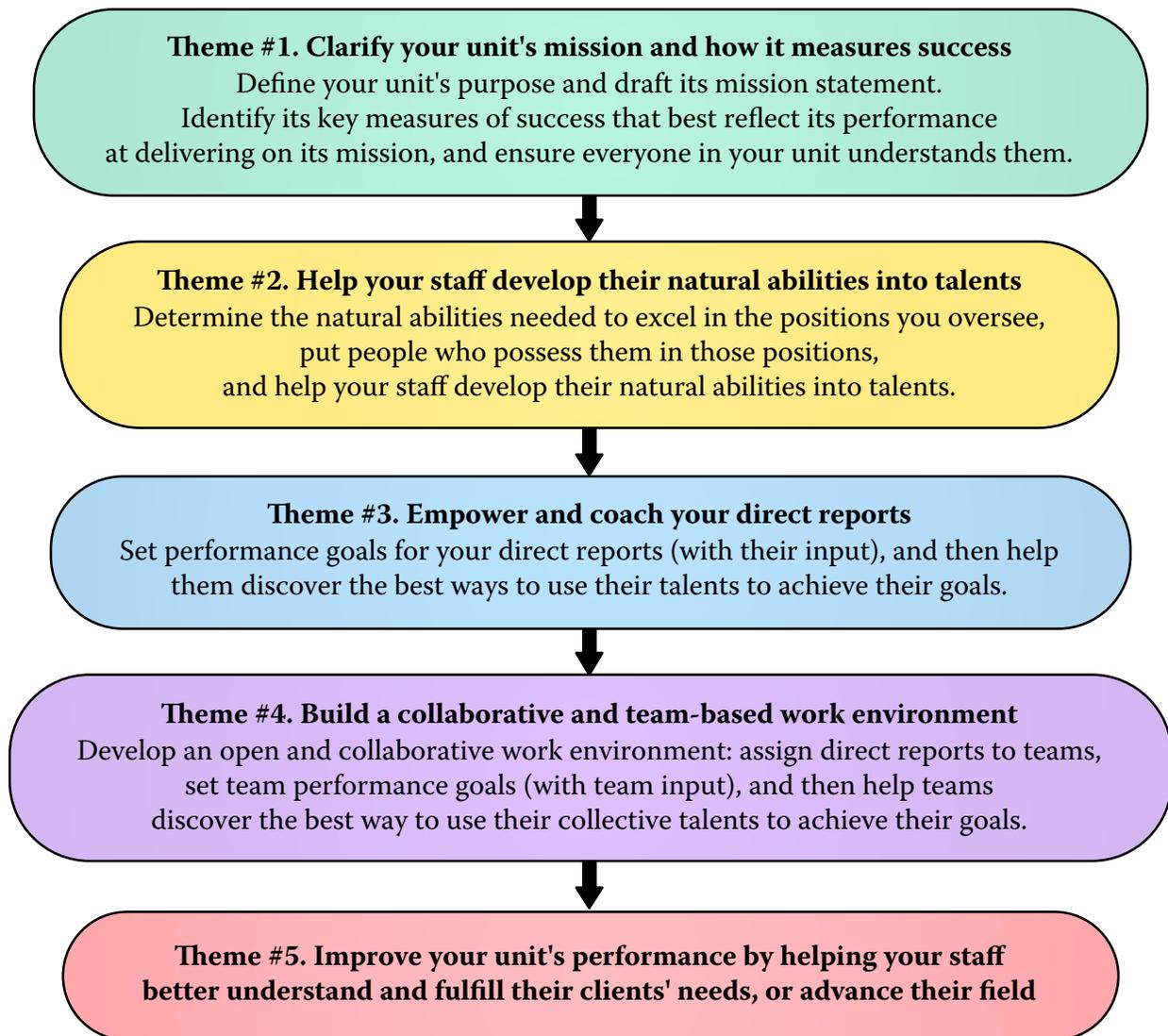
Creating and empowering teams is yet another step you can take to further shift your role from traditional (as well as overworked and under-appreciated) manager to performance coach. This shift should free up even more time to work on your projects and—instead of continually putting out fires—focus on improving your unit's overall performance.

5. Improve your unit's performance by helping your staff better understand and fulfill its clients' needs—or make advances in its field. Most units serve external clients such as clients or process work for internal clients, such as another unit in the organization. Whoever receives the unit's services or work products are its clients.

The first step to improve the satisfaction of your unit's clients is to make sure everyone in your group understands that it's the unit's clients, not themselves, who determine the quality of their work. We define "quality" as *fitness for use*. This idea might seem illogical to them who, compared to their clients, are experts in their field. We have found scientists can have a particularly difficult time coming to terms with this idea. But eventually, even they come to understand that clients determine quality.

Next, with your guidance, teams collect information on their clients' expectations of and satisfaction with their products and services. There are a variety of ways to collect this information. Once teams collect and analyze this information, both you and they will understand, perhaps for the first time, the quality of their work from their clients' perspective. They'll also learn what they need to improve to serve them better.

Learning simple quality improvement tools, which we introduce later in this guide and teach in our team training courses, will help you and your teams do this. The results might surprise you: Your unit will understand its clients better, improve the quality of its products and services, enhance productivity and save money, and be more motivated—all while increasing client satisfaction. (If instead, your unit makes advances in its field instead of serving its clients, you can make parallel changes in how it researches and develops emerging ideas and methods in its field.)

Theme #1. Clarify your unit's mission and how it measures success
Define your unit's purpose and draft its mission statement.
Identify its key measures of success that best reflect its performance
at delivering on its mission, and ensure everyone in your unit understands them.

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Theme #2. Help your staff develop their natural abilities into talents
Determine the natural abilities needed to excel in the positions you oversee,
put people who possess them in those positions,
and help your staff develop their natural abilities into talents.

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Theme #3. Empower and coach your direct reports
Set performance goals for your direct reports (with their input), and then help
them discover the best ways to use their talents to achieve their goals.

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Theme #4. Build a collaborative and team-based work environment
Develop an open and collaborative work environment: assign direct reports to teams,
set team performance goals (with team input), and then help teams
discover the best way to use their collective talents to achieve their goals.

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**Theme #5. Improve your unit's performance by helping your staff
better understand and fulfill their clients' needs, or advance their field**

Fig. 1. Participative management model for world-changing organizations

Management Theme #1
Clarify your unit's purpose and how it measures success

Just as a clear mission and measures of success are hallmarks of successful organizations; they are also distinctive features of successful units. As a manager, they clarify what your unit needs to accomplish, gauge its success at doing so, and enable you and your staff to make improvements where they're needed.

One of the biggest challenges to managing a unit or program within a world-changing organization is defining and measuring success. Managers in profit-driven enterprises know that improving their organization's bottom line—usually its profits—is both their chief responsibility and measure of success. Few conscience-driven managers are so lucky. Not only might their unit lack clear measures of success but their organization might too.

As we describe in *Guiding Statements Guide: Core Values, Mission, and Vision*, many values-driven organizations possess broad mission statements and, if they have any, fuzzy measures of success. Though you might have little influence on your organization's mission and measures of success, you probably have the authority to define them for their unit. We describe a unit's mission and measures of success as:

A unit's mission statement. A clear and compelling statement of:

- *How it advances the organization's mission—its specific purpose in the organization.* Why does it exist?

- *What it does—the main ways the unit fulfills its purpose.* If it's to serve external clients or process work for other units (serve internal clients), consider stating who it helps and how this delivers on the organization's mission. If the purpose is to advance ideas and methods in the organization's field, describe them and why making these advances helps deliver on the organization's mission.

- **Who or what benefits from its work.** If it's not clear, state it—whether it's to serve others, advance emerging ideas or methods in its field, or something else.

A unit's measures of success. The results that a unit produces to deliver its mission and support its organization's mission.

Consider using one of our two "participative approaches" to define your unit's mission and measures of success. The *"first-draft" approach* is to write the first draft of them yourself, and then ask your staff how they could improve them or replace them with better ones. The *"blank-sheet-of-paper" approach* is to have you and your staff collaboratively develop the mission and success measures from scratch—you don't write the first draft.

As an aside, if your organization used our planning model to develop its strategic plan, read

pages 37-38 of our planning guide to learn about **key drivers of success**. Most of them are defined as *exceeding the expectations of the organization's target audiences.* They are often its clients, funders, and supporters. This section of our planning might help you identify your unit's measures of success. One could be the ratio of positive versus negative customer feedback ratings or comments.

When your unit's mission and measures of success are in place, use them to define your unit's **goals**. Many managers set just annual goals for the individuals and teams they oversee. Though they're fine for repetitive tasks and short-term projects, they can lead to short-sighted solutions to long-term problems.

We've found it's better to set three-year goals for longer-term projects, along with one- and two-year milestones to monitor progress and keep projects on track. As with drafting your unit's mission and success measures, ask your staff to participate in setting their unit's goals.

If you decide to follow our fourth guideline in this guide, you'll divide your unit into teams. If so, work with each team to draft their mission, charter (more on this later), measures of success, and goals. Then collaboratively set each of your direct report's annual and longer-term goals.

The following figure shows how you can "cascade" responsibility for delivering on your unit's mission from your unit to its teams, and then to each staff member. Whether your unit's mission is to serve others, make advances in your organization's field, promote a cause, or
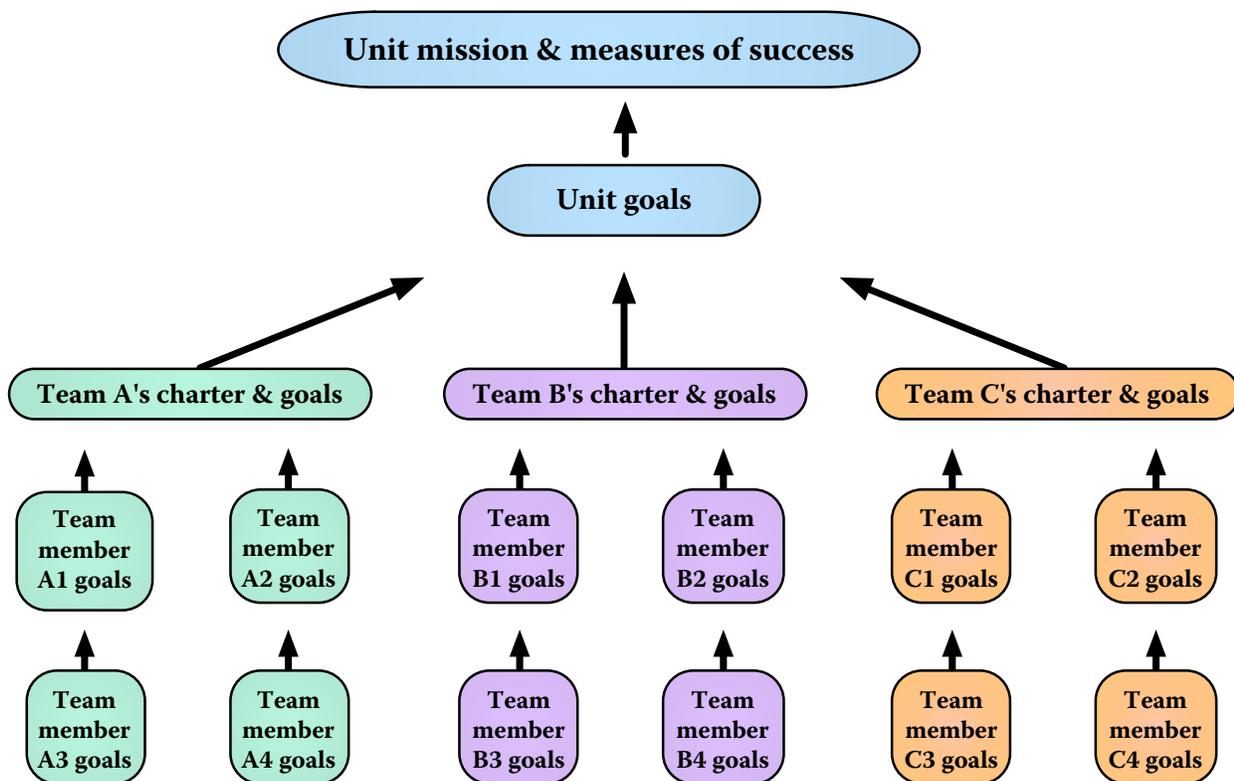
Fig. 2. How a unit's mission, measures of success, and goals cascade down to the unit's teams and staff

carry out a set of duties; a clear mission statement and measures of success should improve its performance. Developing clear success measures for your unit enables you to set precise and measurable unit goals, and link them to teams' and direct reports' goals.

Management Theme #2
Help your staff develop their natural abilities into talents

By analyzing decades of surveys and interviews of hundreds of thousands of people, Buckingham & Coffman[3] of the Gallup Organization determined that a distinguishing characteristic of successful managers is their ability to recognize natural abilities—and help their direct reports develop them into talents they can excel at. *American Heritage Dictionary*, the fourth edition, defines talent as:

> **Talent** is a marked innate ability, natural endowment, or ability of a superior quality.

Three types of talents appear to be particularly important in work settings are:

> *What motivates someone.* These talents span various spectrums: intrinsic/external rewards, helping/competing against others, creating a well-ordered/highly creative work environment, internally/externally driven, conforming to/challenging organizational norms.

> *How someone thinks and acts.* These talents span various spectrums: introvert/extrovert, analytical/big-picture thinkers, guarded/self-disclosing, organized/scattered, and optimistic/pessimistic.

> *How someone feels about and interacts with others.* These talents also span various spectrums: me/we oriented, open/withdrawn, talkative/quiet, and confident/insecure.

Although experience, intelligence, and skills are important factors to consider in hiring or reassigning someone, *talent* appears to be the most important *by far*. One can acquire new skills and knowledge, but not talent. Successful managers place people in positions where they derive deep satisfaction from using their talents to excel at something they're particularly good at.

Managers who base their hiring or reassignment decisions primarily on an individual's skills and knowledge can inadvertently end up with some employees who must rely on their *weaknesses* to accomplish their work. Such hiring and reassignment decisions often lead to poor job performance, erosion of employees' self-esteem, and, occasionally, disgruntled employees demoralizing their coworkers with their constant negativity.

Sending employees who are in the wrong positions to training to learn how to use their weaknesses more effectively is a losing proposition. These individuals cannot acquire the natural talents they need to excel in their positions through training. Avoid this unfortunate

situation by basing your hiring and reassignment decisions on people's native abilities instead of on their skills, knowledge, and experience.

Place the right person in the right position

Identify the one or two most critical talents needed to excel in a position instead of the traditional (and usually much larger) skill set. Look for the *make-or-break* one or two talents required to excel in a position. You might start by identifying the key talents of the top performers in similar positions. Ask them and their coworkers what one or two talents are required to be a top performer. Secondarily consider the skills, knowledge, and experience needed for the position.

Focus also on what candidates have excelled at in the past. Prepare hypothetical scenarios before your interviews that test whether candidates possess the right talents. Invite employees who will work with the person who fills a position or performs similar work to take part in interviewing and assessing candidates.

Take action when someone is in the wrong position

Deciding whether to reassign or fire an underperforming employee is one of the most difficult and stressful decisions a manager can make. Hence there's a natural inclination to ignore the problem hoping it will resolve itself over time. It never does. Instead, it gets worse. When one of your direct reports is underperforming, you have the responsibility as a manager to address the problem.

As a manager, your primary duty is to fulfill the responsibilities your organization has entrusted to you. You are expected to carry out these responsibilities according to your organization's cores values, policies, and procedures. Your performance is evaluated largely by the performance of your direct reports. If they are underperforming, you're underperforming. So it's your responsibility to address issues of underperformance while treating the people you oversee with respect and professionalism.

To understand why a direct report is underperforming, ask yourself if their job is doable. Then decide whether the person has the natural talents to succeed in it. If it's unreasonable to expect anyone to fulfill their duties satisfactorily, you obviously need to address this issue first.

Numerous quality improvement studies have found that poor performance is mostly due to poorly designed work processes, not worker performance. However, most of these studies examined manufacturing firms where work-process design plays a more significant role in employee performance than we suspect in most world-changing organizations.

At a minimum, document the performance of your direct reports annually. Quarterly or semiannual evaluations, however, give direct reports a timelier assessment of their performance. They also provide you with more frequent opportunities to address problems.

Document recurring instances of poor performance, your discussion with them about their performance issues, the steps you want them to take to resolve the issue, and your expectations for improved performance. Then show the person what you've written, make changes to address any reasonable concerns, and have him or her sign it.

You owe it to your organization, the people you oversee, and yourself to document all serious performance issues. Without adequate documentation (letter to file), your future options to address underperforming employees will be limited, and the situation could backfire on you—legally.

If you have taken the steps described above and your direct report is still underperforming, then do one of the following:

- ***Reassign the individual*** to a position in your unit or elsewhere in the organization that matches that their talents.

- ***Change the person's work responsibilities*** as much as you can without compromising your unit's performance.

- ***Ask the person to resign.*** If he or she refuses, terminate their employment in a professional yet compassionate manner. When firing someone, do it quickly. No one benefits by dragging it out. You might check with a human resource professional, your professional association, or an employment attorney to make sure that you are on a solid legal footing, and have taken the necessary steps to fire someone.

Management Theme #3
Empower and coach your direct reports

Most employees of values-driven organizations start their careers with strong aspirations to make a difference in the world. Unfortunately, these expectations often fade as uninspiring, bureaucratic work environments and managers who lack the knowledge and skills to nurture them grind away at them. Although most people keep plugging away as best they can, their enthusiasm often begins to wanes in a few years.

Participative management

Probably the best way to rekindle this enthusiasm is to stop telling employees what to do and instead empower and coach them to use their natural talents to reach their full potential. We refer to this as a form of participative management. We define *participative management* as encouraging employees to have input in or share in decision-making about their work and that of their unit.

It covers the broad spectrum of employee empowerment. One might begin by encouraging employees to improve how they do their work, next have them evaluate their work, and then let them decide what they do. Then, one could do the same thing with teams or a unit.

Further down the participative-management spectrum is forming self-managing teams that have the authority and responsibility to figure out the best way to achieve their goals. At the edge of this side of the spectrum is something that is unusual in the U.S. but common in Europe—employee-run organizations.

If you think participative management might improve your unit's performance, here are some guidelines to get started:

1. Identity the talents of your direct reports and put them in positions where they can use them. Consider assigning them to teams based on their talents that complement those of their other team members.

2. With their input, set quarterly, semiannual, or annual performance goals for your direct reports and teams. (Consider trying quarterly performance goals and performance reviews on a trial basis.)

3. Encourage and coach your direct reports and teams to discover how they can best use their individual and collective talents to achieve their performance goals.

4. Acknowledge their achievements in front your unit.

5. Monitor your direct reports' performance in a helpful and supportive manner. But don't micromanage them.

3A. Help your direct reports develop their natural abilities into talents

Help your direct reports discover and better utilize their natural abilities by buying them copies of *Now Discover your Strengths* and encourage them to take Gallup Organization's online Strengths Finder Profiler.[4] Each book purchase entitles one person to take this assessment online.

It identifies an individual's *five signature strengths* (clusters of natural abilities, which they call *talents*—and we think is better left as natural abilities), which are insightful to both your direct reports and to you as their coach. Gallop defines a *strength* rather oddly as "the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance"—which we think is better labeled a talent.

Assign the right people to the positions you oversee. Then help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to turn their natural abilities into talents. Focus on employees' native abilities.

By doing so, you acknowledge their positive qualities and they, in turn, become more motivated and enjoy performing their jobs more. Concentrating on their weaknesses and their inevitable failures to *fix* them, in contrast, reinforces their negative qualities in themselves, thus demoralizing them.

Buckingham and Coffman[5] claim that great managers understand that *people don't change* and, thus, can rarely fix their weaknesses. *But people can develop their natural abilities into talents.* If they're right (and we believe they are), it's critical to hire individuals with the right natural abilities for the job.

For those people who have the natural abilities to succeed at their work but also possess weaknesses that adversely affect their performance, help them manage their weaknesses by sending them to training, getting them other assistance, and coaching them as best you can. Managers should neither dwell on nor ignore the shortcomings of their direct reports, which can be a delicate balance to maintain.

3B. With their input, set performance goals for your direct reports

The next step to empowering your direct reports is to set their individual performance goals in a participative manner. We encourage you to seek your direct reports' input in setting these goals. As they gain experience in their positions, jointly set their performance goals. You might eventually delegate this entire responsibility to individuals who consistently perform at a high level.

When employees participate in setting their performance goals, they take ownership of them. And they become more confident and motivated as they achieve increasingly more challenging or stretch goals they participate in setting for themselves. Whatever degree of participation you choose for setting performance goals, remember that you are ultimately responsible for their and your unit's performance.

Most employees don't receive enough feedback from their managers. By waiting until the annual performance review *ritual*—if they ever happen at all, both the manager and direct report are often on edge. Often specific events when a direct report excelled or underperformed, which are the cornerstones meaningful performance reviews, might have occurred so long ago that neither of you remembers them.

Thus, many annual performance reviews revolve around the supervisor's general impressions of a direct report's performance, which, whether positive or negative, can easily be dismissed as just someone's opinion. Therefore, we encourage you to consider instituting quarterly or semiannual performance reviews on at least a temporary basis. If they prove beneficial, make them permanent.

3C. Coach your direct reports to help them discover how they can best use their talents to excel in their positions

Once you establish your direct reports' desired outcomes, help each of them to discover how best to use their talents to achieve their goals. Using our participative approach to management, it becomes the joint responsibility of you and each of your direct reports to figure out the best way for them to achieve their goals. Your job is to coach, not direct, them. As their coach, talk to them about what you and they consider to be their exceptional talents to excel at their jobs.

If a direct report cites the ability to focus all their attention on solving a problem as their primary talent, you might coach that person in how best to use it and what to watch out for—such as blocking out more pressing needs or isolating themselves. Naturally, you would mentor that person differently than someone who identified multitasking as their top talent. You also might help your less-experienced direct reports identify several alternative ways to accomplish their work, and then encourage them to experiment until they discover what works best for them.

One particularly useful coaching practice is to share your work experiences with the people you coach along with *the unwritten rules and expectations* of employees in your organization. But scrupulously avoid making any negative comments about particular co-workers or units. Sharing insights your organization's culture, unspoken expectations, and how to succeed in it is invaluable knowledge to those you oversee.

3D. Acknowledge individual achievement

Although most managers know the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the achievements of the people they oversee, it bears repeating. Praise specific behaviors and actions that lead to an achievement or improvement; avoid flattery (generalized praise) as in, "You're an excellent employee." It comes off as gratuitous and insincere.

Offer feedback that produces a jolt of intense positive feelings by *recognizing a job particularly well done*. Doing so as often as once a week can markedly raise a person's confidence and motivation—but it must be well deserved to be sincere. For an added boost, compliment individuals within earshot of their peers.

On the flip side, if you find that one of your direct reports rarely warrants a compliment, consider why this is. Does this person lack the necessary talent to do his or her job? Or is something else going on? You owe it to your unit and your organization to investigate and address these problems. Don't ignore them because you hope the problem will resolve itself over time. Performance problems tend to fester, not recede. And they usually come to a head at the worst possible time. Our advice: *deal with them now*.

3E. Monitor your direct reports' performance in a helpful and supportive manner

We based the management practices in this guide on the assumption that you don't have much spare time to devote to managing the people you oversee, yet you're responsible for their performance. To monitor the performance of each of your direct reports, set up a simple performance tracking system (with their input) to assess their progress in reaching their goals.

Make sure each system tracks the right performance measures or indicators instead of those that are easiest to measure. Sometimes it's difficult to gauge an employee's short-term performance in any meaningful way. For example, it's difficult to assess the effect of meetings with major donors or grant agency officials until they've made a donation or awarded a grant, both of which could be a long time off if they happen at all. But without such meetings, they might never occur.

Therefore, you might need to establish performance indicators (indirect measures) to assess performance. In the previous example, positive feedback about a meeting, requests for more information, or requests for additional meetings from donors and agency officials would be positive performance indicators. Data from even a simple performance measurement system would help many world-changing organizations.

Management Theme #4
Build a collaborative and team-based work environment

Traditional work units are still the primary organizational unit in most organizations. For a host of reasons, many leading corporations have switched to team-based structures. We suggest you do the same. Teams are groups of people who work together to achieve a joint mission. They foster a more open and collaborative work environment, which is crucial to performing complex work or solving complicated problems, than traditional work units.

We've found teams to be flexible and fluid organizational structures that can adapt more quickly to changing conditions, provide higher client and employee satisfaction, and boost organization's overall performance compared to traditional work units. Besides these and other benefits, teams seem to be the best organizational structure for groups of bright, conscience-driven people who need to share ideas and work together collaboratively, yet also need to maintain some level of autonomy in their jobs to keep their edge. What follows are some guidelines to form and empower such teams.

Guidelines for establishing and empowering teams

4A. Assign direct reports who do similar work to the same team

The goal of dividing your unit into teams is to create an organizational structure that optimizes your group's performance. We've found they usually increase employee performance, job satisfaction, and morale. You can either form teams around work functions, programs, or clients.

Yet we've found *cross-functional teams*, in which people who would usually be assigned to the same team are put on different ones, work best. They're particularly helpful when each team can perform all the unit's work.

Assume you oversee a unit of sixteen people and four people can perform each of four specialized functions. Most managers would form four teams of four people each of which performs the same function. But we've found that putting people who each specialize in different functions on the same team is far more effective. Thus, we'd advise forming four cross-functional teams, each made up of people who specialize in different functions. Each team could perform the work of the whole unit. And each would be assigned its own clients to serve.

In organizations where we've helped institute cross-functional teams, *productivity has increased significantly*. Team members cross-train one another so if someone is out, other team members can fill in for them. Teams meet with and get to know "their clients" on a personal level—and understand how to prioritize their projects.

Fumbles and stuff falling between the cracks, which is rampant when work passes from one functionally specialized team to the next, never happens. Instead of working on your one isolated and increasingly boring task week-in and week-out, you're involved with everything that goes on in your team, which includes meeting with the clients you serve.

If you're intrigued by the idea of transforming your unit into teams, you might present several alternative team structures to your unit and ask people to evaluate them. And give them the option to design a better one. If your initial team structure isn't producing the results you want, keep experimenting with it until it does.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of drafting a *team charter* (mission, members, goals, etc.), *administrative policy* (role of the team within unit and organization, transitioning management responsibilities, etc.) and *operating procedures* (decision-making within the team, team leadership, etc.). We describe these documents, which collectively might be a one-of-a-kind set in the management literature, in this endnote.[6]

We've found these documents crucial to team success by avoiding a host of serious organizational problems and misunderstandings. Once you set up your teams, they should carefully review these documents and propose changes they think should be made to them. If there's one time to bring in an experienced consultant to help your unit, this is it.

4B. Help teams define their mission and set goals for each team

Once you've assigned your direct reports to teams, help them define and draft their team's mission statement. We prefer a team mission statement over a list of roles and responsibilities because writing a mission statement makes the team think through what it's trying to accomplish. By clarifying its mission, team members should gain a deeper understanding of the team's purpose and may discover new ways to add value to what their unit does.

Once you and your teams draft their team mission statements and set their performance goals, you should all be on the same page regarding each team's purpose and desired outcomes. See our *Guiding Statements Guide* for tips on writing and reviewing a mission statement.[7]

4C. Empower teams to devise their own way to best achieve their goals

Paralleling the steps outlined above regarding individual empowerment, assist but don't direct teams to find the best way to advance their missions and achieve their goals. Coach teams and team members to discover new ways to use their talents and work together more efficiently. As your teams begin to gel, shift more responsibility and decision-making authority to them.

How far you go in transferring responsibility to the team and establishing self-managed teams depends on many factors, including your organization's culture and management traditions. For example, when a position opens up on a team, you might encourage team members to draft the new position description; take part or lead candidate interviews; and participate in the hiring decision.

If performance improves as you shift more management responsibilities to them, continue doing it. If performance declines or other problems arise as teams try to manage themselves, back off a bit if self-management is the underlying cause.

You might start 360° performance reviews in which team members and others outside the team evaluate an individual's performance. As it gains more experience and confidence, the team might evolve into a self-managed one. If so, your role will probably be as a coach and resource to your teams, freeing up more of your time to work on your projects. Even with self-managed teams, managers usually retain authority over hiring, firing, disciplinary, salary, and promotion decisions.

4D. Provide training on teams and teamwork, coach your teams, and help them develop team skills

For teams to succeed, regardless of how you organize them, both you and your staff should be trained on how teams function as well as team-building skills. Though you'll be sorely tempted to skip this training, our decades of experience building teams indicate it would be a costly mistake. Our Center, as well as other firms, offer a full suite of team training courses.

Other topics to consider are communication and deep listening, conflict resolution, problem-solving, and group decision-making. *The Team Handbook* and *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others and Resolve Conflicts* are excellent books to read to brush up on these skills; both are in the Bibliography.

Coach your teams similar to how you coach your direct reports: help them discover the best way to use their collective talents to achieve their goals and excel. Again, the key here is to assist but not direct them. Although your coaching might include how to raise the talents of individual team members, it should focus primarily on improving overall team performance. There is one other important thing to know about coaching: stepping in too often to prevent an individual or team from failing can promote dependence and hinder team development.

4E. Help teams to better understand their work and monitor their performance

As their coach, help teams understand their role in the organization, what's essential to their internal or external clients, and how to maintain healthy relations with other units. Probably your most important role as a coach is to help teams increase their clients' satisfaction. Sometimes this involves helping them improve their work processes and system, which is probably unfamiliar territory to most managers in world-changing organizations. Step 5 outlines some of the ways to streamline work processes and cites some of the best introductory books on this topic.

Last, develop a simple performance monitoring system for each team tied to their goals. Then post it where the team can see it. Encourage them to display their performance results visually with bar graphs, charts, and dashboards instead of tables of numbers. A visual performance tracking is a motivational tool way to track and enhance team performance.

Management Theme #5.
Improve your unit's performance by helping your staff better understand and fulfill its clients' needs, or make advances in its field

The mission of most world-changing programs and units is to fulfill their clients' needs. Their external clients could be their organization's clients (those who should benefit most from its mission), major funders, or key supporters. Their internal clients are other internal units who are recipients of their work—their *outputs*. To increase the satisfaction of your unit's clients:

A. Assess clients' total experience with your unit: what it offers (services, products, or programs): their satisfaction with the unit's offerings and its quality, delivery, convenience, cost, and options. Also, assess their "customer service" experience with your unit and anything else affecting their total client experience. Keep in mind; client satisfaction is strongly influenced by the other options open to clients, mainly from organizations like yours.

B. Identify the crucial client-satisfaction attributes of your products and services.

C. Improve the attributes that will increase client satisfaction most.

D. Improve your unit's internal processes.

5A. Assess the satisfaction of your unit's clients

Organizations, units, teams, and even employees can assess their clients' satisfaction. But most units within values-driven organizations don't think of their performance or success regarding client satisfaction, particularly if their clients are other units within their organization. Such clients are usually called "internal customers or clients." Despite whether your clients are external or internal, they are the ultimate judges of the quality (*fitness for use*) of your unit's work.

A key to making your unit more successful is instilling a *client-satisfaction focus* in your direct reports. One of the best ways to engender it in your group is to conduct a client assessment. It can range from having informal discussions with your clients to a more systematic external survey conducted by a consultant or outside firm, which might include interviews with key clients.

You also could interview your key clients using a prepared set of questions or conduct a client satisfaction survey yourself. The more systematic and confidential your assessment, the more useful and accurate the results. Standardizing your assessment would enable you to compare current-versus-past results client satisfaction every time you administer it.

Some clients may temper or omit negative responses if your assessment is not confidential. Many people don't like being the bearers of bad news, particularly if they have developed a close relationship with an organization's staff. Hiring your consultant or an outside firm to conduct a confidential client assessment is one of the best investments you can make in improving your unit's performance.

If you decide to interview clients yourself, prepare your list of questions beforehand. Doing so reduces interviewer bias and other problems associated with "just winging it" type of interviews. If you develop the external survey, include a mix of numerical (e.g., "On a scale of 0-5, rate…"), short-answer, and open-ended questions.

Besides lumping all your results together and analyzing them, we encourage you to examine by different categories. For example, by new versus repeat clients, small versus large funders, and dedicated versus sporadic supporters. It's often worth interviewing some clients after digesting survey results to probe into critical issues more deeply. Then discuss the results and their ramifications with your unit.

5B. Identify the crucial client-satisfaction attributes of your services

Crucial client-satisfaction attributes are qualities and features of your products and services that have the greatest influence on client satisfaction. Rarely are they the minimum standards that a product or service should meet.

Instead, they are usually the ones that distinguish a highly valued product or service from those that are merely desirable. Therefore, identify the "vital few" attributes that have the biggest impact on their attractiveness and values to your clients instead of compiling a laundry list of positive attributes.

5C. Improve the attributes that will most increase client satisfaction

Enhancing your client's satisfaction might involve enhancing many attributes: improving the quality of what you offer, offering something different, making delivery of them convenient, lowering their price, and treating clients in a friendlier or more respectful manner. So focus on identifying and improving the vital few attributes that have the most impact on your clients' satisfaction.
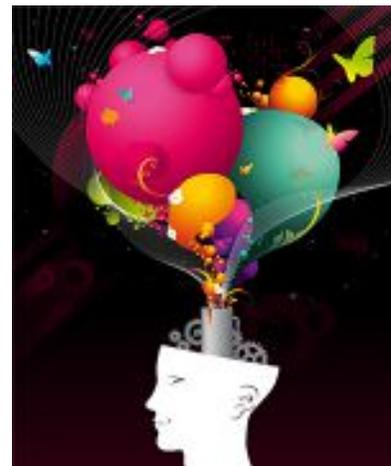
5D. Improve your unit's processes that most affect client satisfaction and your unit's overall performance

Most employees of world-changing organizations neither understand how work processes function nor how to streamline them. And unlike people who work in manufacturing, they don't pay much attention to them. Not only do they have a significant effect on productivity and costs, they similarly affect customer satisfaction. We've found the potential benefits of improving how work gets done in values-driven organizations to be enormous.

The problem with most work processes is they are more complicated than they should be to produce their desired outcomes. Complex operations tend to be slow, inefficient, and costly—and churn out poor quality results. Unless processes are regularly analyzed and simplified, they become complicated and bloated over time.

There are many reasons for this. One is that every time an error arises, a supervisor adds new error-detection and correction steps to try to prevent it from happening again. As these "fixes" pile up and supervisors add more steps to a process, it begins grinding to a crawl. When a process spans multiple units, "receiving" units often add steps to redo or change the format of the "sending" units' work. Another problem with work processes is that they were never designed properly in the first place—particularly given the recent digital advancements to workflow.

Every time a work product moves from one step of a process to the next, there is a chance it could be misplaced, misinterpreted, sent to the wrong place, got damaged, or other problems. And the more handoffs between the steps of a process, the higher the chance one of them will be *fumbled*. This is just one of many reasons that when a process gets more complicated, it slows down, consumes more resources, and demoralizes the staff working on it.

If you suspect that some of your internal processes limit your unit's performance, the field of quality improvement offers a rich source of ideas and tools to streamline your operations and improve your clients' satisfaction. We've helped many organizations make *huge* performance gains by applying simple quality improvement ideas and tools. We outline some of these tools below.

To learn more about quality improvement, we highly recommend reading *The Team Handbook* and *The Leader's Handbook,* which provide the best introduction to quality improvement ideas and use of basic QI tools. We also recommend reading W. Edward Deming's classic *Out of the Crisis,* a fascinating description of the basic tenets and practices of QI from its preeminent master.

Identify the processes responsible for lowering client satisfaction

Your assessment of client satisfaction should identify which attributes of your unit's products or services need improving. Your unit might find the source of dissatisfaction by using simple *check sheets* to track when and under what conditions particular problems occur and then a *cause-and-effect (fishbone) diagram* to reveal their root cause. Plus a cause-and-effect diagram might identify the cause of why fewer clients are using your services.

Then introduce your unit to the *Pareto Principle* to focus their attention on the *vital few* processes that account for most of your unit's client-satisfaction problems. The Pareto Principle (or *80:20 Rule*) states that 80% of problems come from just 20% of causes (the vital few). Once you've identified the processes hindering your unit's performance, map and streamline them with the following tools.

Map key processes and workflows

Workflow diagrams and *process flowcharts* are simple yet powerful tools to see how work physically flows through units or to record all the steps in a process. Such drawings and charts often reveal the complex, convoluted, and inefficient nature of most work environments and processes.

Most work environments can be redesigned to reduce the distance that in-process work travels, eliminate bottlenecks, shorten processing times, decrease the number of people involved in a process, and hence reduce the number of handoffs and fumbles in a process. We've seen units and organizations make huge gains in performance by just mapping and then streamlining their critical workflows.

The *SIPOC work process model* shown below can help your staff see, often for the first time, just how complicated their work processes are. You can learn most of what you need to know to facilitate process mapping in a few hours. Begin by visualizing your unit's key processes as streams of interconnected tasks that produce products, services, or internal work products that they transfer to other units.

Most work processes contain five elements: *suppliers* who provide *inputs* into the *process*, which is made up of steps or tasks, and the *outputs* that external or internal "*customers*" of this process receive. The SIPOC model had become one of the standard ways to understand and map work processes. Without getting too technical, we should point out that DMAIC's define-measure-analyze-improve-control sequence recently incorporated the SIPOC model as a "measure" element of its six-sigma designation. This process is designed to reduce variation in work processes.
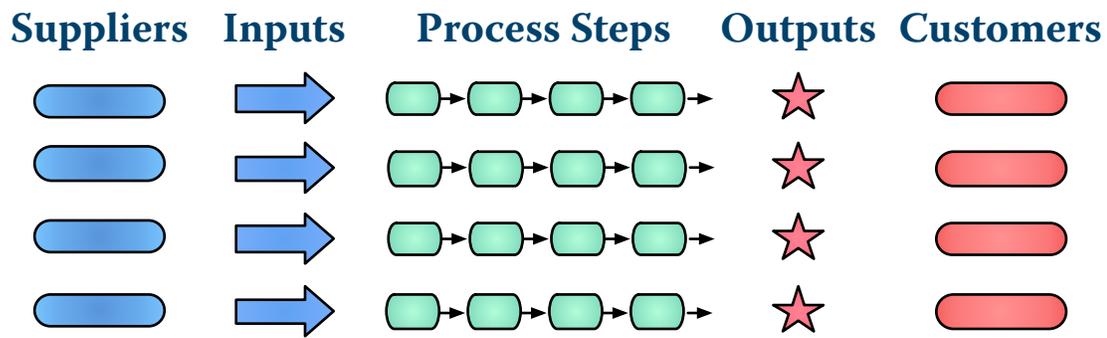
Fig. 3. The SIPOC work flow model

Streamline or completely redesign crucial processes

Once your unit (or its teams) understands the root causes of its client-satisfaction problems, maps its workflow, and flowcharts its critical processes, it's ready to streamline or completely redesign (re-engineer) its workflow and processes. If your workflow and processes are in good shape, consider streamlining them; if they're a mess, redesign them.

Start by determining what the "customers" of each process want. Next, determine if your suppliers understand the inputs you need and then assess the quality of those inputs. Notify your suppliers if you experience problems with their input; if they don't fix the problem, switch suppliers. We've worked with many units and teams who discovered that most of their problems stemmed from low-quality inputs.

Then determine which steps in a process are essential. Decide if you should eliminate, combine, or consolidate any steps. Build quality into your processes through high-quality inputs and error-proof steps and tasks, and thus avoid the need to waste time and money on error-detection and fixing problems "at the end of the line." Pay close attention to handoffs between steps because many errors occur there.

The benefits of improving internal processes can be huge. Most people want to take pride in their work; quality improvement gives them the tools to do so. When people start to map the work processes that have dominated their work lives for years, they begin to see for the first time the root causes of their frustrations. They then delight in permanently ridding them from their lives and design streamline processes that can take pride in. The results benefit employees, their units, their organization, and their organization's clients.

CONCLUSION

The traditional role of a manager as someone whose primary responsibility is to *manage people* is an outdated notion for world-changing organizations. The managers that we work with are incredibly busy. Although managing people is one of their lower-priority responsibilities, it is often the most challenging and frustrating aspect of their jobs. The management paradigm of plan-organize-lead-control is disconnected from the workplace realities of values-driven organizations.

To both survive and enjoy one's role as a manager in one of today's world-changing organizations, managers need to shift the responsibility for performance outcomes to the lowest appropriate level. The **participative-management model for world-changing organizations** that we describe in this guide proposes a new set of roles for managers.

Your first role is *as a **talent scout***. If you can get the right people in the right positions, you're on the way to creating an outstanding unit. Your second role is a ***coach***. Once you set performance goals for your direct reports, your job is to help them discover the best way they can use their natural talents to excel in their jobs. Your third role is ***team builder***—get the right people on the right teams and help them develop team skills. Your last role is that of ***facilitator for performance improvement.***

This approach not only empowers intelligent, conscience-driven individuals to use their talents to the benefit of their organization, it also frees you from traditional (and, we think, counterproductive) management duties so you can concentrate on your projects. Many individuals in these organizations have advanced degrees and many years of professional experience in their fields. When you empower them to devise the best way to use their talents to accomplish their work, you honor both their talent and professionalism.

In conclusion, we believe that this management model will help the organizations with the most critical missions in the world—advancing science, conserving the environment, improving the human condition, and similar endeavors—***and their managers*** deliver on their missions.

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*   *— Recommended*
** *— Highly recommend*

ENDNOTES

[1] **World-changing organizations** are committed to making the world a better place—whether in a local community, a region, or the world. Many are **nonprofits** and **governmental institutions.** But others are **companies** striving as much to make a difference as turn a profit. When we refer to *organizations* in this document, we mean *world-changing ones* unless we specify otherwise.

They range from small organizations working in local communities to global organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development (which I consulted for) and The Nature Conservancy (which I worked for) that work in 100 and 30 countries respectively.

What do these seemingly diverse organizations have in common? Most of them are trying to solve complex problems (e.g., social, societal, environmental, and scientific—to name a few); understand and serve a variety of audiences with different agendas (e.g., clients, funders, and supporters); seek support from diverse interest groups; and manage an idealistic, independent, and often iconoclastic workforce.

These are just some of the things they have in common. And it is up to an organization to determine if it is sufficiently committed to making a difference in the world to refer to itself as "world-changing." If so, they may wish to avail themselves of what we offer.

To avoid repetition, we sometimes refer to them as ***values-driven, mission-driven,*** and ***purpose-driven***. Use the term "values-driven" most often because, as we explain in our *Guiding Statements Guide* and elsewhere, we believe their core values drive everything they stand for and do.

And we often refer to the people who work in and support them as ***conscience-driven*** because their inner sense of what's right and wrong compels them to work for and support these organizations.

[2] We grant you permission to use our guides or any part of them for non-commercial purposes free of charge, including distributing printed versions of them, if you acknowledge they were written by Jonathan Reed, PhD of The Center for World-Changing Organizations. We licensed the stock images from iStock and Fotolia. We used OmniGraffle to design the figures.

[3] Buckingham and Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules*.

[4] See https://www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx (accessed on 2012-3-4).

[5] Buckingham and Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules*, 56-62.

Team Charter

- Statement of why the team was formed.

- Mission statement–the purpose of the team.

- Vision statement (optional)–description of the desired future the team will strive to create for those it serves and for itself.

- Team membership.

- Team performance goals revised quarterly, semiannually, or annually. Who sets them?

- Anticipated benefits of the team approach.

- Technical resources needed by the team.

Administrative policy

- A description of how the team will function within the unit and organization.

- Identify the supervisor, manager, or management team that will oversee and monitor its activities.

- Supervisory responsibilities: will it gradually be transferred from the manager to the team (and, if so, how), or are there more-or-less clear lines of responsibility between the manager and team that are unlikely to change anytime soon?

- Control and decision-making about how work is carried out on the team: assignments, scheduling, process improvements, approval of sick days and vacation, etc.

- Employee evaluations: who conducts them and how (360® evaluations are well suited to a team environment).

- Financial responsibilities: who approves expenditures? Does the team have a separate annual budget? What is the team's responsibility regarding financial reporting— charging of hours and expenses?

- Hiring decisions: what is the team's role in drafting position descriptions, participating in or leading candidate interview, and the hiring process?

Operating procedures

- A short description, prepared by the team, and reviewed by management, about how the team will function.

- Team leadership: who selects the team's leader, is it a more-or-less a permanent position, or will it rotate among a few or all team members? What are the team leader's roles and responsibilities (such as preparation and distribution of meeting agendas and minutes)?

- Other team roles: scribe (note taker), facilitator, etc.

- Decision-making procedures: options include full-consensus, 80% consensus, majority; quorum; discretion of team leader to decide without consulting team, etc.

- Representation: who represents the team in the organization in different functions— the manager or team leader?

[7]   Reed, Jonathan R. *Guiding Statements Guide: Core Values, Mission, and Vision*. Madison, WI: Center for World-Changing Organizations, 2020.

*Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful, committed people
can change the world.*

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.   — **Margaret Mead**

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Retreats and board meetings are the best times to gain strategic insights and forge strong bonds among leaders. We can help you plan and facilitate these gatherings. We also can help you set their goals, design creative ways to achieve them, and ensure discussions are honest and respectful. Topics can range from emerging opportunities to resolving underlying issues.

Probably the best topic is *"How can we make our organization more successful?"* We'd welcome the opportunity to explore it with your leaders and board from an hour-long meeting to a weekend retreat. They'd consider what success means to their organization; what supports, produces, and drives it; and how to strengthen the forces behind it.

Keynote Addresses

Topics for our keynote addresses include world-changing strategy, marketing, and leadership, which we tailor to your organization; inspirational stories to motivate staff; and other topics.

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#2 Strategic Planning Workbook ~40 pages (not pictured below)

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#4 Strategic Marketing Guide: How to Better Understand, Engage, and Serve Those Who Determine Your Success ~50 pages

#5 Strategic Marketing Workbook ~50 pages (not pictured below)

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