

Want Better Results? Focus on Leadership!

By Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2016, distributed September 20, 2016

As a results-oriented organizational leader, you strive to increase sales, reduce costs, improve quality, delight customers, enhance productivity, and retain employees. Why? Because each of these measurable results contributes to the desired bottom-line, increased profitability.

No one can improve results directly. “Results” are the outcomes of the processes and culture that produce them. These two causative factors are where you should encourage your organizational leaders to focus their attention and energy.

Process. All work is a process. Every process starts with an input, ends with an output (a result), and is characterized in between by a series of rather predictable transformations.

Though everyone’s work is composed of dozens of operations, procedures, systems, and methods (common synonyms for “process”), your team members may not consciously search for improvements. Why? Perhaps they envision their roles as simply “getting the work done.”

Culture. Describing accurately your unique culture may be difficult. However, everyone can easily relate to this informal description: “Culture? It’s the way we do things around here.”

The “things” your team members do are the many various processes mentioned above. What makes your culture hard to describe is that you have many complex activities executed by changeable human beings. First, no two human beings function identically. Second, attitudes, perspectives, and focus, as well as circumstances, fluctuate throughout the day and week.

One of the many reasons organizations seek to mechanize processes is to reduce variability. Automation can execute many operations with great precision, eliminating the inconsistencies (and mistakes) that characterize human behavior.

However, we’ve not yet found a way for robots to improve their processes. That remains the realm of human beings. Some organizations overtly encourage team members to seek and communicate improvements. Other cultures are silent on expecting improvement ideas.

Creating a healthy culture filled with individuals committed to improve their operations is one of your major roles as a leader. Are you working to establish a more hospitable, more intentional, more collaborative, and more effective culture?

Your behaviors and comments significantly influence your organization’s culture, often in ways you don’t realize or understand. You and your direct reports are constantly in the spotlight, and every interaction communicates the values that are modeled as important.

The single greatest independent variable in shaping your organization’s culture and processes is the quality of leadership, both at the top and from leaders down through the ranks.

Improved quality of leadership. Let’s summarize, separating the causes from the effects. By improving the quality and depth of leadership, you improve the culture. By improving the culture, people are more perceptive and motivated to intentionally improve their processes. By improving the reliability and repeatability of their operations, results improve measurably.

Enhancing the quality and influence of your organization’s leaders is your single greatest leverage to improving results, especially over the long-term! Are you willing to overtly champion and encourage improved leadership awareness and competence among your direct reports?

Dennis Hooper has been improving the quality and depth of leadership skills in organizations for thirty years. Contact Dennis at dennis@buildingfutureleaders.com or at 404-575-3050.