

IT'S AXIOMATIC



December 2010

The BRIGHTON GROUP

 Partners Inc.

The Brighton Group/OI Partners Inc. is a locally owned and managed consulting firm specializing in career and organizational transition services. In-depth, one-on-one consulting is the core of our distinctive approach.

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There is an axiom that has been making the rounds among executives lately which goes something like this: *“Culture eats strategy for lunch.”* Which is to say that, if they are in conflict, the power of an organization’s culture will almost always trump the power of an organization’s strategy.

There is another, related axiom from the world of Organization Design: *“Systems trump people.”* Or, as one person put it, if you put a good person in a bad system, the bad system wins out.

Which means that the culture and systems of an organization are very powerful organizational dynamics and need to be aligned and in proper working order to achieve business results.

But, what if culture and systems are NOT in proper working order? How do these powerful dynamics get changed or fixed? To answer that, here’s another axiom to be familiar with: *“A key function of leadership is to define culture and optimize systems.”*

The point is, culture and systems determine how things get done in an organization, and leaders determine culture and systems. In fact, some of the great organizational and systems thinkers of our time (i.e. Edward Deming) believe that as much as 85% of employee effectiveness is directly dependent on the culture and systems in which they working, and that employees are heavily dependent on leaders to set up systems and culture that will enable them to do their work effectively.

In the last newsletter, the role of formal and informal employee contracts in shaping culture and systems was discussed. Now consider that it is the leaders in an organization who uniquely have the power to set, change or abolish formal and informal contracts in an organization, and the importance of understanding how to negotiate contracts to shape culture and systems takes on a whole new dimension. Leaders shape culture and systems through the formal and informal contracts they negotiate between all the stakeholders in a business, and the stakeholders are dependent on the leaders to do this.



It takes a powerful leader to control the variables and create and modify the contracts that shape the culture and systems of an organization. It takes a *wise* leader to do this in the manner most conducive to high-performance, wellbeing and success of the organization and all its stakeholders.

When was the last time you saw the word “wise” on the job description of a CEO?

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