right lane review

June 2014

reflect, refresh and reset

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Editor's note: New financial year, new opportunities, new ideas

The theme for this edition of Right Lane Review is ‘reflect, refresh and reset’. The commencement of a new financial year presents an opportunity to do just that, and to get going with FY2015.

As the end of the financial year approaches, we as individuals and organisations, take a collective breath, reflect on the past year’s performance and we recharge our batteries. But before we know it, the first quarter passes. The article ‘Getting off to a fast start’ identifies six ideas that can help organisations to ensure that the first quarter of the new year is not the slowest.

There is an article in this issue on ‘agility’, including its different levers, ‘agile strategy’, ‘agile ways of working’ and ‘agile resources’. Get the new year off to a fast start by aligning senior management priorities, aligning service providers and staffing projects more flexibly.

Right Lane recently conducted discussion forums in Melbourne and Sydney for long-tenure CEOs. This issue includes an article about how CEOs and other senior managers can maintain the energy necessary to drive performance.

There is a deep literature on strategic questions. This issue includes ten strategic questions you need to ask, inspired by strategists Chris Bradley and colleagues, Roger Martin, Richard Rumelt, and our own insights from running scores of strategy engagements.

Our client case study in this issue discusses a strategy project we recently conducted with the George Hicks Foundation, an organisation which is focussing on place based philanthropy and collective impact.

This Right Lane review also draws from our archive. In 2007, Marc Levy and former Collingwood and Carlton CEO, Greg Swann, wrote ‘Taking it one week at a time’. In the article, which was originally published in Business Spectator, the authors argued that there is much for managers to learn from football departments exposed to the weekly ‘blowtorch’ of competition. Some of their suggestions might help you and your team ‘get off to a flyer’ in FY2015.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Right Lane review and welcome your feedback.

In this issue

getting off to a fast start in your new year

by brad McSwain

Right thinking

- The first quarter of the new financial year can be a slow start as we all take a collective breath and reflect on the past year's performance
- Here are six ideas that can help you make a flying start in FY15:
  1. **Organisational agility:** Increase your strategic freedom, capacity and focus, and knock down structures limiting your effectiveness
  2. **Partnership alignment:** Harness the power of your business partners to get things done
  3. **Project delivery:** Get major projects moving and make sure they are on track to deliver results
  4. **Visual metrics:** Adopt highly visible, team-based performance measurement
  5. **Rhythm of engagement:** Set up dynamic board and executive teams interactions to track the progress of your strategy
  6. **Interaction quality:** Improve the productivity of your meetings to liberate your team's time and get better results

It's the start of a new financial year.

Having just navigated through our planning and budgeting cycle, and polished off as much as we can by 30 June, we take a collective breath. We reflect on the past year's performance, including that of our staff. We deal with management issues that have been pushed to the side. Whether or not we take a break from the office, we recharge our batteries.

Before we know it, the first quarter passes. And with our annual plans usually being ever-optimistically front-loaded, we find ourselves pulling out all stops to meet those Christmas/New Year deadlines.

Does this sound familiar? It happens to many of us — the first quarter of the new year is often our slowest.

Here are six ideas that can help you get off to a fast start in FY15.

1. Organisational agility

Increase your strategic freedom, capacity and focus, and knock down structures limiting your effectiveness.

Organisational agility has been a topic that has generated a lot of interest with our clients. Due to the positive responses we have had to materials we recently distributed on agility, we have included the white paper in this edition of the Right Lane Review.

For more information on the topic of organisational agility, please contact Matt Hardy matt@rightlane.com.au.

2. Partnership alignment

Harness the power of your business partners to get things done.

Many partnerships with major service providers are governed by contracts and service level agreements that focus on the operational. These then drive interactions, which may have some impact on the short-term performance of the service provider but do little for long-term strategic gain.

So, before you get mired in year-to-date operational metrics, switch the focus of your business partnerships from contributions and operations to strategy and commitment.

Using a strategy map and balanced scorecard framework (Kaplan, Norton & Rugelsjoen 2010), both parties define a set of outcomes that benefit each other before agreeing on the business processes, ways of working and values that will deliver these outcomes. Engaging the people who will drive the partnership through workshops, collaborative initiatives and project teams is critical to success, as is establishing the processes for partners to continuously monitor progress and to talk candidly about difficulties, share information, and continuously adapt the alliance strategy to evolving external conditions.

For more information on the topic of partnership alignment, please contact Stuart Wilkinson stuart@rightlane.com.au.

3. Project delivery

Get major projects moving and make sure they are on track to deliver results.

Organisations generally understand the benefits of taking a structured approach to the delivery of projects. However, often the time isn't taken to get major projects off to a positive start, and once underway project sponsors and managers can be under pressure to finish up and move on to the next.

We have found that three workshops (see figure 1) can help to get major projects moving, maintain the quality of work and keep projects on track and close out a project properly.

For more information on the topic of project delivery, please contact Zoe Pappas zoe@rightlane.com.au.

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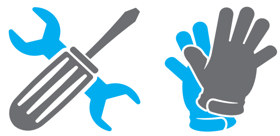
Figure 1: Overview of the 'three workshops' structure

1 Pole position

- Start project on the right footing
- Get everyone on the same page on what we are doing and when

2 Pit stop



- Make sure project is on track to finish 'DIFOTOS' (Delivered In Full On Time On Specification)
- Work out what we need to do for a strong finish

3 Champagne shower

- Look back: identify project successes and challenges
- Look forward: what would we do the same/differently in the future?
- Ensure smooth translation to operational excellence

back to front page

4. Visual metrics

Adopt highly visible, team-based performance measurement.

Are you looking to increase the sense of urgency in progressing your strategy?

Many organisations already have some form of metrics or scorecard to measure their performance. These are often only visible to a handful of senior staff.

When you want to regularly communicate to the organisation its progress towards a strategy, highlight important performance targets, or motivate your staff through transparency of the organisation's performance, wall mounted visual metrics displays can be transformational.

Visual metrics displays:

- create energy, encourage collaboration and foster cohesive teams (working together towards the same goals)
- increase accountability for metrics and action items
- promote transparency, particularly when combined with 'stand-up' team meetings
- increase internal awareness of the strategy and progress towards it
- allow teams to quickly and easily identify issues visually.

For more information on the topic of visual metrics, view article written in the December edition of Right Lane Review titled *'Seeing is believing: visual metrics displays'* http://www.rightlane.com.au/images/Review_December.pdf or contact Lauren Spiteri lauren@rightlane.com.au.

5. Rhythm of engagement

Set up dynamic board and executive teams interactions to track the progress of your strategy.

If your board isn't spending enough time shaping the organisation's future; if board or management committees are not clear on their accountabilities; if there is duplication of reporting; if you are lurching from one interaction to the next—perhaps it's time to review your board, executive and management interactions.

In our December edition of Right Lane Review, we provided ideas on making focus a habit of your organisation. We suggested that organisations focus on creating a rhythm of engagement. Getting this rhythm, and the accountabilities, right with the board and with the executive team will mean an organisation is well placed to track the progress of its strategy and to make decisions to adjust.

For more information on establishing rhythms of engagement, please contact Brad McSwain brad@rightlane.com.au.

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6. Interaction quality

Improve the productivity of your meetings to liberate your team's time and get better results.

We all understand the necessity of meetings. Done well, they help: create alignment and energy; make decisions and agree actions; and break down problems and barriers. Not done well, we feel like our time and our efforts have been wasted.

And it seems more often than not that meetings are not done well.

To get better decisions sooner from meeting, liberating your team's time and getting better results, you can:

- increase your understanding of current practices and their deficiencies
- design a solution of mandated practices
- communicate these mandated practices and train staff in how to emply them
- observe the results and adjust practices.

For more information on improving interaction quality, please contact Matt Hardy matt@rightlane.com.au.

So, don't wait until it's too late. Take on one or two of these ideas and have it as a focus early in the first quarter—it might be just what you need to get off to a fast start in the new financial year.

Reference

Kaplan, R, Norton, D & Rugelsjoen, B 2000, 'Managing alliances with the balanced scorecard, Harvard Business Review, January-February

want to know more?

If you would like Right Lane to help you get off to a fast start in the new financial year contact **Brad McSwain:**

brad@rightlane.com.au

organisational agility

How to knock down structures that are limiting your organisation's effectiveness

by matt hardy & marc levy

Right thinking

1. Organisational agility creates value – agile organisations dramatically outperform unadaptive organisations
2. An agile organisation is agile in strategy, ways of working and resources
3. These three agile levers, used together, can not only increase speed and responsiveness but can also reduce waste
4. This white paper outlines 10 practical tips that can help you improve your organisational agility

Agile organisations dramatically outperform inflexible ones. This Right Lane white paper explains how your organisation can increase its strategic freedom, capacity and focus, and knock down structures that are limiting its effectiveness.

Could it be that organisational 'agility' is to business what the 'loom bracelet' is to young school children? Both have captured their respective zeitgeists; both are difficult, at least initially; and there are different ways to approach them, with the more challenging ways being more rewarding. Once you work them out, both open up a range of opportunities.

Physical agility has, of course, long been the epitome of human movement requiring an integration or combination of balance, speed, reflexes, strength, endurance and grace. Now we hear the term in organisations in many different contexts: mental agility, emotional agility, analytical agility, technological agility, platform agility and strategic agility among others.

So why is this term so prevalent, what does it mean, and how can we think about it as a way of creating value?

Agility originates from the Latin *agilitatem*, referring to mobility, nimbleness and quickness. In medieval Latin, agile came to mean 'to do, act'. The essence of the word today is the ability to adapt quickly and effectively to changing circumstances. Agility can be an organisation's most valuable asset, or, a lack of it, its major point of vulnerability.

The case for the importance of organisational agility is clear in the numbers – agility creates value. A recent study of 2,500 US public companies found that highly adaptive companies doubled in market cap value in a five-year-period, while highly un-adaptive companies dropped an average of 40% in market cap (Reeves, Love & Mathur 2012). Indeed, 70% of the companies that were on the Fortune 1,000 list just a decade ago have now vanished, victims of their own inability to adapt to change.

Organisational agility has come to the forefront in response to the turbulent times of the Global Financial Crisis, because 'when the ground rocks, structures must flex' (Glenn 2009). Recent global and economy-wide research has identified the importance of organisational agility, as well as defining the nuances of the different characteristics of agility that an organisation can benefit from. The challenge now is to increase agility without simply increasing cost; that is, agility needn't cost more.

What are the levers of organisational agility? The above mentioned BCG study (Reeves et al 2012) suggests there are five forms of 'adaptive advantage' – signal, experimentation, organisational, systems and ecosocial – and that maintaining adaptiveness comes at a cost, as with building in flexibility into a manufacturing system. Professor Donald Sull of London Business School studied dozens of firms for over a decade to understand success factors in volatile markets and identified three distinct forms of organisational agility – strategic, portfolio and operational (Sull 2009). More recently, a Melbourne University team in collaboration with accounting firm PwC developed an 'agility model' comprising key capacities, which they called horizon, velocity and plasticity (Casler, Zyphur, Sewell, Barsky & Shackcloth 2012).

So how do we make sense of all the research and translate it into action? And how do we ensure that becoming more agile does not just mean adding redundant flexibility and associated cost?

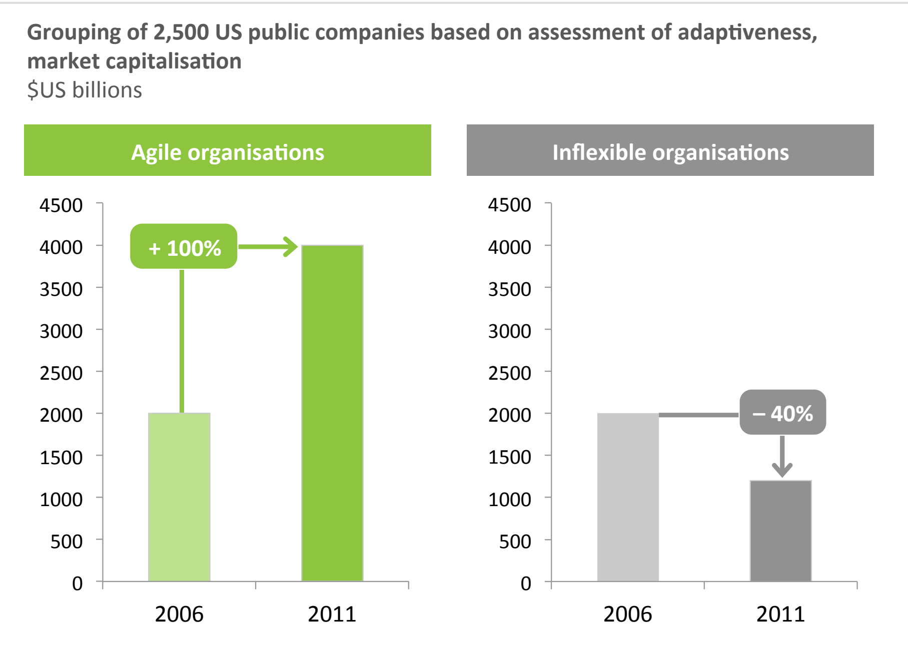
Figure 1: Used together, the three forms of agility can not only increase speed and responsiveness but also reduce waste

At Right Lane, we think that organisational agility can be simplified into three agile levers:

- agile strategy
- agile ways of working
- agile resources.

Let's briefly look at each of these agility levers, starting with what each lever means, addressing questions to diagnose your own agility for each lever, and then considering some potential tools to create value.

Figure 2: Agile organisations dramatically outperform inflexible ones



Source: Adapted from Reeves, M, Love, C, Mathur, N 2012, 'The Most Adaptive Companies 2012, winning in an age of turbulence', The Boston Consulting Group, August; Right Lane Consulting

Agile strategy

We define agile strategy as **how we adapt strategic priorities to meet changing circumstances.** It starts with understanding when, how and in what way the competitive circumstances have changed – or are changing – and then understanding how to adapt the organisation's priorities accordingly.

The shift required for many organisations is from old to new thinking, from conceptualising their circumstances in one way to another: organisations cannot necessarily rely on existing strategic settings and historical sources of advantage to deliver the success they once did.

Similarly organisations cannot rely solely on the traditional strategy and planning processes such as annual strategy retreats and fixed planning cycles. The shift is on from these static approaches to strategy and planning to more dynamic, active management of priorities.

We believe that organisations need a balanced approach between maintaining clarity of direction and the agility to see and seize game-changing opportunities, and that these are not mutually exclusive themes. We also believe organisations will need to become comfortable, and competent, with a more active and iterative approach to setting and shaping priorities.

Some questions to consider here are how well does your organisation:

- constantly endeavour to 'see' things emerging or on the horizon that will have an impact?
- deeply understand the key assumptions underlying its strategy and the triggers or early warning signs for these assumptions?
- translate research into insight, insight into implication, and implication into action?
- ensure visibility of the make-up and progress of the overall portfolio of projects, not just the individual projects?
- prioritise the important and the urgent?
- ensure everyone's individual priorities are directly linked to their manager's priorities, in a way that doesn't feel like micro-management?

A tool we've used to help organisations make strategic decisions in uncertain conditions is strategic pathway planning (or planning under uncertainty). We've found that scenario planning exercises don't amount to much. Frequently they result in well conceived, engaging scenarios, but from a planning point of view they don't always improve the chances of your organisation being practically prepared for different market place eventualities.

Instead, consider a small number of alternative pathways, which are combinations of likely, material external and internal developments that are clearly related; that is, likely to happen together (for example, a product development and competitive response, a regulatory change and a business model transformation). Then consider 'no regrets moves'. What can you get on with now that is sensible irrespective of the eventual strategic pathway. And what are the longer term shaping moves you can make to anticipate pathways and react to them as signs emerge that they are unfolding.

Dynamically reviewing strategic priorities is an obvious agile strategy tool, but in our experience it's rarely done consistently and well. Strategic moves and competitive responses are unlikely to always fit neatly into strategic or business planning cycles. For some clients this has been a shift in mindset and for others a change in practice. Either way, a rigorous and continuous focus on what really matters strategically, on acting quickly, on slaying sacred cows (and having the conversations required to do so) requires courage and discipline.

We have also found that organisations benefit from a basic 5+1 approach to determining priorities at an individual level (Bregman 2013). Here a leader identifies their five things of major focus for the upcoming period (say the next quarter), which should account for 95% of their attention, time and energy and all 'other' things together can only take the remaining 5%. This 5+1 approach is then considered in turn by each executive and their reports and so on. Done well it provides outstanding focus, transparency and alignment.

Can you all agree on the five priority activities for each executive over the next three months and how much time they should allocate between those activities?

Successful organisations, and leaders, are disciplined **and** dynamic, and know why, when and how to pull the right lever, and to get others pulling the same lever.

Agile ways of working

We define agile ways of working as **the capacity to develop and adopt the right delivery capability**, taking into account internal and external skills and relationships, to best achieve an outcome for the opportunity at hand.

For example, organisations can become more agile by taking a more open and fluid approach to reviewing and developing the capacity, quality and potential of relationships. The tools for success include identifying which relationships have the capacity to make the biggest difference (positive or negative) and then working collaboratively to seize the biggest opportunities or combat the biggest risks or threats.

Some questions to consider here are how well does your organisation:

- understand the relative cost in time and money of its different business activities, across organisational functions, and the extent to which these activities create competitive advantage?
- identify when and how best to use external resources?
- create the most value from its partnerships and alliances?
- develop quality relationships between its disciplines, divisions, and teams?
- identify and develop new relationships or collaborations across its networks of suppliers, distributors or customers?

Conducted regularly, value chain analysis can promote agility. As circumstances change, organisations should revisit where they add distinctive value and where others do it better. Value chain analyses, which plot the end-to-end delivery process in an industry the way customers experience it, offer a classical tool for determining where you want to focus, how you want to add value and where you want to have someone else (better, faster, cheaper) do it for you. Our clients are reviewing these decisions more frequently and with increasing rigour, particularly with respect to sourcing decisions.

Another tool that can provide insight relates to assessing and improving partnerships and alliances. We use an approach called 'alliance strategy mapping' (adapted from Kaplan, Norton & Rugelsjoen 2000). This is a way of developing and managing relationships with suppliers, alliance partners, or even other teams within the same organisation.

It is a shift from managing by operational metrics and service level agreements to focusing on strategy, commitment and results. It includes using independent experienced facilitators adapting some of the principles of professional mediation to engage, interview and hear from all parties before bringing them together. The facilitators then help the parties deliver a structured, facilitated, tailored workshop to agree and commit to an alliance strategy and establish a new rhythm for the partnership.

Align and realign with your key service providers frequently. They are delivering important business processes for your organisation and their imperatives need to reflect your – flexible – imperatives. SLAs that are revisited annually and re-negotiated even less frequently are unlikely to promote the kind of agility your organisation wants.

Agile resources

We define agile resources as **the active allocation of human and financial resources to dynamic priorities.**

This may require a shift in operating model; for example, moving away from the inflexibility and inertia of annual budgets being allocated within an inch of their lives, to budgets that can be quickly re-shaped or re-directed to meet new environmental realities or opportunities.

The challenge is to increase flexibility without just adding cost. This involves: taking a disciplined and sharper focus on the reality of each department's key activities; establishing what is absolutely 'must do' activity and identifying discretionary activity for what it is (unfunded unless there is a sound rationale to keep doing it); and creating 'thin' budgets, allowing more flexibility of funding allocation and timing.

There needs to be sufficient funds after spending on the 'known' to allow for discretionary spending, providing scope to test or trial possible game-changing innovations.

Some questions to consider here are how well does your organisation:

- effectively manage the resourcing of both 'now' and 'new'?
- quickly move resources and focus from one area to another?
- extract itself from areas of diminishing reward or advantage?
- commit focus, funds and resources to areas of promise?
- quickly undo existing projects, organisational silos and operational processes and re-direct budgets and resources, when necessary?

Tools that can create value include agile approaches to financial and human resource allocation. These include 'zero-based budgeting' or key value driver budgeting, and creative forms of capacity management such as using professional services firm staffing disciplines for the delivery of strategic projects.

First, let's examine agile approaches financial resources. Annual budgeting processes frequently start with last year's numbers, unchallenged; it is assumed that expenditure from the previous year should be maintained at similar or higher levels. But things change, within organisations and within the environments in which they operate. Budgets need to reflect the flexible, agile plans that management should adopt in response to those changes. This may mean building the budget from scratch, or at least the discretionary parts of it (generally most of the budget), and constructively challenging resource allocations. You might have a more rigorous executive team prioritisation discussion this year (where you are forced to make choices) or invite in external experts to discuss how they'd be allocating your budget based on what they know about the way the industry is changing. It can also mean reviewing the budget and reallocating resources more frequently during the year.

It might be that there is scope for a level of budgeting detail between the top line budget on a page, which can hide a multitude of sins, and the 20-sheet budget booklet, which is so detailed that people only interrogate their own numbers. Would making the five to ten key budget lines from each team's budget – along with the organisation's major cross functional project slate – encourage more open debate about the way the organisation is spending its money?

Analyse the last three years' budgets. Where are the numbers inert; that is, not moving up and down to reflect the changing needs of the business? Where is there an even upward trajectory of 3-5% increases every year? Does that resource allocation make sense given what is known about the opportunities and challenges facing the industry and organisation?

To foster agile financial resources, we also suggest more forward looking budget meetings. What's changing? What does that mean for what we should prioritise in the next quarter? How can we free up resources and allocate them to where there is the highest need (urgency/importance)?

Create a fund for ad hoc investment requirements. Increasingly, key business issues crop up during the year, and don't fit neatly into annual budgeting cycles. Some of our clients have isolated investment funds for this purpose. Such a budget allocation, which executives need to pitch to a committee to access, should have rigorous requirements but should not be overly bureaucratic. Properly set up, such an investment fund can help to limit the contingency that executives are otherwise incented to build into their annual budgets.

Now let's examine agile approaches to human resources. Within your organisation, are the right people doing the right things at the right time? As a project-based enterprise, we think about this challenge at least every week, as people come off projects and new projects get started. It's perhaps easier for us than for an organisation that is a mix of ongoing operational work and projects, like most of our clients; because of the natural turnover in our project work, we can be very flexible with resource allocation. If someone isn't busy enough we can add another project to their work program. If they are doing too much, we can choose not to staff them on new projects for a month or two, or we can reallocate some of their work to a colleague with similar skills who is underutilised. If they are not developing as fast as we would like in a certain area, we can look to staff them on the next project that is likely to give them that development opportunity.

This is harder for some of our clients because of the mix of their work, and sometimes because there are (frequently understandable) industrial barriers that impede more flexible resource allocation. However, there are some things that all organisations can and eventually will do. These include: more deliberately identifying and predicting the resourcing needs of forthcoming project work; knowing what knowledge and skills your people can bring to the work of your organisation; and identifying under and over utilisation and managing it, including by staffing people, from whichever part of the organisation they come, onto suitable projects.

Expand the pool of resources available to staff projects on short notice, by better understanding the knowledge and skills of your people. At one of our clients, a member of the investment team has become a highly desirable resource on strategic marketing projects because of his analytical capacity and sound commercial judgment. That's good for the organisation and good for him as it makes his role more interesting and adds to his professional development experience. For most organisations, staffing projects more flexibly is contingent upon having an accurate view of what projects are coming up and their likely resourcing requirements.

Figure 3: An organisation can be agile in strategy, ways of working and resources

1 Agile strategy	How we adapt strategic priorities to changing circumstances	e.g. planning under uncertainty, dynamically reviewing priorities (e.g. 5+1)
2 Agile ways of working	The capacity to develop and adopt the right delivery capability	e.g. Linking budgets to value chain, creating the most value from partnerships and alliances
3 Agile resources	The active allocation of human and financial resources to dynamic priorities	e.g. zero based budgeting, agile capacity management/ resource allocation

Conclusion

Organisational agility creates value and can not only increase speed and responsiveness but can also reduce waste. An agile organisation is agile in strategy, ways of working and resources. And as with the loom, and human physical agility, organisational agility can be developed and matured.

So you owe it to yourself, and your organisation, to look at your current and potential capacity through an agility lens.

Here is a consolidated list of tips for doing so[1]:

Agile strategy

1. Keep abreast of alternate strategic pathways
2. Dynamically review strategic priorities
3. Evaluate senior management priorities and time allocation

Agile ways of working

4. Know where you add distinctive value and where others do it better
5. Align and realign key service providers frequently

Agile resources

6. Foster transparency in financial and human resource allocation
7. Fight resource allocation intransigence
8. Create a fund for ad hoc investment requirements
9. Reallocate resources more frequently, as necessary
10. Staff projects more flexibly.

It's also important to review and learn. Perhaps ironically, agility can take years to get right. That doesn't mean that you can't access dividends from it rapidly; rather, your organisation needs to keep working at it and continuously improving your approach. In the recent past, what resource allocation decisions worked and what didn't? Where were we agile and where were we too slow to move? What can we do better?

We can see, in our everyday lives, how agility makes a difference. Can you see the opportunity within your organisation?

1 Some of these ideas were adapted from Birshan, Engel & Sibony (2013)

want to know more?

If you want to know more about how Right Lane can help you improve your organisation's agility, contact **Matt Hardy:**

matt@rightlane.com.au

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reflect refresh and reset ...

insights for longer tenure CEOs

by marc levy & giselle diego

Right thinking

- We regularly find ourselves in candid conversation with leaders about what's on their minds. As you would expect there are some common themes that emerge.
- One such theme is: how do leaders maintain their passion to lead? After five, ten or even fifteen years in a leadership role, maintaining the energy and enthusiasm to drive performance, look forward, and challenge and develop your people is common and real.
- We resolved to find some answers. As long-term leaders, how can we 'reflect, refresh and reset'?

Steve Jobs told a Stanford graduating class in 2005 '…to do great work, you've got to love what you do'.

Right Lane recently held discussion forums in Melbourne and Sydney for long-tenure CEOs from a range of different industries. Our ingoing thesis was that after five, ten or even fifteen years in a leadership role, it could be difficult to maintain the energy and enthusiasm to drive performance, look forward, and challenge and develop staff. We gave the forum the title 'Reflect, refresh and reset' because we expected that the long-tenure CEOs who accepted our invitation to participate would – at times – have felt the need to do just that. They were certainly reflective, but the overwhelming sense around the table was that they loved what they did and they had little need for refreshing and resetting; these CEOs weren't careworn, they were fired up.

Loving what you do does not mean that work is not frustrating, draining and sometimes lonely; but forum participants' roles remained interesting and engaging; they had no trouble getting out of bed every morning to face the challenges awaiting them.

In this article we describe themes that emerged from the discussions. As we could find no helpful literature addressing the topic of long-tenure CEOs when preparing for the forums, we trust that the following insights are useful for other long-tenure CEOs and senior executives.

Should I stay or should I go?

Lesson: How long you should be in the job is the question you need to ask yourself.

Tenure, and the decision to stay or go, is as much subjective as it is objective. Subjective in the sense that a CEO must question their own motivations for staying on and whether or not they personally believe they are still adding enough value. Whether a CEO is doing a good job is more important than for how long she or he has been doing it.

The challenge is how to measure that value. Is it solely based on the performance of the organisation the CEO is leading or is it about the energy and ideas he or she brings to their work? Our participants generally agreed that the value they added was in part a function of their capacity to draw passion from and inject passion into their work.

Some CEOs felt strongly that it was important to avoid glib prescriptions about appropriate tenure. CEOs in many industries were making very long-term decisions – or sometimes non-decisions if that's what was required – impacting their customers over 30 or 40 years. These circumstances sometimes meant that long-tenure, and the long term 'over the cycle' judgments it promoted, was in the best interests of the organisations led by these CEOs.

A minority of the CEOs were concerned about staying in the job too long. 'I think there is a correlation between length of tenure and performance – the longer you are in role, the more difficult it is to perform very well in it. This may be due to fatigue – not simple tiredness but more a weariness with the job or certain bits of it, particularly the repetitive aspects, which can lead to cutting corners that should not be cut or an unwillingness to confront the really hard issues. It may also be due to the development of a certain rigidity of outlook and an unwillingness or reluctance to change things, particularly those things that you introduced in the first place, when change is needed.'

While it was important to make one's own judgments about longevity, it was also helpful to take counsel from others, including colleagues, the board chair and trusted external counsellors. Ultimately the board's assessment of a CEO's performance and prospects would be the main factor in determining his or her future in the top job.

Fan the flames

Lesson: Take a break to maintain high levels of energy.

Love for work may provide the 'fire in the belly', but something needs to fuel and fan those flames. It is important for long-tenure CEOs to occasionally take a decent holiday or a sabbatical. As well as being good for the CEO's health, including managing stress, a longer-than-normal, genuinely 'off the grid' absence from the organisation can assist with the development of other senior executives, and executive teams.

Mini breaks provide an opportunity to dial down if switching off is not possible. If travelling for work, tacking on a few extra days before heading back to the office – and trying to incorporate family into those mini breaks – can energise. Having the discipline to avoid work on weekends or after a certain hour in the evenings can help.

Taking a break to exercise is key to physical and mental health. Giving it priority requires discipline, less for the exercise itself, and more in finding and locking in the time to do it.

Let the baker bake the bread

Lesson: Being the boss doesn't mean you have to be the source of all innovation.

Forum participants identified as generalists; they were engaged in every aspect of their organisations to a greater or lesser extent. At times they felt that they had been the only person who could solve certain problems and that occasionally drew them into operational areas that ideally they wouldn't traverse. Long-tenure CEOs sometimes found themselves getting into bad habits – like being too directive and not letting their teams get to the answers themselves, 'giving in' to 'seductive' group think or 'roaming and interfering'. Many forum participants said that a capacity for reflection about flaws in their internal relationships and interactions, particularly with their executive team colleagues, was key to their ongoing success.

Being able to tap into the potential and innovation of the team is an essential component of leading effectively. That said, letting the baker bake the bread does not mean that all idea generation is delegated. Our CEOs relied on their teams, but they wanted to stay in the flow of ideas within their organisations. CEOs who participated in our forums said that learning from other industries and contexts (their personal lives, executive education, etc.) cultivated their innovative instincts.

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Change the work or the team around you

Lesson: Sometimes changing ways of working can give the CEO, and the organisation, a boost.

Market conditions change; new opportunities and challenges emerge. These CEOs were 'not in the same role' that they were in when they started. As one CEO observed, 'Time is a resource to be allocated …' [differentially, depending on the circumstances] to 'strategy development and strategic decision making, building the team, representing the organisation and allocating resources'. CEOs should regularly review how they are spending their time to ensure that their work is having the highest possible impact.

Restructuring the team around you – that is, hiring or promoting new talent and changing the organisation design – may be necessary periodically or when conditions change. For example, a top team might get 'stale' or an executive manager may be perfect for a role at a point in time and then out of his or her depth a few years later.

Executive teams can get used to a CEO — not only used to their expectations and messages, but also used to working and delivering in a way that they know will satisfy or placate the CEO. 'A long-term CEO will have developed a leadership or support group that could become a comfortable club, which may be self-perpetuating and hence a barrier to new talent coming through. It may also insulate the CEO from pressure to step down. There is also the risk of the CEO thinking he/she is infallible – and not listening to other views – particularly if the business is successful.' Some CEOs felt that 'longevity risks' such as these needed to be periodically disrupted.

Renewing executive teams can also help to create the space necessary for CEOs to pursue the work that is most beneficial to the organisation. Changing the team can help energise CEOs, although some of the participants in our forums were concerned about the extent to which this notion was overly self-indulgent. Changing the work or the team can give CEOs a boost; however, it should not be motivated solely by this rationale. A change to the work or team around you should only occur if the organisations needs a new team or to adjust internal practices. These decisions need to be centred on what is best for the organisation.

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Growth and change were unceasingly motivating and invigorating for participants in our long-tenure CEO forums. They recognised the benefits of regular reflection, of asking hard questions: Am I still well equipped for the job? Am I cutting corners because I know the work so well? In what ways could it be beneficial for the organisation if I moved on? They identified different strategies to maintain energy levels and harness the talent within their teams — and when circumstances demanded, they knew they needed to change the work or the team around them.

The authors would like to thank the CEOs who participated in the forum and several others who were unable to attend but shared their perspectives with us by email or in person.

'They (CEOs) were certainly reflective, but the overwhelming sense around the table was that they loved what they did and they had little need for refreshing and resetting; these CEOs weren't careworn, they were fired up'.

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If you want to know more about how Right Lane can help you think through your challenges as a CEO or senior executive, contact **Stuart Wilkinson**:

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ten strategic questions you need to ask

Booz & Co's Ken Favaro (2013) wrote recently that planning questions needed to be distinguished from strategic questions; in other words, that a hierarchy of objectives, and corresponding measures and initiatives, on the one hand shouldn't be confused with fundamental questions that go to where an organisation competes and how it wins there (Martin 2014). There is a rich literature imploring managers not to confuse strategy and planning, as if they were at odds. We have built strategic questions into the strategy and planning projects we run with clients for nearly two decades. We offer the following 'top ten list' of strategic questions, inspired by Chris Bradley and colleagues (2012), Roger Martin (2014), Ken Favaro (2013), Richard Rumelt (2011), Jack Welch (2005) and Dana O'Donovan & Noah Rimland Flower (2013), and our own work with more than 80 organisations.

1. **Why do we do what we do? What's the problem or opportunity in the world with which we are engaging?**
2. **Who are our primary customers?**
3. **What do we want to be famous for?**
4. **Where will we compete, specifically?**
5. **What is our winning move/s?**
6. **How will we add value to our stakeholders?**
7. **How does our strategy rest on insight that only we have?**
8. **How does our strategy put us ahead of the market?**
9. **What capabilities do we need to be successful in the future?**
10. **What could a competitor do to hurt us?**

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right lane case study:

from charity to collective impact

GEORGE HICKS FOUNDATION

by giselle diego & stephanie exton

Right thinking

- Collective impact is a framework used by philanthropic foundations to address social problems in a more sophisticated way, engaging multiple stakeholders and organisations to focus on a common agenda
- The George Hicks Foundation has moved to a collective impact model with a geographic focus on the Mornington Peninsula

Philanthropy is a changing and dynamic sector, boldly moving on from the days of cheque-writing for 'worthy causes'. Many philanthropic foundations are more sophisticated and work more closely with the sectors in which they operate. The language they use is about 'investment' instead of 'giving'; it's about funding 'innovation' and sustainability rather than 'a cause'.

The client: The George Hicks Foundation

Warren Buffett once told Bill and Melinda Gates 'Don't just go for safe projects… take on the really tough problem' (Gates, 2014). The George Hicks Foundation is taking on a really tough problem in Australia; the Foundation's mission is to proactively help young people break out of the cycle of disadvantage through educational interventions. Right Lane has recently partnered with the George Hicks Foundation to develop a strategy that enables the Foundation to keep focus on the mission but approach the problem in a new way through a collective impact model.

The George Hicks Foundation was established by George Hicks, a successful businessman, in 1965 and has over the last 49 years supported the changing needs of people in Victoria and more recently Australia wide. During this time the Foundation has taken many different approaches to philanthropy and these different approaches reflect changes in the sector and ideas about charity more broadly.

The original idea for the Foundation was to address the lack of support for medical research. Many donations were made to well regarded charities 'doing good work' in the community. This was a hands off approach typical of the time. Once-yearly meetings were held to coincide with a social catch up with board members and generous cheques were written.

In 1993 Ian Hicks, George's youngest son, took over running the Foundation. Ian brought a new focus to the Foundation and placed a greater degree of concern on the relevance of the funding.

Between 2009 and 2013 Ian's daughter, Kirsten was Executive Officer. During this time, she oversaw its further transformation to increasingly proactive philanthropy. Under Kirsten's leadership, the Foundation developed and implemented a social investment strategy, which specifically focused on breaking the cycle of disadvantage through educational interventions for young people.

The Foundation continues to follow George's original vision of identifying the needs in society and working towards filling the gaps through strategic philanthropy. This idea stands strong at the core of the work of the Foundation.

The challenge: Complex problems need complex ways of working

Over the past 12 months the Foundation's board began acknowledging that there is potential to move to a more advanced funding model that includes long-term strategy, sector collaboration, geographical focus, research, evaluation and outcome measurement. Up until now the Foundation partnered with organisations that shared its belief that education is a central element to any person reaching their potential; the theory of change being that the provision of educational initiatives combined with social and emotional support for young people who are disadvantaged will result in them having opportunities and the means to overcome barriers to success (break out of the cycle).

Issues that had arisen from this theory of change included:

- **Lack of impact measurement:** How do we assess the value of the outcomes of the Foundation and use this to guide developments?
- **Lack of clarity about the areas of impact on which to focus:** What level of partnership development do we need with non-profits? What degree of engagement should we have with other philanthropic organisations? What is our geographical target, if any?
- **Disadvantage is extremely complex:** Often addressing one issue is not sufficient to impact on the whole system. Do we need to think about collective initiatives?

In addressing these issues, the Foundation recognised that there was an opportunity to draw on current developments, engage with leaders in the field and develop a strategic approach to philanthropic engagement. The idea of a collective impact approach with a geographic focus became the central theme of a strategy workshop.

Collective impact: A departure from the isolated model

Collective impact has come to be seen in the non-profit sector as a new and more effective process for social change. Traditionally the non-profit sector has focused on isolated impact, an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution within a single organisation (Kania and Kramer 2011). The Foundation's old theory of change did just that – target single organisations that offered a solution that aligned with the mission.

Collective impact is a vehicle for facilitating social change. It brings together multiple cross-sector organisations to focus on a common agenda. The power of collective impact lies in what Kania and Kramer (2013) call the 'heightened vigilance that comes from multiple organisations looking for resources and innovations through the same lens'. They articulate the five conditions of collective impact:

1. **Common agenda:** All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
2. **Shared measurement:** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
3. **Mutually reinforcing activities:** Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
4. **Continuous communication:** Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
5. **Backbone support:** Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organisation(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organisations and agencies.

Collective impact provides a complex and agile process for complex problems. In the philanthropic space, collective impact provides the vehicle through which donors become stakeholders in a much broader process than the singular act of grant making.

'I don't feel tied up by the strategy, I feel empowered by it'

Stephanie Exton, Executive Officer, George Hicks Foundation

The project: A new strategy for more effective social change

Philanthropy can be unconstrained, it can be flexible and risky, responsive and immediate, long-term and visionary. Smart philanthropy can change the game. The Foundation had a vision for how they wanted to change the game but it needed help in articulating that strategy. The Foundation wanted a strategy expert to facilitate the process but also expertise in the non-profit space and so they approached Right Lane.

Right Lane worked closely with the George Hicks Foundation in the lead up to its December 2013 strategy day to understand what key questions needed to be answered on the day. The answers to these strategic questions would position the Foundation to affect the change captured by the mission.

During the board strategy workshop the board re-affirmed the mission and agreed that the mission did not need to change. What did need to change was the strategy.

The board agreed that, to help young people break out of the cycle of disadvantage, the new game plan needed was of collective impact with a geographic focus on the Mornington Peninsula.

The Mornington Peninsula is an area characterised by great wealth and great poverty. It is the holiday playground of Melbourne's wealthy while also being the area with some of the most disadvantaged postcodes in Australia. To really break the cycle of disadvantage educational interventions need to start with and support expecting parents. A collective impact framework allows the Foundation to work with various stakeholders and communities in the region to achieve long-term impact.

Through the strategy process the Foundation articulated four new objectives to guide its work:

1. Establish a presence in the centres of disadvantage on the Mornington Peninsula
2. Strengthen and build current and new relationships and alignments
3. Raise the profile of the Foundation and draw new donations
4. Create a monitoring framework for the Foundation.

Right Lane worked closely with Stephanie Exton (the Foundation's Executive Officer) after the strategy day to develop a detailed plan to enliven the Foundation's new strategy, with each objective having a corresponding set of initiatives and measures.

The strategy has given the Foundation a renewed focus to enable it to have the kind of impact it has always set out to have.

A future of long-term investment in the Peninsula

Work has already begun on the Peninsula, the focus currently on Hastings and West Rosebud. A brief environmental analysis was undertaken and the Foundation has been in contact with various organisations on the Peninsula. In June 2014, Stephanie Exton took a group of representatives from organisations on the Peninsula to visit Doveton College a project the Foundation supports. Doveton College is an integrated family and children's centre and school (birth to year 9) operating within a single governance model for children and families in the area. This integrated school could provide an appropriate model for other areas on the Peninsula.

Since spending more time in the area the Foundation has recently launched a small grants scheme for non-profits operating on the Peninsula. The application process is short and simple in comparison to traditional grant applications. The scheme allows the Foundation to see what kind of work is being done, what the needs are, and who the organisations are working to address disadvantage.

The Foundation's strategy is flexible enough that it does not feel hamstrung and has empowered its staff to be able to make decisions and introduce new initiatives, such as the grant scheme.

The Foundation is positioning itself as a resource for other donors where it can pass on information, create partnerships and become a contact point to inform potential donors about the impact of giving. It is early days, but the Foundation is committed for the long-term and will strategically build relationships and alliances alert to the needs of the community and the key role the community itself plays in long-term social change.

Right Lane will continue to work with the Foundation in developing its collective impact framework.

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Consistent with our purpose to 'contribute to a better society by helping organisations that do good do better', Right Lane works with a small number of social impact organisations on a low-fee basis to improve and implement their strategies. In 2013, Right Lane allocated 7% of its consulting revenue to these engagements.

The strategy has given the Foundation a renewed focus to enable it to have the kind of impact it has always set out to have.

Giselle Diego is a Project Manager at Right Lane Consulting and Stephanie Exton is the Executive Officer of George Hicks Foundation.

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taking it one week at a time

new lessons for business from the AFL

This article from Right Lane's archive was originally published in Business Spectator in 2007

by marc levy & greg swann

Right thinking

- In search of advantage, there is much business can learn from sport – in particular the Australian Football League.
- We have found eight basic practices that business can learn from AFL:
  1. Emphasise competitive events
  2. Utilise predictive performance management tools
  3. Encourage participatory decision-making
  4. Use credos more effectively
  5. Inspire workplaces with symbols, emblems and rituals
  6. Approach planning with a focus on the near-term
  7. Make talent management a focus
  8. Review your performance

With the prominence of sport in Australian life, it's surprising that there is such a modest serious literature on what business can learn from sport. While sports managers pour over business books for inspiration and every second footballer is studying for an MBA, there is precious little learning going the other way, aside from the odd motivational speech, leadership program and book about teamwork. We argue that there is much that business can learn from recent developments in sports management, and in particular the activities of the clubs of the country's leading sport, the Australian Football League. In their search for advantage, AFL clubs have adopted several innovative practices, particularly in their football operations departments, that businesses would do well to consider.

In this article we examine eight practices that football clubs perform better than most of the 50 or more businesses we have served in our careers spanning line management, corporate restructuring and management consulting.

AFL clubs have adopted several innovative practices, particularly in their football operations departments, that businesses would do well to consider.

1. Emphasise competitive events

First, businesses can learn from AFL clubs' emphasis on competitive events. Football clubs have at least 22 competitive events – home and away games – scheduled for them every year.

'Taking it one week at a time' as the cliché goes, they study the strengths and weaknesses of their rivals' players and game plans, think through their own competitive strategy and tactics, and prepare their coaches and players for the contest. It's harder for businesses. Few of them have a clear focus on competitive events and of those that do – for example, services businesses that regularly submit proposals for competitive tenders – many invest only scantly in competitor analysis and strategy. While some sophisticated businesses use techniques like game theory and scenario planning to think through competitive situations, they generally do so infrequently and fail to engage many of their people in the process. There is an opportunity for businesses to create competitive events to sharpen their competitor analysis and strategy and tap into their people's natural competitive instincts. For example, Holden outsells Ford in Australian car sales. It would be unrealistic for Ford to aim to outsell Holden over a year, at least in the short term, but they aim to outsell Holden for one month or one quarter, and galvanise its people in support of this quest.

2. Utilise predictive performance management tools

The second practice employed by AFL clubs from which businesses can learn relates to predictive performance measurement. AFL clubs have worked out what they have to do to win. They know if they create enough 'clearances', 'inside-50s' and tackles that they'll win most games. They routinely measure and monitor these predictive performance measures, and coaches have them at their fingertips during games, so that they can challenge players and make changes if they need to. Coaches concentrate on 'getting the processes right' in the knowledge that the results will take care of themselves. In contrast, businesses have struggled to make the transition from a reliance on historical measures of financial performance to a balanced set of leading and lagging performance measures. Of those organisations we know that have a balanced set of historical and more predictive performance measures, many haven't had the discipline to manage by the predictive measures nor the resolve to keep working at identifying the measures that really drive their performance. Again football clubs have had it easier than some businesses in this area, because they have access to deep, longitudinal data sets kept by firms like Champion Data and there is an emerging consensus about what measures matter most.

3. Encourage participatory decision-making

Engaging front line staff through participatory decision-making is a third practice used by football clubs from which most businesses can learn. All AFL clubs now have player leadership groups (generally comprised 5 to 7 senior players elected by their peers), which get involved in all sorts of football related decisions, from taking training sessions to contributing to player selection and from attending to player disciplinary matters to developing set plays. AFL clubs are still relatively small businesses, so it is easier for them to engage footballers in decision-making than it is for larger organisations; but this doesn't mean that a more inclusive and participatory decision-making approach won't work in large businesses. For example, we have seen big professional services firms use consultative groups very effectively as a means of canvassing staff views on important topics. This idea could be pushed much further. Why couldn't businesses involve staff-appointed leadership groups, with clear charters of responsibility, in certain recruitment decisions, the annual planning process, operations improvement initiatives and important internal communications? AFL clubs have other ways of engaging their player groups from which businesses trying to engage their staff could learn. For example, players can be dismissive of the need to engage with sponsors. However, if you bring them together in a participatory forum and explain the economics of the club, why sponsorship is important – sponsors contribute as much as 40% of club revenues – and what sponsors' money buys for the football department, they are far more inclined to get involved with sponsors. More than that, once they 'get it', they are a fertile source of new ideas about how to increase the value sponsors derive from their relationship with the club.

4. Use credos more effectively

Fourth, some AFL clubs have used credos more effectively than many of the businesses we have known. Of course it's easier to get forty people with a common purpose into a room with a good facilitator to develop a list of meaningful values than it is to get 1,000 people with (sometimes) divergent purposes on the same page. But the success of a credo is not entirely dependent on every member of staff having had involvement in its development. We have worked with some outstanding values based businesses whose current staff have had no part in the formation of the values and yet they know them, believe them, and use them routinely in making trade-offs and difficult decisions. Successful football club and business credos have some things in common: they are straightforward and unambiguous without being clichéd; senior people care about the credos, talk about them and make clear how they are used; they are generally linked to individual performance evaluation; and there are well known examples of behaviour consistent with the credos that have been rewarded and breaches that have been decisively dealt with. In the AFL, if there is a significant breach of a credo, the whole team might have to take a 6am dip in the Bay. We are not suggesting that senior managers take their teams for an early morning swim if someone stuffs up, but the idea of taking action in the event of behaviour that breaches the credo is directly applicable in business.

5. Inspire workplaces with symbols, emblems and rituals

AFL clubs use symbols, emblems and rituals to inspire their players – team motifs, jumper presentations, honour boards, images of legendary past players, lockers associated with guernsey numbers. We have seen a handful of organisations utilise this fifth practice with great conviction and effect. A New Zealand subsidiary of a major global company had to restructure its operations under pressure to maintain its profitability. Faced with high levels of anger, cynicism and despair among

its remaining staff, the subsidiary's management adopted 'Kia Kaha', a Maori expression that means stand strong in the face of adversity, as its recovery clarion call. The Kia Kaha emblem became ubiquitous on plans, presentations and other internal communications throughout the restructuring and subsequent rebuilding period. The subsidiary rallied and is now one of the company's leading global performers. This evocative metaphor, and the imagery associated with it, played a significant part in the turn around. We have also seen a few organisations successfully use posters in their shared spaces to draw attention to new strategies, illuminate new initiatives and promote important internal events. Just as many businesses could do more with symbols and emblems, they could also recast ceremonies, such as those for new recruits, and celebrations of success so that they are more impactful and send more specific messages to their staff about what is valued.

6. Approach planning with a focus on the near-term

The sixth practice used by AFL clubs with potential for business is near-term planning. Football operations departments break the playing season into blocks to help make an uncertain future seem more manageable. Coaches often speak about a theme for the next month or winning a certain number of games leading into a mid-season break. Many businesses lack a sharp, competitive, near-term focus to their planning. Instead they have a three-to-five-year strategic plan and an annual business plan and budget. But things can change faster than that, motivation can dissipate between planning events and implementation can go awry. Complementing existing longer term planning with shorter term planning can help businesses to make the link between infrequent and detached strategising and day-to-day decision-making. One CEO we know recently used most of the time his management team had set aside to review progress against the organisation's strategic plan to reframe the challenge facing the organisation over the next few months. The organisation would concentrate on commercialising new products and, aside from keeping the business going, nothing else. The group agreed who would do what and when, the resources they would need, the means by which they would evaluate success and the frequency with which they would meet to discuss progress.

7. Make talent management a focus

Talent management is vital in the AFL. Like US sports clubs before them, AFL clubs have adopted rigorous athletic and behavioural testing for potential recruits, continuous feedback and list management, among other disciplines with direct parallels in business. Many businesses are of course excellent at different aspects of this seventh practice, but there are some things that AFL clubs are now doing from which businesses could learn. Most clubs now have two or three dedicated development coaches who work with young players in particular to accelerate their acquisition of skills, knowledge and abilities. Some businesses we've seen give their staff incredible development experiences (training, coaching, feedback, apprenticeship, etc.), but too many neglect their new recruits, even some organisations with very well established graduate recruiting programs.

That many businesses take too long to act on under-performers is a common refrain; however, there is another aspect of talent management – prevalent in the AFL and applicable to business – that gets less attention. In the AFL, players are constantly being given new opportunities in the interests of their own development and that of the team; for example, to spend some time in the midfield, to move between half forward and half back when the circumstances demand, to do a stopping role, a run with role, multiple roles and so on. In general, businesses are too inflexible with the short and long-term deployment of their resources; they should make it easier for talented people to move between jobs and projects, providing different short and long-term development experiences.

8. Review your performance

The eighth and final practice businesses can learn from AFL clubs is reviewing performance. Fixture permitting, AFL clubs generally spend the first two days of the week after a game sorting through what worked and what didn't, writing history notes and giving coaches and players feedback on their performance. Most businesses don't invest enough time and effort in reviewing performance and making adjustments to their plans. This is relatively easy to fix.

It requires a clear plan with milestones and metrics; regular, well facilitated review meetings; and commitments to being candid with colleagues and taking action when there are significant variations to plan.

AFL clubs are also good at a related practice, moving on. Players all take an end of season break with instructions to come back ready for a new challenge next year. Business people often don't have the same opportunity to take a mental break after a big project or a year's work, but perhaps they should. This doesn't mean synchronising everyone's annual leave, but there is certainly a case for being more deliberate about acknowledging the end of a body of work, reviewing and learning from it, articulating a new challenge and then moving on.

Most businesses don't invest enough time and effort in reviewing performance and making adjustments to their plans. This is relatively easy to fix.

Marc Levy is Director of Right Lane Consulting and Greg Swann is former CEO of the Carlton and Collingwood Football Clubs.

About Right Lane

Right Lane is an Australian management consulting firm that specialises in moderating executive team and board workshops and facilitating strategy and planning processes for midsized organisations.

Right Lane was established in 1997 to help private, not for profit and public sector clients to clarify and accelerate their future plans. Over the past 17 years, we have helped the executive teams and boards of more than 80 organisations to define and adapt their direction and strategy, identify and clarify their priorities, align their efforts with their aspirations, get their major projects started and finished, and measure and improve their performance.

In 2011, Right Lane became, to our knowledge, Australia's first 'for benefit' management consulting firm. This means that we have capped our return on shareholder funds at reasonable levels, rather than seeking to maximise financial returns, which allows us to concentrate on our mission of contributing to society by helping organisations that do good do better.

Our areas of focus

- Developing and managing strategy and planning processes for clients
- Implementing strategy through aligning and engaging the organisation, and measuring and monitoring performance
- Leading strategic projects, such as pre-merger analysis, pricing, new product feasibility and growth options evaluation
- Facilitating clients' board and executive team workshops

For more information

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