

Time does not discriminate, it treats everything equally. Time is also the driving force for changes regardless man's readiness. Time will push us into the future without seeking for our permission. We can be in fear or with excitement to enter the future. Therefore, in growing a company, there is nothing more important staying ahead of time and developing the capability to build its own future.

Building your future

Future
Opportunities
Changes
Unique Propositions
Systems

FOCUS Consulting believes in building your capability to face the future. Our strength lies in creating acute and relevant perspectives that carry adequate importance to create new paradigms in the minds of your members.

Building teams is short term, creating the suitable corporate climate is enduring.

Diagnostic is knowing while suitable intervention is doing.

Not only we help grow leaders, we seek to enable the leaders to act.

Building bridges are easy but maintaining them is hard.

Illuminating differences is essential, but we think embracing diversities is critical.

Instead of just knowing where to go, we look for where to position.

FOCUS Consulting applies a self-developed model to provide diagnosis to any organizations. This model is represented by the word "FOCUS". It offers a futuristic perspective to any organizations that will help set the future defining directions.

Future holds answers to all our queries, dreams, aspirations, etc. It is not an option to just wait for *future* to arrive. We seek to meet the future before it comes.

Opportunities are created and not chanced upon. While some believe in luck of the draw, we believe in creating the draw for ourselves.

Changes are inevitable. Even if we recognize this fact, it doesn't guarantee discerning what to change. Identifying the critical changes is imperative to success.

Unique propositions are processed opportunities. An opportunity that evolves into an idea requires effective communication. Not paying attention to how these ideas should be presented

Systems are an integral part of our lives. We trust black boxes that we have little or no comprehension of as working principles. Every corporate environment creates its own systems that sustain it running. Only the right systems will yield desired outcomes.

What is in the Future?

Into the unknown, uncharted area, path of uncertainties, point of no return, etc. All these phrases are synonymous to the word *Future*. As nobody can foretell the future, as we inevitably move into it by the invisible forces of time, we fear the unknown. While we cannot eliminate fear, we can learn to master it. A kitchen knife can be feared by some but not others. By stepping beyond our comfort zone, we can learn to master the fear of unknown.

It is critical for any organization that aspires to succeed to develop its capability to build their future. Success can mean making a windfall, providing employment opportunities, developing people or exercising social responsibilities as an organization. These are things we usually yearn for.

Unfortunately, a common mental model of many organizations perceives the training function as a support role that carries little or no strategic significance to organization's future.

How can we get there we may ask?

Getting there means we have not arrived.

What is required to get there?

As soon as we ask these questions the fear of the unknown surfaces.

Some will try setting targets to serve as a mean to the future end point.

Creating a vision that is embraced by the team members is another way to the future place. Creating a shared vision is commonly perceived as the *strategic planning session* to many organizations. While this is the start point to creating the organization's future in the mind, most organizations have neglected the need to learn whilst planning.

If we already know the plan, there is no necessity to plan. To plan is to anticipate, anticipation cannot go without entering the unknown, a.k.a. the future. Since we have not experienced the future, it would be wise to learn about it. What works in the past may not work in the future. With the absence of the need to learn while executing the planning stage, most managers simply fall back on what has been proven and known to them subconsciously. Without stepping beyond the known region, the conceived plans are mostly ill-prepared for future changes.

Brain-storming will not be a brain-storming session if the ideas are existing and in-use. It is a default mindset to welcome known ideas written on a flip chart during most brain-storming sessions.

At the individual level, a shared vision requires support from personal vision. For oneself to discover his or her own personal vision, one will need to journey on the path towards personal mastery.

What do we need to know or learn to get there (future)?

If we have inadequate know-hows, we will generate more anxiety as time pushes us into the future. Being aware of what you need to know or sensing what may augment your know-how is a capability to build your own future.

Most training functions in any organization do this and external consultants

Creating a shared vision is commonly perceived as the *strategic planning session* to many organizations. While this is the start point to creating the organization's future in the mind, most organizations have neglected the need to learn whilst planning.

play specific roles to meet special learning needs. Unfortunately, a common mental model of many organizations perceives the training function as a support role that carries little or no strategic significance to the organization's future. The status of some training function can be relegated to a "nice-to-have" function in the organization. The closest it gets to strategic significance is playing as buffer to shuffle budget. During crunch time training budget is the first to be truncated. At worse, the entire function can be re-designated to support operations or totally removed. Making light of the training function is like neglecting the arms on our body. Assuredly, the organization's capability to build its own future will significantly be undermined.

What are the Opportunities?

With the capability to build your own future, surely such an organization can create opportunities or seek out opportunities to translate the vision (future) into reality.

There is a saying, luck does not exist, only opportunities yet to be discovered. A blind cat will never bump into a dead rat if the cat doesn't move. Sometimes it feels

Luck does not exist, only opportunities yet to be discovered. A blind cat will never bump into a dead rat if the cat doesn't move

safer to stay since we have limited information about the future, like the blind cat. If we don't

move out from this safe place, we will never discover new information that can be used as the future unfolds itself. This is a classic paradox experienced by countless managers when planning for next year.

Generally, there are two types of opportunities. They are,

1. Created opportunities
2. Identified opportunities

Created opportunities are activities created by the organization itself that bear great potential for business growth.

Identified opportunities refer to those that are sought through active engagement with stakeholders, vendors, suppliers, clients, etc building processes or agreements that result in bridging, augmentation of relationships, desirably translating to business growth.

Opportunities can be identified or created. We can ask acute questions to trigger our thoughts processes in this aspect. This may invoke the surfacing any underlying assumptions that may become inhibitors later, clarifying any "unshakable notions" that are anchors to future progression. The below sample questions can help to identify opportunities.

- What are some opportunities you can create using the current capability?
- Look both upstream and downstream of your process chain, are there any opportunities lying in dormant, waiting to be harvested?
- What is lying out there, waiting to be discovered?

What would you Change?

What changes would the organization make to develop its capability to build its own future?

The word "change" is often feared and avoided; Henry Ford use to say, you can buy any Ford vehicles

If it ain't broken, don't fix it.

as long as it is black. Also from Mr. Ford, his famous statement; "If it

ain't broken, don't fix it." How many times have you been challenged by statements having opposing meaning to Mr. Ford's notion? The statement may be brief but it carries the mental model of Mr. Ford. The mental models will determine what can be changed and what not. Paradoxically, the desire to change is as tempting to stay the same.

Kouzes & Posner mentioned that notone great leader has done his personal best by keeping things the same. Therefore, all leaders *challenge the process*. Why a need for challenge? We instinctively seek out to reach an equilibrium state of mind for many reasons. Different reasons are emphasized at different times. In the past, the need to seek for a basic shelter is about survival. What about today? Having a place we call comfort zone is important for anyone to rest the body and mind. However if the mind got addicted to this equilibrium state and the body got accustomed to the external stimuli, the mind and body will perceive no impetus to change. In today's volatile society, how can one cope with the ever changing environment while staying the same?

There are many aspects of change; ironically all these changes will not take place if the mental model remains "unshakable". Some aspects of change we can discuss are,

- Operations – procedures, processes, practices and policies
- People – designation, leadership appointment, restructuring a team
- Systems – refer to the section on systems

How Unique is your Proposition?

Opportunities are the raw form of unique propositions. Many opportunities can be identified but few would turn into unique propositions that will bring about business growth.

This part refers to the identified opportunities that eventually got translated into business activities that create uniqueness for the organization. The essence lies in communicating these identifies opportunities to stakeholders along your supply chain and clients. They should stick in people's head and the resulting activities should be head turners.

Some ideas would have been generated from discussing opportunities; this is the part where the ideas are sorted.

They should stick in people's head and the resulting activities should be head turners.

Effort cannot be spared to turn opportunities into unique propositions.

Using useful Systems

By the law of natural principles, plants grow, the earth gyrates, humans multiply, etc. All these activities are occurring simultaneously also at different times. When they interact, it produces life and evolution. We can sense the mighty connection that links all these elements on earth but we may not be able to conceive it in our mind, let alone to verbalize it clearly. It may be best described as an organized mess.

Are organizations so different? Primarily, an organization is a unit made of people, possessing a structure of hierarchy, generating activities to meet societies' basic and emerging needs, through satisfying these needs it remains relevant to the society and the

process of activities generation develops the people belonging to the organization. When all these things interact, certain outcomes will be generated.

To govern this mess, a system should be built to meet the multi-level of requirements generated by these activities. Building a system requires pain-staking efforts and we expect new systems to appear unstable during its inaugural implementation but it will stabilize over some time. As life evolves, society's needs will likewise emerge naturally through the multi-level interactions. A system should be designed with the capability to evolve as novel society needs emerge.

The beneficiary of any system is the organization. Since an organization is made up of a unit of people, the people should benefit from it eventually. At the same time, the people in the unit are the users of the system, providing inputs into the systems. That means the quality of inputs from the end users can affect the system's operation. Garbage in garbage out; the system merely processes what inputs it receives.

What kind of system would help to build the desired future?