

THE LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

PART ONE

When Good Strategy Isn't Enough



Introduction

Most organizations don't struggle because they lack dedicated people or thoughtful plans. They struggle because good people can make good decisions within their own roles and still create an experience no one intended.

This reflection is an invitation to look beneath strategy, policies, and performance—to explore what creates the conditions where people make decisions that strengthen the organization as a whole.

An Experience

The quarterly board meeting had gone well.

Financial reports were healthy. Performance measures were strong. Funding had been renewed. Strategic initiatives were moving forward.

By every measure on the dashboard, the organization appeared to be succeeding.

Then someone shared a recent client experience.

“I know everyone cared and were trying to help. But three different people had me turning in circles. I didn't know which direction to go.”

The room grew quiet.

A board member finally asked, *“If this is what people experience despite all of our efforts... what are we missing?”*

The Executive Director felt a knot in their stomach. *“How did this reach the board before I noticed it?”*

Reflection

Good people. Good intentions. Thoughtful professionals. A capable leadership team. A solid strategic plan.

How can all of those things be true... and a client still leave feeling lost?

Every person who interacted with that client may have done exactly what was expected of them.

They completed their responsibilities. They followed established procedures. They genuinely cared. Yet the client's experience tells a different story.

How can everyone do their job well, and the organization still fall short of the experience it hoped to create?

Pause here before searching for an answer. Sometimes the most important leadership insights begin with the willingness to sit with the question.

A Different Perspective

Perhaps the challenge isn't that people don't care. Perhaps it isn't that leadership failed to create a thoughtful strategy.

Perhaps each person is making good decisions from the perspective of their own role... without fully seeing how their role contributes to the organization's success.

When people understand not only what they are responsible for but why their contribution matters, they begin making different decisions. They begin to see themselves in the organization's purpose, mission, strategy, and desired outcomes.

Another Way to See It

Organizations often invest tremendous effort in improving plans, refining procedures, and measuring performance. Those things matter. But they cannot replace a shared understanding that people genuinely recognize as their own.

Ownership doesn't grow because people are told what matters.

Ownership grows when people understand why it matters... how it connects to the organization's purpose... and where their own contribution fits within that larger picture.

When people see themselves in the mission, the strategy, and the outcomes the organization hopes to achieve, something begins to change. They stop asking, “*What am I supposed to do?*” and begin asking, “*What decision best serves our purpose?*”

That is a very different conversation. And it creates a very different organization.

People make better decisions when they understand how their work contributes to the organization's success.

Perhaps an organization's greatest asset isn't its strategic plan. It's a shared understanding of why the organization exists and how every person's work contributes to its success.

YOUR LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Before your next leadership meeting, ask your team these two questions. Listen for where your answers align—and where they don't. Those differences often reveal opportunities to strengthen shared understanding.

- 1. Can every employee clearly explain how their work contributes to our organization's purpose, mission, and success?**
 - 2. What is one conversation we should have this week that would help more people see how their work contributes to our organization's success?**
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