

“Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion.”


John Welch

Even the most confident, outstanding leaders struggle through times when external circumstances can make them feel off track. Especially in times like these. Sometimes we are not even aware of why we are struggling – we just feel off balance. It can be hard to spot the specific problem when you’re in the middle of it.

The most successful and consistent leaders, however, have developed techniques for recognizing their vulnerabilities and making rapid adjustments.

7 Important Questions...

According to Robert S. Kaplan, in a recent article of *Harvard Business Review*, there are seven target areas in which leaders should regularly ask themselves questions:

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- Am I communicating the vision and priorities of the business
 - How do I spend my time
 - Do I give and offer feedback consistently
 - Do I have a succession plan
 - Are my business structures and processes still aligned to the Vision
 - Do I lead effectively under pressure
 - Does my leadership style reflect my genuine self

Good answers are far less important than taking the time to ask yourself hard questions and honestly examine your strengths and limitations.

1. Vision and Priorities

People are goal seekers by nature. They want to know where the business is heading, what is expected of them, and the areas on which they need to focus and can make the biggest impact. Often times, the specific priorities that give meaning to the vision are unintentionally under-communicated or not articulated at all! Ask yourself:

- How frequently do I communicate the vision and the priorities of the business?
- Am I communicating in an easily understood manner?
- Are my direct reports and employees able to articulate the vision and priorities of the company?

2. Managing Time

How do you spend your time? It is one of your most important assets.

It's vital to track your time so you can gain a realistic, honest assessment of how time is allocated. You may be surprised to find a disconnect between your top priorities and how you actually spend your time. Ask yourself:

- How am I spending my time? Does this match my key priorities?
- How are my people spending their time? Does this match the business' key priorities?

*“Leaders are not born.
They are made.
They are made just like anything else. . . through hard work. That's the price we have to pay to achieve that goal or any goal.”*

Vince Lombardi



3. Feedback

Many organizations postpone giving feedback until it's time for annual performance reviews. This is counter-productive. People want to know how they are doing and are more receptive to learning about themselves when feedback is offered throughout the year, as situations arise.

Equally important is *getting* honest feedback – and then acting upon it. You will improve your own performance, boost trust and keep the feedback loop open. Ask yourself:

- Do I give people timely and direct feedback to act upon?
- Do I have five or six junior subordinates who will tell me things I may not want to hear—but need to hear?

“The goal of an effective leader is to recondition your team to be solution focused rather than problem focused.”

Jim Rohn

4. Succession Planning

Lack of succession planning creates decision making bottlenecks and stagnation. It's critical to challenge, delegate and expect the best from your people – most will fulfill your expectation of them. Ask yourself:

- Have I become a decision making bottleneck?
- Have I picked one or more potential successors?
- Am I coaching them and challenging them to exceed expectations – theirs and mine?

5. Evaluation and Alignment

What got you here today won't necessarily get you there tomorrow. Have you checked to see if the design of your organization still aligns with key success factors for your business? Ask yourself:

- Does the design of my company still align with key success factors?
- If I had to design my business from scratch, how would I create it? How would it differ from the current design?

6. Leading Under Pressure

A leader's actions during stressful times have a profound impact on the firm's culture and employees' behaviors. Emotions are contagious—even more so when they come from the leader. Ask yourself:

- How do I behave under pressure?
- What signals do I send to subordinates?
- Are these signals helpful, or do they undermine the success of my business?

7. Staying True to Yourself

Successful executives develop leadership styles that fit their business needs, as well as their personal beliefs and personality. While many leaders ask themselves about the former, few analyze the latter. Ask yourself:

- Does my leadership style reflect who I truly am?
- Am I direct, honest and open?
- Am being true to myself and my values?

“A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

William Shedo

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Down to earth, hands-on, and driven by achieving results for our clients - ProLaureate partners with organizations to help crystallize their purpose and vision, define their immediate and long-term goals, and develop their most important asset – their people - to drive the achievement and success of the organization and the individual to extraordinary levels.

Our passion is helping people and organizations reach the highest levels of achievement and success, creating and building successful businesses and prosperous lives.

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“Thoughts and action, aligned fearlessly to purpose, become crowning achievement.”