



JOURNEY INTO HIGH PERFORMANCE DOMAINS: How Boards, Physicians and Executive Leaders can Master Nine Habits for Strategy Execution

Series: Part 1 of 3

THIS SERIES FOCUSES ON:

- WHAT ARE “STRATEGIC VISIONING CHARRETTS” AND “SCENARIO BASED PLANS?”
- WHY DO THEY YIELD SUPERIOR RESULTS?
- HOW CAN THEY BE USED IN VARIOUS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSPITAL SYSTEMS SETTINGS?

James A. Rice, Ph.D., FACHE
EVP & Practice Leader
Governance & Leadership Services
Integrated Healthcare Strategies
Minneapolis, MN

Vice Chairman
The Governance Institute
San Diego, CA

Director
International Health Leadership Programme
Cambridge, England



EXPLORING THE DOMAIN OF HIGH PERFORMANCE: Nine Habits for Peak Performance

Can board, physician and hospital executives learn how to be more successful from an engaging, informally educated woman in a rural, women’s co-op in Zimbabwe? She shared with me the most powerful insight into moving people into a high performance domain. She said: “If you can move their hearts or spirit, you can move their minds; and if you can move their hearts and minds, their hands and feet will follow!”¹ Hospital system leaders, now more than ever before need to mobilize thousands of hands and feet to achieve and sustain high performance; and to warrant their continued tax-exemptions.²

This first of three articles provides an introduction to the conceptual underpinnings of the “Nine Habits of High Performing Organizations.” The interrelated concepts described are:

- High Performance Domains
- The Power of Stakeholder Engagement

The conclusions shared in this series have been shaped by my work in over 30 countries; the research of Tor Dahl, a Norwegian economist (see www.tordahl.com); and the Gallup organization’s exploration of organizational effectiveness that spawned the best selling book: “First Break All The Rules”.³

The series seeks to encourage hospital and healthcare leaders to recognize the need to:

- 1) Earn followers;
- 2) That earning followers is all about strategies to engage people to think differently about the future; and
- 3) Providing a culture that facilitates their capabilities that successfully solve problems and implement strategies in alternate futures.

The “Nine Habits” correspond to nine “tools-of-engagement” that will help governance and clinical leaders achieve superior and sustainable levels of performance enhancement. Additional insights into these nine habits are available on the Integrated Healthcare Strategies website at www.IHStrategies.com, in our Knowledge Center.

Getting Started: Remove Barriers to High Performance

People, no matter what age, gender, country, culture or industry, have a difficult time remembering, and hence executing more than three to five strategies. They also are often unable to implement even this more focused number of strategies due to the classic barriers to strategy execution in Exhibit 1.

You often do not need to turn to outside consultants to remove or work around these barriers. An internal group can address these by use of what we call “Aikido Action Planning”.⁴

Aikido Action Planning helps a group to quickly identify top priority obstacles to great strategy development and implementation, and then reach consensus or practical ways to remove the barriers, create momentum building, and achieve early wins for smart and fast strategy execution. The six steps to the Aikido process are outlined in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2: Aikido Action Planning

Exhibit 1: *Barriers to Strategy Execution*

- Lack of information about future consumerism or trends in market demand.
- Middle managers burned out from day-to-day frustrations of a boss who expects more for less, or a supervisor who rarely invites ideas or praises innovation.
- Lack of experience in building scenarios about alternate futures.
- Lack of support from senior leaders or the board to conduct visioning sessions about how stakeholders define their preferred future.
- Lack of blueprint or roadmap to get from today’s realities to tomorrow’s opportunities.
- Lack of ownership among stakeholders to help execute the plans.

Step 1: Fast brainstorm of everything the group can think of that would be obstacles to achieving the targeted goal.

Step 2: Group prioritizes to the top 3-5 obstacles based on their judgment about the relative importance and likelihood of the obstacle.

Step 3: Assign each one of the top obstacles to a small inter-discipline and inter-departmental group and ask them to quickly define the top 3-5 practical ways to remove, reduce or work-around the obstacle.

Step 4: Ask the full group to listen to small group reports, and then list all the actions that could be taken to attack the top obstacles, add any ideas that are stimulated by this discussion.

Step 5: Prioritize the long list of possible actions into the top 3-5 actions, regardless of obstacle with which they are associated. This list becomes the core of your overall action plan to accomplish the original job or goal. It will be about 85% of a great plan. Further discussion and work by experts could add ideas for the rest of the 15% success that you may want.

Step 6: Write up the Action Plan with timetable and accountabilities, get it done, and celebrate your success in small steps along the journey of implementation.

High Performance Domains

High Performance Domains are zones in which leaders motivate and support followers to achieve unprecedented levels of productivity and creativity, and from which important strategies get successfully implemented.

Studies into the psychology of groups and workplace productivity³ provide compelling evidence that people and teams excel when their leaders earn the ideas and energies of their followers with sincere “engagement tactics” that go beyond traditional efforts to define clear goals and delegate wisely. Engagement Tactics appeal both analytically to the “cognitive

part of their minds”, and more importantly, to the emotional or “affective domain” of their minds.

Leaders that are “change enablers” use work and projects that help move individuals and teams into “change ready”, receptive, emotional states of the affective domain by offering work and interactions that provide: 1) a high sense of satisfaction; 2) a high sense of control over one’s work and resources; and 3) a high degree of “positive stress”. Activities and performance enhancement strategies that have a high probability to connect with these emotions (satisfaction, control, positive stress) are more likely to have change implemented and then sustained.⁵



solving, and in project planning and project implementation. The process of engagement yields a sense of participation that leads to enhanced ownership, and hence greater likelihood of their willingness to help implement the solution or strategy to succeed. Organizations do not need more IQ from their teams, as much as they need more “EQ” (i.e., a higher “Engagement Quotient”).

The Nine Habits

In my work in Asia, Africa, Europe, South America and the U.S., I’ve learned that the probability of achieving high levels of EQ increase exponentially when leaders employ the nine habits or behaviors shown in Exhibit 3. Each of these habits relies on the successful use of the group process tools associated with each habit.



“Engaged employees drive customer loyalty:

Jack Welch, the CEO of General Electric, once said, “Any company trying to compete...must figure out a way to engage the mind of every employee.”

This is especially true in service industries, where nearly all of the company’s value is delivered to customers by individual employees. But even in pure manufacturing environments, quality products are unlikely to be produced without engaged and committed employees.

Buckingham and Coffman in
First, Break All The Rules, 1999, 1.247

The Power of Stakeholder Engagement

Successful leaders understand that the probability of moving people into a high performance domain goes up markedly if the people are given opportunities to become fully engaged in problem definition and problem

SOURCES CITED IN THIS ARTICLE:

¹ James A. Rice, Leadership Insights, Cambridge University England, 2004

² See e.g. Russell and Mehrabian “Task Setting and Personality Variables Affecting the Desire To Work”, Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 60, No. 4, 1975; Mehrabian, Albert, “Effects of Affective and Informational Characteristics of Work Environment on Worker Satisfaction”, Imagination, Cognition and Personality, Vol. 9 (4), 1989-90; and www.tordahl.com

³ First, Break All The Rules ‘What the World’s Greatest Managers do Differently’, By Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman, Simon & Schuster

⁴ Aikido is one of the martial arts (used by Steven Segal) and relies on redirecting the force of opponents to your advantage with smart, circular not linear moves.

⁵ Bossidy and Charan, Execution: The Discipline of getting things done, Crown Business, 2002

Exhibit 3: *Nine Habits of Behaviors*

Habit	Description	Principal Tools Mastered
HABIT 1: Performance Culture Compacts	Formal agreements that define mutual expectations about results and style of work among groups and units	Signed and posted performance and value “contracts” or “compacts”
HABIT 2: SWAT Teams (Strategic Wisdom Actions & Tactics)	Project and group management principles and practices	Project management process and software
HABIT 3: Scenario Framing	Definition of alternative plausible future states in which organization could operate	Scenarios building worksheets and implications wheels
HABIT 4: Strategic Visioning	Definition of desired future state that articulates how enterprise will work 10-20 years from now	Visioning and Charrette Design Guide
HABIT 5: Situation Assessment	Definition of strategic growth opportunities and identification of performance gaps	Gap and SWOT Assessment worksheets
HABIT 6: Balanced Score Cards (BCS)	Graphic summary of Performance Measures that cascade into each operating unit and team	BSC worksheets and software for easy deployment monitoring and refinements
HABIT 7: Results Aligned Management (RAM)	Culture and systems to align work and rewards of managers to organization’s Performance BSC’s	Guides and worksheets to develop and manage executive incentive comp programs
HABIT 8: Frontline Engagement	Philosophy and infrastructure to maximize participation of customer facing staff and middle managers in strategy design and execution rollout	Job description, workshops and web based workplans, suggestion box, and project management
HABIT 9: Merit Based Recognition & Reward	Culture driven to values based peak performance that celebrates the ideas and accomplishment of staff and stakeholders	Paper and web based portals to nominate and recognize high performance people and teams. Infrastructure for merit pay and non-cash rewards

The remaining articles of this series describe these habits and offer practical insights into their use.

Part 2 of the series is entitled: “Future Mapping: The Art and Science of Strategic Visioning for Career and Business Planning” and addresses the first five habits of high performance organizations.

Part 3 is entitled: “Aligning and Rewarding a Passion for Performance” and it explores the last four habits of high performance organizations.

Questions and comments on this series can be directed to Jim Rice at jim.rice@IHStrategies.com.

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For more information please contact the Marketing Department - Phone: (800) 327-9335 Fax: (612) 339-2569
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