

the clone, the complement, and the complete team

As I watch my clients build their companies, there seem to be three discrete organizational stages—cloning themselves, obtaining a partner whose abilities complement their own, and, over time, assembling a complete team. This column offers some thoughts about each of these processes.

In each stage, you're looking for a partner or corporate officer to whom you will delegate significant functions and who will share your vision for the business. In many ways, how you perform here will determine your present success and your future growth prospects.

THE CLONE

Several of my small business clients are seeking a clone of themselves. They are tired of working seventy to eighty hour weeks and want to bring some balance into their lives. They want to attract someone to their business who will view the business much the way they do and will have similar values in pursuing it. They see such an addition as not only giving them more free time but also as a way of improving their revenue and net profit.

Because so much rides on the clone choice it is worthwhile to take your time. You may wish to use a search firm or personnel agency in the recruitment process, use personality or trait tests (your own as well as the candidate's) in the interview process, be particularly sensitive to your own gut feelings about good chemistry, and structure an offer that is attractive and also contains an escape hatch if the clone is not as he or she initially appears.

Be aware that there will be differences in personality, style and approach, and to determine in advance to have flexibility in working with these differences as they appear.

The potential benefits and detriments associated with a clone are great, and the process of selection should accordingly be careful and deliberate.

THE COMPLEMENT

"I love sales, I hate production."
"I love engineering, I hate marketing."
"I love technology. I hate finance."

If these or like statements are yours, what do you do? You hire someone who loves to do what you hate? Pretty simple, huh?

Well, yes and no. They not only need to love what you hate, but they need to share your vision for the business and have, from you, a good understanding of how what they're doing fits into the overall functioning of the business. If you don't take the time for this, you may get a critical function in the business wandering off on its own. If you catch it sooner, it may be retrievable, if later it may be a disaster.

And don't forget that their experience and level of expertise needs to fit your business as it exists today and as it may exist tomorrow. Your attempt at a quick fix here may, depending upon the growth rate of your business, be neither quick nor a fix.

THE COMPLETE TEAM

Suppose your company has gotten to the point in its development where you have functional heads for at least sales, production and finance, or their equivalents in your company.

One thing you must do early in your relationship with each team member is take the time to get to know them. One of the fundamental building blocks of loyalty to an organization is satisfying people's distinct needs to be seen, to be understood and to be well-used.

You may have people on your team who are world-beaters, potential successors to you. They need to be challenged, tested, tried and rewarded with ever-increasing scope in their responsibilities and comprehension of the overall operation. On the other hand, there may be members of your team who are highly proficient or outstanding technicians in their discipline, but do not have further ambition. Their skills and contributions need to be recognized and celebrated by you, and you need to sponsor continuing education and activities for them that result in industry-wide recognition in

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their chosen field. Finally, there may be those of your team whom that all-expense paid golf vacation really lights up, and others for whom attendance at that personal growth seminar is the ticket.

The key here is that you as CEO need to know who's who on your team, and what, above and beyond money, will truly motivate them and inspire loyalty to you and the organization.

You also need to aware that there will be times in a team's development that a member will hit a ceiling, either personal or organizational, and will have at least a perception that he or she is or will not be "well-used." Being sensitive to these situations and having frank discussions with the team member will help, either in working out long term ways to address the situation, or in facilitating easy, rather than disruptive exits. Your openness on these matters will facilitate early sharing of frustrations by other members of your team.

What's at stake here is your acceptance of the dynamic tension between organizational need and individual ambition as a natural accompaniment of building, nurturing and maturing a top flight team in a growing organization.

It's also important to have balance with-

in the team. Within Myers-Briggs categories, this means having extroverts and introverts, sensory and intuitive types, thinkers and feelers and those who make quick decisions and those who tend to need more information before making decisions. Along another continuum, you need individual members on your team who are particularly head-oriented, heart-oriented or gut-oriented.

The point here is that to get a full three hundred sixty degree view of business situations, you need all types, or all you can get, in the makeup of your team. And you need to be open and accepting of their viewpoints so team members feel free to share their insights, and subtleties and nuances are not overlooked in the team process.

The dynamics among members of your team need to be monitored carefully. If you're hearing "I just can't stand X," or "Y won't cooperate with me," or worse, "Could you tell X to be less brusque and demanding?" you will need to put the responsibility for cooperative effort back where it belongs - with the team members. As a CEO, I told members of my teams it was part of their responsibility to cooperate each other. They needed to talk out difficulties or misunderstandings with each other. I told them I was measuring their executive abilities by the outcome of such discussions. If I had not done this, the monkey would have been on my back and I would have been drawn into exposure to a "taking sides" or favoritism perception.

Another feature of being the leader of a team is being able to lead against the team's consensus and keep the team in the boat. There may be times when you have a gut feeling or an understanding that the team doesn't grasp. A friend of mine, faced with spiraling equipment costs and keen competition in existing markets, outsourced part of his trucking business as a means of expanding into new markets. His team uniformly opposed it, citing quality control concerns. He went ahead anyway, quality issues did not arise, his revenue and profits increased fifty per cent and he kept his team in place.

Choosing, structuring and nurturing your clone, your complement, or your complete team requires a delicate balance of your

- dependence upon their top performance,
- weaning them from their dependence upon you, and
- maintaining the power of your leadership and their loyalty to you,

all at the same time.

The end which you seek is, of course, that you

"...want to be with people who...
move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire
be put out."

(Marge Piercy, *To be of use*)

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