



Ruts and Predictability

By Hal Johnson

Well, here we are, at the beginning of a new year with, hopefully, some new opportunities ahead. We have just gone through several of the worst economic years most of us have experienced in our life-times. But here we are. My experience tells me that it is pretty easy to get in a rut and not break out unless something extraordinary happens. The usual – based on our very predictable human nature – is pretty much to keep doing what we usually do. “Usual and customary” performance has a very high degree of predictability to keep producing the same old results.

Here’s a thought for you to consider. How about we really try something different – something we are not doing now - that just might make for a better 2012. (If you are a business leader, this will endear you to your stakeholders.) Well, what could that possibly be and why are we not doing it already? Good question. I believe there are two factors in play. The first is *unconscious incompetence*, that is, we just don’t *know* exactly what it is we should do to improve. The second is the *commitment to change for the better*, try something new and different. Get out of a rut.

Based on my 40 very active years in management and leadership, I can tell you with a high degree of certainty, two of the biggest constraints on high productivity (read as continued success) are lack of knowledge and low commitment to keep getting better.

I have spent most of my career in the mid-market business sector, working primarily with entrepreneurs and family businesses. The really successful ones have a very high degree of commitment to (1) continuous learning and (2) to keep getting better. That is powerful leadership!

Regarding the first, a continuous quest for knowledge about what contributes to business success is essential in today’s marketplace for survival. It’s hard to know what to do next to keep getting better unless you have some continuous examination in process.

“What else do I need to know and do to keep getting better?” is the mantra for great leadership. Otherwise, you are in a rut. The second part of the success formula is extra difficult. It involves commitment, discipline and accountability.

These attributes are not normally found in great quantities. Now we are talking about extraordinary performers – like Jerry Rice, Yo Yo Ma, Jim Harbaugh, Drew Brees or Jack Welch. These guys tapped into the leadership formula – talent, knowledge and skill underscored by continuous improvement.

So, the question is, how good do you want your 2012 to be? Then, what are you willing to do that is different that will increase the likelihood the year will not be customary and usual? What can you do to make 2012 a “breakout” year? You are in the driver’s seat.

If you need help with this, give me a call. I will be happy to share some insights into some of the successful initiatives I have seen create a brighter future. And that is the essence of leadership.

Here’s to a great 2012!

Hal Johnson has been CEO of eight companies and has authored three books on business performance. He is Chairman/Co-founder of LeadershipOne, a business transition consulting firm.

He may be reached at (916) 391-3042 or at hjohnson@leadershipone.net