

The background of the entire page is a blue-tinted photograph. In the upper portion, the lower half of a person's face is visible, looking slightly to the right. In the lower portion, a dumbbell is shown in a close-up, angled view, with the handle and the circular weight plates clearly visible. The overall aesthetic is clean, professional, and motivational.

UNLEASH YOUR BUSINESS BEAST:

7 STRATEGIES TO GET FASTER,
STRONGER, AND MORE
COMPETITIVE

GARY COVERT

Identify and address the untenable.

An untenable situation is one in which the condition must be addressed assertively to move forward. Untenable situations can no longer be tolerated or explained away. They must be corrected. Organizations can have untenable strategic positions. Leaders can have untenable behaviors. Teams can have untenable dynamics. An athlete cannot simply train through every injury. Some must be diagnosed and treated aggressively for the athlete to perform at their best level possible.

Consider where you are and where you want to go. Are there key areas that have been adapted to that must actually be corrected?

Get a strategic infusion.

Sometimes organizations need new and different blood to stay healthy. The key here is to get the talent for where you want to go, not just for where you are. Consider companies like Kodak. It was unwise (and unfair) to ask chemists to lead the company in a pivot to digital. Kodak needed talent that could move them to the future not just an optimized present. Professional basketball has changed dramatically to a game dominated by distance scoring. Current team owners should be asking themselves if they have the players and coaches that can compete in the new

normal AND also adapt to what will come next.

How well is the talent in your organization positioned play a new game with new dynamics at an elite level? (Or even better, can they create a game so compelling that it will force others to play to new realities?)

Wake up your innovation muscles.

Most companies started with at least some degree of innovation behaviors. Some practiced disruptive innovation (creating something valuable or unique in the market) others may have just copied what they judged to be a good idea and launched their company that way. The problem is that organizations often lose their innovation muscles (or just have them developed in isolated pockets of the organization). A healthy, vibrant organization has leaders that are excellent at eliciting ideas for innovation and helping to screen those ideas in and not just screen them out. The problem with many organizations is that even if they started from innovative roots, it is very different from innovating with a mature (more bureaucratic) organization versus a smaller, nimble (often hungry) organization. The very strongest organizations are making innovations constantly that involve wide areas of the organization.

How effective are you and your team at surfacing, screening and implementing innovations widely across the organization on a regular basis?

Evergreen your strategic view.

In inclement weather, people use their wipers frequently to keep the view forward as clear as possible. It is both safe and smart. Likewise, leaders need to keep their strategy fresh and relevant. Gone are the days of three- and five-year strategies. The assumptions for long-term views change too fast. Vision for the future can be more constant, but leaders are kidding themselves if they think they can wait until their next “retreat” to think and act strategically. Leaders today must be finely attuned to the environment and able to make corrections (and take actions to exploit opportunity) quickly. Windows of opportunity do not stay propped open.

How effective are you and your team at maintaining relevant strategic focus?

Do less, better.

Any fool can be busy. It takes discernment to determine what things deserve the highest attention. And it

takes discipline to stick with things until some results are seen. Success is switchback and rarely a straight shot to the summit. In fact, the “summit” may in fact be a false summit obscuring the final objective. It is not reasonable or effective to load up yourself and the organization with too many priorities. If everything is a priority, then nothing is.

What are the key things that absolutely must be achieved or improved to call the next year a success? What are the key actions that must be taken to get there?

Evaluate your alacrity, not just your speed.

Alacrity is moving quickly with enthusiasm. Leaders who move fast, but have little enthusiasm are just robotic and are likely not bringing all their strengths and creativity to bear. Leaders who are enthusiastic, but glacial in their approach are simply dreaming if they think they can make things better. No speed and no enthusiasm is the existence of zombies.

What is your level of enthusiasm and speed regarding your highest priorities? If low in either, why is that? How would you rate your team for speed and enthusiasm?

Don't expect to diet your way to success.

When wanting to get in better shape, many people make the mistake of trying some draconian and impossibly spartan approach to calorie restriction. It does not last and usually ends in disappointment. Likewise, organizations should not be surprised that they cannot cut their way to success. Yes, cut those things that will not grow, but make sure things that can grow are provided the maximum nutrition. This includes investing the most in your best people. For example, for every leader who needs coaching,

organizations should invest in three leaders who warrant coaching. (And if leaders feel they are an important asset to the company then they should not be shy about directing significant investments for their own growth.)

What are the biggest areas you see for potential growth? How can you boost more investment in these areas? Are you an investible opportunity? What further investments can you make in yourself to boost effectiveness?

**About Gary Covert**

Gary helps busy leaders develop great talent, operate with strategic focus, and innovate constantly. Through his executive advisory services, tailored coaching, and workshops he helps leaders elevate their game consistently and have more fun doing it.

Sign up for the Monday Morning Warmup -- a quick shot of leader wisdom to get your week off to the best start possible.

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