

SPECIAL SECTION: The Heart of Business Strategy

We usually think of business strategy as some sort of aspirational market positioning statement. Doubtless that's part of it. But I believe that the number one "strategic strength" is excellence in execution and systemic relationships (i.e., with everyone we come in contact with). Hence I offer, in shorthand form here, the following 47 pieces of advice in creating a winning "strategy" that is inherently sustainable.

1. "Thank you." Minimum several times a day. Measure it.
2. "Thank you" to everyone even peripherally involved in some activity—especially those "deep in the hierarchy."
3. Smile. Work on it.
4. Apologize. Even if "they" are "mostly" to blame.
5. Jump all over (eventually release) those who play the "blame game."
6. Hire enthusiasm.
7. Low enthusiasm. No hire. Any job.
8. Hire optimists. Everywhere. ("Positive outlook on life," not mindless optimism.)
9. Hiring: Would you like to go to lunch with him-her? 100% of jobs.
10. Hire for good manners.
11. Do not reject "trouble makers"—that is, those who are uncomfortable with the status quo. (Source of ... ALL ... innovation.)
12. Hire for demonstrated resilience.
13. Overwhelming/dis-proportionate response to even the smallest screwups.
14. Become a student of all you will meet with. Big time.
15. Hang out with interesting new people. Measure it. (You = Those you hang out with.)
16. Lunch with folks in other functions. Measure it. (220 opportunities/year.)
17. Listen. Hear. Become a serious "professional"/student of listening-hearing.
18. Work on everyone's listening skills. Practice.
19. Become a student of information extraction-interviewing.
20. Become a professional/student of presentation giving.
21. Incredible care in 1st line supervisor selection and development. Measure it.
22. World's best training for 1st line supervisors.
23. Construct small leadership opportunities for junior people within days of starting on the job.
24. Insane care in all promotion decisions.
25. Promote "people people" for all managerial jobs. Finance-logistics-R&D as much as, say, sales.
26. Hire-promote for demonstrated curiosity. Check their past commitment to continuous learning.
27. Small "d" diversity. Rich mixes for any and all teams.
28. Hire women. Roughly 50% women on exec team. (Or more, depending on market.)
29. Exec team "looks like" customer population, actual and desired.
30. Focus on creating products for and selling to women.
31. Focus on creating products for and selling to boomers-geezer.
32. Work on first and last impressions. (100% contacts = "WOW" experiences.)
33. Walls display tomorrow's aspirations, not yesterday's accomplishments.
34. Simplify systems. Constantly. (Not "systems," but "beautiful systems"!)
35. Insist that almost all material be covered by a 1-page summary. Absolutely no longer.
36. Practice decency.
37. Add "We are thoughtful in all we do" to corporate values list—#1 force for customer loyalty, employee satisfaction.

38. Make headlong employee growth (for all) a formal part of values set. Above customer satisfaction. Steal from RE/MAX: "We are a life success company."
39. Flowers.
40. Celebrate "small wins." Often. Perhaps a "small win of the day."
41. Manage your calendar religiously: Does it accurately reflect your espoused priorities? Use a "calendar friend" who's not very friendly to help you with this.
42. Review your calendar: Work assiduously and mercilessly on your "To don'ts."
43. Bosses: Formally cultivate one advisor whose role is to tell you the truth.
44. Commit to Excellence.
45. Talk up Excellence.
46. Put "Excellence in all we do" in the values set.
47. Measure everyone on demonstrated commitment to Excellence.

This document is #46 in a series of 48 highlights from Tom Peters' *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence* (HarperStudio, 2010). For more information, visit tompeters.com.

