Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain how the vision, mission, strategy, and mechanisms for execution relate to each other.
2. Describe ways to create a leadership vision.
3. Discuss the common themes of powerful visions.
4. Describe four basic approaches leaders take in framing an organization.
5. Discuss how leaders formulate and implement strategy.
6. Explain the elements of effective strategy.
7. Identify social and economic pressures for change.
8. Explain the eight-stage model of planned change.
9. Identify stages of the appreciative inquiry process.
10. Describe ways to expand creativity and facilitate organizational innovation.
11. Discuss techniques to overcome resistance to change.
12. Analyze the negative impact of change.

Written Lecture

Leaders establish organizational direction through vision and strategy. They are responsible for studying the organization’s environment, considering how it may be different in the future, and setting a direction everyone can believe in. The shared vision is an attractive, ideal future for the organization that is credible yet not readily attainable. A clear, powerful vision links the present and the future by showing how present actions and decisions can move the organization toward its long-range goals. Vision energizes employees and gives them an inspiring picture of the future to which they are eager to commit themselves. The vision can also give meaning to their work and establish a standard of excellence by presenting a challenge that asks all workers to give their best.

The mission includes the company’s core values and its core purpose or reason for existence. Visions for the future change; however, the mission should persist as a reflection of the enduring character of the organization. Effective leaders frame a noble purpose that inspires followers and helps the organization maintain a competitive advantage. To frame an organizational purpose that helps people find their work meaningful, leaders can choose among four basic concepts as the basis of purpose: discovery, excellence, altruism, and heroism.

Strategy is the serious work of figuring out how to translate a vision and mission into action. Strategy is a general plan of action that describes resource allocation, activities for dealing with the environment, and helping the organization reach its goals. Like a vision, strategy is ever changing. However, successful companies develop strategies that focus on core competence, develop synergy, and create value for customers. Strategy is executed through the systems and structures that are the basic architecture for how things get done in the organization. Leaders decide on direction through rational analysis,
as well as intuition, personal experience, and hopes and dreams. Leaders make a real difference for their organization when they link vision to strategic action so that vision is more than just a dream. Superior organizational performance is not a matter of luck. It is determined by the decisions leaders make.

An important point of Chapter 15 is that tools and approaches are available to help leaders facilitate creativity and innovation and manage change. Change is inevitable, and the increased pace of change in today’s global environment has led to even greater problems for leaders struggling to help their organizations adapt. A major factor in the failure of organizations to adapt to changes in the global environment is the lack of effective change leadership. Leaders who can successfully accomplish change typically define themselves as change leaders who can describe a vision for the future in vivid terms, and articulate values that promote change and adaptability. Change leaders are courageous, capable of managing complexity and uncertainty, believe in the followers’ capacity to assume responsibility for change, and learn from their own mistakes.

Major changes can be particularly difficult to implement, but leaders can help to ensure a successful change effort by following the eight-stage model of planned change—establish a sense of urgency; create a powerful coalition; develop a compelling vision and strategy; communicate the vision; empower employees to act; generate short-term wins; keep up the energy and commitment to tackle bigger problems; and institutionalize the change in the organizational culture.

An exciting approach helping to change management is known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which engages individuals, teams, and/or the entire organization in creating change by reinforcing positive messages and focusing on learning from success. Rather than looking at a situation from the viewpoint of what is wrong and who is to blame, AI takes a positive, affirming approach and follows the stages of discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Appreciative inquiry is powerful for leading both major changes and smaller, everyday changes.

Leading for innovation is a significant challenge for today’s leaders. One way is by creating an environment that nourishes creativity in particular departments or the entire organization. Five elements of innovative organizations are alignment, creative values, unofficial activity, open culture, and team collaboration. These correspond to characteristics of creative individuals. Creative people are less resistant to change. Although some people demonstrate more creativity than others, research suggests that everyone has roughly equal creative potential. Leaders can increase individual creativity by facilitating brainstorming, lateral thinking, and creative intuition.

Implementation is a critical aspect of any change initiative. Leaders should strive to understand why people resist a change. They can use communication and training, participation and involvement, and, as a last resort, coercion to overcome resistance. Leaders must recognize that change can have negative, as well as positive consequences. One of the most difficult situations leaders may face is downsizing. They can use techniques to help ease the stress and hardship for employees who leave, as well as maintain the morale and trust of those who remain.
Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Reflection Paper

After you finish with the material for Unit VIII, reflect on your experience and write about it. What did you learn? What did not quite make sense? Can you apply the concepts you learned toward your career? How? The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on the material you learned and to expand upon those thoughts.

This is not a summary. A reflection paper is an opportunity for you to express your thoughts about the material by writing about them. Reflection writing is a great way to study because it increases your ability to remember the course material.

Use these guidelines as you reflect on the course material:
1. Write at least one page
2. Include your thoughts about the main topics
3. How does it apply to your career?
4. How does it apply to your personal life?

Format your reflection paper using APA Style. Use your own words and include citations for other articles as needed to avoid plagiarism. This is a non-graded activity, so you do not have to submit it.