



Dear Chief

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COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: We’re in the midst of our annual corporate drills. You know: updating our mission statement, vision statement, and goals. I sit here and laugh because every year they try making changes to each statement yet we continue to build the same product, the same way, and distribute it to the same places where the same customers buy it. What we do never really changes but we’re expected to sing and dance to new music each year. This whole week is a waste of my time. I should be working, not sitting in a circle singing Kumbaya. This place is a joke. Maybe it’s time for me to leave.

SONG AND DANCE GUY



DEAR SONG AND DANCE GUY: I’m assuming you’re a leader in the organization since you’re partaking in annual corporate discussions of such nature. One thing I’ve learned over the years is that these sessions can be as good or as bad as you want to make them. And yes, the music does change. The frequency of that change depends on a company’s internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.

In order for people to be committed to a company or organization and contribute to its success, they need

Embrace strategy sessions

focus. They should have a statement of purpose to believe in, direction they are willing to move toward, and a belief that their activities will lead to achieving something meaningful. Unless there are unifying mechanisms--a common focus and alignment--the company or organization will remain mediocre at best.

Executive management must provide this focus and ensure alignment. They provide focus by clearly articulating the company’s purpose, values, and vision. They provide alignment by ensuring consistency of goals at all levels so that everyone is moving in the same direction. And the executive team must ensure that everyone knows how their actions contribute to achieving the mission, vision, and goals. Ultimately, any actions taken or decisions made by someone should result in one or more of the following: 1) contribute to accomplishing the mission; 2) inch closer to achieving the vision; or 3) comply with company values. If those actions or decisions don’t result in one or more of these things, then they’re probably not worth doing or not worth the time associated with making a decision.

So as you can see, these annual discussions and reviews are important to ensure your company remains on track, gets on track, or changes track so it doesn’t fall off track or stay off track.

Are you on track with all this? If so, I recommend you change your attitude. It isn’t a waste of your time and it isn’t a joke. If you continue to feel the way you do about it, maybe you should leave and go to a place where you have less responsibility--where you are less of a leader--where your poor attitude won’t infect others.

If you want to accept some responsibility for leadership, then look for ways you can make these annual strategy sessions more productive or impacting if you feel your executives can use a hand. Perhaps you can lead in facilitating next year’s session or maybe you and your team can have a creative idea session and come up with ways to improve the company. Either way, bring something to the table. Don’t just sit there and judge. Be prepared to discuss why the mission or vision should remain the same or change. Your input may very well be put to good use. Trust me. If their minds were totally made up about all of this, they wouldn’t be having these strategy sessions. So embrace the opportunity to be a valuable part of the process AND the solution!



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.