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Internal Entrepreneurs – Next Generation of Leaders

By Susan Foley

A day does not go by where you don't read something about the need for a new type of leader. Someone who can jump over tall buildings in a single leap, see the future by looking into a crystal ball and wave their magic wand to produce innovations that generate new revenue growth. If this is the type of leader we want, where do we find them, how do we develop them, and how do we keep them engaged.

A recent article described this heroic figure as a "Change Wizard." There is something mysterious and magical about this type of leader. Perhaps we should be looking for them at Disney World at the new Harry Potter Theme Park™ – Wizarding World. The reality is that you don't have to travel to Disney to find the next generation of leader, you just need to understand what you are looking for and what differentiates these individuals from the rest of the pack.

No... they won't be wearing a pointed hat, carrying a wand or looking for answers in a crystal ball but they may be down the hall or across the table from you in a meeting. Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. On the left side of the paper write Core Business and on the right side of the page write New Business. Think about all the things that are required to support the core business - the strategy, structure, systems and processes, policies and culture. Then identify the individuals who have been successful "exploiting" the core business. These individuals know how to effectively and successfully operate in the existing business.

On the right side of the page think about what it takes to build a new growth business. Many of the things that are required to build a new business are just the opposite of what you need in the core business. Existing systems and processes get in the way and create barriers that can impede progress. Now think about all the people who don't seem to fit in the core business. Individuals that color outside of the lines, step on toes and break rules, question authority, are not happy with the status quo, or see the world through a different lens. Individuals willing to create new systems, experiment, change direction, and so on. These individuals are "explorers." They don't feel like they fit in the core business but they thrive building a new business.

The next generation of leaders will need to be both "exploiter" and explorer". They will need to be able to work effectively in the core business at the same time they are building a new business. Yet, most executives today achieved their success exploiting the core business, not exploring new businesses. *The next generation leader must be adept at both.*

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