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*Re-Imagining the Organization*

# Ten Essential Elements For Achieving Organizational Greatness!

*By Paul Krass*

*“Wow, what great stuff. You write extremely well--polished and professional with complete relevance. I study a lot of material on management, leadership, motivation, etc., and find your "Ten Essentials..." hitting the center of the "organizational needs" bull's eye.” David Nimmo, Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR)*

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*“If only 20% of all employees are doing what they believe they do best, and innate talent produces consistent repeatable near perfection performance, what is the consequence to your business if your competition aligns their employee’s talents with organizational objectives before you do?”*

# Ten Essential Elements To Achieving Organizational Greatness!

**By Paul Krass**

Most business owners and executives understand that the bottom line drives a business to success or failure. National statistics find that 95% of business start-ups fail within five years. But it isn't just the small organizations; we read in the news about large global companies failing. This isn't something new--everyone is aware of these statistics. In this article, I will address ten essential elements that will assist your organization in achieving extraordinarily bottom line results rather than ordinarily unsuccessful results!

The statistics regarding business failure are enough to discourage anyone from jumping into the mix, but the American dream is about having the opportunity to do what cannot be done. The fact is that some visions, companies and even people do manage to rise to the top and become superstars. There's a lot we can learn from these adventurous individuals whether they are corporations or sole proprietors.

No doubt talent has a lot to do with stardom—some of us have natural charisma, confidence and capability. But even if you're not a born winner, you can still attain a degree of greatness by applying any one of the following ***Ten Essential Elements To Achieving Organizational Greatness.***

## Element One

Not only does your strategy depend the quality and effectiveness of your people, it depends on you believing in people.

*So how is your confidence?  
Are you approaching your  
bottom line on a hope and a  
prayer?*

*Are your people trained,  
systems, processes and  
communications working for  
you or against you?*

*Are you experiencing a culture  
of slippage ... feelings of little  
or no control, limited points of  
reference, a limited sense of  
reality?*

### Believing In People Is Key To Organizational Strategy

CEO types talk about bottom line results; field personnel talk about needing resources. Everyone in between seems to be connected in some way, but most don't appreciate the consequences of their decisions or actions on the rest.

To put this in perspective, imagine you're a Navy pilot 1,000 miles from shore landing on an aircraft carrier. (Have you ever wondered what it takes to land \$50 million planes on a postage stamp floating in a bath tub and get it right every time?) How many situations in your organization have this track record?

Most likely you're a businessperson accustomed to the pressure of the bottom line. In my scenario, your bottom line will be a cable stretched across the carrier deck, and your strategy is the plane's hook. Your flight has been tough, the fuel is gone, it's dark and the deck is bobbing 20 feet. Any landing you walk away from will be a good landing today.

As the pilot of your business, how is your confidence? Are you approaching your bottom line on a hope and a prayer? Are your people trained? Are your systems, processes and communications working effectively for you or against you? As you're dropping to the bottom line, who are you depending on to make your strategy a success?

If you're like many executives, you're experience a feeling associated with "cultures of slippage" – a feeling of limited control, limited points of reference and limited sense of reality. Why do you continue on a hope and prayer?

Not only does your strategy depend the quality and effectiveness of your people, it depends on you believing in people.

## Element Two

**As management, you get what you INSPECT not what you EXPECT. Detailed reporting that contrasts between quantified expectations and actual results places your team's focus squarely on what you're inspecting.**

*Often organizations are not even aware of "profit erosion" hidden by a continuous string of "quick fixes" offering temporary relief.*

*You just don't know what you don't know, until you somehow, trip over what you don't know.*

### **You Get What You Inspect, Not What You Expect**

Every year, companies pursue the latest fads, gadgets and business theories suggesting additional success. Often these are no more than other companies emphasizing their vision, their superior methods or their glory. Such solutions tend to be "quick fixes" that may add limited value to the organization. The main problem with "quick fixes" is that they frequently disguise the root of problems.

Often organizations are not even aware of "profit erosion" hidden by a continuous string of "quick fixes" offering temporary relief. Here are some tough questions to ask instead. Do your manager's seem surprised by unexplainable variances? Are your process controls tight? Are schedules updated frequently? Is there accountability regarding cost, documentation and management results?

"Profit erosion" typically develops in "cultures of slippage" where deadlines come and go, but no one is sure of the consequence. Costs seem to rise with no apparent explanation. There is more conflict and less cooperation. Explanations frequently suggest that today's employees are inferior. What is that sinking feeling as profit margins slip away, but no one really knows why?

If you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it. Why? You just don't know, what you don't know, until you somehow, trip over what you don't know.

As management, you get what you INSPECT not what you EXPECT. Detailed reporting that contrasts between quantified expectations and actual results places your team's focus squarely on what you're inspecting.

## Element Three

### Trust, Accountability and Disciplined Reporting

Building a long-term exemplary organization – one that's actually desired – takes more than just willing employees. It takes employees who respect and trust leadership.

**Develop a culture based on mutual trust, accountability and disciplined reporting of reality.**

*Cultures of slippage have an illusion of cohesive teamwork.*

*Cultures of accountability typically thrive on high performance teaming concepts.*

*The glue of effective teamwork is accountability.*

Trust is a unique concept often misunderstood. It occurs when one party perceives sincerity, commitment and competence on the part of the other party. Simply put, employees typically trust leadership that inspires a compelling vision (competence), offers meaning, purpose and excitement (commitment) and is sensitive to individual awareness, expression and interaction (sincerity). Yes, it is a new paradigm for many in leadership roles.

Mutual trust is the key to overcoming the greatest challenge of organizational development: getting accurate information in a timely manner. "Cultures of slippage" frequently develop when people don't trust leadership and fear retribution for "dragging reality onto the table" – telling the truth.

Your better alternative is to develop a "culture of accountability" where leadership celebrates acknowledgment of reality (good and bad), and leadership coaches teams striving to transition strategy to reality. Accountability requires a disciplined approach to gathering information on a consistent and timely basis through real time reporting.

The irony. "Cultures of slippage" have an illusion of cohesive teamwork. However, "cultures of accountability" typically thrive on high performance teaming concepts. The glue of effective teamwork is accountability.

Develop a culture based on mutual trust, accountability and disciplined reporting of reality.

## Element Four

It is essential that leadership mediate the inherent 30/70 imbalances that create conflict when patterns of interaction are not understood at all levels

*30% of the population annoys the other 70%, and the 70% doesn't understand the other 30%*

*Unless you're mediating conflict resolution, the 70% typically discourage or drive away the 30%*

*30% relate better to creativity, innovation, new ideas and possibilities*

*70% relate better to consistency, repeatability, quality and facts*

### Leadership Must Mediate The Inherent 30/70 Imbalance

Do you ever ask the question, "Where are all the leaders?" Or, maybe your question is, "Why doesn't anyone want to work?" Do you ever struggle with resolving conflict within your organization? Frequently senior leadership's response is, "It doesn't seem bad enough yet." Yes, most employees will resolve their own differences, but can you afford the outcome?

Why do 95% of all start-ups fail in the first five years? There are many reasons, but one is associated with our innate talents, passions and preferences.

Our natural preference is to be drawn toward our talents and passions. This is a pattern of interaction we are born with, and it changes in less than 5% of us during our lifetime. So what is the issue? Roughly 30% of the population annoys the other 70%, and that 70% doesn't understand the other 30%. So what is the consequence? Unless leadership is mediating conflict and friction, the 70% typically drive away the 30%.

The 30% relate better to creativity, innovation, new ideas, possibilities, etc. They ask, "Why is it done that way?" The other 70% relate better to consistency, repeatability, quality, facts, etc. They answer, "Because that's the way it's always been done."

Entrepreneurial people are typically in the 30% and production people are typically in the 70%. The 70% *unintentionally* discourage or drive away the 30% without knowing they are key to the organization adapting, innovating and improving efficiency. It is essential that leadership mediate the inherent 30/70 imbalances that create conflict when patterns of interaction are not understood at all levels.

## Element Five

### Circumvent Unintentional Sabotage Of Communication

To eliminate “unintentional sabotage of communication,” communicate in writing. ... everyone reads the same message subject only to his or her interpretation process.

*What influences how we classify information depends on promises you or I make (both explicit and implied), our personalities and our life experiences (both good and bad).*

*If I ask you to deliver a message ... it is subject to your interpretation and classification process.*

*Your values, beliefs, perceptions and life experiences all influence your understanding of the intent.*

We all have a fundamental need to make sense of the world around us, and we classify everything whether it is vision, inspiration or communication. What influences how we classify this information depends on promises you or I make (both explicit and implied), our personalities and our life experiences (both good and bad). These all influence how we perceive and interpret messages in any format.

Have you ever communicated a seemingly clear, concise and well-received message only to later discover that the broad understanding of your message doesn't resemble your intended message? This is the result of “unintentional sabotage of communication.” Yes, it does undermine the credibility of leadership, but we shouldn't assume there is malicious intent by anyone.

If I ask you to help me pass a message, you naturally listen to it with the best intentions of passing on my intended message. However, my message is subject to your interpretation and classification processes. Your values, beliefs, perceptions, life experiences, etc. all influence your understanding of my intent. In addition, the message you pass on is subject to you subconsciously adjusting it according to your perspective, values, beliefs, etc. regarding communication. (You might not use the same language as I do). These subtle influences are typically subconscious, but modify, ever so slightly, the intended message. And, the process repeats.

To eliminate “unintentional sabotage of communication,” communicate in writing. This way, everyone reads the same message subject only to his or her interpretation process.

## Element Six

### Leadership Sees The Horizon Not Perceived By The Masses

Leadership is leading a group from where they are to a horizon they do not perceive. Genuine sincerity, integrity, and heart felt passion is essential.

*Are you looking for extraordinary results in your organization?*

*The best employees ARE searching for extraordinary leadership.*

An organization needs to articulate its story clearly – not as a multi-paragraph, lofty mission statement, but as a simple, to-the-point sentence that makes it easy for everyone to understand your business and associated goals. There's no better example than Southwest Airlines. If you work at Southwest Airlines, you know that the business isn't flying passengers, but rather, delivering a unique travel experience.

Enfranchise every employee with your organization's story and they become a champion for your success – from the CEO to the employees checking luggage.

How do you capture the passion of employees like Southwest Airlines does? For starters, you have to believe in your heart that people get up in the morning with the intention of being successful. Everyone wants to be a star, but the majority don't know how. However, they will diligently follow leadership if they feel sincerity, integrity and heartfelt passion.

Some reading this may debate they are in business of making money and not "baby sitting." Isn't leadership about leading a group of individuals from where they are to a horizon beyond anything they perceive? Are you looking for extraordinary results in your organization? The best employees ARE searching for extraordinary leadership!

Consider your response to sincerity, integrity and passionate commitment in promoting your interests. Are your remarkable results associated with passionate, heart felt concern?

Leadership is leading a group from where they are to a horizon they do not perceive. Genuine sincerity, integrity, and heart felt passion is essential.

## Element Seven

### Change The Ability To Execute, Not The Strategy

To achieve maximum potential, hold firm to your strategy until *you* understand the barriers to executing it.

*For many, they change their strategy based only on interaction within their inner circle, or maybe just the paper on their desk.*

*To understand what is happening, one has to stand where the “rubber meets the road.” It is impossible to feel the essence of a situation until you experience it firsthand from the perspective the other side.*

Organizations exist to execute strategy and vision. However, many organizations struggle with communicating expectations regarding execution of their strategy and vision. Employees often are not sure what is expected, and management suggests everyone “just knows.” However, when things fall behind schedule, the tendency is to change the strategy. If everyone knew what was expected, is there a possibility more would happen? Why do many organizations change strategy without first gaining a clear understanding of what is failing?

For many, they change their strategy after limited interaction within their inner circle, or maybe just the paper on their desk. When this is the case, you never see the reality of the situation. To understand what is happening, one has to stand where the “rubber meets the road.” It is impossible to feel the essence of a situation until you experience it firsthand from the perspective of the other side. Reading about it isn’t the same.

Venturing into the specifics of executing strategy enlightens one’s understanding of people and the reality of complexity. It can be difficult, but executing is a vehicle for transitioning strategy to reality. Remember, the people responsible for executing your strategy will proudly defend their perspective, but they will also engage an opportunity to improve the process. You have to ask questions to gain an understanding of their perspective. They will tell you if they trust you.

To achieve maximum potential, hold firm to your strategy until *you* understand the barriers to executing it. Maintain a disciplined focus on aligning your ability to execute with your strategy; rather than, changing the strategy to accommodate an inability to execute.

## Element Eight

### Management Develops Repeatable Processes That Focus Team Attention

Management develops repeatable systems, processes and reporting that clearly focuses the team's attention on what isn't working.

*This includes quantifying expectations in terms understood by those responsible for executing.*

*... the key to effective management is separating organizational noise from the issues and details needing attention.*

If we walk into a bookstore or library, we find volumes of books about management and leadership. In fact, many believe the two subjects are one in the same. Others seem to ignore one or the other. So what is management anyhow?

The word manage implies that one handle something. Management is associated with all the tangible aspects of an organization – such as anything that can be seen, felt, heard, measured, counted, quantified, etc. Management is responsible for repeatable processes, systems, reporting, tracking and any other quantifiable activity.

When management is given responsibility for executing a strategy, they develop a plan for how to move toward a defined objective. Everything about the strategy and the objective is quantified in terms of when, how many, where, etc.

Effective management involves developing systems, processes and information management practices that collect relevant facts about the organization. This includes quantifying expectations in terms understood by those responsible for executing. It includes collecting data regarding actual results.

The key to effective management is separating organizational noise from the issues and details needing attention. Have you ever received a report that has little or no relevance to influencing the outcome? Have you ever received a report that clearly pointed you to what needs attention?

Management develops repeatable systems, processes and reporting that clearly focuses the team's attention on what isn't working. Let technology file what is working, and focus your attention on what isn't working.

## Element Nine

### Leadership Sees What Management Does Not See – Extraordinary Results

**Leadership sees what management doesn't see – the means for achieving extraordinary results.**

*Leadership is what people cry for during challenging times.*

*Remember, 30% annoy 70%, and 70% never understand the other 30%.*

*Understanding what the 30% offer is key to achieving extraordinary results.*

The Target chain spends much of its marketing budget creating cool images and advertising a fun shopping experience that redefines their niche. The Target shopper pays extra to feel good about shopping. The uniqueness of Target's strategy differentiates it from the others that remain commodities. Target sees what others don't see – extraordinary results. The difference is intangible.

Leadership is an *energy* or influence that pulls the team toward a center of focus, strategy or vision. It can't be easily measured or quantified, but rather, it is ideas, creativity, innovativeness and possibilities. People cry for leadership during challenging times. Remember the nation's cry on 911 when the President's location was unknown? Did you believe things would be okay as he walked across the White House lawn?

Effective leadership inspires shared visions based on nothing more than an intangible peek at how things can be. Compelling visions offer meaning, purpose and excitement that energize individuals and teams.

The irony is that people will follow an inspired leader even when the quantifiable data suggest a different outcome. Sam Walton changed retail marketing because he inspired a vision of how things could be different. As a leader, he redefined the "facts" and "proven methods" associated with successful marketing. He could see what everyone else couldn't see.

Leadership sees what management doesn't see – the means for achieving extraordinary results. Remember, 30% annoy 70%, and 70% never understand the other 30%. The 70% struggle with seeing what the 30% see. Understanding what the 30% offer is key to achieving extraordinary results.

## Element Ten

### **The Key Is Understanding Patterns Of Interaction That Govern Talent, Passion And Communication**

To achieve organizational greatness, leadership and management must understand patterns of interaction, talents and passions, and styles of communication

*Regardless of positional responsibility, a talent consistently achieves repeatable near perfect results*

*If only 20% of all employees are doing what they believe they do best ... what is the consequence to your business if your competition grasps the meaning of this before you do?*

Ten or 20 years ago, competition was different, and organizations operated much looser. Today, the global economy has created a business environment where most things are equal. Today's competitive advantage depends on management's effectiveness in identifying, developing and aligning talents and passions with organizational initiatives.

This can be learned and mastered, but involves aligning innate talents and passions with organizational initiatives and objectives. Regardless of positional responsibility, a talent consistently achieves repeatable near perfect results. We can also learn to master new skills, but studies prove we never achieve the repeatable near perfect results as compared to innate talent. (Think Tiger Woods)

Imagine your organization having talent and passion aligned with organizational objectives. Now, compare this picture to an organization where individuals are randomly assigned.

Gallup surveyed 198,000 employees of 7,939 business units in 36 companies to find employees who believe they have the opportunity to do what they do best – talent and passion. Only 20% responded favorably. Organizations where employees do what they believe they do best, experience 50% less turnover, 38% higher productivity and 44% higher customer satisfaction.

To achieve organizational greatness, leadership and management must understand patterns of interaction, talents and passions, and styles of communication. If only 20% of all employees are doing what they believe they do best, and talent is something done consistently with repeatable near perfection performance, what is the consequence to your business if your competition grasps the meaning of this before you do?

## The Biggest Element:

### Communication

The core to achieving organizational greatness is building a pillar of communication

*Leadership is energy or influence that pulls the team toward a center of focus, strategy or vision*

*Management is action or process associated with aligning accountability with expectation, strategy and vision*

*Communication is expectation associated with a purpose, strategy and vision*

*StrategicHelm is an organizational enhancement program derived from experience and understanding gained through over 20 years of repeatable turnaround success.*

## Building A Pillar Of Communication

### The StrategicHelm Paradigm

Picture a spin top (in our logo) spinning on the desk and ask, “What keeps it upright?” The answer is a force or energy that is real but not easily seen, felt or measured. The physics term for this is centripetal force, which is constantly pulling toward a center of axis. This force acting on a spin top can be a metaphor for leadership.

**Leadership is energy** or influence that pulls a team toward a center of focus, strategy or vision. Much like the centripetal force acting on a spin top, leadership acts on the organization in an intangible way. In the absence of leadership, the team topples much like the spin top when centripetal force diminishes.

**Management is action** or process associated with aligning accountability with expectation, strategy and vision. Imagine the spin top being multiple layers of loosely stacked rings rotating independently about the axis. Within an organization, each level of management aligns accountability relative to leadership’s expectation, strategy and vision. Expectation, strategy and vision serve to align the organization. This aligning influence serves a similar function to the spin top’s axis of rotation, and can be a metaphor for communication.

**Communication is expectation** associated with a purpose, strategy and vision. Imagine the axis of our spin top being the standard against which all rings or layers align. In a similar manner, communication in an organization is the standard by which all results, decisions and expectations align. Think of communication as a pillar aligning all organizational initiatives, investments and people. The pillar of any organization is the ability to effectively communicate expectation, strategy and vision.

**Paul Krass** is a veteran of organizational enhancement.

His contribution spans over 20 years of effective leadership and organizational enhancement experience involving organizational analysis and improvement.

Coupled with his extensive understanding of people, processes and technology, he undertakes engagements within organizations seeking to improve operational effectiveness and productivity.

Paul has led organizations through times of difficult conditions and organizational realignments. He understands business processes and human engineering, consistently demonstrating the ability to take charge, evaluate present business conditions and initiatives, and in real-time, realign resources and processes, thus, achieving and delivering desired output and productivity.

His approach to this process is the hallmark of StrategicHelm.

Paul has that unique ability to understand, and then ask the questions that bring a flood of answers – answers critical to organizational development and improvement, customer quality and productivity.

Mr. Krass offers his “**Ten Essential Elements To Achieving Organizational Greatness**” as a unique perspective on organizational leadership and is available to speak with your group or organization. Please send your queries and requests to: [Paul@StrategicHelm.com](mailto:Paul@StrategicHelm.com).

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Mr. Krass is available for seminars and workshops on effective communication, and leadership and management practices regarding organizational enhancement.

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