



In the Board Room

By Mitch Dorger

One thing I have learned over time is that we live in a world where the only constant is change. I don't consider myself old, but I have been through radical technological and social revolutions in the span of my work career. Think for a moment about working in an office with no computers, no smart phones, no internet, no Wi-Fi, no copy machines, and no social media. That was how it was when I went to work. Our organizations are now critically dependent on technologies that did not exist 40 years ago or, in some cases, even 10 years ago. And I have heard it said that organizations a decade from now will be critically dependent on technologies that do not even exist today. The thought is staggering.

Now, think of the world and how it has changed. There are nations that did not exist when I was studying international affairs in graduate school, and the politics and economics of these nations impact each of us and our organizations in ways most of us cannot even fathom. Where will this global economy and global society be in another 10 - 20 years?

Finally, think about our society. Many volunteer-based organizations were built around middle management workers. Unfortunately, this class of worker has almost disappeared -- victims of economic cutbacks, technological innovation, and organizational restructuring. Think also about our family structures. The families of Ozzie and Harriet Nelson and Ward and June Cleaver do not exist anymore. Both spouses are now out in the work place trying to earn enough to make ends meet in an environment where a year at a decent college can now cost nearly \$50,000 and a wedding can be even more. The increase in working spouses has also served to drain the volunteer pool. We are also changing rapidly as a society (age, diversity, etc.). Who our customers were and what appealed to them in the past is very likely no longer who they are or what they are interested in today. We need to be able to adjust to this.

I believe strongly that all organizations must be prepared to deal with the change that has already engulfed us and will continue to do so in the future. We ignore

this challenge at our peril. In his book, *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*, Peter Drucker wrote, "... unless it is seen as the task of organizations to lead change, the organization -- whether business, university, hospital, and so on -- will not survive. In a period of rapid structural change, the only ones that will survive are the Change Leaders." (Drucker, 1999, 73) So how do we do this?

I believe there are two keys to dealing with change. I call them the twin pillars of success. They are (1) good organizational governance and (2) effective visioning. The former deals with how organizational leaders carry out their responsibilities, particularly those on boards of directors who are legally charged with ensuring the future success of their organizations. The latter is a term coined by author Andy Stanley in his book *Visioning*. He defines the term as "...the course one follows to make dreams a reality. It is the process whereby ideas and convictions take on substance." In short, it is the "engineering of a vision." (Stanley, 1999, 8) In my use of the term, *Visioning* combines comprehensive strategic planning with solidly engineered and well-executed implementation.

In the coming months I will devote this column to writing about both pillars, with governance coming first, because it sets the stage for visioning. I will dissect the subject of effective governance and offer

ideas on what makes good governance as well what impediments there are to good governance in many organizations. I will also offer suggestions for overcoming these impediments. Additionally in March of this year I address what I call "The Dirty Dozen" of bad governance (or at least governance that is not operating at optimum levels.) This webinar provides organizational leaders (board members and staff executives) tools that can be used to evaluate how effectively their organization is in terms of this critical area. (If you missed the Webinar, be sure to check it out as an IFEA Webinar on Demand.) The result of our mutual efforts will hopefully be organizations in our industry better equipped to grapple with the challenges of a changing world.

Recently retired as the CEO of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, Mitch Dorger brings to his new consulting practice more than 40 years of work experience including 20 years as a chief executive officer. His experience as a CEO was consistently characterized by successful performance improvement programs and high employee morale and achievement. He believes the fundamental goal of leadership is to inspire teamwork and the spirit of continuous improvement. He has recent expertise in the world of non-profit organizations and is well versed in corporate governance, volunteer management, financial planning and management, government relations, and large event management. As a public speaker he has lectured on non-profit organizational management, strategic planning, change management and leadership. He has also served as a keynote speaker for four different festival and event association conventions.

Mitch Dorger, Principal
Dorger Executive Consulting
Pasadena, California.
mitch@dorger.com