



Want to make better decisions?

Build a Strong Pyramid

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“We’re in business to save our home planet.” – Patagonia

Is the decision you’re about to make something you’d want splattered all over social media?

Are you willing to have this exposed to the public eye for everyone to see?

Take, for example, the shenanigans during college prior to the widespread availability of smartphone cameras, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.

Consider that embarrassing moment—or the time you toed the legal line with a bunch of friends just because “everybody was doing it.”

My guess is that those aren’t the kinds of decisions you’d want out there in the world.

Today’s consumers and workforce are much more in tune with their principles than ever before, and organizations must be keenly aware how their choices impact these essential communities.

Research has shown that younger generations have a desire to feel more connected with their work. Consumers are progressively conscientious about where they choose to spend their money. Business partners are increasingly diligent about the partnerships they contract with to allocate capital and invest in implementation with.

So, if the answer is NO—no, you wouldn’t want to post that list of priorities on your company’s social media page—then why even make the decision in the first place?

The answer is that more “solutions” or plans are being made based on recent performance,

short-term targets, or the overarching pursuit of results alone.

This approach leads organizations and teams to constantly implement new plans to address the most pressing needs, thus creating the “flavor of the month” approach to decision-making.

This frantic style of decision-making creates a confusing, hard-to-keep-up environment for your teams and often causes managers and employees to become more disconnected from the core mission that exists.

An environment like this has the potential to lead to frustration, lack of engagement, an erosion of trust, and burnout.

“We create happiness by providing the best in entertainment for all ages everywhere.” – Disney

Simon Sinek articulated this well in his TED Talk titled “How Great Leaders Inspire Action,” illustrating that “People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it.”

He contrasted the success of Apple with that of IBM, arguing that IBM, which historically focused on building technology solutions, found itself struggling to foster a deep emotional connection with consumers, thus dramatically losing market share to Apple.

Meanwhile, Steve Jobs unlocked a mission within Apple “to bring the best user experience to customers through innovative hardware, software, and services.”

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It was all about the consumer experience; thus, all design, product, and service decisions were developed in alignment with their mission, vision, and values.

This article aims to provide leaders with a framework to ensure that you and your teams are making decisions from a place of purpose before developing action plans to achieve your goals.

You can do this by first building a strong foundation around your mission, vision, and values.

This important phase will define the organization and become the source of purposeful decision-making at all levels of the organization.

“To discover and spread ideas that spark conversation, deepen understanding, and drive meaningful conversation.” – TED

Let’s break each of these components down for simplicity.

- **Mission** – Why do you exist?

Consider asking your teams independently to write down the answer to this simple question.

See what you get back. Read the answers aloud in a leadership development session.

This can be a telling exercise that might signal a need to re-discover your business’ purpose.

Consider, for example, ensuring that your mission effectively communicates beyond the

“what” you do, and instead incorporates the “why” you do what you do.

Asking yourself “so what” to an existing mission statement can help spark a more meaningful significance to your company’s existence.

- **Vision** – Where will you provide the most value to others?

Vision refers to a clear and inspirational long-term goal or aspiration for what an organization aims to achieve in the future.

Consider using this as a roadmap that will guide the company toward its desired future state.

“The American Red Cross’s mission is to prevent and relieve human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.” – The American Red Cross

An effective vision has the potential to inspire, motivate, and energize employees and stakeholders as they work toward a common goal.

- **Values** – What beliefs and behaviors will you lean on to move closer to your desired outcomes?

Values are a key ingredient to these guiding principles that help shape the way an organization operates.

Consider, for example, the core components of your culture: how will you deliver an exceptional client experience, differentiate your brand from the competitors, and how are you making a positive impact in the community.

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Mission, vision, and values collectively form the foundation for building high-performing, sustainable teams. So, make sure it's rock solid before you move onto the second layer of decision-making.

Much like a pyramid, the first layer of bricks must be carefully settled to withstand the pressure of adding subsequent tiers.

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

And this next level is all about the people. It has nothing to do with having the right number of people, and more to do with how your people will deliver on the mission.

This is where you and your teams must deliberately translate the above concepts into daily behaviors and habits.

Consider, for example, asking the following questions.

- How will we live up to our values?
- How can we best promote a spirit of teamwork?
- What strengths can we utilize to achieve even greater success together?
- How can we manage conflict directly and compassionately?
- How must we provide the team with the necessary support, encouragement,

and accountability that will move us closer to our targets?

Spend time discussing how your team will interact in resolving internal conflict, develop key initiatives, set parameters around strategic decisions, empower and elevate each other's roles and responsibilities, and drive a more innovative culture.

I'd caution you not to speed through these first two phases. It can be easy to jump straight to the tip of the pyramid, but it's important to slow down and build your foundation.

This will help you avoid a monumental landslide by throwing too many decisions on top of an unsettled bedrock of misconception, misalignment, and misunderstanding.

Completing these first two steps with your team is also a great way to foster a culture of collaboration.

By doing this, you'll be leading by example and demonstrating aspects of your vision and values into real-life practice.

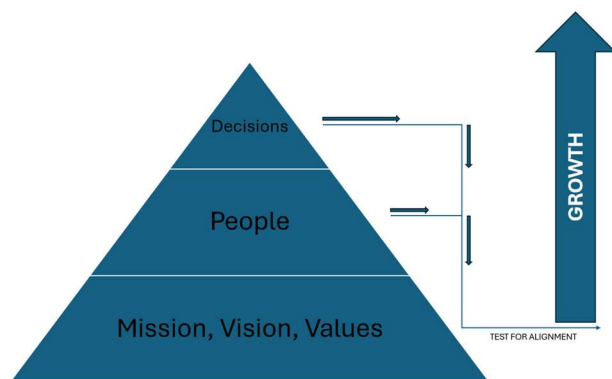
“Become the kind of leader that people would follow voluntarily; even if you had no title or position.” – Brian Tracey

If you've completed this, you can now move on to the third phase. The top of the pyramid is where you and your team will evaluate your key strategies by “testing” each proposed action plan against the previous phases to ensure alignment with your mission, vision, values, and people.

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Consider exploring ways to enhance your products and services, discontinue outdated processes, discover new opportunities to expand your market share, equip your teams to navigate anticipated challenges, identify strategies to capture evolving consumer trends, and deliver more value to existing clients.



“Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.” – Peter Drucker

Testing potential decisions against the first two phases ensures that you are making value-driven choices and reaffirms your teams’ guiding principles.

By implementing this approach, you will reach conclusions quicker and with more certainty because your teams will have an agreed upon construct for making decisions.

Your employees, customers, and partners will benefit from experiencing a stronger connection to your core mission which will lead to significant growth toward your next levels of performance.

In an increasingly complex world, the decision-making process can involve many dilemmas, competing interests, and conflicting opinions.

This decision-making pyramid provides a robust framework for individuals and organizations to thoughtfully act on choices that stay true to their principles, resonating more deeply with the world, ultimately driving peak performance for many years to come.

If you’re unsure of how strong your pyramid is or would like to further explore strategies to achieve even greater performance, then hiring a leadership coach might benefit you and your organization. Leaders who invest in their own abilities and team development signal to their employees a commitment to continued growth and advancement.

“When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.” – Roy E. Disney

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