



## *Leading the Charge*

### *The Required Qualities of Today's Exceptional Leader*

This White Paper, one in a series of occasional monographs from Stamats, will present 10 leadership responsibilities that college and university presidents must address to not only help their organizations deal with the issues outlined below, but to help them flourish in difficult times.<sup>1</sup>

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Six years ago, I wrote a couple of White Papers on leadership and strategy. At that time, colleges were in the middle of a solid run. Enrollments and endowments were up. Life was good.

Of course, things have changed. One Saturday night last winter I was sitting with a college president, sharing dinner. We were talking about leadership, particularly what kind of leaders colleges and universities need in these early years of the new millennium.

As we ended our conversation he looked at me and said, "Good times can hide the ugly head of poor leadership." He stopped for a second and added, "but these are not good times."

Based on that conversation, and conversations I have had since that time with other college and university presidents, I have decided to revisit the issue of leadership. I, in particular, wanted to assemble a list of "must

do" for today's college and university leaders. This White Paper is the result of those discussions.

#### **SOME MAJOR ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Before we discuss leadership, let's take a second to outline some of the major issues defining the higher education marketplace right now. Without wallowing in a great deal of painful detail, we can safely say:

- Fundraising is off and not expected to recover until well after the economy turns around (of course, we have no real sense of when it will turn around)
- While applications are up an average of 20 percent at most colleges and universities, tuition revenue is down, or flat
- Contributions to the operating budget from endowments are down in part because of lower numbers of donated dollars and mostly because endowment performance is off
- Many students that had historically attended privates are now embracing public higher education

- One sector of higher education that is showing consistent gains—often at the expense of not-for-profits—are the for-profits, particularly Apollo/University of Phoenix, Strayer, Corinthian, Argosy, and others
- Marketing, student recruiting, and even fundraising budgets are flat and even declining

Amidst these issues, colleges and universities struggle to develop a compelling vision and a workable strategic plan to achieve it.

#### **TEN LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

While the demands on today's college or university leader are many, there are 10 in particular that must be addressed if you are to meet the challenges and realize the opportunities that are before you. These 10 are:

1. Recognize the three key roles of leadership
2. Get the right people on the bus

<sup>1</sup>Earlier White Papers can be downloaded from [www.stamats.com/whitepapers](http://www.stamats.com/whitepapers).

3. The vision thing
4. Focus, focus, focus
5. A realistic, linked strategic plan
6. Learn the most important word of all—integration
7. Use data wisely
8. First build awareness and then generate response
9. Execute
10. Hustle

### LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #1: RECOGNIZE THE THREE KEY ROLES OF LEADERSHIP<sup>2</sup>

There are dozens of excellent books and perhaps hundreds of articles on the role of the leader in an organization. However, with an eye toward simplicity and brevity, it is hard to beat Karl Albrecht. According to Albrecht, writing in *The Northbound Train*, today's leaders have three distinct roles.

The leader as **team-builder** puts the right people in the right places for the top-level leadership team, welds them into a single-minded core of advocacy for the common cause, capitalizes on their individual strengths and resources, and continually develops them as team and individual leaders who can serve the mandate required of them. We will address this more completely in the second key responsibility.

The leader as a **living symbol** is the individual who “walks the talk” in a

highly visible way, demonstrating a constant and unrelenting pattern of reinforcing the institution's vision.

The leader as **buck-stopper** faces the difficult issues, discerns the truth of challenges, and makes the tough decisions and dramatic changes that have to be made. While this involves open-minded listening and collaboration with the leadership team, it is the leader who must ultimately face the music and manage the organization's response to critical issues. Good leaders are not afraid. They do not duck the issues. They weigh in, decide, take the heat, and move ahead.

Leaders might do all manner of other things, but exceptional leaders must continually address those big three. Without a synergistic team, the leader is doomed. If the leader is not the living symbol, who will be? If the leader is not willing to back up his or her troops, you will not get their best work and the team will be picked apart.

### LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #2: GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON THE BUS

I am heavily swayed by Jim Collins' *Good to Great*. The basic treatise of the book is this: It is very difficult to make a good organization into a great organization because many leaders (and followers) are too easily satisfied with being good. Collins then outlines a handful of “must dos” for the truly successful organization.

His first recommendation is simple: **Get the right people on the bus.** And by extension, get the wrong people off

the bus. In other words, build an exceptional team. In his mind, and mine, that is the primary responsibility of the senior leader.

Getting the right people on the bus is an amazingly disciplined and difficult undertaking. It usually begins with the creation of a core of individuals; perhaps the president and one or two other senior administrators. It is the synergy among this group that must be expanded to include additional team members. And here is the key issue: Hire for attitude and professionalism, almost everything else can be learned. There is no technical skill or ability that will overcome someone who will not be a contributing member of the team.

While there are lots of great models for building a team, I like the simplicity of the following model that stresses the four Cs. First, **character**. Is this person honest? Can you trust them? Do they keep their word? Do they keep secrets? Or will you always be waiting for the other shoe to drop?

Second, is this person **committed** to the team's vision? He or she must be willing to let achieving the vision be the north star that guides all actions.

Third, **chemistry**. Will this person get along with other team members? Will he or she support the individual roles of the team members, including the team leader?

Finally, **competency**. Does this person bring a valued skillset to the team?

If a potential team member does not have the four Cs, take a pass. You will never regret it.

<sup>2</sup>The first two responsibilities are a bit co-mingled. Bear with me, there is a method here.

### ***Get the wrong people off the bus***

Even as the senior leader is getting the right people on the bus, he or she must get the wrong people off the bus. Chances are, you already know who these people are. You probably keep hoping they will change or get with the program. I can tell you, they almost never will. Cut your losses. They need to be let go.

Yes, this is hard. It should be. It should never be done casually. But if you have a team member, particularly at the executive level, that just won't play, he or she must leave. They will only continue to poison—or, at minimum, distract—the team. Be fair. But be firm. Get the wrong people off the bus.

### ***Keep the demotivators at bay***

Rather than focusing on motivating the team, the senior leader must work to keep demotivators away from the team. In other words, the senior leader must run interference for the team and keep the petty rules, petty thinkers, and petty tasks away.

Not too long ago I went to a service honoring a senior pastor of a church with 3,000 members and a staff of 12. During the eulogy, a number of staffers spoke about their leader and many of them said that one of the qualities they valued most in him was that he protected them from the second-guessers.

First and foremost, the senior leader must build. And once the team is in place, the leader must protect the team.

### **LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #3: THE VISION THING**

We hear a lot about vision. We know that leaders are supposed to have visions for their organizations. We know that organizations with strong visions have a clear sense of direction. We know that organizations with great visions are more successful than those that do not have a vision. We know that without a vision, people and organizations will likely perish, or at least wander in the wilderness for a generation or two.

Burt Nanus, writing in *Visionary Leadership*, defines vision as “a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization.” He goes on to say that there is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future that is widely shared.

#### ***The northbound train***

Karl Albrecht uses a metaphor, “the northbound train,” to describe how important vision is to an organization. Albrecht says that the metaphor of a train conveys an unwavering commitment to a particular direction. “Think about the implications of a northbound train: Purpose and direction,” he says. “No vision statement or mission statement can ever make much sense unless it originates in some valid concept about what it takes to succeed. It is not a platitude. It is not a slogan. It is not an exercise in journalism; it is an exercise in careful, clear, creative, disciplined, and mature thought. It provides a critical success premise that leaders can understand, commit to, and

dramatize to others. The idea of a moving train also conveys a strong sense of momentum, of unstoppable, implacable movement in an unambiguous direction.”

Albrecht notes that leaders and followers must have a clear image of this northbound train. The keyword is image—something that you can describe and that people can see in their mind's eye. It is a mental picture of an enterprise, operating in an environment, performing to some criterion of excellence, and appreciated for what it contributes.

Enough verbiage? Then let's get down to brass tacks. Ultimately, there are three very important words that apply to vision (as they do to many other things). Those words are:

- Important
- Believable
- Distinctive

Think of these three words as a kind of vision litmus test.

Do your most important external audiences (not just your internal ones) think that your vision is **important** to them? In other words, do you fill an indispensable niche?

Second, is your vision **believable**? Every college wants to be nationally known for something. The question is, and it's a big one, does your audience believe that you can? Chances are, most colleges can't be nationally known. They don't have the horses. But Denison can. So can Grove City. And Calvin. Their vision to be nationally known is believable.

Third, is your vision **distinctive**? Does it have a certain amount of cache that sets it apart from your competitors? Instead of being yet another four-year private college that is friendly, caring, and supportive, one president I know has a vision that his institution will offer only bachelor's degrees that students can complete in three years. That's distinctive and, I suspect, believable and important.

When you merge these three words—important, believable, and distinctive—together you have begun to define another word: **Relevance**. Imagine, being relevant to donors and prospective students. What a great position.

#### **LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #4: FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS**

As we have discussed, visions have a number of essential qualities. They are inspirational. They provide direction. They galvanize. In addition to these noble responsibilities, effective visions must also provide **focus**.

Colleges and universities sometimes have trouble focusing their energies, efforts, and resources. Instead, it seems as if they believe that the one sure path to institutional safety involves offering a little something to everyone. Rather than depth, they have sought breadth. Rather than quality, they have sought quantity.

Smart leaders know that this is actually a very dangerous path. It may appear safe and sure, but the fact is that it undermines quality and negates distinctiveness.

Rather than trying to be all things to all people, today's leader must try to be fewer things to fewer people. By gathering critical resources behind fewer offerings, you will increase quality and viability.

Al Ries, in his insightful book, *Focus*, makes the case for narrowing your academic focus. He notes that a handful of educational institutions have specialized, notably the Juilliard School in music, Rhode Island School of Design in design, Fashion Institute of Technology in fashion, and Babson College in entrepreneurship. Some have achieved a specialist reputation almost by accident, notably The Johns Hopkins University in medicine.

He goes on, "Some graduate schools have also achieved world-class reputations as specialists, again mostly by accident, notably Wharton in finance and Kellogg in marketing. What would work better, however, is for an educational institution to deliberately focus on a single field of study and then make an effort to achieve a world-class reputation. The spectacular success of INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France, is a good example of what can be achieved. A 35-year-old graduate school that focuses on turning out global business managers, INSEAD (European Institute of Business Administration) has a sterling reputation. It's the school most targeted by international corporate recruiters. Nearly 200 visit the school annually, offering starting salaries averaging \$75,000.

"Here in the United States, the American Graduate School of International Management in

Glendale, Arizona, is mining the same area. Known as 'Thunderbird,' the nonprofit school has enjoyed a 900 percent growth in revenues in the past five years. Yet few American educational institutions specialize. Almost all of America's more than 2,000 four-year colleges are generalists. So far, they have benefited from a steadily expanding market for their services. But there's a limit. As the percentage of high school students going on to college levels off, the competition is going to get more intense." Concludes Ries, "What you are likely to see is a shift toward educational specialization, which is exactly what has happened in the market for goods and services."

Fortunately, some colleges and universities are beginning to specialize and focus. The University of Phoenix only serves adults. The decision of Trenton State to downsize its enrollment by one-third and eliminate many graduate programs so it could focus on undergraduate education has already had enormous strategic benefits. Cornell College, the original Cornell, through its One Course at a Time program, focuses on a unique approach to teaching and learning.

In fact, if you look closely, you will find that most great colleges focus on one or more of the following:

- A specific geography
- A certain kind of student
- A certain way of teaching
- A specific discipline

Resist being vague. Resist trying to be all things to all people (or more things to more people). Go for depth, not breadth. *Focus.*

#### **LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #5: A REALISTIC, LINKED STRATEGIC PLAN<sup>3</sup>**

There are probably few phrases that cause a greater group groan on most campuses than “strategic planning.” The fact is, most colleges and universities look at strategic planning as a path to pain, rather than a path to plenty. As a consequence, the universal response to the completion of a strategic planning process is, “Whew, finally, now I can get back to work.”

Recognizing that it is a bit of an uphill battle, let’s spend a little time talking about the role and purpose of strategic planning before we explore some options for improving your planning process.

#### ***The purpose of strategic planning***

A strategic plan has one goal: To help you achieve your vision. As such, it is a resource gathering and resource allocation tool. Strategic planning purists will talk about the need for the plan to create an alignment between an organization’s day-to-day activities and its environment to facilitate the flow of resources to that organization. That’s true, but somewhat complex. Keep it simple. The strategic plan is the means. The vision is the goal.

Strategic planning has four important tenets. First, it recognizes the symbiotic relationship between the organization and its environment. Second, strategic planning is based

on a robust and defensible situational analysis that incorporates solid, defensible marketing research. Third, the resultant strategic plan is the central organizing principle around which the institution orders its daily activities. Finally, strategic planning involves monitoring and evaluating return on investment of time, talent, and treasure.

#### ***It’s not the plan—it’s what you do with the plan***

You must begin your planning process with an important understanding: The goal is not the creation of a strategic plan. Rather, the goal is the sense of direction and institutional coordination (we might say “integration”) created by an effective strategic planning process. In other words, the plan must be a guide to action.

#### ***Understand the tools***

Let’s try an analogy here. If you want to build a piece of furniture, you need a set of tools. Probably a saw. Some chisels. A tape measure. A nice square. Some glue. In the same fashion, there are a handful of institutional tools (sometimes called “domains” or “essential task areas”) that you can use to execute your strategic plan. These include:

- Finance and budget
- Academic affairs
- Student recruiting and financial aid
- Student development/retention
- Institutional advancement and alumni relations (fundraising)

- Facilities planning
- Information technology
- Brand marketing/image
- Human resources

As your planning process unfolds, you should be asking yourself, how can facilities planning be used to advance the overall vision? What about human resources? Or IT? In the final analysis, strategic planning is all about how you orchestrate these nine domains to achieve your vision.

#### ***Answer the “what’s in it for me” question***

Ultimately, people don’t work for institutions, they work for themselves or their immediate peer group. Recognizing this, the strategic plan must answer for all people on campus the important question: What’s in it for me? If individuals don’t see how the plan, their participation in it, and its success will improve their lot in life, they will likely not participate or not participate fully. People must see and value how the plan will increase the flow of resources—dollars, equipment, time, access—to them.

#### ***What gets measured is what gets done***

Lofty goals are just that, lofty. As such, they are often ill-conceived, ill-defined, and difficult to measure. A successful strategic plan, a plan that guides institutional action toward accomplishing the vision, is built on clear goals that are themselves built on solid data. If the plan calls for improving your image, you must know

<sup>3</sup>This section on strategic planning is adapted from my February 2003 University Business column.

what your current image is and you must be prepared, at some point in the plan's implementation, to measure your image again to determine your progress. If you don't take the time to quantify your goals, you will have great difficulty measuring your progress at a later date.

### ***Clarify who does what, when, and hold people accountable***

Institutions and departments don't do anything...people do. A good strategic plan is built on a clear sense of who will be doing what and when, the resources that will be consumed, and when and how the activity will be evaluated. Without this kind of operational detail, the strategic plan will likely accomplish little.

### ***Link plans to budgets and actions to rewards***

As you develop your strategic plan, take the time to link plans to budgets, and actions to rewards. Without these linkages, your plan will likely fail. First, let's look at plans and budgets.

Too often, plans are written without a nod toward the budget. Either plans are too grandiose for the dollars that are available or the plan is written and then dollars are sought. Both approaches will lead to disappointment. It is much better to plan within your means. As you think about budgets, remember that strategic planning is more often about the reallocation or redirection of existing dollars than the use of new dollars. The nine essential task areas outlined previously already consume great numbers of dollars. A good strategic plan will coordinate those

dollars toward one end: The fulfillment of your vision.

Second, you must link actions to rewards. Higher education is fixated on egalitarianism, a notion that all people and departments should be treated equally. In today's tight budget climate, this means all people—regardless of their contribution—are probably treated poorly. A successful strategic planning effort must reject this notion of blanket egalitarianism. It believes that people who perform should be rewarded to a higher degree than people who do not. To treat performers and non-performers the same way sends the signal that their contribution does not matter. This will likely undermine their desire to contribute further.

### **LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #6: LEARN THE MOST IMPORTANT WORD OF ALL—INTEGRATION**

Have you ever watched a racing shell go through its paces? All eight rowers are in perfect synch as they carefully listen to the coxswain and follow his or her lead. The rowers and the coxswain are functioning as a completely integrated team.

When we talk about strategic planning or even marketing, the most important word is **integration**. In other words, is everyone working together toward the single, common vision?

According to our friends at Webster's, integration means "to make into a whole by bringing all parts together. To unify or unite." This is an amazingly powerful concept. To illustrate it, let's go back to the image of a racing shell. For the crew to win, everyone must

row together. A well-crewed shell will not suffer a rower who is out of time, not pulling her or his weight, or simply does not want to row. Rowers who are out of synch are a tremendous drag on the shell. They will be cut from the team.

There is a powerful and important lesson here: At the top, and as far down as you can go in the organization, there must be complete harmony on vision, direction, and means.

From a planning perspective, this kind of integration means:

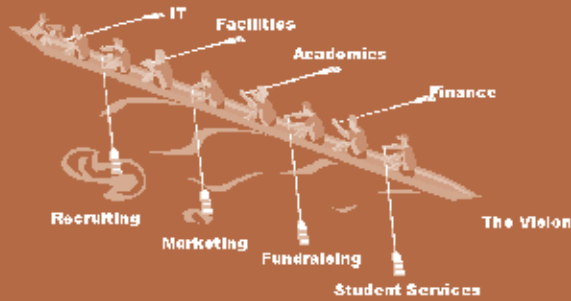
- A shared vision
- Common goals
- A set of actions that are coordinated across all departments and functions
- A realistic, shared budget that is equal to the task

In addition, somewhere in the background, there is a coxswain calling out the cadence and everyone is following the beat. That's you, the leader.

If dollars are tight and the market demands are plenty, then the need for integration increases. In some respects, integration, stewardship, and synergy are all synonyms.

Remember, the opposite of integration is disintegration and disintegration is wasteful and embarrassing.

## Everybody Pulling in the Same Direction



director's ability to run an annual fund. Data that shows one search mailing had a seven percent response rate and another had a nine percent response rate will allow you to determine which search mailing you should repeat.

the same. Research can be used to customize messages (older donors want to give to mission while younger donors want to give to vision) and media (older donors are more likely to respond to a letter in 12-point type than one in 11-point type). A segmentation strategy built on solid data will always generate greater response rates.

### LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #7: USE DATA WISELY

Imagine that you are the captain of a cruise ship that is navigating treacherous waters at night. Rather than using radar, however, you opt to rely on intuition or perhaps the advice of a wealthy passenger. Sound foolhardy? Of course. However, the many colleges and universities that use intuition rather than solid research data are sometimes taking that same foolish chance. They may think they are saving time and money by not gathering data, but the fact is they are likely heading for the shoals.

#### *At the very least, data fills six important functions*

1. Data forces you to face the brutal truth. Clear, concise data that describes falling enrollment, underperforming endowments, or a buildup of deferred maintenance will force you to deal with the issue. It is hard to ignore the numbers.
2. Data allows you to assess performance. If your annual fund contributions increased by five percent in one year and the average gift increased by \$12, you can feel good about the performance of your new alumni

3. Data allows you to illustrate issues. If students are not inquiring, a non-inquiry survey of prospective students will help determine how they perceive you—and compare you with your competitors. These data will likely illuminate strategic and tactical issues that need to be addressed before response rates will increase.

4. Data helps you make meaningful comparisons. Norming is an important tool to gauge performance. If the average five-year graduation rate among your cohort group is 76 percent and yours is 55 percent, you've got trouble. Comparison data is a powerful leadership tool.
5. Data helps you clarify options. Imagine that you have the resources to offer one new major but you have two possibilities. A survey of prospective students and employers clearly shows a preference for the evening M.B.A. program rather than the Master of Social Work. Which one should you offer?
6. Data allows you to segment messages and media. Not all students and donors think and act

#### ***But not too much data***

It is possible to go overboard with data collection. I've seen colleges routinely keep track of hundreds of different variables. In fact, I often think they spend so much time gathering the data that they forget to spend time analyzing it. Great leaders learn early on which datasets are most important. Often called dashboard indicators, these are the numbers that, at the macro level, guide performance. For example, some dashboard indicators—organized around the nine strategic planning domains—might include:

#### • **Finance and budget**

- Equity-debt ratio
- Net tuition revenue
- Ratio of annual debt requirement to pledged revenue
- Level of institutional reserves as percent of operating budget
- Ratio of expenditures/income
- Ratio of debt service to unrestricted current fund revenues
- Ratio of expandable fund balance to plant debt

- Ratio of general assets to general liabilities
- Net income ratio (more than just tuition)
- Cash income ratio

• **Academic affairs**

- Instructional support as percent of operating budget
- Ratio of tenured vs. non-tenured/full-time vs. part-time
- Cost of instruction/FTE student by level of program (lower division, upper division, master's, doctoral)
- Cost of instruction/program
- Ratio of academic expenditures to overall expenditures
- Academic strength indicators are well above average—retention and graduate rates

• **Student recruiting and financial aid**

- Cost to recruit a student
- Net tuition revenue
- Tuition discount rate
- Growth trend demonstrating successful matriculation of targeted prospective students
- Enrollment vs. cost analysis of individual departments
- Trend of applications by prospective students
- Yield ratio for admitted students
- Admissions selectivity expressed as a percentage of applicants accepted

- Admissions yield expressed as a percentage of those accepted who enroll
- Relationship of tuition rates to peer institutions (defined as institutions with common applications)

• **Student development/retention**

- First-year to second-year retention rates
- Five- and six-year graduation rates
- Student satisfaction assessment

• **Institutional advancement and alumni relations (fundraising)**

- Alumni satisfaction
- Cost to raise a dollar
- Endowment growth
- Total cash gifts
- Private dollars per FTE student

• **Facilities/planning**

- Asset/depreciation ratios
- Deferred maintenance

• **Information technology**

• **Brand marketing and image**

- Baseline awareness data among key audiences
- Overlap data

• **Human resources**

- Significant resources committed to professional development of faculty and staff

- Institutional student-faculty ratio, including teaching assistants (two)
- Institutional staff-faculty ratio

Of course, this list tells only part of the story. The key is to develop a cogent, easily monitored list that describes your school and your circumstances.

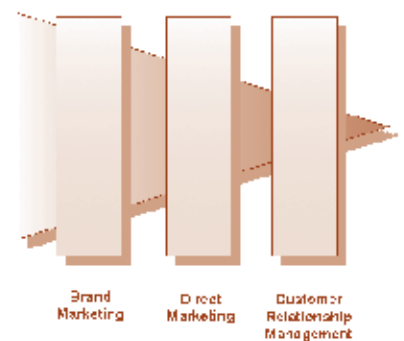
Don't operate without radar. Gather the data. There are shoals ahead.

**LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY #8: FIRST BUILD AWARENESS AND THEN GENERATE RESPONSE**

If you don't own a position in the minds of your students and donors—if they have never heard of you—they will never be in your dorm or on your donor roles. It is, fundamentally, all about the brand.

Over the past year much has been written about brand marketing. Very little, however, has been written about the relationship between brand marketing and direct marketing. In fact, brand marketing and direct marketing are two legs of a three-legged stool. The third leg, as you can see in the diagram below, is customer relationship management (CRM).

**Integrated Marketing Communications**



We know from previous White Papers and *QuickTakes* that a brand is a valued promise that you make to your most important audiences. We know, further, that brand marketing is all about creating awareness of that promise in the mind of a student or donor.

Direct marketing, on the other hand, is all about generating a response. It is the “ask.” Will you donate? Will you enroll?

***Brand marketing is all about:***

- Awareness
- Attitude
- Imparting information
- The future

***Direct marketing is all about:***

- Response
- Prospecting
- Now

Here’s the key: To increase your direct marketing response—to get more students and more donated dollars—you must first create brand awareness. Awareness is the fertile ground upon which the “ask” must land.

Let me give you an example of how this works. Brand marketing is Ford telling people that “Quality is Job 1.” Ford is linking their name to the idea of quality. They are not selling cars, they are creating awareness of the association between Ford and quality.

Direct marketing is all about selling a Taurus. The question, “Do you want to

buy a Taurus?” is directed at car buyers who are already aware that Ford and quality are synonyms.

So, what does this have to do with colleges? Let’s take a minute to find out. If you have no brand, no image, no top-of-mind, then your direct marketing strategies—student search and annual funds—will have to work much harder.

However, if you have a brand in the minds of students, then your materials and messages will more likely be responded to.

A number of years ago, I outlined a five-point, sure-fire recruiting strategy that will never, ever fail. It goes like this.

1. Identify the kinds of students that persist at your institution
2. Identify the benefit segments they seek (the qualities and characteristics that you offer that they value)
3. Determine where they live in sufficient numbers
4. Build a brand in their heads
5. Search

If you follow those five steps, and give Step 4 the time and resources it needs, you will be successful. If you skip any of the steps, but especially Step 4, your search strategy will never be as successful as it could be.

Though messaging technology may change and become more complex, brands persist. Whether you opt for postal mail or e-mail, your response rates will increase if your “ask” is

preceded by some serious brand-building. Be bold. Build the brand.

**LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY**

**#9: EXECUTE**

It’s not how many ideas you have, it’s how many you make happen. That’s the tag for Accenture’s great new ad campaign (you can check out the entire campaign, including a screen saver, at [accenture.com](http://accenture.com)).

The ads in the campaign all follow a similar theme:

- I am your idea. One day you’ll look for me and I’ll be gone.
- I am your idea. Competitors may be closer than you think (words in a car’s rearview mirror).
- I am your idea. I won’t stay hot forever (features a cup of steaming coffee).
- I am your idea. Drive me (imprinted on a golf ball).
- I am your idea. How far do you want to go (highway sign)?

Accenture’s ads are all about execution.

Recently, I spent time with some people from the Sloan School at MIT. During the course of reviewing their marketing materials, I noticed a fascinating quote from a graduate student. When asked to summarize what he had learned at the business school, the student replied:

Think Daringly.

Execute Steadily.

In four simple words, that M.B.A student captured what should be right, but is often wrong, with strategy. He noted correctly that we need to think daringly. Some of us can't or won't think daringly. Our comfort levels and our reluctance to tilt at windmills prevent us from thinking boldly, even audaciously. At this point, we balk at the starting gate.

Some of us, however, are quite willing to think daringly. Now we run into the second, and perhaps more insidious, issue—failure to execute. In other words, we don't follow through.

Behind my desk is a small list that contains a handful of things I will do in a specific quarter of the year. At the bottom of the list is a note to myself that says, "If I did not work on one or more of these things today, then the day was a waste." John Maher, a consultant friend of mine, has a similar sign on his desk. It says, "I have two oars in the water. One is labeled drive. The other is labeled focus. I need to pull on both oars at the same time or I will go in circles."

True leaders welcome new ideas, but not too many. They choose carefully. But their passion is execution. They value getting things done. They constantly ask themselves, "Am I on strategy?"

## **LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY**

### **#10: HUSTLE**

Recently while cleaning out some old files, I ran across an old article from the September-October 1986 *Harvard Business Review*. Written

by Amar Bhide, it was titled, "Hustle as Strategy."

While Bhide's comments are directed at the financial services industry, I think they have direct application for higher education (or any organization for that matter). Says Bhide, "Strategy, its high-church theologians insist, is about outflanking competitors with big plays... (However), it is questionable whether this proposition is sustainable.... While they preach strategic planning, competitive strategy, and competitive advantage, they overlook the record of a surprisingly large number of very successful companies that vigorously practice a different religion. These companies don't have long-term strategic plans with an obsessive preoccupation on rivalry. They concentrate on operating details and doing things well. Hustle is their style and their strategy. They move fast, and they get it right."

Bhide goes on, "Are executives in these companies living in the managerial Dark Ages? Wouldn't they do even better if they linked their hustle to big, powerful strategic plans? I believe the answer is no. Opportunities to gain a lasting advantage through blockbuster strategic moves are rare in any business. What mostly counts are vigor and nimbleness. These traits are always needed and always important, yet strategic planning theologians largely ignore them."

Countless companies in all industries, young or old, mature or booming, are

finally learning the limits of strategy and concentrating on tactics and execution. In a world where there are no secrets, where innovations are quickly imitated or become obsolete, the theory of competitive advantage may have had its day.

As important as strategy is, sometimes even more important than strategy is the hustle.

### **Just do it and do it now!**

## **CONCLUSION**

Within the Chinese symbol for crisis are the symbols for danger and opportunity. Certainly, the academy is besieged. However, there has never been a better time for the exceptional leader, the leader who can build the team and boldly pursue the vision. Where there is danger, there is opportunity, but it takes a very special leader to realize it. It is my hope that some of the insights offered in this White Paper will help you to be that kind of leader.

### ***A leader's bookshelf***

One of the great joys of working as a consultant is the reading you must do to stay current and fresh. In particular, I tend to focus on books on leadership, strategy, and innovation. In that vein, here are 10 that I believe should be found on any leader's bookshelf:

1. Albrecht: *The Northbound Train*
2. Bennis: *Organizing Genius*
3. Collins: *Good to Great*
4. Kaplan: *The Balanced Scorecard*

5. Katzenbach: *Wisdom of Teams*
6. Kotter: *Leading Change*
7. Nanus: *Visionary Leadership*
8. Ries: *Focus*
9. Sevier: *Thinking Outside the Box*
10. Trout: *The Power of Simplicity*

Rather than read every book on leadership that comes out, I strongly suggest that you identify a handful and reread them until the lessons are learned and applied.



*Promises kept.*

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