

PREFACE

The most direct route your organization's leaders can take to achieve sustained performance improvement is through the development of a more effective *structure of leadership*—all of those arrangements your senior manager has to put in place to organize themselves, establish productive working relationships, and set up the decision making processes that will assure the reliable delivery of your organization's critical outcomes. An effective structure of leadership enables leaders to create and fulfill their organization's strategic vision. It also helps them respond to emerging opportunities, anticipate—not just react to—customer demands and gain the long-term respect and loyalty of their customers and other key stakeholders.

The power in a structure of leadership became clear during my twenty-five years as an adviser on system-wide organization improvement projects as well as mergers, shutdowns and turnarounds. Through these experiences, I saw many examples of how outmoded and inadequate leader relationships blocked senior managers and directors who wanted to improve and sustain higher levels of performance, quality and customer satisfaction.

How does a company's disorganized, outmoded and ineffective structure of leadership stymie the best intentions of its senior managers? It can happen in several ways:

- It overfocuses your leaders' attention on self-serving short-term activities and results. It distances them from your customers' needs and disconnects them from the company's strategic vision.
- It confuses your leaders, leaving them clueless about what outcomes are most critical to the survival of the company.

- It leaves gaps and overlaps in your leaders' accountabilities and roles, lowering trust, increasing conflict and causing people to work at cross-purposes.
- It traps your leaders in a web of uncoordinated communication and decision-making snafus and undercuts their power to get things done.
- It provides little means or incentive for your leaders to sustain their hard-won improvements.

Leaders Implement their own Structure of Leadership

I have written *Leaders First* so that executives within organizations of all sizes and complexities can think through the design and implementation of their own structure of leadership.

Leaders First details the arguments, underlying assumptions and sequence of activities you would follow in order to implement a more effective structure of leadership. It shows you how they all work together in the design your structure. If I had a book like this many years ago, showing when it was time to refresh the work organization of a company's leadership, as well as how to redesign and implement it, my past clients' performance improvement projects would have been much easier. I would have been able to show the connections between all aspects of their improvement projects. On the other hand, it was through those projects that I made many of the discoveries detailed in this account.

Leaders First shows you a group of leaders working step by step to design and build a new structure for their leadership of Blue Range General Contractors, their fictional company. If you are a top manager, a developing leader or board member, this task-oriented account is like a blueprint, showing you how to restructure outmoded work relationships and remove the problems they can generate. It shows you how to

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construct a solid base where individual leaders can lay out their own operating platforms and deliver customer-satisfying outcomes.

In clear and direct words, this account illustrates:

- A leadership turnaround process from start to finish.
- How, by leaders designing their own leadership structure, they receive invaluable development experiences and become prepared to accept ever-greater leadership responsibilities.
- How the recognition of market and operating demands anchors the leaders in reality and inspires a relevant and powerful strategic vision with benefits for many stakeholders.
- How to work effectively with organization consultants and how consultants can better support the transformation of a company. You will find examples and explanations of these typical interactions:
 - How your consultant advisers can help you prepare your leaders to participate in this redesign process.
 - How your leaders can establish a constructive consulting relationship.
 - What process milestones your leaders can follow to complete their own redesign.
 - How you can be sure your leadership improvement project stays on track.

Leaders First examines many of the up-front commitment issues confronting even your most experienced managers. It shows how they can arrange their power sharing to benefit the company while satisfying their own individual goals and ambitions.

How You Can Use Leaders First

- Use this book as a guide for initiating reorganizations and performance turnarounds and for implementing mergers and acquisitions.
- Use it to replace your current leaders' dissention and self-defeat with acts of teamwork.
- Use it to develop your company to a higher level of functioning.
- Use it to anticipate what needs are likely to arise from your organization-wide performance improvements projects.

Leaders First lays out a path to better performance in all types and sizes of organizations, both profit seeking and nonprofit, but it is not the final word. There will be many innovations by others who apply *Leaders First* in their organizations. In that regard, I am looking forward to hearing from you about the parts of this book's message that make the most sense for your organization and work best for your leaders as well as where your own innovations have taken your company to higher levels. Visit www.GeneMorton.com to add your ideas, gain access to supplemental materials and read the best practices others have applied to develop their own leadership.

Put *Leaders First* in the hands of your colleagues. Start a conversation about how the group of you can develop an outstanding culture and inspire the people in your organization to realize a compelling strategic vision.

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