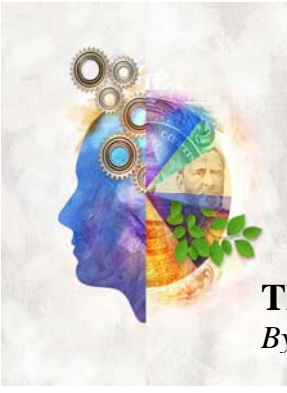


The Corporate Mind



"No two minds ever come together without thereby creating a third, invisible intangible force, which may be likened to a third mind."



The Corporate Mind

By Donald J. Hahn

The concept of Mastermind Groups was first introduced in Napoleon Hill's book *Think and Grow Rich*. Mastermind groups have been around for many years and involvement in them has proven to yield huge growth opportunities for participants. A mastermind group is about the power of a "third mind" made possible through regular collaboration by peers. Precious few companies have internalized this concept throughout their organizations. Those who have operate with a focus and synergy that their counterparts cannot replicate. We call this "The Corporate Mind"

A Competitive Advantage

Corporate enterprises are consumed by an alphabet of tools and metrics; KPI's, ROI, ERP, CRM, and PDA's as well as lean processing, six sigma, extranets, intranets, kaizen, and more. As a consultant, I get it, but all too often companies obfuscate the real issues with tools which act as a mere band aid to a deeper problem, a fundamental lack of vision and leadership. Not that the myriad of business tools offered in the marketplace are unimportant, but understand that the choice of tools is extensive and the software salesmen and consultants aplenty. Each is more than happy to provide the tools in exchange for a fee. The very fact that they are in large supply make them, in the final analysis a commodity. These tools have become mere table stakes in present day corporate America. Certainly there are nuances between various tools, so one particular program may best suit your needs, or you may be able to customize one tool over another to better fit your needs. However, over the course of time, software and technology can not provide you a sustainable differentiator in the marketplace.

Additionally, your ability to be the low cost provider is not sustainable unless you have a patent that insures your long term advantage. Even the R&D of drug makers has a relatively short shelf life, after which generics diminish their market advantage. New product innovation is generally short-lived as an advantage.

So what is the silver bullet? Is there in fact a sustainable advantage? Before you dismiss this article as consultant psycho- babble, I challenge you to think very carefully and answer the following question:

In the history of your organization, what has been your single greatest SUSTAINABLE differentiator?

If you thought deeply enough, peeled away enough layers and looked in places we seldom search and rarely invest you probably concluded that in some way, the only sustainable advantage possible is an ongoing investment in your culture and your people. Alignment and focus on human capital has been and always will be, at the core, your sustainable differentiator. **This “Corporate Mind” results in a single-mindedness of purpose and an ability to filter out distraction. It causes a motivated and mobilized team to act at all times in support of the vision.**

The Corporate Mind: An Overview

Great organizations have a strong vision, a culture which supports that vision, and leaders who live that vision. The organization is aligned very strongly from top to bottom in translating that shared vision into tactical, focused action. The enabler to that alignment is focus, provided by way of a clear and transparent communications pathway allowing information to flow bi-directionally. It sounds simple on paper. In reality this alignment is difficult to capture and even rarer to sustain. Precious few companies get it right. Those who do, reap enormous benefit. Apple computer, BOSE, General Electric, Wegmans, and Google are just a few of the companies that “get it.” Each of these entities operate their business as a single Corporate Mind. Their culture attracts and retains the best people and each continuously invests in human capital.

In business, effective communication is crucial. Possessing a strategy and strong leadership ability is important. However, they mean very little if you are unable to clearly communicate your vision and turn it into action. In The Corporate Mind, this is accomplished by what you say and how you say it. You recognize great communications by its frequency, its consistency and its style.

In the brain, communication takes place when a signal is sent from one neuron to another across a channel known as a synapse. When each component to this communication is firing properly you are able to do pretty incredible things. When they aren't strange things begin happening. Deteriorated communication results in loss of functions such as memory, language, learning and more, rendering a person's incredible talent, education and experience ineffectual. Likewise, within your business your talent, education and experience are unrealized potential outside of effective communication. Ben Franklin referred to wasted resources as “sundials in the shade.” If you want your Corporate Mind to function at its very highest level then you'll need to make highly effective communications a priority.

Focus

The greatest corporate minds realize that their creative energy is best spent on a limited number of high yield activities. Their ability to filter the demands placed on them and focus is what allows them to excel to the highest heights of their potential. Simply put, they know what needs to be done personally by them and that everything else needs to be done by somebody else. That's focus in The Corporate Mind.

In the human mind you'll find something called Broca's Area. This area of the brain is responsible for language comprehension and it has been theorized that this part of the brain could also be responsible for the filtering action our brains undergo as we move about in our over communicated society. The idea is that if your brain processed every piece of stimuli it encounters your life would come to a screeching halt due to the sheer volume of attention our environments demand. The belief then is that Broca's area chooses what signals are translated to your brain for comprehension and the rest get thrown away. To get inside the brain you need to get around the gate keeper, Broca's area. How that's done isn't the point. It's the fact that your mind has a gatekeeper to help you function at a high level.

Likewise, in your Corporate Mind, you need an excellent filter to help you perform at the highest level with the greatest degree of focus and determination. Great leaders focus their efforts in five critical areas:

- Finding talent
- Assessing talent
- Developing talent
- Focusing talent
- Planning; both construction and execution.

More than half the mid-sized companies we have worked with lack a comprehensive strategic plan. There is a tendency to draft financial budgets, extrapolate sales forecasts and check "strategic planning" off your to-do list. All this accomplishes is more of the same thinking, with the expectation of single digit growth and an inability to broaden your perspective. Great companies invest in strategic planning annually. Their leadership team goes off site for a minimum of two full days and recalibrates, preferably with an outside facilitator. Starting with the corporate vision and values, the corporation reevaluates its market position, unique selling proposition, SWOT, personnel and corporate architecture. Goals and accountabilities are agreed to and a strong communications plan is adopted by all. The communications plan must consist of daily huddles, effective team meetings and meaningful coaching engagements supported by regular reviews of progress toward the key milestones of the plan. The measure of a well executed plan is that each person in the organization embraces the vision, the strategic plan, their role and what they personally are responsible for in contributing to that plan on a daily basis.

Three themes come to mind regarding effective execution of any plan:

- You can not manage what you cannot measure
- You must inspect that which you expect
- Things are created twice; first in vision, second in reality

Alignment

Small and Medium Businesses (SMB) are headed up by entrepreneurs or their heirs. Both are challenged in sustaining alignment, but for two distinctly different reasons.

Entrepreneurs are creative, driven individuals that seldom take the time to share their vision, empower their people or communicate effectively. Their focus is lacking as they love their craft but do not necessarily love owning a business. They do not take the time, or spend what precious financial resources they possess in developing their leadership or the leadership of their key persons. They are living the Entrepreneurial Myth, as outlined by Michael Gerber, author of *The E-myth*. They are moving at warp speed in a frantic attempt to keep up or “get ahead.” At some point they either evolve or die off.

Often times the heirs to a business have different values and beliefs than the founder. Consequently the highest mortality rate in SMB occurs in 2nd and 3rd generations. The change in leadership sometimes results in a subtle but distinct change in the vision, accompanied by a sometimes not too subtle change in leadership style. These changes impact the culture and can shift alignment and performance. The principles that fueled the company to initial success are lost or simply misplaced. The company starts down a long and slippery slope to mediocrity, or worse.

In both instances, those who adapt step back, evaluate their role and begin to lead versus “do.” You see, unless you are able to release some control, share your vision and empower others (who also share your values and beliefs) to thrive, you will become your greatest impediment to growth. In today’s hyper competitive business climate it is nearly impossible to “go it alone.” You must share your ideas and mobilize others and you must seek out peers who can aid you in gaining perspective in your business and markets. You must seek a safe haven to expand your horizons and think beyond the limits of your own mind. Generally this is found by way of an impartial catalyst such as a board of directors, an executive coach or a peer group. Do you have a support mechanism that allows you to view your organization from the OUTSIDE IN?

Goals are achieved through adherence to a well conceived and well managed plan which mobilizes your assets and focuses your resources in an unwavering dedication to persevere. Critical to that success is embracing the concepts of a “Corporate Mind”

Does your company operate as a “Corporate Mind?” Assess your organization in regards to the five critical components on the following page:

1 Poor 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above average 5 Exceptional

Culture: How would you describe your culture? Is it empowering or is it enabling? Does your culture embody the best of your organization? What would your employees say? What would your customers say? **SCORE** ____

Leadership: Would you categorize your senior team as managers or leaders? Are your key personnel coaches, mentors, supervisors or dictators? Can every layer of your organization clearly convey the mission statement? Do all people participate in planning and goal setting? **SCORE** ____

Communications: Communications must be frequent and consistent. Are there any communications gaps? Is the communications consistent across the organization? Does it flow both ways? Is communications transparent or selective? **SCORE** ____

Focus: Does each person have a clearly defined job description outlining their key accountabilities. Additionally are the standards of performance (quality AND quantity) well documented? **SCORE** ____

Accountability: Have these standards been distilled down to Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), outlining the critical accountabilities of the job? All of the above will be for naught if you are not able to establish ownership and accountability at every level of the organization. Define the critical outputs and inspect what you expect. Do consequences (good and bad) relate back to performance? **SCORE** ____

So, how did you fare? Total your scores and find out. TOTAL ____

23+ Congratulations! You are in the top percentile of respondents, and have most likely made this a long time focus. Your challenge however is to continuously reinvent yourselves and stay here!

22-23 You are in select company and your financials probably support this observation. The slope however becomes steeper and more slippery as you approach the summit. Steps are shorter and progress becomes tougher.

15-21 You are at base camp, and have a choice, turn back, or prepare and continue to climb. Your organization is doing OK, but needs better focus and alignment. You can achieve big ROI if you can sustain a score in excess of 22. Start by evaluating your leadership team.

0-15 You are at a significant disadvantage in today's marketplace. Regroup and assess your leadership team. You have little hope of summiting with the current team. Prepare for a long journey fraught with many potential missteps.

Critical to success is creating a powerful vision and having the ability to rally your people toward that vision through powerful and purposeful communications. Additionally, all personnel must know precisely how they contribute daily toward achieving that mission. The tools you use to achieve this alignment are strategic planning, accountabilities and ongoing coaching and development.

Components of a Corporate Mind **A solution set from HAHN Training**

HAHN's Corporate Mind is unique, consisting of five key elements insuring focus and accountability.

- **Executive mindshare:** a monthly mastermind group reserved for entrepreneurs and executives. Share best practices, seek input and gain perspective.
- **Head of Sales:** a monthly mastermind group reserved for your key sales leaders. Learn from your peers, discover techniques and tools to exceed your sales objectives.
- **Sales Think:** A uniquely powerful 15 week sales training class designed to build a world class sales team. Not theory, but guaranteed practical results.
- **Five Focuses:** Your organization receives five seats in our bimonthly leadership workshops. Master the five focuses (Coaching, Hiring, Assessing, Managing and Planning) and put them in place across your entire enterprise.
- **Coaching Pathway:** Sustain Focus and accountability. Coach your people to greater success with our powerful online coaching tools.



Executive Mindshare

Duplicate yourself a few different times. Now give your duplicates abilities that you don't have. Give them strengths and experiences you don't have. Now stick yourself in a room with your equal but opposite others. You just created a mastermind group.

The Executive Mindshare is a mastermind group where equal but varied colleagues join their minds on a regular basis to propel each other toward achieving their respective vision. Naked honesty, respectful inquiry and a healthy dissatisfaction for

“good enough” are the chemistry that governs the Executive Mindshare. Forget walking in someone else’s shoes. Get inside their mind. That’s where the real power lies. When executives are ready to get vulnerable and experience exponential increases they join the Executive Mindshare.

Head of Sales

You're it. If sales are good, you're king. If they're bad, you better have a good explanation and a better solution. There are things that are beyond your sphere of influence. No matter, where the head turns so does the body. This sales leadership development program endows a new perspective and tool set to achieve exponential results and concrete leadership gains. Monthly workshops lead to a thorough understanding of sales management and leadership. Highlights of this program include the Sales Manager Toolkit and the Leadership Development Mentoring Program, unique tools designed to create future leaders from an organizations current ones. The greatest leaders made a choice to be so. Head of Sales is for those sales leaders who know what they want and have the courage to choose it

SalesThink

The most powerful motivators come from within. The best in any field are the best because they strive to achieve a vision that is anchored in their core. This is where SalesThink begins. Fifteen weeks (40 hours) of structured sales training workshops will challenge your sales team to reconsider their view of sales and their role in the sales world. SalesThink provides an ongoing program of training, support and reinforcement to help members develop and refine their skills in the areas of sales, human relations/communications, goal setting and implementation, time and territory management, risk taking and decision making. Bridging the thought and technique synapse is what makes SalesThink far more than typical sales training. Sales training is acceptable but SalesThink is game changing.

The Five Focuses

So how do great business leaders achieve their grandest visions? Focus. More specifically, the Five Focuses: Coaching, Hiring, Assessing, Managing and Planning or C.H.A.M.P. These are the ingredients to the not-so-secret family recipe. Great business leaders embrace the challenge of filtering their activities through this looking glass. To find success, we begin by finding focus and offer five half-day workshops to be held every two months to focus on these core competencies. Become a CHAMP. Discover The Five Focuses.

Communication Pathway

Not unlike the white matter of the brain, that which insures proper communication within your brain's neural pathways, this crucial element insures the same within your sales organization with the benefit of transparency and accountability. Executives, managers and their team can become more effective in working toward the common goal and staying on the right path 24/7. Its guided management for effective communication and it's all available on the web; anywhere you are, anytime you need it. Benefits include consistent and concrete feedback, a dynamic communications system that aids in performance evaluations, reporting to identify trends and allows coaching from a distance. You're in control and you can finally provide your team with the guidance and direction they've been not-so-silently seeking. Follow the coaching pathway

You possess the most coveted resource in business and you are likely using only a fraction of it. The minds of your people are screaming to be set free. Align these liberated souls and you will ignite a supernova of innovation and achievement. Change the world. Do the impossible. You think you're good now. Share your minds and then try not to blink.

Interested in learning ways to create Your Corporate Mind?

Contact us at: info@yourcorporatemind.com

Your CHAMP Trainer:

Hahn Training LLC is an enterprising, customer driven, training and coaching company dedicated to the development of organizations which are committed to excellence and growth in their profession. As a corporate development and training organization we provide a practical Approach to Organizational improvement. Our trademarked CHAMP (SM) program focuses on improving the five critical impact areas of any organization:

- Coach well
- Hire Right
- Assess & Benchmark
- Manage key metrics
- Plan & execute

About Donald J. Hahn:

Donald J. Hahn, Chief Learning Officer, has enjoyed a successful 30 year plus career in corporate development and training. His sales expertise while working for Fortune 500 companies consistently earned rankings among the top 5% of all sales performers. During his tenure as an accomplished sales executive and leader he delivered marketing, training, recruiting and coaching solutions to thousands with measurable results. Don's passion for helping companies thrive greatly influenced his decision to establish HAHN Training in

2000. Since then he has built a flourishing business helping others to do the same. Don works with local, national and international business leaders and is proud that more than half of his business comes from past or current client referrals.

Don is an accomplished author and professional speaker. He has published *Keep it in the Fairway*, a metaphor connecting sales and golf. His white papers and business commentary have been featured in professional journals and publications. Don has also trademarked powerful programs on corporate development and candidate selection such as *CHAMP* and *HIRE* designed to improve corporate learning and development. He is a highly sought after speaker and delivers dozens of seminars, lectures and workshops every year which always receives high audience approval ratings.

Don is a member of the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) and the International Coaching Federation. He is Certified Franklin Covey Coach as well as a Certified Values, Behaviors and TriMetrix Analyst. Don serves as board member and mentor for the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership at the University at Buffalo (UB) and is past President of the Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives. He is a graduate of UB's School of Management and is engaged as faculty by the University.

Don is a father to two grown girls and soon to be first time grandfather. He lives in Amherst, NY with his wife of 32 years, Debby and enjoys golf, gardening and reading.

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What is honored in a country will be cultivated there.

- Plato

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