

**Successful Leadership Skills**  
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**Going For The Gold**

**Watch Out For Fools  
Gold**

**An excerpt from our  
upcoming  
book on  
healthcare  
leadership -**

**Terry Belmont, CEO  
Long Beach Memorial  
Hospital  
Long Beach, CA**

**Going For The Gold**

If you are in any way like us, you have been spending way too much time in front of the television this month. Yes, it's that time again. The Olympics in some far off place, weird television schedules that disturb our sleeping patterns, and sports that you weren't sure even existed.

We don't really care very much about medal counts, politics, weird food and propaganda. We don't really care about whether NBC is doing a great job or not, whether the coverage is too soft, or that we are really watching a sales promotion for China.

But, what does engage us is watching world-class athletes compete....and win! Is there anyone not in awe of Michael Phelps? In fact, "Going for the Gold" has come to mean more than just an effort at the Olympics, it has become a general usage term in our language and in our minds.

We have always loved winners. You know the storyline. No one remembers who the second best is. But second best out of thousands of competitors seems like a pretty good accomplishment. I'd be on cloud nine if it was my kid winning a silver medal. But whether it is the Olympics or golf or the NFL or business, 2<sup>nd</sup> best just doesn't seem good enough.

Perhaps you remember our Olympic wrestler who won gold a few years ago. In the gold medal match he defeated someone who had not lost a match in 13 years! No one, or I'll bet very few of you, can tell us the name of the wrestler who was undefeated for 13 years, but then came in second place once. (We've left out the name of our winning wrestler in honor of the unnamed losing wrestler)

So we celebrate the winners.. As we should. But the concept of 'winners' often spills over to the rest of our lives. We seek, you know, 'winners' when we are recruiting. We are looking for people who know how to win. We are looking for leaders who can drive a team to victory. We are looking for stars! And if you are like us, (at least the way we were in our younger days) you easily let sports analogies spill over into your leadership language.

We were both active in competitive sports and felt they taught us a lot, so it was natural for us to use sports analogies in our business careers. And if the truth be known, we inserted probably a bit more emphasis than deserved on winners and winning. It just seemed a good way to get important points across.

It was quite a few years ago when a female executive came up to talk privately. With a smile, she said: "You know sports analogies aren't really very helpful to all of us. Many of us haven't had your experiences and we just don't get it. What would be better for me would be to use a theater analogy (her background). You know, there is a star out front, but there is supporting cast, there is back up music, there are prompters, there are stagehands, electricians, lighting people, there is a set created by talented people, and on and on and on..."

In a few simple words she pointed us to the way that IOSI would eventually embrace. The whole team is the story, not just the people out front in the spotlight. It takes a large and complex team to support every star. And as we lead our business teams we need everyone to understand their role. We need everyone to have the skills to perform their role. We need everyone to understand they are a very necessary part of putting on the "show". We need the wisdom of the entire team to solve the inevitable problems that will continually be presented. And yes, we do need directors (leaders) that organize and plan and keep everyone on track.

We are often asked by senior leaders to help them focus on their stars, their winners. They want formal high potential programs. Although driven by good intentions, these requests reflect conventional wisdom and what leaders THINK they are supposed to be doing. It must be good for the organization to identify and develop our stars, isn't it? Well, maybe it is and maybe it is not.

Our views come from a very different direction. Stars, if you are lucky enough to have them, usually take care of themselves. Give them great assignments and learning opportunities, a little guidance, appropriate thanks, and get out of their way!

The remaining dilemma is that having a few stars will almost NEVER transform your institution. And that's why we think we are being asked the wrong question when asked to develop Hi-Po programs.

So what is the right question? We think there is a more important and appropriate question that CEO's should be asking. Simply this... How do I get the middle 85% of my people to be 15% better? It's a matter of leverage. A few stars are nice to have but there will be no situation where you will not be able to compete if the majority of your employees can be lead to consistently improved performance.

My goodness, how will that get done? Isn't that what hundreds of books and courses all go after with generally limited results? Well, it won't happen with a few stars, winning leaders. Our experience is that it only happens with a long term focused effort to transform the majority of your entire leadership team into highly effective leaders.

Once again, conventional wisdom will be your enemy. You will not realize this transformation because of your pronouncements, or from banners and the posters in the cafeteria, nor wallet cards, or probably even traditional management training.

Your leadership team will change and grow when they are provided a model worthy of being followed, when they are given individual insight on what they should specifically do in simple, practical terms, when they see senior management acting as role models, when they are held accountable, and when they believe what they are being asked to do is the right thing for the organization's success.

Eventually this can come to mean something different than any one person winning the race. It can mean literally hundreds of leaders and followers performing better together than any of them could do alone.... And together they will take your organization to the Gold.

## **Watch Out For Fools Gold**

The title of this article was actually “Selecting Final Priorities” but we just couldn’t resist continuing our Olympic Gold theme. In just a bit you will find out why the title is relevant.

In April of this year this newsletter discussed Criteria Based Prioritization. We presented our view of how important it was to develop specific criteria against which to judge the value to the organization of alternative strategies.

In July, just last month, the newsletter covered POS, a concept we call the Probability of Success. It presented another set of items to consider as you assess alternative projects. If you need to refresh your memory on either of these topics you will find the back issues of the newsletter at our website in the Archives section. ([www.successfulleadershipskills.com](http://www.successfulleadershipskills.com))

This month we’re going to share a bit about how we use both concepts in tandem in order to make the best final selection from the alternative projects and strategies that are being considered.

It’s important to issue a caution here. While the approach will seem simple, its significant value comes from just not rushing through the steps as if it were a formula, but from deep and open debate about how you set your value assignments and POS assignments. There is no question that the best outcomes result from the best internal debate before you get to this phase.

We simply guide our clients through a two-sided matrix that compares their assessments of value (using their defined criteria) against their assessments of POS. If you will picture a two-sided matrix numbered from 0 to 10 you’ll start to get the picture.

Although there are a number of important subtleties that really make this process hum, we just have room to cover the basics about this process.

The first quadrant is simple. It is the quadrant where alternatives end up that have received both a very low POS score and a very low Value score. We usually just label this quadrant "Why Bother" and spend almost no time in discussion.

The most important quadrant is also pretty straightforward. It is the quadrant where alternatives are assigned both very high Value scores as well as very high POS scores. These are your best alternatives and depending how many have been scored into this quadrant, you may have all the projects that you need.

A third quadrant represents a situation where we see many organizations make mistakes if they are not using a disciplined process to manage priority selections. It is the quadrant that has a very high POS, but very low Value. It is very, very tempting. Why? Because you can do it! We find organizations that select these types of alternatives often end up with a work force that has worked very hard all year, but never really accomplished anything that made a big difference. You simply can't afford to spend much time on projects that end up with this assessment. Some people label this quadrant "So What".... But we prefer "Fools Gold". It glitters and looks great, but it just isn't worth anything.

The most difficult quadrant to handle is the one where the projects have been given a very high value and a very low probability of success. Many organizations make the mistake of rushing ahead to select one of them. They simply say that it is so valuable they just have to do it. If that's all they do, they will probably fail. We allow selections from this quadrant but only after a thorough conversation about what will be done to raise the POS. In other words, go into the project with your eyes wide open and have an additional realistic plan to reduce the risks of a very low POS.

Using a disciplined approach to final selection that incorporates Criteria Based Value Assessments and the Probability of Success will revolutionize your planning and will provide the opportunity for significant levels of buy-in from the planning team.

## **An Excerpt From Our Upcoming Book On Healthcare Leadership**

**The healthcare industry is one of the most complex in the world. We can all benefit from the insights from successful leaders in this business. We are working on a book to do just this. Each month we will share a pearl of wisdom.**

Terry Belmont, CEO of Long Beach Memorial Hospital in Long Beach, Ca shares his perspective on how to operationalize his leadership values into an organization.

*"First of all it takes time. But the way to do it is consistent role modeling and being very available. I take the time to go to our Partnership Councils. I work hard to be accessible to our physicians, to our employees, to middle management, to everybody. If I don't model the leadership values I want they will see it very quickly that I don't mean what I say. By being very accessible they get the chance to see me be a role model. By being out there I'm able to see what is going on and whether there are inconsistencies with what we are stating we expect.*

*One of the latest things I did was put up a web site. I have my CEO connection web site. It has been incredible how people have responded. It allows people I don't yet know to feel connected to me. When I visit the night shift I will have folks I do not know come up to me and greet me by name and mention something they read on the web site. Some folks have read books that I have mentioned in the site and have let me know that they really enjoyed reading it.*

*So I try very hard to model being accessible, being personal, demonstrating our values, demonstrating concern and pride for our organization and supporting people who take the right approach to solve problems... even when the outcome may not be perfect. That they take the right approach is to me the most important thing."*

## **Forward to a Friend**

We welcome and encourage you to forward this to as many people as you think will find this interesting.

If you would like to contact us or leave a suggestion for topics you'd like to see in future issues, please email [info@successfulleadershipskills.com](mailto:info@successfulleadershipskills.com).