

Four Suggestions for Polishing Your Crystal Ball

Author : David Kiel

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The recent surprise in the US presidential election results suggests that those who do not pay close attention to current trends and possible future events may be unprepared for sudden changes that can have a big impact. Here are four methods for polishing your crystal ball.

1. Tap a variety of perspectives. This includes various levels of management, departments, advisory board members, governing board members, leaders of citizen's groups and others. The more your organization brings together information from all parts of the system, the less likely it is you will be blindsided. Mapping these key perspectives and organizing systematic ways of touching base (e.g., surveys, visits, phone calls, etc.) is key to success in this endeavor.

2. Assess and prioritize the information. We are all awash in the ocean of information. What part of all this input is accurate, relevant and actionable? For this kind of analysis, there also needs to be a diverse team (e.g. level, race, gender, department) that will sort, analyze, prioritize, and report the information gained making it more digestible and actionable.

3. Plan and take anticipatory action. Those short-term, actionable, important, likely and relatively circumscribed events should be assigned for action to the relevant unit. Those longer-term, actionable, and important and of broad impact, should be referred to a responsible team or task force with the expectation that a plan of action would be forthcoming.

4. Create a culture of leadership that is future oriented. Each leadership team should have some set of practices by which they regularly scan the present and imagine the future, even if it is only 5 minutes at the beginning of a meeting. Hold a monthly discussion of one hour's length. and an annual strategy session . HAVE people report back from conferences they attend, etc. The "aha's that result need to be taken seriously and acted upon.

Conclusion: Leading and managing in three time frames

Leadership, ever challenging, is becoming even more complex. In our current time of rapid change this means **effective leaders must really run three different organizations (near term, mid-term, and long-term) on a rolling basis** and make it all work together for the good of the many stakeholders of your organization. Giving sufficient attention to understanding and assessing the

impact of future trends, events, and issues is key to delivering this high standard of value.

*This is a much condensed version of an article originally written for Academic Impressions—see <https://www.academicimpressions.com/news/how-good-your-crystal-ball>