

Sanctifying the CEO's Office

CEO's very rarely do what they are hired to do.

My father introduced me to Peter Drucker who was one of the greatest management gurus of the last century. While many others developed or spoke about the fad of the day, he thought in terms of transferable principles which wear well no matter how cultures change.

Drucker (and Dad) were firm believers in the trap of the "Executive Sandbox." This was Drucker's term for the thing the CEO really enjoyed doing. He said if you did a time study on most CEOs, you would find that they spent little time doing their job, because they allowed their heart to take them back to the job they really enjoy.

So if a CEO came out of finance, he would spend the majority of his time meddling in the finance department. Even though that was no longer his job, it was still his heart. Similarly, the CEO who came up through the ranks in the production side of the house would find 1,000 excuses for investing the bulk of his time there.

These are examples of the Executive Sandbox. It is where the people who arrive at the place of minimum accountability — the CEO's office — allow their heart to lead them in their allocation of time, instead of doing the job they were assigned to do.

I am totally guilty of that. My Executive Sandbox is research and writing. I vastly prefer to do what I am doing now, than what I should be doing as the CEO of Sapphire Leadership Group. So writing this blog makes me feel good and makes you feel good and is costing the company strategic long-term positioning because I am not thinking strategic thoughts right now. I am having fun instead of doing my job.

So what is the job of the CEO? It is to see the big picture. He needs to see three things.

-Where the world will be in five to ten years.

-Where the current policies of the company will position it in five to ten years.

-What new policies would better position the company in five to ten years.

In other words, the playing field of the CEO is perspective, and gaining perspective in a chess game with ten billion variables is hard work. Hence, after fifteen minutes of



hard work, most CEOs abandon their job and go play in the sand box. It is so much more fun.

For this paper, we are going to select a female CEO. Since she has had to compete for 20 years in a terribly unfair corporate culture, it has taught her that being less than exceptional at everything she does is a sure formula for being devoured. Two decades of unfair labor practices have turned her into a focused, tenacious, knowledgeable worker, who is committed to doing her job with consummate excellence.

Since her character is well-developed and she does the right things instead of what feels good, let's put some serious wind in her sails through blessing the land.

This time, we will start with the micro and build out to the macro.

One of the most important pieces of perspective has to do with interpersonal relationships vs. ideology. When you have a strong difference of opinion with someone, when should you hold your position in a totally unmoving way, even though it burns bridges, and when should you seek to maintain the relationship for the future.

Amos went up to Bethel and prophesied in the enemy's temple there. The king of Israel sent a message ordering him to stop and go home, and he defiantly threw it in the king's face, saying he was under orders from the Most High God and the king's opinion in the matter was utterly irrelevant. He could hardly have chosen more polarizing words.

By contrast, Gideon won the battle against the Midianites, and it provoked great jealousy from the other tribes. Now Gideon was absolutely in the right. God had sent home a bunch of soldiers and Gideon had followed God's orders implicitly, so he could have thrown that in the face of the Contingent of Grumps. However, he understood that this was a time for conciliation, not truth, so he honored them for their military prowess and avoided burning his bridges.

"Father, I bless this land with the extraordinary wisdom to know which discussions require unflinching courage to confront the error, and which require remarkable finesse to resolve the differences. Both are skills which Jesus demonstrated with ease and mastery. May this land be saturated with wise perspective to know which skill set to embrace on any given day."

There are endless groups out there to liaise with. Most of those relationships involve well-meaning people but they end up costing more resources (like time!) than they give back in value. Other individuals and groups are a black hole of selfishness. You invest in them and it never comes back. But there are those strategic people or groups who are deeply loyal and will be valuable partners five years down the road if you give them a hand up today.

David went to rescue the city of Keilah when they were under attack from the Philistines. This was a gutsy move because he was on the top ten Most Wanted list in Israel at the time. For him to engage in a frontal assault against a foreign invader when



he had to watch his own back for fear of his own government was a high risk gift to the people of Keilah. But he did it.

He won the battle, chased out the Philistines, and moved into Keilah expecting some level of gratitude. What he got, was betrayal. That investment turned real sour.

By contrast, near the end of his time in the wilderness, he sent gifts to the rulers of Judah, because he knew that for him to become king, it would necessitate their breaking rank with the rest of Israel – in effect starting a civil war – in order to side with the home boy.

That investment paid off exactly as he had hoped.

“Father, today there are dozens of people and groups the CEO could contact with an eye to the future. Greed, treachery and basic self-centeredness are prolific in our culture which makes front loading the investment in any relationship a risky proposition. I bless this office and this land with the ability to hear the Spirit clearly about where the good relational investments are. May the CEO have extraordinary success in positioning herself in the community, because she can hear the Spirit exceptionally well from this place.”

One of the major issues in any profitable company is determining what degree of liquidity is ideal. Retained earnings are taxed which drives the majority of economic advisors to push endless strategies for deferring taxes by making the profits appear to be spent. They trust in the borrowing power of the company to come up with cash if it is needed.

Nehemiah did not know he would be rebuilding Jerusalem in the context of extreme political fragmentation and opposition. But something in him caused him to accrue wealth and to retain it in a quasi liquid form which is uncharacteristic of great investors. When it was time to drain the swamp of corruption in Jerusalem’s government, he did it by funding the executive branch of the government out of his personal wealth for 12 years so that he was totally independent of the power brokers who might try to bully him with budgetary mechanisms. His strategy of high liquidity allowed him to accomplish the unthinkable, because of his independence.

“Father, I bless this land with uncommon wisdom about the allocation of profits. There is the shrill, piercing sound of the world’s wisdom at all times. There are the conflicting demands of the sundry stakeholders. I bless this land with being imprinted with the wisdom of God regarding discretionary spending. Let God’s financial principles be imprinted on the land, and let the CEO’s spirit hear Your Spirit more loudly than the siren calls of the culture.”

Understanding that the core product of a company should flow from its design, not from the economic vagaries of the marketplace is a huge part of strategic positioning for the future. There are many kinds of widgets that you could manufacture with the resources you have, but only a few of those will also be growing your people in the core competencies of your design, so that you can step into the golden opportunity when it comes your way,



and do something you have never done before, with excellence.

Lebanon is an example of that. As a nation, they are redemptive gift of Exhorter. One of the core competencies of the Exhorter gift is exceptional presentation. They had honed those skills in their nation to a very high degree. When God was ready to build the Temple in Jerusalem, He used heaven's architect, Israel's gold, silver and bronze, and Lebanon's finishing skills.

Ephraim was an Exhorter tribe, but they had not honed their design as majestically as Lebanon had, so God opted to go with a Gentile nation in order to get the finest skill sets available on the open market.

Think of the fact that they were able to experience a brain drain of thousands of skilled craftsmen for a period of seven years, without their own infrastructure suffering, and you have some idea of the abundance of talent that had been developed by King Hiram in the generation leading up to the once-in-a-millennium opportunity.

"Father, I bless this land with uncommon perspective so the CEO can see what economic engines within the company will also unpack the full measure of the core competencies of their social DNA. Let her be able to achieve her economic objectives while simultaneously generating the far greater treasure in the company, so that they are exquisitely prepared to step into their moment of destiny."

Another point of perspective that is vital for the CEO is seeing where the culture is going, before it is there. Hezekiah knew that an invasion by Assyria or some other nation was highly probable some time in the future, so he developed an aqueduct that would provision the city with an incredibly scarce resource of drinking water during a siege. In so doing, he significantly improved his strategic position, both for him and those coming to the throne after him.

"Father, the chatter of pundits in our culture creates a smog of words that causes more harm than good. Differing presuppositions and differing sets of data produce a cacophony of different conclusions about what the world is actually like today, much less ten years out. The CEO simply does not have time to wade through 50 opinions a day, and it is unspeakably dangerous to listen to just one voice.

"I bless this land with a discerning perspective that will allow her to hear the single snippet of truth in one blog, and the precise principle needed in some magazine article, and to weave them together in a fresh, cogent perspective of the future that will set her apart from her peers. Let her draw astoundingly correct conclusions from minimal data because the land is anointed for gaining perspective."

In addition to the economic battlefield and the data glut which the CEO has to deal with, there are the spiritual dynamics of running a company which actually are more important than most of the things we have talked about so far. Accurately assessing the current spiritual climate is a wonderful skill. Even more valuable is having the perspective to see



in the daily natural events, endless opportunities to gain spiritual authority for the battles that are coming.

Ruth demonstrated that when she arrived in Bethlehem. Naomi's stronghold was powerlessness. Since they arrived at harvest time, gleaning was an option. Rather than appeal to rich relatives for a handout, she went to work in the fields — an odious job. By refusing to be powerless herself, it set in motion a chain of authority-gaining events that eventually shattered the whole stronghold over Naomi. Her daily economic activities also accrued authority in the spiritual realm.

"Father, today You will give the CEO many opportunities to enhance her spiritual authority by the economic choices she makes. I bless this land with a keen sensitivity to the opportunities You bring her way. May she not see the wrapping paper of the problem the opportunity comes disguised as, so much as the core gift of the opportunity You devised. Let the anointing for right perspective on the land be so deep that she readily sees and can walk out the incredible treasures of authority-building activities which will equip her for the future."

The single most challenging piece of perspective is to determine where our Great King will be in five to ten years so we can be well positioned to serve His agenda.

Paul struggled with that a bit on his second missionary trip. He was Middle Eastern by culture and was drawn to that milieu. As he went down the main road out of Antioch, he tried to turn east at every available opportunity since that was culturally correct for him, but the Spirit would not let him. When he came to the end of the road, he had a vision of a man from the west, in Europe, calling him to come over and help them.

This was profound revelation to Paul, but it was indicative of the King's overall strategy. The King had decided to circle the globe with the gospel from east to west. After fifteen centuries of the gospel in Europe and Africa, it flowed west across the Pond to North and South America. Four centuries here was enough and it crossed the Pacific, still flowing westward.

Christianity has powerfully penetrated the strongholds of Communism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Currently the King is beginning to be enthroned where Islam once reigned uncontested. God will complete the global circle with a vast ingathering from Israel, at the end of time. This is His strategic plan for the expansion of Christianity.

Paul got it. By the later years of his life, his passion was to go west to Spain since he knew that this was where the King was going, and Paul wanted to be an integral part of the King's cutting edge thrust, not simply a bit player in the rear echelons.

"Father, King Jesus has a plan and His plan generally uses people and resources to demolish enemy strongholds and to expand the hegemony of His Kingdom. I bless this land with an anointing for perspective so deep and so wide, that this CEO can accurately sense what steps can be taken today, that would position her and the company for exquisite



partnership with the King five and ten years out. Let this office be a place where she can see with her spirit what cannot be seen in the natural, so that her choices will be uncommonly beneficial to the King's agenda."

Perspective. That is the playing field of the diligent CEO. And blessing the land so it becomes a place where perspective comes easily, will help lure the CEO out of finance and production, back to his or her desk where he belongs, looking at the big picture.

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Airborne in a grasshopper in seat 12B, exit row aisle

