



Questions & Answers

How do Olympic ideas translate into a kind of new mission statement for companies?

I was inspired by the Olympic athletes in London and Sochi, how they are always striving to set new records, to compete harder and faster than ever before. We live in an increasingly competitive and complex global business environment that also demands that we work smarter, harder, and faster. It demands new strategies and tactics, sharper skills, and new ways of thinking about the big picture and the bottom line. The pace has never been so grueling; the stakes never so high. This environment taxes the best leaders and companies.

Change is occurring at a blistering pace, leaving many people unprepared. Technological breakthroughs have revolutionized entire industries overnight. Wrenching political changes are bringing new opportunities and fresh risks. Competition in global markets is growing fiercer by the day. Customers expect ever-higher levels of quality, customization, convenience, and timeliness. Success today will not become success tomorrow without adapting strategy, culture, and structure to an ever-changing environment. Rather than rest on our laurels, you and I must look ahead to the challenges of the future. Organizations must change and adapt just to stay in the game.

How can businesses today stay current and keep from becoming sleepy giants that are unaware of the need to change?

We have three choices: we can consent to what happens to us, resent what happens to us, or invent what happens to us! Successful individuals and companies invent what happens to them. They invent their future. They constantly innovate, seek self-renewal, and target improvement after improvement, percent by percent, discipline by discipline.

It's very important for businesses to understand where they are positioned in the marketplace. Today's success does not guarantee tomorrow's. Experience is an adequate guide only when changes are made in small increments. When decisions are strategic and have sweeping, irreversible consequences, intuitive and experience-based action can be grossly inadequate. Successful performance in the uncharted waters of the future requires executives to be open to new ideas, challenging past assumptions, questioning conventional wisdom, and engaging in healthy introspection.

WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE
THE COMMITMENT: THE PURSUIT: THE ACHIEVEMENT

MICHAEL G. WINSTON



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What do you tell managers and CEOs who need to align their employees behind a new, future goal?

You know, I have a phrase I use when I'm encouraging unity for employees: "You can't guide a ship by watching the wake." The best way to predict the future is to invent it. Don't leave your business up to fate! High-performing leaders create and communicate a compelling vision of excellence. They know that true motivation for change comes from a desired "ideal," a vision of what is possible as a result of the change. They attract and energize their people by stating the vision and demonstrating the will and determination to see that the course is maintained.

People perform best when they come together with a keen sense of the vision—knowing where they are headed and that it is someplace special. If the vision is clear and compelling, it draws people together and pulls them forward.

What are the most important things to consider when shaping a new vision for the future?

The vision should provide direction and definition; give focus for structure and consistency; communicate the need for change; and instill enthusiasm, commitment, and pride. Once the vision is formulated, it becomes a standard against which decisions can be weighed and progress can be evaluated. The vision should create the thrust for all organizational activity, sharpening the focus so allocation of time, talent, and money and day-to-day decisions and direction are more easily rationalized, communicated, and understood.

The vision must serve to rationalize allocation of strategic resources. Explore these strategic questions with your team: 1. What trends and assumptions should you consider in the world around you: political, regulatory, social, economic or technological? 2. What trends or changes do you expect in the needs of your customers? 3. What trends or changes will affect your customer base? 4. What might happen that would reduce or increase the need for your product or service? For a broader discussion on the various facets of making your team into World-Class Performers, make sure you check out my book.

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