

Classify Your Commitment For The Next 12 Months

Insights from Tom Hershberger, CEO, Cross Financial, 2020

Let's face it, we all have agendas. Formal or informal, we have clear preferences about how we would like our organizations to respond to the changing environment impacting community banking. In 2019, we had what we thought was normal and now it is gone. What did we lose? My answer would be a comfortable game plan. The things impacting our daily endeavors were well-known and predictable. Sure, we had to deal with an occasional 'mini-crisis' but nothing to the level we are experiencing today.

Leaders experience change every day. They always have. It's part of daily life, running a business, leading a team, and serving customers. That said, the scope of the changes being experienced today, takes the change chart and runs the line way off the top of the page. So, what needs to change in today's game plan? How do we develop a plan that will properly balance organization resources and capacity with the desired outcome?

The starting point begins with a realistic look at your agenda and the embedded expectations. Think about the future of your team fitting into one of these four categories...survival, return to previous conditions, progressive improvement, or aggressive change. It is an interesting spectrum of approaches. Which one fits your leadership agenda?

Survival

Survival is important. Everyone wants their organization to be open for business. If that is your main expectation, let's assume you are achieving your goal. Getting the work done and meeting organizational minimums is achievable for nearly

everyone. This makes it a terrible goal. There is no energy or drive in just surviving. It is a low goal, easily met. Give your employees more to pursue.

Return To Previous Conditions

Some of our daily routines will return as we manage our way through the pandemic. Uncertainty will continue and daily adjustments will be necessary, but many of the comfortable and predictable activities from your daily things-to-do list will return. Employees have confidence in the things that were working just fine. Returning to some of those routines will be beneficial for everyone. It is stable, but lacks new energy. Again, it is a low goal that is fairly easy to achieve. Give your employees more to pursue.

Progressive Improvement

Now we're digging into some opportunities. Returning to some of our competencies will be important for employees and customers. What we do with the rest of our time could be the beginning of a paradigm shift. Virtual meetings are now an opportunity. Remote employees are now an opportunity. Electronic signatures are now an opportunity. Digital service growth is now an opportunity. And the list goes on.

What has your organization and team learned about processes, procedures, technology, and employee skill sets? Anything that has allowed teams to take a step forward in delivering an improved customer experience is a positive for your future. Take those success stories and make them part of your now normal. Encourage your staff to acknowledge those success stories as valuable achievements and challenge them to identify what they can improve related to customer service, team collaboration,

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daily productivity, and customer satisfaction. Use their insights to nurture a culture driven by progressive improvement. The now normal becomes what it takes to get better every day.

Aggressive Change

If you are up for a bigger challenge, become an aggressive change agent. Not every culture can adapt to this agenda. If you are still developing the foundational skills of your leaders and managers, rapid changes can become a significant threat to performance. Aggressive change is loaded with additional risks that followers seeking a tested method will avoid. The agenda requires highly effective communications, coaching, mentoring, and employees open to a new way of doing things. Those conditions are not a comfort zone for many organizations. This is fine. Being a 'leading edge' organization takes a slightly different culture and talent arsenal.

If you are in this group, you will find that it can attract very talented and driven professionals. This agenda will draw the attention of employees and clients with an entrepreneurial mindset. Be prepared for the challenges introduced when free-thinking entrepreneurs join your team or become customers. Their expectations are different from individuals seeking proven solutions and stability in daily routines. The reward is simple. There is less competition for your brand. You will find the number of peers pursuing aggressive change is pretty limited.

Communicate Your Expectations

As a leader, whatever you choose to do, during and after the pandemic, make it your daily responsibility to talk with your team. Share your vision, your expectations, your desires, even your feelings. Make your focus for the future (your agenda) a visible part of your team's future.

Culture plays out in the daily life of your organization. Make sure your culture is pointed toward an agenda filled with success that matches your capabilities with your execution.

Make Some Notes For Your 12-Month Agenda