



## Effective leadership starts with the leader

### Leadership is a multiplier effect

At Deloitte, we've sat across the table from hundreds of senior leaders: experts in their field, highly accomplished, armed with a bold vision for their organization – and yet... There are a lot of executive meetings and employee town halls, a well thought out strategy, but somehow, the vision then doesn't materialize into tangible, lasting results that leaders and organizations are able to experience. So what's missing? "If only," we hear, "my employees were more engaged." "If only the rest of the organization was bought in." "If only we weren't so busy putting out fires every day."

Familiar stories? There are innumerable examples of day to day frustrations on the ground within organizations. A clear mission, vision, or strategy by itself cannot drive organizational outcomes if we don't consider the people themselves who are implementing them. For positional leaders, this is an invitation to look closely not only at how people at every level in the organization effectively deliver to mission, but how they connect to it. This is about accountability.

*This accountability must start with leaders themselves.*

Accountability is not just accepting blame when something goes wrong, it is about delivering on a commitment (Peter Bregman, "The Right Way

to Hold People Accountable," Jan. 11 2016). It is a feeling of responsibility for and personal connection to outcomes rather than completion of a set of tasks. When individuals feel this, they can achieve greater performance outcomes for their teams. When teams feel this, they deliver on a commitment to each other. When leaders feel this, they create momentum for shared accountability at the top of the house, tiering high performance – and the outcomes that follow – throughout the organization.

If accountability connects how people feel about their work to performance, shared accountability is how that happens at scale in an organization. Shared accountability is the barometer for business outcomes, and leaders are at the helm of amplifying that for the organization. *Bottom line: Leaders initiate a top down multiplier effect for shared accountability, and therefore, organizational outcomes.*

How do leaders create this multiplier effect? They recognize that momentum for shared accountability and connecting "people" to "performance" starts with them. Effective leaders tend to engage in two movements. First, they create shared commitment and responsibility with each other through intentional leadership alignment. This enables them to set the tone for the second movement – inviting the organization to collectively own strategy and reach business outcomes.

## Effective leaders align

Leadership alignment is a result of acting on a simple formula: *leadership is intensely personal and, at the same time, deeply about building collective success*. It is a personal connection to performance and outcomes for every leader at the top of the house as well as a shared commitment and responsibility among a leadership team for business outcomes. Leadership alignment reinforces personal connection to mission, vision, and strategic priorities, individually and collectively for a leadership team.

Consider the three actions below as a blueprint to help you align as leaders. These actions are distilled best practices from our applied research with hundreds of positional leaders that we've worked closely with. The order is important, and each best practice is a foundational for the one that follows.

### 1. Start with yourself...Lead meaningfully:

Effective leaders are self-aware and act on that self-awareness. They work deliberately to bridge the gap between who they aspire to be and how they show up each day for themselves and others. Their actions are an authentic expression of their personal creed – who they are and what they believe in. They amplify strengths and translate personal creed for impact in their performance of business outcomes.

### 2. Connect as a leadership team...Build trust:

Many of the best leaders craft the way forward together in a unified voice. They build trust. They are transparent and authentic, even vulnerable at times, which is necessary to connect meaningfully. Trust is a foundation for shared commitment, which then enables a leadership team to successfully operationalize business strategy – people will feel committed to a strategy because they feel committed to each other.

### 3. Collectively, set the tone...Align on business strategy:

When leaders answer the question – why do we do what we do for our business or mission? – they are ready to operationalize business strategy together in a different way. This shared “why” wraps around strategy, tasks, initiatives, and all that must happen to turn the wheels in an organization. Further, overlaying each leader's strengths and aspirations to this ‘strategy with purpose’ provides a powerful organizational roadmap of leadership roles and responsibilities and cascade strategic priorities.

## Leaders set the tone for the organization to drive tangible results

Did you catch why the magic starts with leaders? Something incredible happens when commitment is shared top down. The key to making amazing things happen is when you as a leader show up, set the tone, and lead by example – first for your leadership team and then for your organization. The measure of success depends on how intentionally you focus on individual aspiration, build trust, and translate that to collective momentum for business strategy and mission delivery.

By creating shared commitment among themselves, leaders can invite the rest of the organization in, unfolding opportunities for people at all levels to be – and *feel* – responsible for collective success. When we operationalized the blueprint for alignment (three actions above) with leaders, the impact on business outcomes has been significant: for example, for one of our senior federal executive clients, between 10-15% increases in [Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey](#) (FEVS) indicators in their organization within 2 years; and for our leaders in Government & Public Services (GPS) Human Capital, a doubling in the size of our business over 5 years in a market growing at only 1-2%, according to our own data. Shared accountability starts with leaders, and when that happens something incredible is set in motion, a new energy in an organization – one that everyone is a part of.

## Contacts

### Sean Morris

Principal, GPS Human Capital Leader  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
semoris@deloitte.com  
+1 571 814 7640

### Mark Porell

Principal  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
mporell@deloitte.com  
+1 571 814 7929

### Susmita Murthy

Specialist Leader  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
sumurthy@deloitte.com  
+1 571 882 6043