



# The Leadership Letter July 2016

## First Steps in Strategic Planning: What Makes a Great Leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

A strategic plan is a roadmap to grow your organization. Typically, this plan is developed with a classic set of steps such as developing an executive summary, writing an elevator pitch, creating a mission statement, setting goals, determining performance indicators, identifying target consumers, conducting an industry analysis, developing a marketing plan, creating an operational plan, and making financial projections. But does this old model continue to work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century business culture? Before we can effectively engage in strategic planning, we must first evaluate the types of leaders we are bringing to the table.

If we are not careful, we will hold on to a "superhero" mentality of leading our organizations that focuses around one exceptional person with a seemingly perfect mix of personal attributes to lead everyone and save the day. However, as we move forward in the fast-changing 21<sup>st</sup> century, organizations based on old models of strategic planning and leadership will have challenges adapting to the face-paced changing environment.

**A study of 4,000 companies found that 58% had significant talent gaps with their critical leaders (Leslie, 2009).** This gap means that in spite of their leadership development efforts, more than half of the companies were not able to grow enough great leaders. A disturbing trend is emerging of organizations being unable to adapt to changing demands due to either outdated and/or ineffective leadership practices. This leads to two important questions.

- ◆ *First, why is the leadership gap widening?*
- ◆ *And next, what are successful leaders doing?*

Despite typically limited financial resources, non-profits like SECA and its affiliates have the potential for huge impact when they have good leaders in place to guide the development and implementation of their strategic plans. However, these organizations need to consistently evaluate their current leadership development to determine the leadership skill gaps that exist in key positions. After making these determinations, they can help their leaders to identify what characteristics they need to develop to overcome these gaps.

So what are the characteristics of leaders in thriving organizations? To be a great leader, one needs to ask these questions that great leaders ask themselves to enhance their leadership effectiveness:

1. **Where are you looking to anticipate the next change in your business model or your life?** Look at your calendar. Who are you spending time with? What types of activities do you engage in? Where are you going? What are you reading? Great leaders don't lead head-down, but are constantly looking around corners. They are shaping their future instead of reacting to it.
2. **What is the diversity measure of your personal and professional networks?** While you likely have a network of people you are comfortable with, what is your capacity to develop

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# What Makes a Great Leader/continued...

relationships with people different from you? Great leaders understand that interacting with a diverse group of people provides not only for more variety of ideas, but for more advanced solutions as they engage with people that think differently.

3. **Are you courageous enough to drop a long-held practice that made you successful in the past?** It

is so easy to keep doing what is easy and comfortable, but great leaders dare to do things differently. They not only talk about what could be, they take steps to put action to their thoughts and ideas. They also build the emotional stamina to be able cope with the criticism of people who are resistant to their new ideas. A constituency always exists that will be willing to join in a courageous

venture toward the new.

Great leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are women and men who are willing to throw off the comforts of predictability, past practices, and homogenous networks for both the real challenges of today and the unlimited possibilities of the future. *Adapted from What It takes to be a great leader on the TED Talks website.* [https://www.ted.com/talks/roselinde\\_torres\\_what\\_it\\_takes\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_great\\_leader?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/roselinde_torres_what_it_takes_to_be_a_great_leader?language=en)

## Top Ten Ideas for Strategic Planning

### Starting a Movement

As early childhood professionals, we are very passionate about young children and their families. But as passionate as we may be, many times it feels like nobody is listening. Great movements begin with just one person who can effectively organize a few followers who can engage as well as lead others.

### The Unlikely Beginning of Movements

The founder of the *November* movement (men's no-shave November cancer awareness) said, "4 mates, 4 mustaches can inspire a roomful of people. That roomful can inspire a city...that city can inspire a state, and that state can inspire a nation, and beyond that, you can create a global movement." You need only hang around early childhood professionals having dinner to hear many solutions to the world's problems. But when specific *action* is added to these conversations, even by just a few people, progress is sparked.

### Challenging Apathy

A common misconception persists that most people are too lazy or self-absorbed to do what it takes to affect change. But if we communicate our cause in a way that empowers and motivates, they will engage in activism. Many times we discourage the very ac-

tion we seek to create by the way we ineffectively communicate our goals.

### Inspiring Action

Communication is at the heart of any successful movement. An inspiring message about WHY you want to do what you do motivates more than just telling them what you want to do.

### Global Challenge: Local Values

By adjusting the message around local values, non-profit organizations like SECA and our affiliates can both spread the message further and amplify the message's impact. Addressing how this practically happens best in a particular state or region makes a greater impact.

### Making Complex Messages Accessible

Think about what fun and creative ways your organization can build empathy for your goals. By creatively making the message personally relatable, you will inspire action.

### Crowdsourcing the Goals

Many times the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are beyond the abilities of one organization or even government agencies to handle effectively. Non-profits must engage both individuals and other like-minded organizations to develop and initiate programs that

solve these problems. We can achieve more when we work together.

### Crowdfunding the Goals

Some problems need significant financial support for the programs designed to solve them. *Crowdfunding* is a term used to describe the process of initiating an effort to pool financial resources. To do this, the organization sets up a campaign page on their website to advertise the need and collect donations, with the goal of achieving program aims.

### Human-Centered Solutions

People are our work in early childhood. Innovative solutions to problems must be focused on helping individuals improve the quality of their lives. Make it personal!

### The Subtle Power of Everyday Leadership

Even simple actions can have far-reaching impact if they are intentional and consistent. It is the everyday decisions to lead in small ways that have a cumulative effect and make a difference for children and their families.

*Adapted from Top Ten TED Talks for Nonprofit Leaders on the Classy Blog.* <https://www.classy.org/blog/top-10-ted-talks-for-nonprofit-leaders/>



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**Promoting Quality Care and Education for Young Children and Their Families**  
**SECA is a "Voice for Southern Children"**

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- ◆ Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.
- ◆ Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.
- ◆ Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.

**SECA is a "Voice for Southern Children"**

[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

## Other Resources from SECA

As you assess your current leadership structure and the type of people and skills that will be needed in the future, you may wish to access these previous issues of *The Leadership Letter* for additional information.



[Leadership Transitions: Challenges and Opportunities/ January 2014](#)



[Diversity and the Strategic Plan/ July 2015](#)



[Why Have a Plan for the Future?/January 2016](#)

[Your Role as a Change Agent/ March 2016](#)



### SECA BLOG

We hope these newsletter tips are helpful to you, but we would also like to hear your thoughts and share your expertise. Blog topics we've discussed to date:

- ◆ Children & Media
- ◆ Outdoor Classrooms & Licensing
- ◆ Mommy Talks-Daddy Talks

**Our current blog post concerns **bullying in preschool children**.** Please visit the SECA Blog to engage in a conversation around early childhood topics that are important to you! You can connect with the blog [here](#).