



Liz on Leadership

Onboarding Lessons from College Orientation

Last week, I attended college orientation with my daughter. As students and parents gathered in the auditorium, she sat alongside hundreds of other eager freshmen while I situated myself among the parents. To kick off the event, the Dean of Student Life addressed the room. As she spoke to students and their families, I couldn't help but observe the many parallels between welcoming students to college life and onboarding new employees.

The dean launched her presentation by explaining to us that her job is to “engage, develop, and retain” the students—much as it is a leader's job to engage, develop, and retain new hires. She provided context and set expectations for the students and their families. And she conveyed her genuine delight at welcoming the incoming class.

Here are some of the dean's key messages, tailored just enough to help you set the stage for a rapid and successful integration of your new employees.

1. **We are glad to have you.** This simple but important message will help your new hires feel welcome and engaged from day one. Don't neglect to let people know how pleased you are to have them onboard.
2. **We are here to support you.** It doesn't matter how experienced, accomplished, or mature your new hires may be. If they are new to the team (and particularly if they are new to the company), they will need your generous support, guidance and sufficient resources to be successful.

3. **If you work hard, you will succeed.** This may seem obvious but there must be a clear and overt understanding between employer and employee: Give us your best and your efforts will be recognized and rewarded.
4. **We expect you to take risks.** New hires may be particularly cautious about introducing new ideas or taking unfamiliar approaches. But risk is a requirement for meaningful innovation and growth. Make it clear to all that risk-taking is both welcome and expected.
5. **We want you to ask questions.** Be sure your new employees understand they aren't expected to have all the answers. To ensure they feel comfortable asking questions, connect them with a peer or mentor who can help them navigate the organization and offer sage advice on how to most effectively work with the new boss.

The fact is, past success is a predictor of future success—but only under the right conditions. Even the smartest and most experienced new employees need context, clarity, direction, and support. So why leave them to sink or swim?

Remember the dean's welcome and make it standard practice. Because, like her, you've got a responsibility to actively engage, develop, and retain the new kids in town.

Dr. Liz on Leadership: New Column and Special Offer

For more leadership advice from Dr. Liz, check out my new digital monthly column, exclusively in Life Science Leader!

While Life Science Leader is designed for executives in the life science/healthcare/pharmaceutical space, **Dr. Liz on Leadership** contains pragmatic advice every leader can use.

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Are You a Leader Who Does Too Much?

Pick up the newspaper any day of the week. Skim the headlines and you will see stories of leaders stepping aside or being forced out, sometimes without warning. These sudden exits stem from an array of circumstances:

- *An activist investor calls for the CEO's ouster following strategic disagreements or poor annual results.*
- *A leader is forced out in response to the latest company scandal.*
- *An illness or death in the family necessitates a prolonged leave of absence.*
- *An executive is lured away by a competitor with an offer he can't turn down.*

These exits are highly disruptive to the flow of business. With gaps at the top, middle, or front line, companies struggle to seize opportunities, optimize productivity, and maintain employee confidence. Collaborations are disrupted or lost. Workers become stressed and overwhelmed as they take on the work of colleagues whose seats are now empty. Clients grow concerned about the capability and sustainability of the organization.

Proactive leaders recognize they can't predict the future, but they can plan for it. Here are four ways to create an organization that can survive sudden losses and thrive in the face of change.

1. **Look at your current bench.** Do you have multiple successors within your leadership team? Are you giving them the experiences, challenges, and mentoring to prepare them for the next level? If not, there's no time like the present to prepare for the future.
2. **Anticipate that you will lose good people.** Some of your most valued employees will be recruited by your competitors. Some will leave to start their own ventures. Others will depart due to health concerns or family commitments. Don't let's these developments catch you off guard. Instead, search for untapped talent in your organization and beyond. Assess and enhance their readiness to step into openings that will inevitably arise.
3. **Create a remarkable work culture.** Make your organization a place where ideas are celebrated, dedication is recognized, people are treated with decency and respect, relationships are valued, and communication is open, clear, and honest. That's the way to retain your best and brightest and attract outstanding new talent.
4. **Consider current and future needs.** What are the roles, skills, and experiences needed to excel today and lead the way to a remarkable future? Look beyond filling near-term gaps. Envision your company, industry, and customer base in another year, three, or ten. Develop in-house talent and scan the external environment, preparing your organization to thrive well

into the future.

In today's dynamic business environment, it can be all too easy to focus on urgent demands yet postpone the vital task of planning for the future. The most successful companies, the ones that will flourish far beyond the next quarter and year, have proactive leaders at the helm. Be that leader. Pause to reflect on the kind of team and organization you need for a truly extraordinary future. In other words, slow down to speed up!

About Dr. Liz

Dr. Liz Bywater has been called a one-of-a-kind leadership expert. Working at the intersection of business and psychology, she brings together pragmatic experience, advising top executives across the Fortune 500, with an advanced degree in Psychology and a dynamic personal style to inspire, engage and counsel her clients.

For more than a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb, AmeriSourceBergen and more. She uses her expertise in human behavior to drive commercial success. She helps her clients propel innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Fast Company and USA Today. She is on the editorial advisory board for **Life Science Leader** magazine and is a featured expert on such radio broadcasts as CBS Philadelphia's **Philadelphia Agenda** with Brad Segall and **Woman of the Week** with Marilyn Russell.

Liz earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University. Her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Cum Laude. She is a longstanding member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting. She lives in scenic Bucks County, PA, with her husband and two teenage children. Stay tuned for Liz's forthcoming book, **Slow Down to Speed Up!** (Business Expert Press, Fall 2017).

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