



Liz on Leadership

Is Your Bench Ready for the Next Inning?

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 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, low down to speed up!

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, launching July 6th!

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?

If you are like many of my executive clients, you are a leader who started out as a doer.

Earlier in your career, you were a star individual contributor whose talent got the attention of your manager and other company leaders. They recognized your skills and dedication. They identified you as a future leader with untapped potential. And so, you got promoted.

You became a manager, director, vice president and above. You went from being the person who gets things done to the person who manages the work, then manages the managers, runs the department, leads the business unit or region, or runs the entire company. You may have ascended rapidly or gradually over the years. And today, you're a leader.

But... are you a leader who does too much?

Truth be told, even great leaders can have trouble letting go. After all, it's not easy to change how you see yourself or your beliefs about the value you bring. And chances are, you are very, very good at what you do. You are an expert. You are dedicated. You can get things done quickly and you do them well. So why shouldn't you jump in, especially when there's so much work to be done?

I'll give you three good reasons. Here's what will happen if you are too hands-on:

1. **You will deprive your team the opportunity to learn.** How can your people develop new skills if you keep doing their jobs? Step back, let them stretch, grow and learn. Yes, they may work a little more slowly than you (at first). They will make more mistakes. Give them time. They'll get there.
2. **You will have less time to attend to leadership activities.** Don't lose sight of what you're really being paid to do. As a leader, you should be spending your time on strategy, vision, inspiration and influence. You also need to develop strong successors. If you're busy doing the work, you won't have enough time to thoughtfully assess the talent in your organization and set them (and the company) up for success.
3. **You won't look like a leader.** You may be the best implementer your company has ever seen—but if you keep on doing, you will lose credibility. You won't be viewed as the person to lead your team and company into the future. And once you've lost the confidence of others—the board, your boss, peers or employees—it will be awfully hard to get it back.

You've worked hard to become the leader you are today. Make the most of it.

Slow down, step out of the daily busyness, and home in on the actions that will help you, and your organization, truly thrive.

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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