Utilize the Skills of Your Team Members

In a world of constant change, organizations are struggling to meet the challenges of the new competitive landscape. To succeed in the future, organizations and leaders must grow and change at least as fast as the world around them changes. The most important change for leaders is their view and understanding of the role of people.

During the Industrial Revolution and most of the 20th century, people were seen as cogs in a great machine. Organizations wanted workers who could do simple, repetitive tasks as efficiently and quickly as possible. Leaders were the "head" and workers were the "hands." To achieve this dynamic, the best form of leadership was a command and control process. The leader was responsible for all of the creativity, thinking, and decision making. The workers were expected to simply follow the orders of the leader.

In today's information economy, to prosper and even to survive, an organization must tap into the creativity, imagination, and decision-making capabilities of every employee. This means that the people – along with the information, knowledge, and skills they possess – are the most important resource in any organization. Consequently, the very nature of leadership has radically changed.

Leaders should lead with one purpose in mind: to achieve increasingly positive results from the efforts of their team members. Highly effective leaders see the qualities of passion, trust, commitment, and loyalty as absolutely essential for improving results from their organization. Imagine the power of an organization where every team member has white hot passion, unwavering trust, total commitment, and enduring loyalty! These qualities are developed in team members as a response to specific values held by their leader.

Truly effective leaders also understand that no leader can convince team members to become something the leader is not. The old expression, "Do as I say, not as I do" carries no weight in a work environment that strives to motivate team members.

Leaders who want passion, trust, commitment, and loyalty from team members must first develop these values in themselves. Effective leaders understand that purpose is the ignition to passion, integrity is a prerequisite for trust, service to others

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generates commitment to the leader and the organization, and stewardship ensures that team members develop their

potential, which fosters loyalty. To ignite passion, trust, commitment, and loyalty, highly effective leaders base their leadership on a foundation of four cornerstone values: purpose, integrity, service, and stewardship.

▲ Purpose. Purpose provides the "why." Your purpose is why you are doing what you are doing. When you know why a person is doing something, it enables you to understand that person's intentions, motives, and priorities. People don't work just to have something to do, they want to make a difference, they want to contribute to something they believe in and are passionate about. Only a noble, worthy purpose will fan the flame of passion.

▲ Integrity. Leaders are required to be individuals worthy of trust and genuine respect among those they lead. Leaders at every level cannot expect followers to grow and develop unless they are willing to improve themselves. Leaders must first learn and master personal leadership – leading themselves – before they can truly master leading others. The root of the word "integrity" is integer – which means a complete, whole, indivisible number. Leaders with integrity live complete, whole, well-balanced lives. All great leaders display personal integrity by being dedicated to the pursuit of significant goals in all areas of life – not just goals for the organization. Numerous studies have shown that team members consistently regard integrity and honesty as the most important qualities of effective leaders. Leaders with integrity display consistent thoughts and actions; their words and deeds do not contradict each other. Team members want to know that their leaders will do what they say they are going to do, and that they will keep their commitments.

▲ Service. Highly effective leaders succeed because they desire to be of service. With today's global business climate shifting away from production of goods toward a knowledge and service orientation, leaders who respond to challenges with a commitment to service empower their organizations to grow and prosper. Organizations now recognize that customer loyalty is vital for ongoing success. To achieve this loyalty, businesses must offer the highest quality products and services and be responsive to customer needs. Leaders must also give the same consideration to team members to earn their loyalty. An attitude of service must start with the leader. When top leaders demonstrate that they genuinely care about the people they lead, their team members will respond in the same manner. The end result: team members who want to be of service to customers and customers, who in turn, will continue to buy your product or

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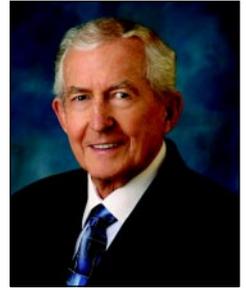
service. Both customers and team members will go where they feel welcome and stay where they are valued and appreciated.

▲ Stewardship. Leaders who are committed to service develop a strong sense of responsibility, or stewardship, over the resources and assets they have in their charge. A steward places emphasis not just on the financial assets, but also on the invaluable, intangible assets of an organization. The collective talent of team members is recognized as the core resource of any company or organization. True stewardship acknowledges human potential as the organization's most important asset. In organizations that fail, effective stewardship has been the Achilles' heel of management. Some leaders are simply unable to sacrifice their own needs and desires for those of their team, even if that sacrifice would be for the good of the group. Short-term pressures easily crowd out long-term concerns for developing people and their talents. The inevitable result of this short-sighted approach is that you will have team members who feel unappreciated and unwanted, and who fail to deliver their maximum contribution to the organization. Successful leaders believe stewardship is a vital, permanent part of their management effort. This is because they see their team members as repositories of human potential. As stewards of this incredible untapped potential, highly effective leaders feel an ongoing responsibility to help team members grow and develop in all areas of life. An organization can grow only if its people grow. Great leaders are able to mold a partnership that enables all team members to dream great dreams, make noble plans, and daily pursue those plans together.

Leading an organization and embracing these core values on a daily basis is not easy. It takes clear focus, unwavering commitment, and supreme self-confidence. Most failings of leadership are a direct result of a leader's lack of clear and consistent values. A strong value system forms the foundation of a positive self-image.

Believe in Yourself and Your Abilities

Your mental picture of yourself, the image you would like to project to others, and what you truly are all dramatically affect your productivity because your self-image controls how you use time. You act like the kind of person you think you are. It is impossible to act otherwise for any length of time – no matter how much willpower you have.

People who think of themselves as failures inevitably fail regardless of the amount of time they spend working. What appears to be "trying hard" to succeed may actually be unproductive busywork that reinforces a negative self-image and produces failure. In contrast, people who expect to succeed focus their attention and efforts on constructive activities that produce results.

When you are no longer chained to self-defeating attitudes from the past or fears about what other people might think, you can experience the exhilarating challenge that makes every hour productive and success possible.

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Invest Time in Training

A work environment that encourages learning is essential for continuous improvement. First, clearly send the message to your people that continuing mental and educational development – through both formal and informal plans – is vital. Then nurture the three primary freedoms that create a learning environment: freedom to express dissent, freedom to make mistakes, and freedom to invest time in learning.

An indispensable aspect of a learning environment is the freedom to engage in solution-oriented discussion and discovery. Make sure people are rewarded not for maintaining the status quo but for achieving constructive results. When people sense undue pressure to agree and to conform, they avoid pointing out even the most obvious problems for the sake of maintaining consensus and goodwill. The results are often embarrassing, and at worst, tragic. In contrast, a dynamic learning environment nurtures and supports people who express their ideas about existing policies and procedures that are not working well. Irate controversy, of course, is to be avoided; courtesy and positive attitudes should always be valued and maintained. Constructive, courteous dissent produces creativity, progress, and productivity.

Encourage those who possess the ability and the inclination to pursue answers to complex questions. One common yet misguided approach related to time efficiency is the autocratic demand for immediate answers and solutions. This approach rewards shallow thinking on the part of team members and exerts pressure to be agreeable at all costs. Give people adequate time and support to develop insightful solutions.

Valuable experience involves making mistakes and learning from them. If you never make a mistake, it is because you have never stretched to reach a new challenge. Mistakes teach people what does not work. Then they are free to move in a new direction to reach desirable goals. Establish "safety nets," policies that protect people when they make honest mistakes in pursuit of corporate goals. In so doing, you encourage them to shed their protective, perfectionistic guards and to experience enthusiasm for innovation and learning.

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Give your team members the freedom to schedule the necessary time for job-related educational development. Appropriate time allocation is a key factor in creating a learning environment. Although continuing education and training take time away from immediate results, the investment of time now provides huge dividends later. Goal setting, leadership, and management development are important for all team members' continued professional development.

A healthy, dynamic learning environment is characterized by freedom to express dissent, to make mistakes, and to invest time in learning. These elements provide the necessary backdrop for continuous improvement and increased productivity.
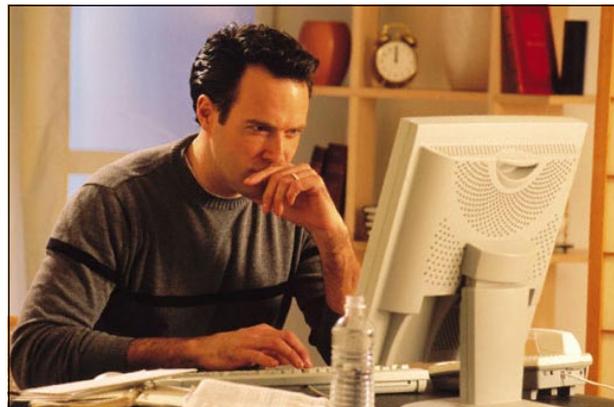
Guiding Your Team in the Right Direction

A tourist was walking by a construction site and saw three brick masons busy at work:

The traveler stopped, watched the workers for awhile and asked, "What are you doing?"

The first mason immediately replied, "Laying bricks, what does it look like?"

Still curious, the tourist turned to the second brick mason and again asked, "What are you doing?"

The mason stopped working, looked at the tourist and said, "Building a wall."

Not satisfied, the traveler went up to the third worker and asked, "What about you, what are you doing?"

The third brick mason turned to face the tourist and said, "I'm building a magnificent cathedral where my children and grandchildren will come to worship."

Of course this is a fictional story, but its message echoes through virtually every organization in the world. Team members with exactly the same job and responsibility can have totally different views and attitudes toward their work. The attitude and productivity of people in your organization will be, in large part, determined by their understanding of what they are trying to accomplish.

If people only see their job as completing a simple task, or blindly following someone's orders, they will be filled with apathy and boredom. If, however, people see their work as an important and integral part of helping the team or organization accomplish a worthwhile objective, their work takes on an entirely different meaning. The key to this difference is for everyone to have the same clear vision for the team or organization.

A vision is simply a picture of a desired future. In other words, a vision is a vivid description of where you want to see the organization at some point in the future. One of the primary characteristics of all high-performance teams and organizations is a clear and shared commitment to a specific objective or vision for the future.

The Need for Clear Vision

One of the best metaphors to help understand this concept of vision is a puzzle. A puzzle is a picture that is cut into a number of pieces. Imagine each team member as one piece of the puzzle. It's impossible to see the total picture just from seeing one piece. In fact, it's difficult to even guess where the piece would fit in the puzzle without being able to see the whole picture.

Only by being able to view the entire puzzle is each person able to understand where he or she fits in the total picture and in what role in the organization. The clearer the picture of the completed puzzle, the easier it is to put the puzzle together by placing the various pieces in the correct position. The clearer you make the vision for your team or organization, the easier it will be for team members to work together toward completion of that vision.

Great leaders are totally focused on their vision. They think of it by day and dream of it by night. Continually focusing on the vision induces action. Both organizational leaders and team members need to understand and internalize the vision of the company. What separates effective leaders from mediocre leaders, or from no leadership at all, is a clearly defined vision and sharing that vision with members of the organization.

It is crucial that all team members feel the emotion and the potential of the vision and be totally committed to it. The leader's role is to develop in associates a zeal for the organization's vision. When team members fully grasp and share the vision, they dedicate the full power of their potential to the company's future. Vision is the gift of clearly seeing the possibilities. Vision expands our horizons.

As competition in the world of business heats up, organizations are confronted with constant change. One significant change is the unlayering, downsizing, and flattening of organizations. Companies realize they can no longer afford managers and supervisors whose only job is to watch over workers. In today's world, team members must perform and produce results without being closely managed or supervised.

To compete successfully in the 21st century, leaders must create ideas that lead and guide people instead of constantly watching over them to make sure they're working. This all starts with a clear, exciting, and inspiring vision for the organization.

Take Charge of Your Life and Dreams

Your personal commitment to development of the highest possible level of leadership expertise involves commitment to an arduous plan of work. Personal growth always requires effort. Developing leadership ability is no exception. Some of your goals may be achieved fairly soon and with a relatively small investment of time, money, and effort. The more significant ones, however, may lay a number of years in the future and will require continuing effort and hard work on your part. Everything worth having – including leadership effectiveness – carries a price. But every worthwhile goal also produces rewards, and your career success as a leader is especially rich in benefits.

Your success as a leader gives you the respect and trust of people. As they follow your leadership, you are encouraged to become even more competent and successful. Eventually, their respect and trust for you are shared by other people in the community, and you begin to exert a wider influence that, in turn, gives you new opportunities for growth and service.

Consciousness of your own professional competence is one of the prime rewards of your program of leadership growth. For a person who is goal directed and self-motivated, a sense of personal competence is a function of the highest human need – the need for self-actualization.

Development of your leadership ability enables you to achieve your personal goals. Professional success provides adequate income, freedom to manage your own activities, and the ability to move in any social or professional group that attracts you. Goals that involve your family and home and other areas of your life move into your grasp as you grow professionally.

One of the most exciting rewards of leadership success is the ability it gives you to offer new opportunities to other people. The members of your team become almost like family members to you. You feel a responsibility for them; you enjoy making it possible for them to grow; you rejoice in their successes; you are excited about rewarding their achievement with money, position, and recognition. When you know that you have made a direct contribution to the growth of the people with whom you work, you feel a sense of fulfillment that can be gained in no other way.

Success as a leader gives you the opportunity to be of service to your community. You have the skills to contribute to the leadership and success of various groups to which you belong: civic organizations, professional societies, religious and charitable groups, and governmental services. Your career success provides the recognition of your skill that makes people seek you out and ask for your help. You are thus able to expand your influence and the impact you can make on others. This area of self-actualization adds meaning and purpose to your life.

Growth as a leader and the attendant financial rewards enable you to grow in the enjoyment of giving. We live in a world of abundance, but not all people find themselves in a position to enjoy the potential abundance that is there for them. Your success makes it possible for you to serve those who need some help to gain an education, to find physical and mental health, to prepare for jobs or careers that will make them productive, and to solve problems too great for their resources.

Your joy in sharing personal growth and success with your team members can be extended as you find ways to promote the growth and success of people in your immediate community, in your country, and throughout the world.

The Leadership Journey

What you accomplish as a leader is completely up to you. William Jennings Bryan said, "Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved." Set a schedule for working regularly on your goals. Identify study materials and plan how you will use them. Monitor your progress toward the goals you have set. Your plan for the future can be as exciting as you make it. Take charge of your life and design the future of your dreams. In the inspirational words of Paul J. Meyer:

"Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass."
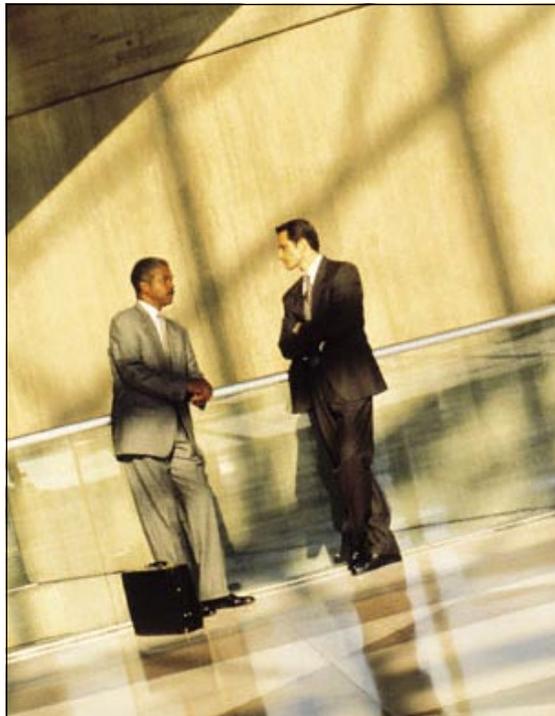
Become a Master of Making Change

More than 2,500 years ago, the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, said, "Change is the only constant." The world we now live in has certainly proved him right. Change just may be the most powerful influence in the business world today. Just consider some of the changes we will encounter in the next decade: • Almost half of all current knowledge will become obsolete. • The pace of change will continue to accelerate. • Entire industries will disappear. • Organizations will continue to restructure to meet the changing demands of the marketplace. • The lifespan of new products and new technologies will get shorter and shorter.

Whether we like it or not, we work in a world of continuous change. Today's workplace has been described as "permanent white water." Most organizations can no longer offer lifetime, longterm, or even secure employment. There is only one solution: If we are to successfully lead team members and our company to success, we must become masters of change and innovation.

Overcome Fear of Change

The only thing that never changes is the fact that everything constantly changes. Change is the natural state of all life. You cannot escape it. If nothing changed, leadership would be a simple process of developing smoothly working procedures and then sitting back to watch them operate. But since it is inevitable, every executive faces the challenge of dealing with change. Many people fear change and attempt to hang on to the status quo. The first task in leading change is to help team members overcome their underlying fear of change. **Four basic processes can help you overcome the fear of change:**

◆ **Clear organizational goals** – People fear change because its consequences are unknown. The present is familiar and comfortable. People know they can survive. But the prospect of succeeding in different, undefined circumstances is frightening. An organizational goals program defines the changes to be made, the direction they will take the organization, and the actions each person must take. Clear goals with specific individual responsibilities turn the threat of change into a challenge.

◆ **Personal development** – A part of the leader's own business goals should be a plan for leading team members to set personal goals. Involve your team members in personal development, and they quickly realize that the best way to achieve their personal goals is to succeed in their work. An environment in which everyone is growing is a vital, exciting one. When team members grow personally, their positive attitudes and their enthusiasm and excitement about their work is contagious. They support one another — and you, too.

◆ **Team involvement** – Involve team members in the entire process of planning, tracking results, and providing feedback. People who know that they are part of the process feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the overall success of the organization. Involving them also gives you the benefit of their creativity, their insight into problems, and their intimate knowledge of the day-to-day mechanics of the organization. Participation in creating change eliminates the threat of change.

◆ **Safe learning environment** – Could you walk along a narrow plank on the ground without fear of falling off? Would you feel just as confident if that plank were 20 meters above the ground? Team members who face change feel that they are walking a narrow plank high in the air. They are not sure whether they can stay on. Rather than risk failure, they choose not to attempt new behaviors. When you ask people to change, plan some provision for handling failed attempts, unexpected obstacles, or roadblocks. Safety nets can take many forms: additional reports and feedback, frequent problem-solving meetings by the entire team, or increased involvement by the top executive. New ideas and innovations can only happen if mistakes and failed attempts are not just tolerated, but actually encouraged. Thomas Watson Sr., the founder of IBM said, "If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate." A safe learning environment is one based on encouragement and support rather than punishment.

Create Respect by Building Team Trust

Trust is an indispensable force in any relationship, and it is a powerful bond that team members can form to help them reach their team goal. Trust is the combination or convergence of three separate beliefs:

- First is the belief that your team members are competent and that they have expertise in the areas you trust them in.

- Secondly is the belief that others are concerned, that they care for you and have your best interest at heart.

- Third is the belief in others commitment – that they will do what they say and follow through on their commitments.

Creating Respect, Synergy, and Success

Trust enables you to encourage other team members to use their skills and abilities to help move the entire team toward reaching its goal. When you display trust in others, showing them that you believe in them and that you have confidence in their skills and abilities to contribute to the team's success, they will trust and encourage you to use your skills and abilities to help reach the goal.

Mutual trust among all the team players creates congruency in thought, ambition, desire, and action. Teamwork bolstered by trust minimizes stress, eliminates misunderstandings, and saves time as you get more done. When you have team members who trust each other, you do not need to have lengthy conversations. Rather, you can almost speak in shorthand. These qualities in turn create synergy – the phenomenon that enables team members working together to accomplish much more than if they worked solo.

Trust develops respect among team members. Respect is required for any healthy relationship whether it is personal or professional. Teams are frequently made up of people who bring very different skills and abilities to the work group; their differences contribute to the strengths and capabilities for reaching the assigned goal. When all the team members assume their appropriate responsibilities, mutual trust and respect develop.

The team leader is responsible to recognize the skills and abilities of each team player well enough to know who would be best in each position. The team members must have confidence in the team leader to make team assignments and to ensure that the right players are in the right positions. In a band, the leader assigns responsibility for playing the drum to the person who can best play the drum. The leader assigns a trumpet player the responsibility of playing the trumpet. The band members in turn trust that the leader knows best and goes along with his or her direction. This kind of trust creates harmony, respect, synergy, and, ultimately, success.

Working in a climate of trust reduces stress and enables energy to be used more constructively. If two people in a rowboat paddle randomly, they expend twice the energy to get half the results. But if they paddle in sync, they double their speed with half the effort. The exact same principle applies in any organization when team members work together with a high level of trust. They work together more efficiently and effectively because they know they can trust the other team members to do their part. Their loyalty grows, and their level of job satisfaction increases. When workers are doing their best to contribute to the success of the team and they are enjoying their jobs, the result is always a higher level of success.

Trust is essential to reach the goal, to get the job done. Like any worthwhile accomplishment, there are no shortcuts to establish trust:

- Developing trust takes time, effort, and commitment.

- Building trust means doing what is right even when it is difficult to do.

- Trust means encouraging other team members even when you do not feel like it.

- Trust means always doing your best and not letting the team down.

These increased levels of synergy and success are not limited to the work team; they expand into every other area of the organization. Customers come to believe that your organization keeps its promises and genuinely cares about their needs. Expanding business is the ultimate result. Your organization makes a profit, you have job security, and you enjoy the personal satisfaction of having contributed to it all.

Bridging the Gap Between Potential and Performance

Since 1966, Leadership Management Institute™ has been bridging the gap between potential and performance by helping organizations and individuals evaluate their strengths and opportunities through implementation of the unique and proven LMI Process™.

The LMI Process™...

- Develops leaders who, in turn, empower their people to use their untapped talents and abilities.

- Identifies key areas the organization should focus on in order to reach the next level of success.

- Gives direction to an effective solution and delivers measurable results.

- Practices a 93 percent effective leadership model.

The LMI Process™ is designed around a Strategic Development™ model with four vital components:

- Awareness
- Development
- Planning
- Results Management.

LMI® tools and processes have been making a difference in organizations and individuals for 40 years in more than 60 countries.
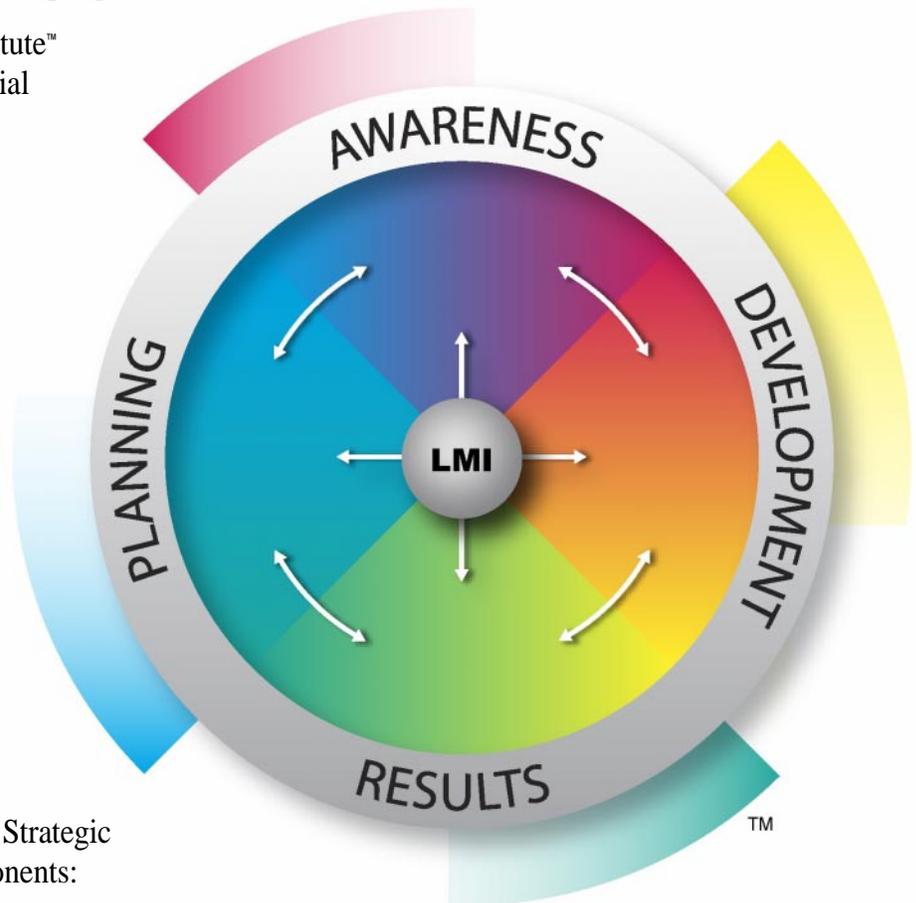
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