

Farr Associates is a Leadership Development and Organizational Effectiveness consulting firm located in High Point, North Carolina. Farr delivers a range of services that improves performance by enhancing the quality of leadership at all levels of the organization.

Perspectives of the CEO

Mark Ernsberger
Farr Associates: President and CEO

Hiring and Conscious Leadership

"Never hire or promote in your own image. It is foolish to replicate your strength and idiotic to replicate your weakness. It is essential to employ, trust, and reward those whose perspective, ability, and judgment are radically different from yours. It is also rare, for it requires uncommon humility, tolerance, and wisdom."
- Dee Hock, Former CEO, VISA International

When I read the above quote from a former banker, I was impressed. From our perspective, this is remarkable psychological insight from someone who either had a natural talent as a leader or worked like crazy to develop it on his own. Perhaps it was a combination of the two. Nevertheless, inherent in what Mr. Hock suggests are two of the most challenging tasks any leader faces.

The first is to be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. That is one of the abilities we at Farr Associates specialize in helping executives develop. Not necessarily an easy task. Most of us are very easily persuaded to acknowledge our strengths; few of us naturally desire to discuss - much less work on - our weaknesses. However, the immediate payoffs from taking a hard look at your natural skills as a leader and working to improve them are well documented: more powerful leadership through improved motivation, higher morale, and greater retention among your organization or team. Usually, these leaders have more balance and, in general, lead happier lives.

The second challenge can be a bit more far-reaching. Whether we realize it or not, most of us hire people who possess our same strengths and/or weaknesses. When this happens, they begin to form what we commonly call the culture of an organization. The culture in turn reflects the personality characteristics of its leaders -- both the good and the not-so-good. Some leaders are not aware they are making these choices. Others are aware but find it easier to manage this way. Bottom line, effective management requires consciously hiring people who bring different personalities, skills and approaches to your organization.

The benefits from following Mr. Hock's advice include deliberately and consciously creating an organization with the diversity to solve any problem or remove any obstacle to its ongoing success. But what is the cost? It requires openness to acknowledge where you fall short; humility and perseverance to give the hard work it takes to get better; tolerance to accept views that completely disagree with your own; and finally, it takes wisdom to separate the best views from the worst and yet consistently motivate all who contribute. Leadership at this level is rare. Re-read the last line of the quote at the top of this article. The word "uncommon" is not accidental. Neither was the success of the organization Mr. Hock led. With insight like that, it is no wonder Mr. Hock is credited with growing VISA over 10,000%, operating in 200 countries worldwide, and serving over half a billion clients since he took over in 1970.

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The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves.

- Ray Kroc,
Founder of McDonald's

Watch this quick video to learn about the power of [Conscious Leadership](#).

Did you know?

In a study of 300,000, 360 feedback reports on 30,000 managers, those who ranked in the top 10% of effective leaders had on average a positive impact of \$ 4.5MM on company net income vs. those ranked in the bottom 10% who had a negative \$1.2MM impact on net income. What is this largely attributed to? It is not related to their salary, but rather to the level of employee engagement they are able to create. And, that engagement stems from the quality of leadership. *CLO, July 2009. How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profits. Jack Zenger, Joe Folkman and Scott Edinger*

News From the Field

Improving Team Performance Starts with Awareness

Dr. Kevin Mays, Consultant at Farr Associates

During a recent Team Optimization initiative, I encountered a leadership team with a common problem that dramatically impacted its organizational outcomes – the team consisted of similar personality types who looked at the world through a common lens.

While their organization had grown significantly in the past ten years, the leadership team lacked the focus to allow it to function optimally. The team had a fragmented approach to solving problems, an approach that often created collateral damage to the organization and ultimately resulted in poor quality solutions.

In the Team Optimization process, these leaders discovered that they were not focused on organizational objectives. Rather, each focused on the objectives of his own division. Even when they did unify to develop organizational initiatives, they struggled with maintaining quality and effectiveness. Because the leadership team consisted of a group of extroverts who focused on idea generation and execution, they often omitted sufficient data collection and organizational impact analysis.

After becoming acutely aware of the negative impact their team's dynamics and preferred problem-solving process had on decision-making quality, they were in an excellent position to make dramatic improvements in quick order. They developed specific processes and rules of engagement for their meetings to counterbalance their natural tendencies.

The new rules of engagement created the forum for prioritizing organizational objectives and gathering supplemental data from outside sources before venturing into problem solving, idea generation and execution. Following the Team Optimization exercise, they substantially improved the quality of their business initiatives as well as their standing among the organization's employees.

Optimize your team to raise quality and accomplish more

Optimize your team's performance with new tools, greater focus, and an awareness of what has been holding you back. With Farr's [Team Optimization Process](#) you will see lasting and tangible results that impact your business goals.