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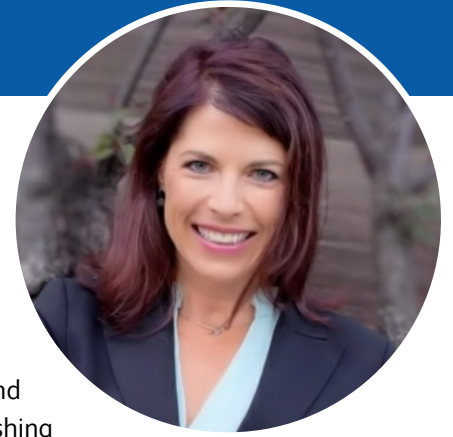
Creating a Strategic Vision

*Are You Making the 3 Mistakes Most
Organizations Unknowingly Make?*

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*Helping
executives and
entrepreneurs
achieve results
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approach*

Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at Sara@LaForestConsulting.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

*Improving
Performance*

*Navigating
Transitions*

*Accelerating
Results*

Have you seen the effects of success blindness?

It is a condition where success can be your greatest impediment to growth and succeeding in the future. Success hides many ills. It masks fundamental weaknesses in the business. And can lead to poor decisions – decisions that could end up fatal to your business. We've all heard the adage – they're throwing money at the problem. Well, today money is scarce for many. And simply stated many businesses literally can no longer afford to throw money at the problem to fix it.

We need a better approach, and it starts with creating a sound strategic vision as we work our way out of this recession. While your leadership team works on creating a *new* strategic vision, be careful to avoid these 3 mistakes that most organizations unknowingly make...

3 Top Mistakes Business Leaders Make While Creating Their New Strategic Vision and Direction

1. Failing to look at the organization's current strategic vision for relevance and how the market has changed. Before you even start thinking about creating a new vision for your organization, you need to think about these two things...

- Is your past/current strategic vision still relevant in today's economy?
- Has your market changed: for the better or for worse?

If you were selling subprime mortgages or providing goods and services to the real estate market then your market has changed for the worse. If on the other hand, you are selling goods or services to Apple, Walmart or Target, then you are likely doing reasonably well.

Strategy is multi-dimensional and what was successful in the past may not be successful in the future. Context and situation require change, at the very least, re-evaluation and validation. Without a current, sound strategic vision there is no direction for your company and forward momentum will become unlikely. Defining a strategic vision is the starting point as business growth resumes.

2. Failing to ask eight fundamental "business health check" questions. You see, far too often, small to medium size businesses fail to take an objective and dispassionate view of their operations when planning for their future. In many cases, they focus on only one component of the business, such as sales. How does this help you determine how to best position your organization for the future? You must ask these 8 questions...

- What's working now and how do you know?
- What's not working and how do you know?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What do you need to avoid?
- What do you need to eliminate ("stop doing")?
- What do you need to safeguard/preserve?
- What could you be doing to better prepare if an ongoing recession, and for the eminent rebound? (What else could you do to prepare for worse/best case scenarios?)
- Then, what are your next best steps to sustain you now and position you for the rebound?

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It is critical to ask (and listen to your team's responses to) these questions when creating your new strategic vision.

And lastly, **mistake #3** which is highly interdependent with #2, and most critical to execution- that is, operationalizing your vision to results:

Failing to *align* your leadership team with the new strategic vision of where you are headed. If only you or a few of the executives address the questions above in framing out and defining your strategic direction, it results in a gap – a lack of knowing by the very staff that will be making it happen (AKA: EXECUTING). Not knowing organizational priorities results in disarray due to individual agendas and priorities. (Think of individual employees as arrows pointing in different directions, versus focus and energies in a clear and common direction.)

For example, one of our leadership consulting clients was running a successful research business in the medical industry with a strong client base. The work product was good, as were sales. And for the most part clients were satisfied. What wasn't working well was the leadership team. Why? Talented researchers were promoted to leadership positions with little (or no) management experience. This created a "learning curve" both for the newly promoted manager (learning how to be a manager) and their employees (learning how to cope with the new manager's learning how to be a manager). The new managers that were thrown into a leadership role brought their baggage with them. That is the politics, behaviors and opinions they had as subordinates. No time was spent working to align the leadership team with the organizational vision and to align the team with itself. As a result, frustration grew – in both the new managers and the employees – and employee turnover became high. In a short time, clients felt the impact.

Lack of a commonly understood strategic direction leads to misaligned efforts and frankly poor decisions – and this can end up fatal to your business.

The recession has changed many businesses forever. What were opportune and successful strategies in the past will no longer work for many organizations. And believing you will soon return to business as usual is dangerous thinking.

Through addressing these 3 mistakes, you can re-surface from the recession by taking an intentional, dispassionate look at your current market situation, asking the tough questions, and defining a strategic vision that is desired and doable by you and your staff.