

# Secrets of Success

## TIPS TO PROPEL YOUR DEVELOPMENT

### Climbing the Ladder: Step Up to Strategic Leadership

by John Regentin, Director of the Gettysburg Leadership Experience

Any successful company employs highly skilled subject matter experts, able to troubleshoot problems and provide guidance, analysis and perspectives in complex situations. These individuals deliver front-line solutions to address daily challenges, and are often recognized with promotions into leadership positions.

While taking a step up the career ladder can be gratifying, it can also be complicated. Facing more uncertainty and a broader scope of responsibility and leadership requires more strategic-level thinking, a transition from hands-on operational expertise.

Making the transition to strategic leadership can be challenging, but here are a few considerations to facilitate the process.

#### 1. ESTABLISH A DESTINATION.

For any journey, the end goal or vision creates purpose, direction, guidance and inspiration. After all, it's hard to stay on the right path when you don't have a destination. To graduate to strategic leadership, it's important to define your professional philosophy and purpose, and then share these with your team. Communicate your motivations, your vision, and your expectations. Combined, these are the guideposts on your path to success. Especially during times of uncertainty, including leadership transitions, people will support you as a leader if they already embrace your strategy and goals.

#### 2. CREATE THE FRAMEWORK.

As a strategic leader, it's your job to create the conditions for your team to succeed by providing them with structure and process for implementing your vision. It's not your job to get in the dirt and do the work. Instead, the strategic leader should delegate, trust and position themselves to think upwardly and outwardly while the team manages and implements at the operational level, allowing them to make meaningful contributions without micromanaging the details.

### 3. SEEK VARIED PERSPECTIVES.

Strategic leadership thrives amid varied perspectives that create a fuller understanding of the situation at hand. While developing into a strategic leader, it's important to look at data, market research and industry literature that both supports and is contrary to your position. Also take time to speak with stakeholders who both support and disagree, and listen carefully to understand what they notice and consider.

### 4. EXPAND YOUR EXPERIENCE.

When seeking to develop strategic leadership skills, be open-minded about finding opportunities outside the organization to position oneself as a thought leader and practice strategic leadership skills. Volunteering on boards, enrolling in continuing education courses, attending conferences and presenting at seminars are prime occasions to demonstrate your expertise and test new strategic ideas.

**John Regentin is the Vice President of Experiential Learning for FCCS. He has 25 years of professional experience integrating the classroom, academic research, and active learning. John's deep understanding of the art and science of experiential learning lends a multi-dimensional understanding of strategic leadership, which he imparts to a broad range of FCCS clients.**

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