



*Sherry Schiller, Ph.D.*

*work with purpose & harmony*

## Lessons Learned

Here are some of the things I've learned from three decades of helping people in organizations work with greater purpose & harmony:

1. Successful organizations are led by people who consistently focus on their common purpose. When they share a vision, they can successfully align their programs, structures, and systems.
2. Effective leadership requires understanding—and appropriately responding to—changes—in the organization, its people, and its environment. Past success does not guarantee future success.
3. Effective leaders understand the changing and diverse roles needed from them. Today more than ever, they must act as facilitators, communicators, and coordinators.
4. Many good ideas fail because the culture into which they are introduced is unconstructive. Constructive cultures are safe, healthy places to work where people feel valued and respected and work together undefensively toward common goals.
5. Top performers need to know what is expected of them at work—and to have the required skills, authority, and resources—then to be rewarded appropriately.
6. Short term gains made at the expense of the long-term vitality of an organization, its people, and communities are not gains at all.
7. Tough decision, unaddressed, usually don't go away by themselves.
8. Effective change initiatives must be authentically inclusive. People need to feel they've had a voice in decisions that affect them if they are going to embrace and implement those decisions.
9. High performing groups are more evidence driven than anecdotally driven. They rigorously measure against meaningful benchmarks in order to align and improve performance.
10. The success of any new idea is shaped by how it is communicated internally and externally.
11. Over- or under-emphasis on any one element (programs, processes, purpose, or people) results in a low-performing, lopsided organization.
12. Effective change initiatives take time, which requires a visible, consistent, and ongoing commitment from organizational leaders.
13. If you want to understand the priorities of an organization, look at how its leaders spend their time and resources.
14. Disasters are almost always the confluence of multiple strands of issues, none of which by itself constitutes a disaster, and most of which are identifiable and even preventable.
15. If your gut tells you something is not right, pay attention. And cultivate your instincts about the things that matter most to you.
16. Know and play the strengths of your people and your team.
17. Tell your own powerful, compelling story. If you don't shape your message, others will do it for you.
18. More organizations fail from dreaming too small than from dreaming too big.
19. To truly understand something, it must be viewed non-judgmentally and in context.
20. Continuous improvement involves making smarter and smarter mistakes, not preventing them.
21. High performance and growth depend on constructive conflict.
22. It's all about relationships.