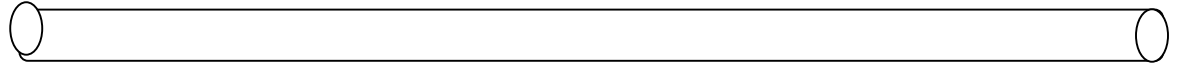




PIPELINE LIFE CYCLE OF A BUSINESS

Where is your business? Where is your personal strength?



**Start-Up
(Infant)**

**Driving
(Teenage)**

**Sustaining
(Middle Age)**

**Declining
(Old Age)**

UNDERSTANDING EACH STAGE:

Start-up

This is the beginning of an organization, project or system. During these initial events, the organization is completely dependent upon outside sources (money). In this beginning stage a lot of mistakes are made and most attempts seem to be fruitless. This stage is highly confusing and volatile. Any new endeavor begins here even if it is an offshoot of a sustaining or declining organization.

Driving

This is the “teenage” stage where there is a lot of unrest and rebellion in the effort. The organization wants “to be unlike any other” and demonstrate their own viability (even though they remain somewhat dependent on funds and services from other sources). The organization is full of new ideas and energy but is sometimes off track. It loves to try to new things and does not mind making mistakes. Some would say that Google is in this stage.

Sustaining

This is the “middle age” stage. At this point in development the organization is making money, creating a profit and has become connected to routine and predictability. Both surprises and mistakes are considered unwelcome. The organization is less energetic and tends to be on purpose. Some would say that Hewlett Packard is currently in this stage.

Declining

This is the time when organizations tend to wind down. The organization does not want to bring in new ideas and is rather low in energy. The organization has made money and is lacking in energy. “This is the way we have always done it” is metaphorically on the flag pole in the front of the building. (If the organization does not create some of the infant projects it will become extinct.) Some would say that General Motors is in the position.

APPLYING THE LIFE STAGES TO INDIVIDUALS

Start-up

Some individuals are best suited to work in the Start-up phase of organizations. These people are highly creative and enjoy unpredictability. They are often strong at generating new alliances and customer bases. They are not strong a developing long-term systems and strategies.

Driving

Some individuals are best suited to work in the Driving phase of organizations. These individuals are creative and like to challenge authority. They are often strong at taking ideas and making them happen. They are less creative and more driving. They love to see things completed (and sometimes make a mess in the completion). They are highly effective (getting things done) but not as efficient.

Sustaining

Some individuals are best suited to work in the Sustaining phase of organizations. These individuals enjoy creating systems that can be duplicated and perfected. They are very effective but more efficient (getting things done in a very predictable way). They are strong at finance. They are good at keeping relationships working (but not as strong at creating new relationships).

Declining

In a perfect world these people are very strong at handing off the business to others. They are good communicators and see their value in leadership in teaching. They are good at finding others with good ideas and creating opportunities for them. The best of these individuals work like a ship cutting through the ice – they make room for others behind them to be creative. They tend to love youth and energy and gain energy from spending time with youth. They are wise but do not have to have center stage and they always pass the credit on to others. The best of the “decliners” help create start-ups.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Every organization works best when they have a clear understanding of their current stage – and can understand the strengths of their workforce in relationship to these stages. The most successful companies of today can compensate for declining energy by creating SWAT TEAMS who are strong at the start-up phase. Then as the work on the start-ups matures they can bring in new people who have Driving, then Sustaining and then Declining capabilities. And recognizing your organization’s own stage and the stages of your workforce is the first step.

