

Outcome Management

In subsequent chapters we will be discussing applying success principles and practices to enhance your business success. Helping you learn how to apply these Pearls of Business in your day to day activity is the focus of this book. A prerequisite for applying these principles starts with understanding that every engagement you enter into must be preceded by an outcome management objective. Researching the phrase *outcome management* yielded the following pearl from IBM:

“Outcome management is a client-centric model, which puts the needs of the clients first.”

In growing CST, Bobby and I never went into a client business development meeting without having done some serious preparation work beforehand. We applied an outcome management strategy prior to any meeting we went into. We would think through the following questions:

- Who is this client?
- What is their perception of us?
- What is their mission?
- What is our understanding of their current challenges?
- What do we offer that can be adapted to optimally support them?

We practiced this outcome management technique with every engagement, including meetings with existing customers and during our staff meetings. Because we had thought beforehand about the outcome we wanted, the resulting conversations and discussions would inevitably lead to positive results. In other words, we imaged the outcome we wanted going in, prepared well for the meeting, and kept that image in our minds, which guided the discussion. We would frequently reach a point near the end of a sales meeting to ask a closing question. We learned to apply a Columbo tactic.

We would stand, smile, thank the prospective client for their time, move toward the door, then turn and ask something like, “By the way, George, when we come back next week for a follow-up, should we meet with you and your COO or just you?” This closing question is critical in that it can’t be answered with a simple yes or no. By asking about the future, you’re showing that you’re planning for it and giving the person you’re engaging with the opportunity to commit to meeting with you again. So, creating this outcome management environment led to closing deals and the ultimate successful growth of our company.

Soon after the launch of CST, we had the great privilege of meeting with Larry Womack, business consultant and author of the book *Outcome Management*. That meeting and his book provided us with priceless insight and advice. He gave us one of the greatest pearls.

“Outcome management is determining a desired outcome and managing toward it.

It is managing **from** the future instead of **for** it.”

– LARRY WOMACK

He shared with us that, “Managing effective outcomes requires expectations of leaders, managers, and workers and a demand for adherence to those expectations from everyone.” Womack states in his book that the guiding principle for leaders in an outcome management environment is to, “Dream before you

think, think before you plan, and plan before you act, and that it demands a stamina of spirit, courage of conviction, and leadership mettle.” In other words, outcome management is accomplished successfully in an organization throughout the entire operational team; the owners and leadership team pass it down and they all accomplish it by practicing it daily.

What Larry is sharing with us is that having outcome management in mind continually affects every engagement during day-to-day operations. I can attest to its importance and effectiveness. The more you practice it, the more it becomes central to every business encounter, both internally and externally.

Outcome Management Anecdotes

An example of applying the outcome management strategy affected me personally in a positive way relative to my career. While I was still supporting the Ballistic Missile Defense Systems Command in the early 1970s at Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) in Huntsville, Alabama, one of my CSC coworkers who had accepted a job with Advanced Technology, Inc. (ATI) approached me with a suggestion that I should consider interviewing with ATI because they were looking for someone to launch a branch office in Huntsville.

I was contacted and invited to meet with ATI’s leadership team in their Reston, Virginia, headquarters to discuss my interest. Here was my outcome management thought at the time: I decided not to just show up at this meeting and wing the discussion. I thought through what their agenda might be and what their expectations were. I did some homework on what it would take to launch their branch office. I contacted several office complexes for office space costs and even investigated phone, copier, and other overhead costs, including a receptionist.

I drafted a briefing in preparation for my interview. When I arrived, I was invited into the main conference room and the ATI president and

the entire leadership team were there, including my colleague. Following introductions, I opened my comments with my background and experience then reached down and opened my briefcase and pulled out the copies of the briefing and acknowledged they were looking for someone to open an office in Huntsville for them.

I said I had thought through what I felt might be required to accomplish that, passed around the presentation, and briefed it. After I answered a few questions from the group, the president asked me to step out of the room for a few minutes. In a relatively short time, they invited me back into the conference room and offered me the job on the spot. I had imaged the outcome I wanted and prepared my remarks to give the ATI leaders what I actually thought it would take to open a branch office successfully. I acted like I had the job, took the necessary steps to ensure I would get it, and it worked.

Another vivid personal example of an outcome management application came to me during a proposal activity I was leading at ATI following the tragic loss of NASA's Shuttle Challenger during its launch in the mid-1980s. The Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) was responsible for all of NASA's propulsion systems design and development and it took full responsibility for the success and possible failure of every shuttle launch. As a result, the entire MSFC staff and personnel were devastated by the Challenger loss and were, for a while, in a state of depression.

Following the accident, NASA's MSFC leadership made a decision to assure that such an event would never happen again, and they launched a program to form a new Safety, Reliability, Maintainability & Quality Assurance (SRM&QA) Program. The contracts office released a Request for Proposal (RFP) solicitation to find and award a qualified contractor to fulfill and support MSFC's SRM&QA requirements.

ATI decided to compete for the contract, and I was asked to lead the proposal effort from our Huntsville office. Those of us who were close to NASA during this time were also devastated by the accident. As I put the proposal team together it became important to me that the

writers and responders to the RFP had a grasp of both the current state of mind of MSFC in general, but also that of the proposal evaluators, specifically. I knew they would be looking for a contractor who understood their current state of mind and the depth of their commitment to assure that another failure of that magnitude would never happen again, and I wanted to make sure my team understood that, too.

In order to gain a clear picture of this outcome management anecdote, I need to share with you something I had experienced during the early days of NASA's Shuttle Program, prior to the loss of the Challenger. In 1981, the US Space and Rocket Center's (USSRC) IMAX Dome Theater was featuring a powerful documentary, *Hail Columbia*, about the first flight of the Space Shuttle Program (STS1). When I watched it earlier, I had an enormous feeling of pride and excitement for our future space exploration.

So, back to the proposal effort. I realized that we had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help the devastated MSFC staff get their excitement back. The next morning when the proposal team arrived, I sat everyone down and said, "Folks, we're going over to the USSRC's Dome Theater and we're going to watch the movie *Hail Columbia* so you can personally feel the pride and excitement this NASA team had after the first successful shuttle flight." I said that the NASA proposal evaluators would need to feel that we understood what they had experienced and that if they selected us, we were going to take them back there.

When we arrived back from the movie and the writing commenced, our proposal accomplished the outcome I was looking for. We were awarded the contract.

Applying the Pearl

An important commitment to incorporating this outcome management strategy into your operation is to, from time to time, create opportunities to hold outcome management exercise sessions. The most effective

exercise is to make a list of some settings where you and your team image situations and then create some mock engagements with colleagues and practice the meeting outcome technique. An effective approach is to have a pre-practice session discussion and set up a staff meeting scenario so you can think through how and when to insert the outcome management technique. Just setting up the scenario supports the leadership team's internalizing the technique.

Outcome management must be an ongoing activity and state of mind. As a leader and company principal you internalize it first, pass it down to your leadership team, encourage them to pass it down, and you continually protect it from wavering. Applying the strategy takes some practice. Below you will find some ways to practice imaging, which will, with a little bit of work, become second nature to you.

- Take a few minutes to act out some scenarios you might find yourself in and practice how to achieve the desired outcome. Say you have a meeting with a big client about your new product or service. What is the desired goal and outcome from that meeting? How will you achieve that outcome using imaging?
- Before each meeting or engagement, meet briefly with your leadership team. Practice in real-time what you put in place in the above strategy. Ask them what they expect, or image, will happen during the meeting and ask them what they anticipate the outcome will be.
- Just think for a moment about what would happen to your business if every time you went into a business development engagement, a staff meeting, or a board meeting you imaged the outcome you wanted and it actually happened. Where could that take you?

The applicable pearl here is:

“Hold an image of the life you want,
and that image will become fact.”
– NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

My adaptation of it is:

“Hold an image of the *outcome* you want,
and that image will become fact.”