**Synchronize vs. Strategic:
The Power of Going Slow to go Fast**

Do you ever feel like your people are not able to stay in step with you?

Let's take a quick look at two words:

**Synchronize:** Cause to occur or operate at the same time or rate.

**Strategize:** To devise a course of action.

Jane supports, and I can even say, loves her team. She’s proud of what they accomplish and how they overcome obstacles to move the work and the mission forward. However, Jane has a blind spot. She’s what I call a fast processor. She thinks fast, synthesizes information fast, comes up with ideas fast and likes to execute fast. That’s just who she is. With this skill, she has helped countless organizations pinpoint bottlenecks, identify next steps and chart successful forward-moving action. She gets things done.

It may take Jane ten minutes to figure out the problem others had been working on for four hours. She is good at solving complex issues. Most of the time, she instinctively knows what needs to happen. It is almost as if she has a 3D view of the situation. She can see what happened before, what is happening now and what needs to happen next.

**This is great, right?**

Not always. Jane does this so well that she does not understand what others are missing. She may even ask herself "what about this obstacle was taking them hours to figure out?" or "what stopped them from seeing what I see?" Once Jane gives an assessment, she proceeds to give instruction to the team by setting action steps and deadlines to get things done without realizing they are still wondering what in the world just happened. While Jane is satisfied with what she has accomplished, those around her are discombobulated. They often ask themselves "how do we keep up with Jane?"

Do you know anyone like Jane? Are you Jane? Jane is strong at processing information in record time - that is just how her brain works. She is also good at setting the hair on fire of those around her.

What happens when your well-meaning leader sets your hair on fire, in love of course, then leaves the meeting for another appointment?

**Clarity is a Gift**

When I first started working with Jane and others like her, I thought the solution was to get her to stop doing what she did, get her to practice self-control, and make behavioral adjustments. I realized in time that the Janes of the world find it difficult to maintain behavioral changes, even for the good of the team. They may give it a try for about five proverbial minutes, then their natural intuition and ingenuity will take over. The way they process is hardwired and a part of their success code or zone of genius. Why would we want to change that?

Jane was not aware that she was operating from a space of gifting and did not know why she would often get frustrated and impatient with others who didn’t move at her intuitive pace. Once the clarity came to the surface that she was doing something unique, she stopped trying to change and took a breather. She noticed that her team or her clients were not slackers because they needed four hours to process what took her 10 mins to figure out.

Before realizing this, she expected everyone to arrive at team meetings ready to hear the proposed big picture idea, and then leave ready to execute. After all, that is how her world worked. In reality, her team was left with questions, things that needed to be clarified, and significant gaps that, unless resolved, would prevent them from confidently creating and taking next steps.

**Synchronize vs. Strategize**

Traditionally, the leader arrives to a meeting with an agenda. The expectation is that everyone would get the agenda, follow the leaders wishes and off they would go to get it done…even if they did not feel they had all the information regarding the outcome or how to evaluate success. When this happens, the leader goes away feeling satisfied, while the team may feel unsure or even insecure. They are not working together; the leader is on one page and everyone else is on another page.

In coaching we have a term that we use called "dance in the moment." Well, what if both parties are not hearing the same music? One person is dancing to a Cha Cha and the other people is dancing to a Waltz. What are the outcomes going to look like if there is a lack of a unified rhythm?

When a leader puts the focus on the agenda only, the outcome is unpredictable. They need to address the steps required to advance the cause with the team so that everyone understands which dance they are doing. Take a look at this video of a man teaching the Cha Cha dance. Imagine that he’s teaching this to your whole team so that everyone knows the steps for the meeting. If you’re really up for a fun challenge, do this with your team and see what it takes to get in sync with each other.

With this in mind, here is a document that I created with my team for the purpose of building structure in a specific type of meeting we have for Promise Land Living called a standup. It’s kind of like our version of doing the Cha Cha together - it's a fairly fast paced and repetitive meeting. Once everyone knows the steps, we can move together and do the dance efficiently and, actually have fun, too!

**Agendas Matter**

***"Give me an agenda or else I’m not going to sit there, because if I don’t know why we’re in the meeting, then there’s no reason for a meeting." —Annette Catino, chief executive of the QualCare Alliance Network.***

This quote by Annette Catino is correct. People want to have an agenda for a meeting. However, another important aspect of leader communication before, during and after team meetings is pacing. When relaying information to others, one helpful approach is to "go slow to go fast." Or, maybe you have heard of the Navy Seal's philosophy saying "slow is smooth and smooth is fast." Also, effective communicators are often great teachers, which can empower the listeners with all the puzzle pieces for building the complete and often complex puzzle. Clear and simple communication with a reasonable stride can set the team up to be successful as a foundation for establishing the positive affective side of the team’s processing of new information. The leader has already taken the time to think about and process her ideas, although this is the first-time others are hearing it.

When communication feels like a race, hasty or incomplete, the listener’s emotionally responsive limbic system or amygdala (directs communication between the lower and upper brain) can kick into fight or flight due to stress, fear, frustration, alienation, or anxiety, which is the lower brain. Whereas, the upper brain, or prefrontal cortex is where memory is constructed and neural networks of executive functions guide voluntary behavior with reflective, rather than reactive, choices (Understanding by Design Meets Neuroscience). Most all team members want to perform well, although blurry or missing puzzle pieces can feel like one or both arms strapped behind your back when trying to do a cartwheel.

To make the environment a bit more complex, the leader needs to take into consideration each team member’s learning styles for effectively communicating their agenda. A room full of auditory learners will end a meeting with a lot more giddy-up than your visual learners if your great ideas are not penned and, in their hands, preferably ahead of time.  Yes, this takes time, pointing us, once again, to the art of synchronization with our teams.

There are many ways to structure your meetings. Here is an article on 15 Meeting Management Tips - it’s a phenomenal resource.

Learning to Dance Together

Leading goes beyond the strategy or the agenda. To have maximum impact it must have room for others to get in the same space with you to clarify the rhythm. Jane’s gifts are evident, but they stand alone without the support of her team and their ability to be synced up with her. Once everyone knows the steps, they do the dance together as part of a team. No one’s hair needs to catch fire.

In summary, to maximize your leadership efforts, consider the need for both - strategize and synchronize. Confirm that everyone knows their move and how to execute it.

Jane is brilliant at what she does. She has been recognized the world over for her work with companies and teams and that is something to celebrate. Jane’s blind spot impacts her team, sets their hair on fire at times and slows the work that needs to be done in her own company.

There are many successful Jane’s out there and that’s a good thing. With the right tools and perspective shift, they can have far reaching impact inside and outside of their organizations simply by learning a few new dance moves and practicing those moves with their teams.

Strategize.

Synchronize.

Evaluate.

Repeat.

I would be happy to explore your preferred future with you – simply reach out and we can set up a complimentary call.



**About Cheryl Scanlan**

Cheryl Scanlan, MCC, CMCC, BCC is president of C3Advantage. She has worked with CEOs that are in Fortune 100 through next generation small business owners. Having also run a multi-million dollar firm in New York, Cheryl knows the importance of business goals and the impact of teams. Cheryl's thought partnering method helps leaders see clearly what is fuzzy, articulate what is currently unintelligible, and generate coherent and executable strategy.

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