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# Deriving and Using Vital Signs for Assuring Florida Organizational Viability

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If any organization, public or private, is to succeed it must prove value for money. If any organization does not contribute measurable value to all stakeholders it should disappear. Leaders must assure that their organization is both valued and valuable.

Leaders of both public and private organizations should focus on societal value added as central to strategic thinking, planning, and contributions. Building on two Peter Drucker insights, this article proposes tools for being responsive to his advice:

Leaders in every single institution and in every single sector...have two responsibilities. They are responsible and accountable for the performance of their institutions, and that requires them and their institutions to be concentrated, focused, limited. They are responsible also, however, for the community as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

...one of the reporters asked Peter what the first initiative of the new Drucker Foundation would be. The father of modern management replied "An organizational self-assessment tool."<sup>2</sup>

This article has two core themes; (1) the responsibility for any organization to add measurable value to our shared society, and (2) provide useful criteria for organizational self-assessment for practical and useful strategic thinking, planning, and resulting contributions.

*Defining, creating, and being responsible for a better shared future:* Our world depends on it: using one's organization as the vehicle we all must make sure our world exists—environmentally, socially, financially, and culturally-- for future generations.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been rising since the 1960's.<sup>4</sup> CSR urges all organizations, public and private to take active responsibility for their actions and the impacts flowing from what they currently use, do, produce, and deliver have on employees, consumers, communities, and environment. Leaders require, then, a useful compass for organizations to use when making decisions.

Conventional CSR, however, may be seen as incomplete in that it tends to just repair existing organizational missions and activities instead of also being proactive and creating new contributions that an organizations might provide to our shared world; contributions that are not currently identified in current missions nor in most models and indeed in such tools as a balanced score card.

Proactive approaches to CSR might even result in changes to any organization's mission that might be assisted by the use of guidance from using the suggested vital signs (discussed below) as a compass for navigation to create a better future for all stakeholders.

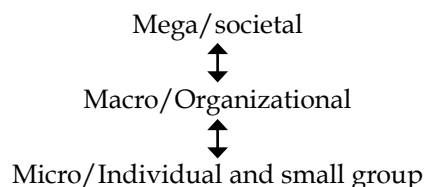
Any useful compass must have headings and calibrations for direction based on defining correct and useful destinations so we can make decisions about both where we are headed, justify why we should go there, design our journey, and then track our progress. A form of CSR that may be applied in both a reactive as well as proactive mode has been developed by Kaufman starting in the 1960's and evolving into Mega Thinking and Planning.<sup>5</sup> It provides self-assessment criteria for a practical and ethical CSR.

*Deriving self-assessment criteria for creating a better world:* It is important for serious work that one moves beyond inspirational words to performance specifications that can be used for planning, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The criteria suggested here have been derived by asking people world-wide "what kind of world do you want to help create for tomorrow's child". Mega thinking and planning is an approach that puts measurable social good as the primary focus of planning, doing, and evaluation. It can provide a framework and guidance for those who would measurably improve our world using their organization as a vehicle. It has been successfully applied from Australia to Europe to Mexico and Central America to Latin America.<sup>6</sup>

Mega planning provides a framework for CSR for defining direction for any organization; an Ideal Vision. The Ideal Vision may be used to extend organizational purpose and efforts beyond what any organization now does and delivers. The Ideal Vision provides the criteria for organizational planning, design, and delivery as well they may be seen as vital signs; vital signs such as our physicians use to check the status and progress of our health.

The ideal vision and vital signs define and justify ends before selecting the means to get from here to there. These have been successful applied almost world-wide.<sup>7</sup>

*Deriving, justifying, and applying vital signs:* Using needs assessment—identifying gaps between current results and consequences and desired results and consequences and placing them in priority order-- we can define a fiscal and ethical compass for any organization. A useful needs assessment identifies, documents, and aligns performance gaps between current results and consequences and desired results and consequences at three levels:



Based on the gaps in results and consequences selected for reduction or elimination and by prioritizing them on the basis of the cost to meet the needs as compared to the costs to ignore the needs, any organization can define its mission, including measurable criteria for planning, management, design, development, implementation and continual improvement.

Following are some application exercise that will structure the questions to be asked and answered and provide the framework for collecting valid data for the needs assessment.

## **Finding Direction: A Generic Organizational Ideal Vision and Related Vital Signs**

**The Ideal Vision:** There will be no losses of life, elimination or reduction of levels of well-being, survival, self-sufficiency, or quality of life from any source.

Indicators – vital signs-- of success include:

**First Level:** Basic survival –All people

Zero pollution – no permanent destruction of our environment

No deaths or permanent disabilities from what is delivered

No starvation and/or malnutrition resulting in incapacity

No partner or spouse abuse resulting in incapacitating physical or psychological damage

No disease or disabilities resulting in incapacity

No substance abuse resulting in incapacity

No murder, rape, crimes of violence, robbery or destruction of property

No war, riot, or terrorism, or civil unrest resulting in incapacity of individuals or groups

No accidents resulting in incapacity

Citizen positive quality of life.

**Second Level:** Organizational Survival

Continued funding or profits based on measurable positive return on investment

Programs, projects, activities, and operations meet all performance objectives and adds measurable value to level One Vital Signs.

These vital sign indicators are indeed ideal. We might not deliver them all immediately or even soon but it provides a common guiding star for our compass toward which we may relentlessly move. The vital signs are best taken together and not splintered and thus miss the relationships among them.

## Applying the Ideal Vision and Vital Signs for organizational self-assessment.

Exercise 1. Is an Ideal Vision and related vital signs important for my organization?

The Ideal Vision	Your response	Your response
There will be no losses of life, elimination or reduction of levels of well-being, survival, self-sufficiency, or quality of life from any source.	Important for my organization and our community or shared world	None of my business or it will have no impact on my organization, community or shared world.

If the response was that the ideal vision and vital signs could be important for my organization, then:

Exercise 2. Vital signs for achieving the Ideal Vision. Identify the variables for which gaps between current results and required results for these elements that are important for you and your organization to consider and help reduce or eliminate:

Vital Signs			
First Level: Basic survival for all people	Yes, directly	Yes, with other partners	Someone else's problem/no problem
Zero pollution—no permanent destruction of our environment			
No deaths or permanent disabilities from what is delivered			
No starvation and/or malnutrition resulting in incapacity			
No partner or spouse abuse resulting in incapacitating physical or psychological damage			
No disease or disabilities resulting in incapacity			
No substance abuse resulting in incapacity			
No murder, rape, crimes of violence, robbery or destruction of property			
No war, riot, or terrorism, or civil unrest resulting in incapacity of individuals or groups			
No accidents resulting in incapacity			
Citizen Quality of life			
Second Level: Organizational Survival			
Continued funding based on measurable positive return on investment			

Programs, projects, activities, and operations meet all performance objectives while adding value to first tier requirements			
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Exercise 3. Identify gaps in results for those variables that you have selected and rank their importance or criticality for you, your organization and our shared external clients. Data to support this should be both valid and measurable on an interval or ratio scale.

<b>Vital Signs</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Rank</b>
<b>First Level: Basic survival –All people</b>	<b>Current results and consequences</b>	<b>Desired results and consequences</b>	<b>Importance/ Criticality rank for each from 1 (vital) to 5 (not immediate)</b>
Zero pollution—no permanent destruction of our environment			
No deaths or permanent disabilities from what is delivered			
No starvation and/or malnutrition resulting in incapacity			
No partner or spouse abuse resulting in incapacitating physical or psychological damage			
No disease or disabilities resulting in incapacity			
No substance abuse resulting in incapacity			
No murder, rape, crimes of violence, robbery or destruction of property			
No war, riot, or terrorism, or civil unrest resulting in incapacity of individuals or groups			
No accidents resulting in incapacity			
Citizen positive qualify of life.			
<b>Second Level: Organizational Survival</b>			
Continued funding or profits based on measurable positive return on investment			
Programs, projects, activities, and operations meet all performance objectives and adds value to first tier criteria.			

## **Applying the vital signs**

After you identify the gaps between the current results and their consequences and the desired results and consequences, prioritize them on the basis of the costs to meet the needs—close the gaps—and the costs to ignore the needs. Then, based on hard evidence, you may design, deliver, and evaluate the ways and means to get from where you are to where you want to be. It is all based on evidence and provides a way to practically and ethically measurably improve what your organization uses, does, produces, and delivers to our shared world.

An organization could develop a dashboard of the vital sign indicators where anyone in the organization, can at a glance, determine how far they are from the results and impacts they must achieve.<sup>8</sup>

## **If we are not moving toward these, what do we have in mind?**

Use this Mega thinking and planning compass each time one is considering how to make our organizations successful will deliver organizational results that add value to our shared world... and do so measurably. This concept provides criteria for self assessment, planning, management, implementation, and evaluation; for creating and managing useful change while creating a better world. ..the advice that Peter Drucker offered.

Each time we are considering a program, process, or intervention we can simply ask “will this take us closer or further away from the vital signs and the Ideal Vision?”

## References

Kaufman, R. (2011). *The Manager's Pocket Guide to Mega Thinking and Planning*. Amherst, MA, HRD Press.

Kaufman, R, & Guerra-Lopez, I. (2008) *The Assessment Book: Applied Strategic Thinking and Performance Improvement through Self-assessments*. Amherst, MA. HRD Press Inc.

## Endnotes

1. Quoted in Hesselbein, F. (2011). *My Life in Leadership: The Journey and Lessons Learned Along the Way*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.. Page 119.
2. Hesselbein, F. (2011). *My Life in Leadership: The Journey and Lessons Learned Along the Way*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.. Page 144.
3. An example of this concept of leadership taking responsibility for adding value to society and that is now reaching the "main stream" of management, is the article by International Practice Director of McKinsey & Co.: Davis, I. (2005, May 26). *The Biggest Contract*. *The Economist*. London: May 28, 2005. Vol. 375, Is. 8428, p. 87
4. Based in part on Wikipedia on December 5, 2011: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate\\_social\\_responsibility](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_social_responsibility)
5. E.G.

Bernardez, M., Kaufman, R., Krivatsy, A., & Arias, C. (Jan.,2012). *City Doctors: A Systemic Approach to Transform Colon City, Panama*. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*.

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Kaufman, R. (2011). *The Manager's Pocket Guide to Mega Thinking and Planning*. Amherst, MA, HRD Press.

6. For example, two special issues, on Mega thinking and planning provide case studies of applications:

Kaufman, R. & Bernardez, M. (2005) Eds. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, Special invited issue on Mega planning. Volume 18, Number 3..

Kaufman, R., Bernardez, M. & Guerra-Lopez.(2009) Eds. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, Special invited issue on Mega planning. Volume 22, Number 2.

7. Bernardez, M. (2005). *Achieving Business Success by Developing Clients and Community: Lessons from Leading Companies, Emerging Economies and a Nine Year Case Study*. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, Vol. 18, Number 3. Pp. 37-55.

Bernardez, M., Kaufman, R., Krivatsy, A., & Arias, C. (Jan., 2012). *City Doctors: A Systemic Approach to Transform Colon City, Panama*. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*.

8. Such a dashboard has been developed by the University of Puerto Rico for all internal and external partners to use. By displaying an emphasis on results and consequences a dashboard can help avoid people wanting to implement programs, projects, activities and funding that does not "move the needle" in the vital signs results and consequences dashboard.

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