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INTERVIEWER:

Today we were talking about, "If your organization was running absolutely perfectly, how would you know?" How would you know?

SEDORY HOLZER:

I think that's a pretty tough question. I think part of it is "What does perfect mean?", and the other part is, "How would you know?" If we break those apart I think the running perfectly aspect of an organization is something that will constantly be evolving. We have goals, we have measurables, we have performance indicators, and we have employee satisfaction data. We have a lot of opportunities to measure and monitor whether our organization is running perfectly. But I think our group today really had a good time reflecting on that all the best metrics in the world still really aren't necessarily the things that drive us as leaders toward knowing that our organization is running perfectly. That it really does become more of a personal intersection between, "How do you feel about your job? How do you feel about what happens on a day-to-day basis? How do you feel when you go home?" So I think as much as I really want to ensure that my organization has appropriate metrics and that we are focused on a vision and a mission that will help us achieve some goals and that we have a good way to measure and monitor that, unless I'm listening, unless I'm paying attention to what people are saying to me, or unless I'm paying attention to how I feel, then I really wouldn't know. To me, knowing if my organization is running perfectly has a lot more to do with an unmeasurable sense, if you will, of what's really succeeding. Are we accomplishing things on a day-to-day basis that make us feel good, that move us toward a mission, that speaks to everything we're trying to accomplish?

INTERVIEWER:

What are some examples of those non-traditional metrics, some of the things that you would actually experience that indicate perfection or where there's a gap?

SEDORY HOLZER:

My organization is a professional society that represents a group of physicians who are at their heart and soul very innovative. Interventional radiologists are trained radiologists who have worked throughout the entirety of their career to identify new ways to treat other diseases or procedures, often that are done by surgery or often done by other means, or help patients for whom there aren't any easy alternatives. We have an opportunity within my organization to help serve what those members need. And so I think one way that I would know if I'm running absolutely perfectly is if my staff are able to mirror that energy, to mirror that opportunity of always looking at the next new opportunity or the next new thing, that we are feeling engaged and empowered at the end of the day, that we made a difference in someone's life, much like our members arguably go home with the same kind of concept of making a difference in someone's life. I think that would definitely be one aspect of the intangible side of measuring, "Are we making a difference?" Similarly, I think we have a lot of opportunities to get our message and our word out about what it is we try to do, and knowing and hearing reflected back that the things that we do are making a difference. That members' or patients' lives are being helped by the things that we're doing makes a big difference too.

INTERVIEWER:

You mentioned your members are innovative, and you also mentioned that you like your staff to relate to and mirror that. Do you then also look at your organization and say, "Are we an innovative organization? Is innovation happening here?" Is that one of your points or metrics?

SEDORY HOLZER:

It is. We have to constantly look toward making sure innovation is happening where we are. We need to be able to always work faster, work smarter in today's environment. I think that we are – I'm trying to think of how to summarize that. We need to bring our best game to the table every day at the same time within the workplace. We have to find an engaging opportunity for staff to feel like they're able to take time to reflect on what they're doing and to look for either ways to improve processes or ways to achieve different outcomes with the same processes. In order to build greater capacity and more success for the future, being innovative is just something that will help us grow as we need to or move us toward a place where we want to go.

INTERVIEWER:

And then how do you connect that to the mission? It's one thing to work on the organization – better processes, better whatever – but there's the connection to the mission which is more direct to what the members are trying to accomplish.

SEDORY HOLZER:

I think a medical, or any professional, association has an opportunity because of the connection between leadership and being able to help set the agenda and to drive where we want to go. Our mission is really constantly in a state of tuning. I think there's no way we could end up with a strategic plan that just sits on the shelf for many years because on a year-to-year basis what we do is constantly reassessing what we're accomplishing and what our goals are. And we need to use that mission to help us identify "What are the areas we need to continue to explore?" And then, "What are the areas we need to shed or to let go of in any given year?" We don't have an unlimited set of resources or an unlimited opportunity to raise more resources. Connecting ourselves to a mission is a way of both grounding us in terms of accomplishing the things that we know we must accomplish, keeping us humble to only know that we can take on the things that we must do or to know how to partner to achieve some of the outcomes we need to achieve. Ultimately at the heart and soul of it, we are there to serve the members who belong to the organization. Doing that in a way that is both rewarding and satisfying to them so that we are constantly demonstrating the value of why they belong to the organization, giving them an opportunity to engage in the organization, because it really is their organization and we are really just stewards of what we're trying to do there, is really a very important part of connecting what I need to do in running the organization to the customer who is looking for ultimate satisfaction out of belonging to the organization.

INTERVIEWER:

You mentioned shedding which is pertinent, given that you want so much innovation. Talk a little bit about how you shed, how you pare back, how you decide "We've now innovated some new things. What are we going to keep and what are we going to let go?" Because without that, you get overwhelmed.

SEDORY HOLZER:

Right, and I think there's so many different ways that people try to stress or urge folks to try to continuously cut. We've all been told we're supposed to have our to-do list and our not-to-do list. I think I've always struggled with, "How do you really create this process for letting go of some of these activities?" The concept of shedding doesn't feel so foreign, though. Somehow when I think about the concept of shedding it's a much more clear visual picture of the idea, it's seasonal because a dog needs to shed because it's too hot. Sometimes it comes under situations of stress because maybe the dog is in an environment that they don't like being in and they need to adjust to it. Or it's just a very natural process that says, "We need to absolutely let go of some of this old process in order to let the healthy new growth come in." I think that what I really want to make sure the organization is able to do is to allow that shedding process to happen regularly and naturally, rather than feeling like it's only something we need to do when the budget gets too tight, or it's only something we need to do when the priorities get too large. I think that if we don't do it often enough we'll never have the ten or twenty percent of room to think of fresh new ideas. And so, the culture of shedding is critical, but I think it just has to be considered a natural phenomenon. It allows for new growth.

INTERVIEWER:

Let's look forward because we will be reconvening in six months or so. What are some of the things that you see doing now that will start to produce some extraordinary results?

I think in addition to the part about shedding – which is really something that our organization hasn't done as seamlessly or as effortlessly as I'd like to be able to do – having a greater role and appreciation for and value in individual goal-setting and organizational goal-setting. It's something that I'm really trying to institute within the organization. We do individual goals at performance review time like most folks do, but to me that's a very critical part of a process. I want to make sure that all employees are in tune with the overall organization strategy so that they can set goals that will make a difference, that are really moving the organization forward, and that those goals ideally are tied to either broader organizational goals or team goals so that we see our performance cycle and our performance activities not as housekeeping but as something to share and be proud of. We've talked about making sure that our goals are transparent and that we're sharing that. One of the things I know I really want to commit to doing in the next six months is to actually put that into action. We will have had our goal-setting period. We will have gone through the process of at least defining those, and by six months we should have some interim goals. And so I'd like to be able to know that not only have we achieved those goals but I have staff openly talking about what goals they have achieved and that they're actually sharing in each other's success, either because they worked together on them or simply because they're excited about them enough to share them. To me, that's when I know my organization will start to be aiming toward a higher level of performance, when we're really able to articulate what it is we did and what we accomplished and then share each other's success with it.