

Shaping RIT's Destiny

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STRATEGIC PLAN 1994-2004

In 1994, after over a year of campus wide deliberation, the Board of Trustees approved *Learning and Careers 2004: The Strategic Plan for RIT*. That planning process was a very comprehensive and inclusive process. It was both bottom up and top down. The entire campus was involved. There was a Steering Committee of about thirty people. There were Task Forces composed of approximately 200 faculty, staff, and students who were heavily and creatively engaged all year long. There were campus-wide forums. The Plan was brought to the governance groups and they endorsed it unanimously. The Board approved it unanimously.

We have been working on that Strategic Plan for approximately ten years now. We have accomplished just about everything that is in that plan. I believe it is one of the best Strategic Plans ever developed at a university and I want to thank the campus for that. Many of the faculty, staff, and trustees who are at RIT today participated in that process.

At that time, we clearly had to define who we were. We had to pick ourselves up and gather ourselves together as a campus and go forward.

I think we are much more together now than we were then because the form and spirit of shared governance have been introduced and are carrying us forward. However, the time frame for the 2004 Strategic Plan is coming to an end. We need to prepare now for RIT's next strategic plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2015

This paper will delineate the conceptual structure for this next strategic planning process. The paper will be offered at a "high" level. That is, it will not delve into specific details. It will take the campus a year or so to come up with those details. Faculty, staff, students, and trustees will be engaged and involved as we go forward.

The Strategic Plan 1994 to 2004 started out with a Vision Statement. The Vision Statement said that RIT "will lead higher education in preparing its students for successful careers over their lifetimes". The Plan followed this vision statement with a mission statement, goals, priorities, and action steps.

This time, I would like to present something that is more than a Strategic Plan. It is a Dream. It is a dream that some of you have heard me talk about before.

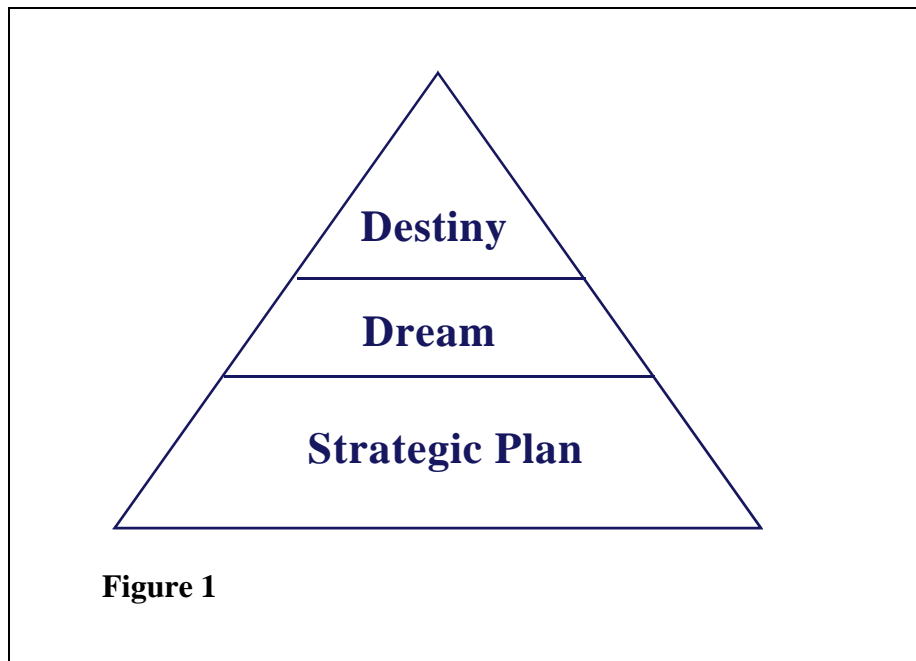
RIT'S DREAM AND DESTINY

Fast-forward 10 or 15 years from now. The hundred best students in the country graduate from high school and they apply to the best universities in the country. One-third apply to the

best traditional universities (e.g., Harvard), one-third to the best research universities (e.g., Stanford), and one-third apply to RIT.

Does this mean that RIT is the same as Harvard and Stanford? No, it does not mean that. It means that RIT is different from them but this difference is what one-third of these top students want. These 100 students could go anywhere they choose, but one-third of them want to come to RIT. I think of this dream as an extension of our next strategic plan. More than that, I think of this dream as a seeding of RIT's destiny.

A destiny is something that is inevitable. It is where we will be in ten, fifteen, twenty years from now. I think we can lay the groundwork right now for a destiny that fulfills the dream. Figure 1 depicts movement from our strategic plan through our dream on the way to our destiny.



FOUNDATIONS FOR DESTINY

RIT's destiny depends on the cultural change and momentum currently underway at RIT. I believe two kinds of foundations are necessary if RIT is to maintain this cultural change and momentum. I call one the "Conceptual Foundation" and the other the "Substantive Foundation". Most of this paper will treat the Conceptual Foundation.

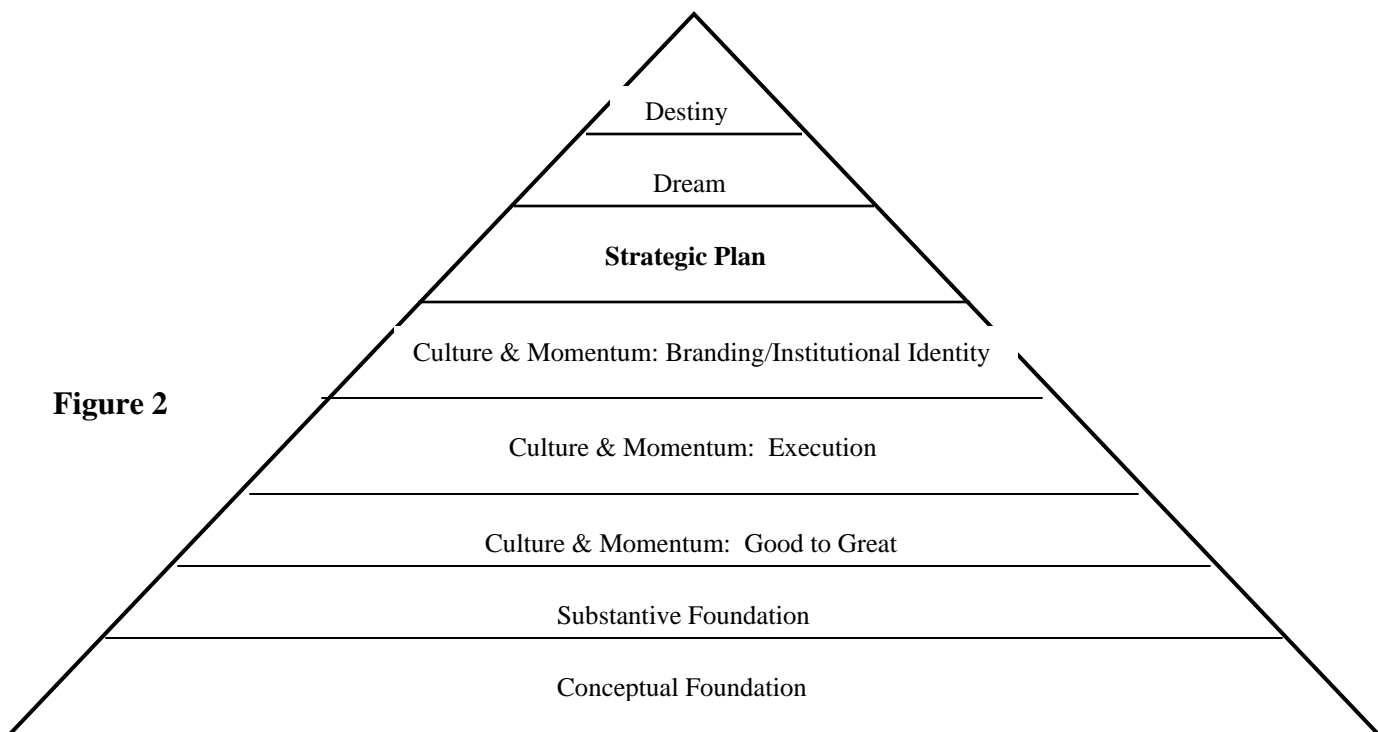
Leadership is the primary driver for the Conceptual Foundation. That means the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Department heads will carry the Conceptual Foundation forward. However, no leader can get anything done without everybody being on the team.

So we will be looking for a partnership, across the campus, of the trustees, administrative leadership, faculty, staff and students. Alumni, corporations, and friends of RIT will become involved when that is appropriate. However, it primarily will be administration, faculty, staff and students working together that construct the Conceptual Foundation.

Faculty are the primary driver for the Substantive Foundation. The faculty establish the curricula, teach and counsel students, and engage in research and scholarly activity. While the university is “for” the students, it is “by” the faculty. As we go forward on this journey, the faculty must be insightful, inspirational, imaginative, bold, and creative. The faculty, therefore, must be in partnership with the Conceptual Foundation in order to develop the Substantive Foundation. While these two connected foundations are being established, the staff will continue to provide the glue for the university and the trustees will continue to exercise their oversight and fiduciary responsibility.

I see three themes underlying the Conceptual Foundation. They are: 1) Good to Great, 2) Execution, and 3) Branding/Institutional Identity. These themes are taken from three recent books.*

Figure 2 expands on Figure 1. It depicts how the Conceptual Foundation is the first in a series of building blocks that lead to RIT’s destiny.



* Collins, J., *Good to Great*, Harper Business, 2001; Collins is a former faculty member at Stanford University Graduate School of Business, author, researcher, and consultant. Bossidy, L. and Charan, R., *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, Crown Business, 2002; Bossidy is Chairman and former CEO of Honeywell International, former Chairman and CEO of Allied Signal, and former vice chairman of General Electric; Charan is a former faculty member at Harvard Business School and Kellogg School of Northwestern University, former editor at *Fortune* magazine, author, and consultant. Sevier, R., *Building a Brand that Matters: Helping Colleges and Universities Capitalize on the Four Essential Elements of a Block-Buster Brand*, Strategy Publishing, 2002; Sevier is Senior Vice President of Stamats, a large higher education research and consulting firm.

CULTURE AND MOMENTUM: GOOD TO GREAT

RIT is “good.” In fact, we may be “very good.” I do not believe we are “great.”

The enemy of great is good. Why? If you are good, it is easy to get complacent and rest on your laurels. The minute you do this you lose your momentum and forgo the opportunity to be great.

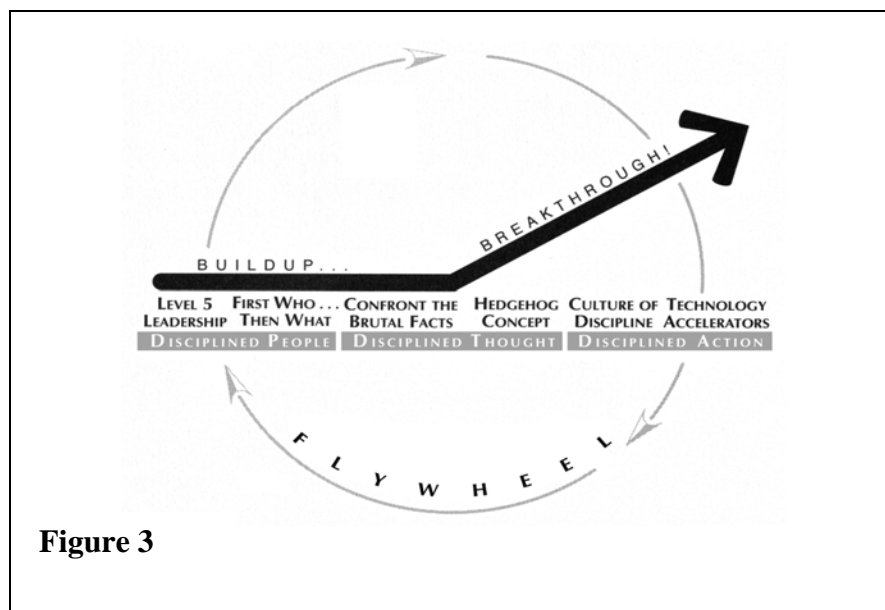
So we have to be careful. We are good now. We have to be careful that we are not so good that we never will become great. When we become great, we will have an internationally positive institutional identity. We do not form an institutional identity to become great. We become great and then an institutional identity can follow. We shall return to this idea later on in the paper.

Flywheel

How do we become great? The gestalt for great is the flywheel framework. It has several components. First, there is a transformation process, which involves a “buildup” and then a “breakthrough.” Second, there are the three discipline-based stages. These stages are (1) disciplined people, (2) disciplined thought, and (3) disciplined action.

“Disciplined people” refers to the concepts of “Level 5 Hierarchy” and “First Who ... then What.” “Disciplined thought” refers to the notions of “Confront the Brutal Facts” and the “Hedgehog Concept.” “Disciplined Action” refers to the “Culture of Discipline” and “Technology Accelerators.”

Figure 3 shows the flywheel framework. The following discussion describes it. Note that RIT’s buildup requires disciplined people and disciplined thought. RIT’s breakthrough requires disciplined thought and disciplined action.

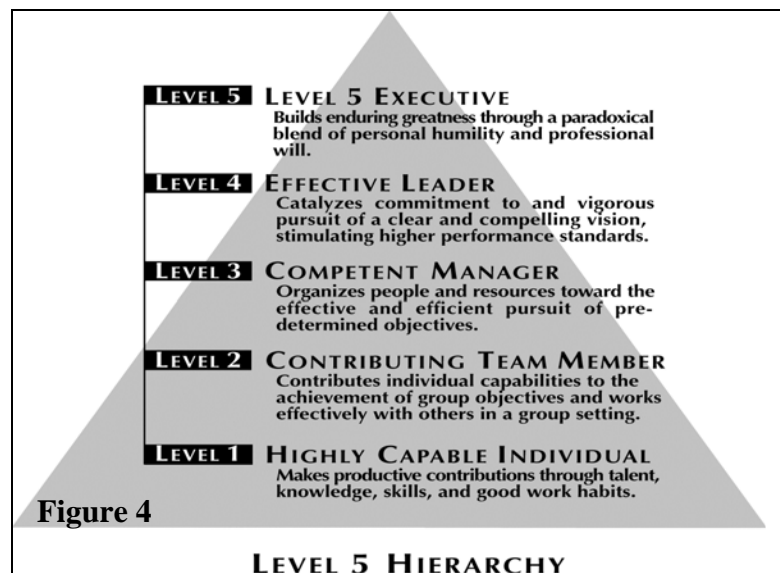


A lot of what we are talking about involves good practice, things that we are doing already. Some of the discussion puts structure, substance, and definition to what we are doing or should be doing. I am proposing that our subsequent actions and behavior be driven by this orientation.

I am talking about culture change, in terms of what we are doing at RIT and what we will be doing going forward. The approach is not brand new. It is not accelerating from zero to 90 miles per hour. We are already at thirty or forty miles per hour. However, we are never going to get to 90 miles per hour unless we change our mind-set. We are not proposing a formula guaranteed for success. We are advocating a useful framework.

Level 5 Hierarchy

Figure 4 summarizes this discussion. Level 1 reflects highly capable individuals doing good work. Level 2 denotes people working in teams. Level 3 describes competent managers. Level 4 portrays effective leaders. Level 5 leaders build enduring greatness in their organizations.



I try to be Level 5. I expect all the vice presidents, deans, and department heads to try to achieve this level.

Two paradoxical attributes constitute Level 5 leadership. One is “personal humility” and the other is “professional will.” Professional will means we work relentlessly to achieve our goal. We squeeze, push, get knocked down and get up, and do not stop breathing until the goal is reached. Personal humility can be illustrated by the metaphor of the “window and the mirror.” When something good happens, the Level 5 leader looks out the window to find people to whom credit is given. When something bad occurs, the Level 5 leader looks into the mirror and takes responsibility.

First Who ... Then What

RIT needs to hire the best people at all levels. They have to be smart, talented, creative, of the highest integrity, and possessive of a strong work ethic. They have to know how to communicate, work in groups, and adopt a university perspective. These attributes are more important than the particular skills or experiences that qualify them for employment in the first place.

As this implies, we have to get the right people “on the bus” and “in the right seats”. We may have to get certain people off the bus. Formal and regular – at least annual – evaluation of faculty and staff is essential. RIT’s post-tenure review program (“Faculty Evaluation and Development” or “FEAD”) is an essential part of this process, as are the staff evaluation and development programs.

“People” are not our most important resource. Rather, the “right people” are our most important resource.

Confront the Brutal Facts

Accepting and “confronting the brutal facts,” while at the same time “unwaveringly pursuing the endgame,” can lead to “psychological duality.” This duality has been termed the “Stockdale Paradox.”

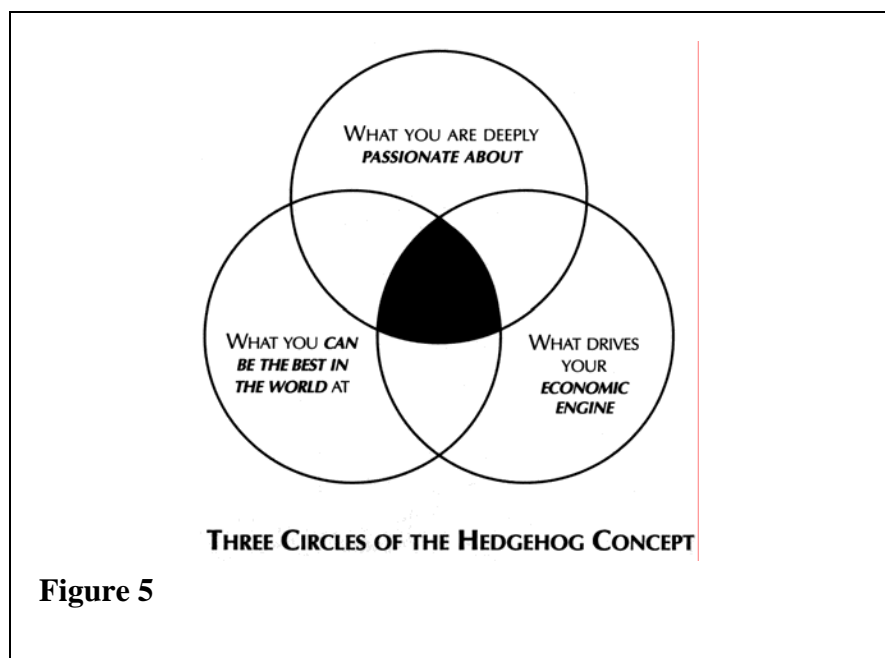
Colonel Stockdale was the highest ranking American captured and imprisoned during the Vietnam War. He was a prisoner for many years. He was tortured, injured, and disabled. He said that the thing that enabled him to persevere was the fact that he faced the brutal facts. Some people around him said, “We will be home in December; we will be home for Easter; we will be home in a year.” He said to himself, “When I look at things, I don’t know when we will be home. I don’t think that we will be home in six months or nine months or twenty-four months. But, I do know I am going to get home.” So, he faced the brutal facts but he had an unwavering pursuit of the endgame. For him, the endgame is, “I am going to get home. No matter what they do to me. No matter how much they torture me or try to brainwash me, I am going to get home.”

RIT’s culture must be one that confronts the brutal facts. It must face what it can be and what it cannot be. RIT must then act on these facts.

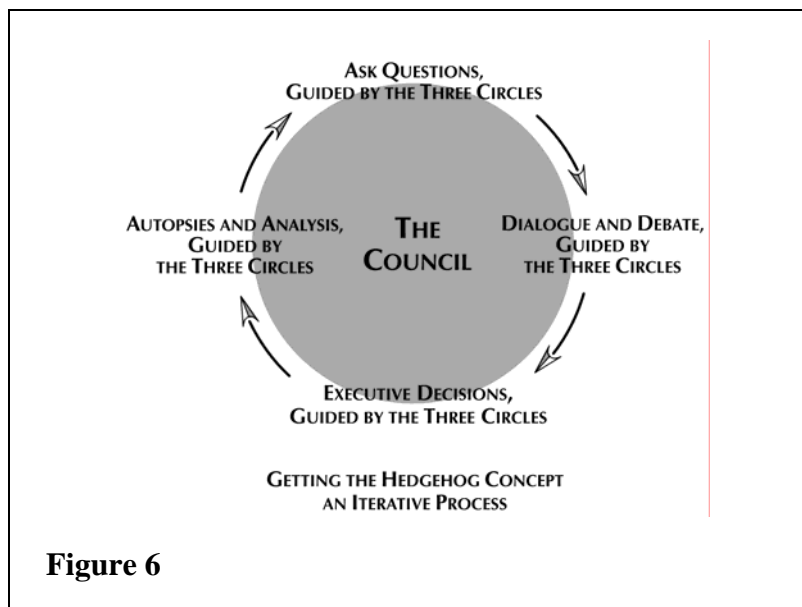
Hedgehog Concept

RIT is a complex world. The hedgehog concept attempts to simplify this complex world into a single organizing idea, a basic principle or concept that unifies and guides everything and brings us together.

Figure 5 describes the construction of the hedgehog concept. First, we find out what we can be the best at (circle on the left in Figure 5). Second, we find out what we can be deeply passionate about (top circle). Third, we find out what drives our economic engine (circle on the right). Our attention should be focused on the intersection of the three circles (i.e., the black area). That intersection should be our single unifying purpose and our hedgehog concept going forward.



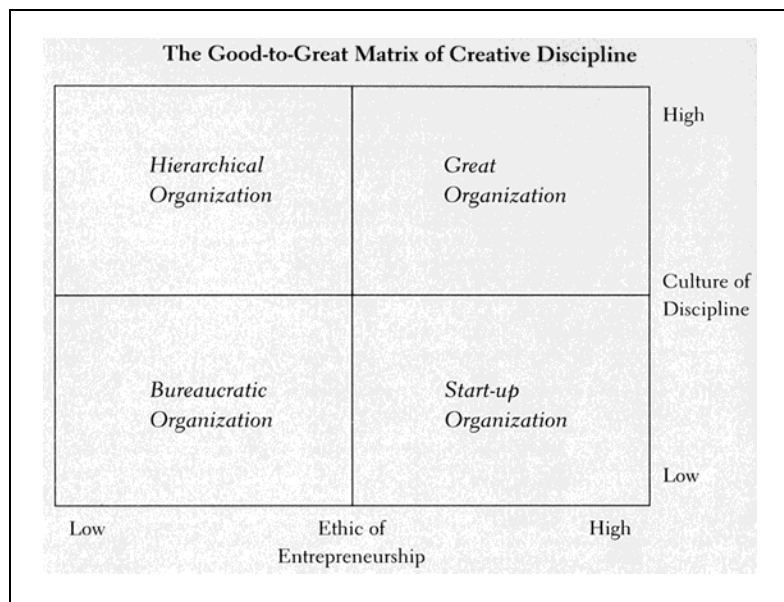
How do we develop the hedgehog concept? The answer is through shared governance. Refer to Figure 6. At the top, you ask questions. You are guided by the three circles we talked about in Figure 5. You move to the right (clockwise), engaging in dialogue and debate. Here we are guided by what we really are passionate about, by what we are good at, and by what really is driving us economically. Then we make some decisions (bottom of Figure 6). Finally, we perform an autopsy. That means, we analyze and evaluate. We hold ourselves accountable. We said we would do something to get certain results. Did we get them? Based on this analysis, we ask more questions (top of Figure 6 again). This iterative process implements the hedgehog concept.



Culture of Discipline

We have to understand what RIT can be the best in the world at and what it cannot be best at. We must recognize that what RIT “wants” may not be what it “can”. This is where the brutal facts come in.

An ethic of entrepreneurship is of significant importance as we seek to establish a culture of discipline. Figure 7 portrays this relationship.



Entrepreneurship is measured on the horizontal axis and the culture of discipline on the vertical axis. RIT wants to be in the top box on the right where there is a high level of entrepreneurship and a high level of discipline.

Do you think RIT is in that box now? If so, where in that box? If not, what box are we in?

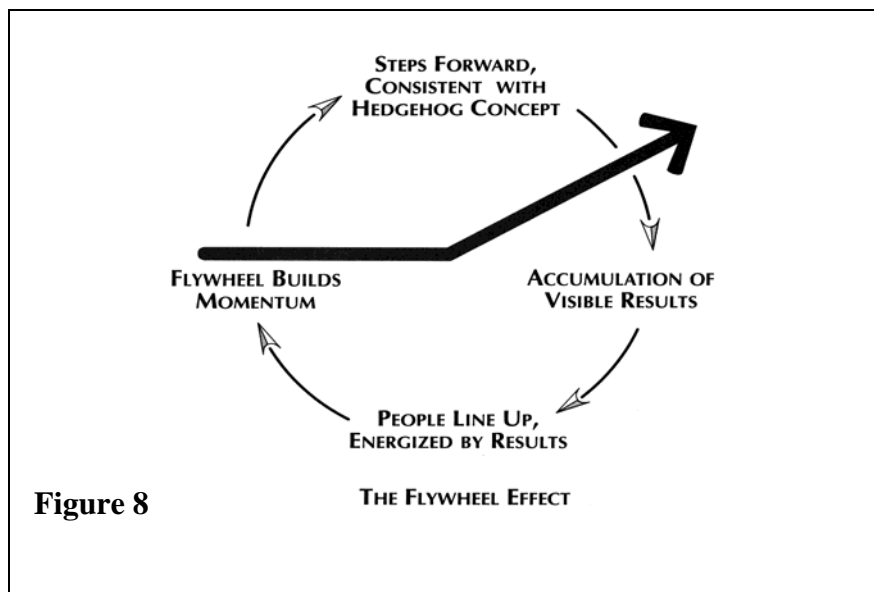
If we look at RIT as a system, leaders should seek to hire people who are self-disciplined, so that the leaders can manage that system and not the people. If the right people are hired, leaders would not want to micromanage. With the right people in place, leaders can give their direct reports enough flexibility and discretion so they can work within the right (and evolving) system.

Technology Accelerators

Technology is an accelerator of momentum, not the creator of momentum. RIT is a technological institution and there is a lot of technology in everything that we do. We have to look at all technologies available to us and determine which ones fit our hedgehog concept. Internet 2 and the technology associated with imaging, microelectronics, and bioinformatics, for example, do fit. We should be the best at these technologies and utilize them to accelerate the university's momentum. If a particular technology does not fit our hedgehog concept but we can use it to complement something we are doing, let us be good at it. Let us not try to be the best at that because there is not going to be much of a payoff in terms of our single purpose hedgehog concept. If a particular technology is "nice" and everybody is doing it but we don't need it because it doesn't fit into our hedgehog concept, let us be disciplined and ignore it.

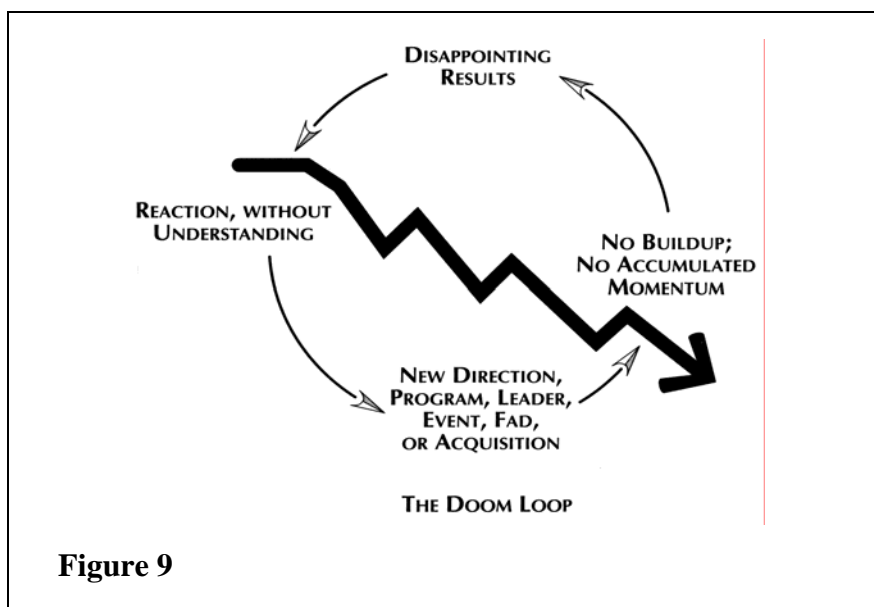
Momentum and the Flywheel Effect

Figure 8 shows how momentum is generated through the effect of the flywheel. Start at the top in Figure 8 and take some steps forward. These steps are consistent with the principles that we have been talking about. As we move clockwise, we are going to accumulate some visible results. Hopefully they will be good results. People will be energized by those results and they will line-up (bottom of Figure 8). I hope that is what has been happening over the last ten years at RIT. We start to build momentum, completing the circle. We then take some more steps. The momentum is building up. We move faster and faster in iterative circles around the flywheel.



Doom Loop

As we make decisions and take actions, we want to avoid the “doom loop.” Figure 9 illustrates this disaster. Starting at the top of the circle and moving counter clockwise, we experience disappointing results and react without understanding. We move in a new direction without disciplined thought, we change people, or maybe jump on some fad (bottom of Figure 9). Since we have had no build up and no accumulated momentum (right side of Figure 9), we return to the top with disappointing results again. Continuing this pattern, we generate negative momentum. Pretty soon we are in a charge to the floor. We do not want to do that at RIT. I do not think we are in danger of doing that; the doom loop is the counter example of what we want to do.



Built to Last

Jim Collins, wrote another book. This book actually preceded the book on which the present discussion is based. These books could be viewed as being out of sequence. His first book was titled *Built to Last*. In this book, he asks how are the most successful organizations structured? The ones that have endured year after year and have been successful year after year, what are their characteristics? His answer is that they concentrate on clock building and not time telling. We do not want to buy a clock from somebody and then be the expert in telling what time it says. We want to continually build a better clock and let other people tell time.

As RIT builds a great and enduring organization, its culture must incorporate the genius of “AND”. The AND culture is a “can do” and not a stultifying culture. It is a culture that does not say, “if we do this, we *cannot* do that.” Rather, it says “we can do both.”

For example, RIT can have purpose AND be financially viable, can achieve continuity AND generate change, and can exercise freedom AND be responsible. Figure 9A gives further examples of the “Genius of ‘AND’”.

Purpose	AND	Financially viable
Continuity	AND	Change
Freedom	AND	Responsibility
Personal Humility	AND	Professional Will (“Level 5 Executive”)
Get the right people on the bus	AND	The wrong people off the bus
Confront the brutal facts of your current reality	AND	Retain unwavering faith that you will prevail in the end (“Stockdale Paradox”)
Deep understanding	AND	Incredible simplicity
Shun technology fads	AND	Pioneer the application of technology
Evolutionary, incremental progress	AND	Revolutionary, dramatic results

Figure 9A Genius of AND (from Collins, J. and Porras, J., *Build to Last*, Harper-Calkins, 1997)

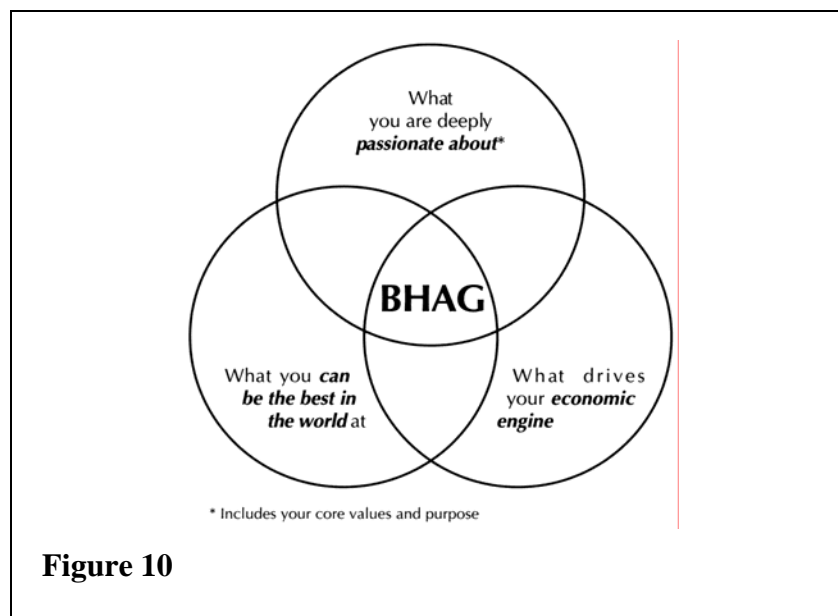
As we talk about building a great organization that lasts, we are talking about the RIT legacy that each of us some day will leave behind. That legacy will reflect a core ideology – i.e., a set of values and purpose. At RIT, this ideology includes the values of openness, excellence, and relevance. The core ideology will guide decisions and inspire us as we go forward. We have to preserve the core ideology as the anchor point while we stimulate change, improvement, innovation and renewal in everything that we do.

BHAG

A BHAG (“beehag”) is a “**B**ig, **H**airy, **A**udacious **G**oal.” It is huge. It is daunting. It is a way to stimulate progress while preserving that core that we just talked about. It is something clear and compelling; people get it right away. We will be talking about corporate identity later on. BHAG is part of it. It is a unifying focal point of effort. It galvanizes people and creates team spirit as people rush toward the finish line.

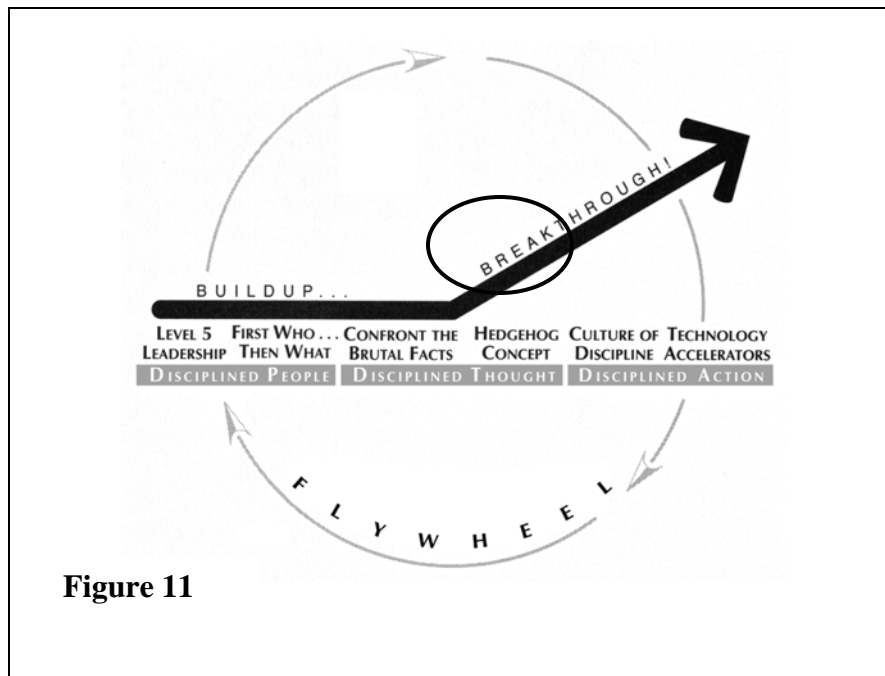
We never get to that finish line. It is always moving. It is the rush that is important. It is the rush that stimulates us and then if we just take a breath, we see how far we have come and how far we have outdistanced our competitors. And, that is what we are about.

Figure 10 is a replication of Figure 5, except that the intersection of those three circles is now labeled BHAG. These are the things that we can be passionate about, the things that we can be best at, and the things that drive our economic engine. Where they all intersect, is BHAG.



RIT and the Flywheel

Where is RIT on the flywheel? In Figure 11, I have circled a segment about one-quarter or one-third of the way up on the positive slope of the breakthrough part of the arrow. I believe RIT has passed the build-up stage. We are starting the breakthrough and that is why we are good. But, we have to go further to be great.



Why do I say we have broken through? One piece of evidence is the concluding paragraph in the report of the Middle States Accreditation team when it submitted its report in August 1, 2002:

“All in all, RIT appears to be an institution concerned about students, their learning and their careers. It is a school very dedicated to strategic planning. It is able to identify challenges and find strategies to attack them. The institution is entrepreneurial and nimble and moving to new programs and opportunities. The periodic report and the supporting materials indicate a high quality educational institution.”

We are on our way. We are in the breakthrough stage but we have to go further.

CULTURE AND MOMENTUM: EXECUTION

If I had a criticism of the *Good to Great* book, it has to do with follow-through and implementation. The author could have been stronger in his analyses of how an organization actually makes things happen. The discussion in this section will attempt to fill this gap. It is based on the book, *Execution*, that I referred to earlier. A lot of the literature in the fields of business, economics, and behavioral science is concerned with strategic management, organizational behavior and structure, and how to motivate people (theory X, theory Y, theory Z). There is no systematic body of theory and practice around the notion of execution or implementation.

It can be argued that execution is a discipline and a system . I believe we have to build execution (i.e., follow-up, implementation, getting things done) into RIT strategy, goals, culture and leadership.

We do not want a culture in which people take a great idea and talk about it forever, and then feel good about it because they had a great conversation today, and yesterday, and five years ago – and then nothing ever happens. They never took any action. Rather, we have to have a culture in which there is a meaningful discussion over a reasonable period of time, followed by action. As we have this discussion, we must be careful that we do not promise things that we cannot deliver. We cannot have a gap between what we promise and what we actually achieve. We have to be sure that there is not a gap between what we would like to do and what we have the ability to do.

We have to go from ideas to concrete action steps. We have to talk about the “how’s” and the “what’s”. We have to expose reality (the “brutal facts”) and we have to act on it. We need the right people, the right details, the right timing.

Three Building Blocks

There are three building blocks for execution. They are leadership, culture, and people. Successful *leaders* know their people and live the university. They insist on realism, set clear goals and priorities, and follow through.

Successful leaders reward the doers. This means the non-doers do not get rewarded. They get advised, counseled, mentored, or coached, and if they still do not produce they get separated from the organization. Leaders need to find out who should be on the bus and who should not be on the bus. Leaders need to face those facts and be disciplined in their actions.

Successful leaders have emotional fortitude. They have to know how to get up when they have been knocked down. They have to know how to ask for criticism and not be defensive when they get it. They have to listen and modify their behavior based on what they hear and learn. They have to keep moving forward no matter what the obstacles are.

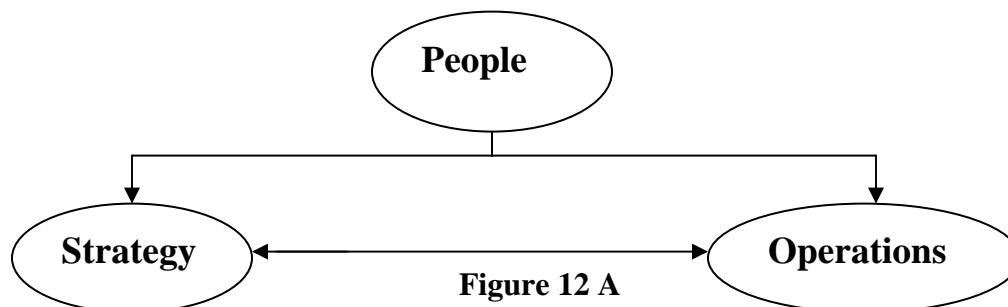
The second building block for effective execution is *culture*. Culture reflects our shared values, beliefs and norms of behavior. We need to link our culture to results and getting things done. We have to motivate and encourage the kind of behavior that will yield the kind of results that we want. This means we need to state clearly those desired results and discuss how to get those results. We must reward people for producing the results.

The third building block is *people*. We have continually stressed this point through the paper. We have to have the right people in the right place. We have to have people who follow through and get things done.

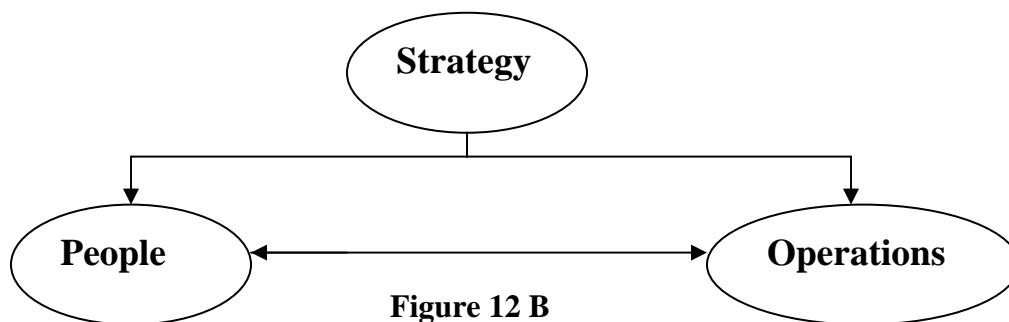
Thus, the foundation for execution is leaders with the right behavior, a culture that rewards execution, and a consistent system for finding the right people and putting them in the right jobs at the right times.

Three Core Processes

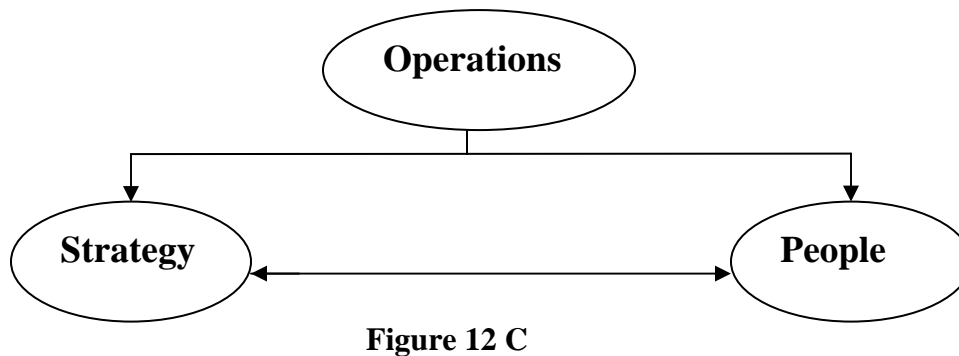
Three core processes lie at the heart of execution. They are people (again), strategy, and operations. The *people* process is the most important. People develop the strategic plan and carry out the actions. The people process links strategy and operations (Figure 12A).



The *strategy* process links people and operations (Figure 12B). For example, our strategy might be to successfully recruit students, parents, employers, alumni, donors, and partners and, at the same time, be financially viable. What people do we need to execute that strategy and how do they operationalize it?



The *operations* process links strategy and people (Figure 12C) to results. The strategy process defines where RIT wants to go. The people process defines who is going to get us there. The operations process defines the path that those people are going to follow.



These three processes are tightly linked with one another. They are not separate and independent. Leadership is deeply engaged in all three processes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RIT'S DESTINY

The concepts presented in the “Good to Great” and “Execution” discussions need to become part of the culture and mind-set of RIT as it goes forward. The thinking, expectations, behaviors, and actions of our administration, faculty, and staff have to consistently and steadfastly represent these concepts.

Some of these concepts already are in place, in whole or in part, at RIT. However, the culture transformation still has a long way to go. The destiny that I, and I believe most if not all of us, want will not be achieved by doing what we have been doing the way we have been doing it. Because we work hard, RIT has achieved good things, even very good things.

However, to achieve greatness, our next Strategic Plan must support a dream that can lead to a desired destiny. The concepts discussed so far can take what would otherwise be fashioned as a very good Strategic Plan to a realized dream that establishes our destiny.

CULTURE AND MOMENTUM: BRAND/INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

What is the essence of an RIT which is great? What is our institutional identity? How do constituencies outside of RIT see us? How does the world see us? How do we see ourselves?

Is what these different groups see accurate? Is it complete? Is it what we want them to see?

The answers to these questions are what “branding,” or its synonym “institutional identity,” is all about.

What Is Brand/Institutional Identity (B/II)?

B/II for RIT is not a Coca Cola logo. It is not a Pepto-Bismol jingle.

B/II for RIT is a **promise**. What kind of a promise? A promise that is valued. Valued by whom? Valued by our most important constituents, once we have identified them.

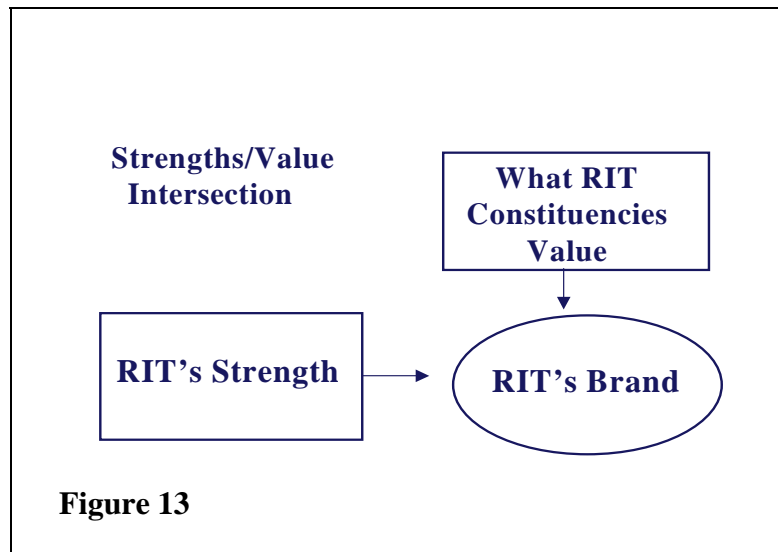
Our constituents include potential and actual RIT students. Not every student is a potential RIT student. If someone wants to major in Biblical studies, he or she is not a potential student for us. Students that are potential and actual students want what we have to offer.

Parents of these students, our alumni, employers, donors, supporters of the university, and faculty and staff are also RIT constituents. We have to make a promise that our constituents value. It is a promise that differentiates RIT from its competitors in ways that matter to our constituents. It is a promise that creates equity (i.e., net benefit) over other branded or non-branded universities. It is a promise that gives RIT a competitive edge in the short run. In

the long run, it is a promise that provides substantial continuity and viability. It is a promise that cannot be copied (and kept) by anyone else. It is a promise to capture the heart of RIT as it meets the needs of our constituencies. It is a promise that instills pride, loyalty and creativity in everyone effected by RIT and engaged with RIT.

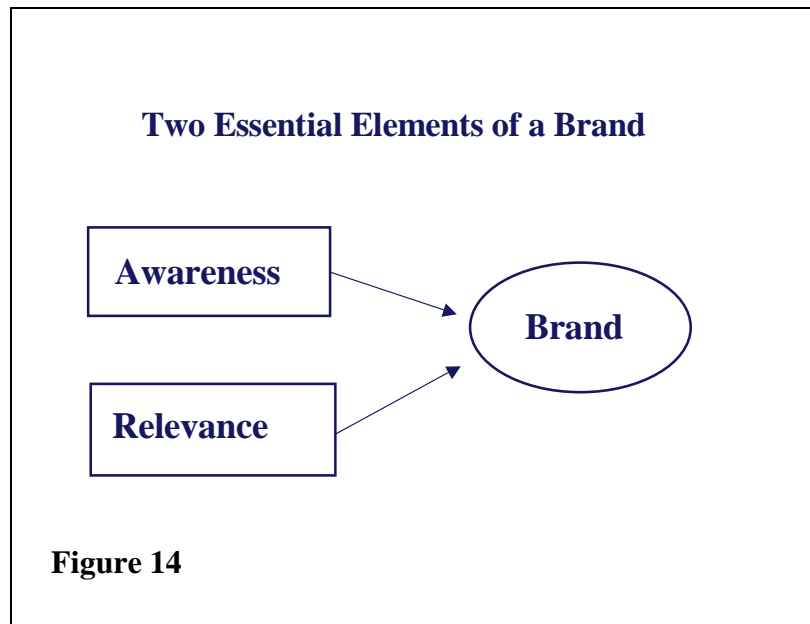
Building B/II

How do we build B/II? We look at RIT strengths and at what RIT constituencies value. Where these attributes intersect is where we build our B/II. The B/II is going to be our promise. We are going to promise to meet what our constituents value because we are strong enough to be able to deliver it. Our logo will describe our promise. But the logo is not our B/II. Our B/II is who we are. It is our substance and our essence. Figure 13 depicts this construct.



Essential Elements of B/II

There are two essential elements of a brand – relevance and awareness. Relevance refers to what our constituents value and, therefore, what we have to produce and deliver. Once we have achieved relevance, we have to make our constituents aware of it. Figure 14 shows this intersection.



Trust

Trust is an important component of B/II. Figure 15 displays the trust equation:

Trust $T = \frac{C + R + I}{S}$

T = Trust **C = Credibility**
R = Reliability **I = Intimacy**
S = Self-orientation

Figure 15

If the numerator increases, trust increases. The numerator will increase if our credibility increases. We say we are going to do something and we do it. We have credibility. The numerator goes up if reliability goes up. We did it this year, we did it last year, and we did it five years ago. We are reliable. You can count on us year after year. The numerator

increases if intimacy increases. We talk to people. We touch people. We keep in contact in every way that we can. We are intimate.

Trust decreases if the denominator in the trust equation increases. This means we have to stay away from self-orientation, i.e., doing things that are viewed to be in our own self-interest, and not in the interest of our constituencies.

Positioning

How do we position ourselves relative to competitive universities? We can begin to answer this question by noting that “position” relates to ownership and the mind. RIT needs to *own a position in the minds of our constituents*. When people say RIT, the lights should go on. For example, when people say “Harvard” a certain vision appears in the person’s mind. When MIT or Stanford or Michigan is cited, another (different) vision or image appears. What we want is the right view, a positive and accurate view, for RIT in the heads of our constituents. We don’t want people to say RIT, “what”? Is it a bar of soap? Or RIT, “where”? Is it in Minnesota? We know we own a position in more minds in the Northeast than we do on the West Coast. We own a mind position in some places internationally. One manifestation of the dream for RIT is that we will have as strong a position in the minds of our constituents as MIT or Stanford have locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. We shall return to this theme later.

How do we position ourselves in someone’s head? You can do it with *quality*, overall and in specific disciplines. We can do it with *value* – “it costs a lot but it’s worth it.” We can position ourselves based on certain *features* – e.g., the new fieldhouse, microfabrication facilities, Heidelberg Sunday Web Press. We can draw on special *relationships* – e.g., we are a private university, a co-op university. Students who want a co-op experience would think of RIT and our relationship to co-op. We can position ourselves based on *aspirations* – the CEO of KODAK and the Associated Press are RIT alumni, as is the U.S. Public Printer and nine Pulitzer Prize winners – “I want to be like them.” We can position ourselves through *problem-solving* – I need a job/career and RIT provides the entrée. Finally, positioning can be *rivalry-based* – RIT is the university that competes each year with Middlebury for the NCAA Division III hockey championship.

Characteristics of Good B/II’s

Quality, value and the other attributes just noted are strategies that can be pursued – probably in some combination or as sub-B/II’s – to position RIT in the minds of its constituents. However, whatever B/II strategy(s) we select must possess certain characteristics.

Specifically, a good B/II delivers a *clear message*. It communicates *quality*. It projects *credibility*. It strikes an *emotional cord* that reaches people. It *motivates* constituents to action – “I saw this message and I have this image, so I am going to apply; I am going to submit an application; I am going to attend; I have been given an offer and I am going to go.”

Finally, a good B/II creates strong “user” *loyalty*. For example, we have legacy students at RIT. In the fall, I meet with a group that gets bigger each year. These are students whose parents or grandparents (or both) or great grandparents graduated from RIT. Loyalty means, aside from family relationships, that “I graduated from RIT and I recommend it to all my friends or I recommend it to all my friends’ kids because it was great for me; it made me what I am today.”

Communicating RIT’s B/II Promise

How do we communicate our promise to our constituents? We have to communicate a promise that is *noticed*, is *relevant*, and is *memorable*.

We have to observe certain mechanics. For example, where are our constituents geographically? Do we communicate differently if they are on the West Coast or in Asia? We have to prioritize and define our target constituencies. For example, if someone is interested in engineering, do we communicate differently than if they are interested in public policy or the physician’s assistant program? We have to understand that we need to communicate an overall view of the university but that sub-messages might have to be different depending on which constituents – geographically and in terms of academic interest – we are trying to reach. In other words, can we have an “umbrella” B/II with compatible, coordinated, and synergistic “sub” B/II’s?

We need to find ways to personalize our communication. We have to carefully choose the media mix.

The context for RIT’s communication strategy can usefully draw from business. We need to meld the “3 P’s” – Product (what academic programs we offer), Price (tuition), and Place (Rochester) – and the 3 C’s – Customer (student), Cost (tuition), and Convenience (recruiting, registration, and student services). Above all, we have to pay strict attention to *quality* and *relevance* in everything we communicate and do.

What Promise Should RIT Make?

What promise should RIT make? The answer is “just one thing.” The following dialogue from *City Slickers* illustrates the answer.

Curly (Jack Palance): Do you know what the secret of life is?

Mitch (Billy Crystal): No, what is the secret of life?

Curly: This! (Holds up index finger)

Mitch: Your finger?

Curly: (Looks exasperated at Mitch) One thing, just one thing. You stick to that and everything else don’t mean _____.

Mitch: That’s great, but what’s the one thing?

Curly: That’s what you’ve got to find out.

That is where we are now. That is what RIT has to find out.

I propose that RIT's one thing derives from the whole, not from any one or two individual attributes. *All* of RIT's essential attributes *in combination* define its oneness, its uniqueness, and its ability to differentiate.

What are these attributes? I believe they are:

- Career Focus
- Primacy of teaching
- Co-op
- Technology base
- Diversity
- Quality students, faculty, staff, programs, curricula, facilities
- Student Success
- Experiential learning
- Applied Research
- Partnerships
- Service to society
- Student centeredness
- Relevance
- Scholarship
- *First in Class*
- Sense of campus community

All of the above attributes, taken in combination, provide a synergy that distinguishes RIT from other universities.

On any one of these attributes, or on any pair of attributes, there may be universities that would score higher than RIT. However, I believe that if we were to weight these attributes according to importance to RIT's mission, and if we were to assign points to them and compare the RIT points total with other university points totals, right now RIT might have the highest total, particularly since many universities will not possess some of these attributes to begin with. As RIT pursues its destiny, we will at some stage clearly have the highest point total. B/II assures that RIT's constituencies know this. Our constituencies will be "aware" of RIT's "relevance" to their needs. The perception and mind-set of our constituencies coincide with our "dream."

When this occurs, RIT will have moved from "good to great". The challenge for us now is to figure out how to do it. Our next Strategic Plan/Dream/Destiny will meet this challenge.

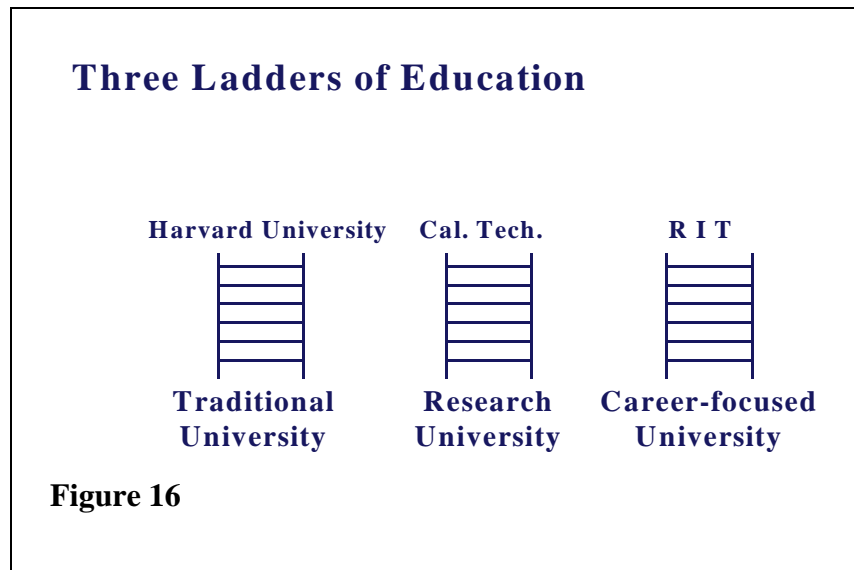
THE DREAM

I have been sharing the "dream" for RIT for most of this year with RIT trustees, faculty, administration, staff, community friends, and alumni in coast-to-coast meetings. It has been refined and simplified along the way. The most recent rendition is the result of an animated, stimulating, and productive discussion with the President's Roundtable, a group of 19 business and community leaders who meet with me for a full day once a year. I introduced this dream at the beginning of the paper and I am repeating it now.

Imagine that we take a snapshot today of the nation's 100 best students graduating from high school. Perhaps one-half of them apply to the best traditional universities (such as Harvard) and one-half to the best research universities (such as California Institute of Technology). Next imagine a time – 10 or 15 years from now – when the 100 best students in the country graduate from high school. This time one-third of them apply to the best traditional universities (such as Harvard), one-third apply to the best research universities (e.g.,

California Institute of Technology), and one-third apply to the best – let us say for now – career-focused universities, and that RIT is at the top of that list. Figure 16 depicts this scenario.

These students apply to RIT because RIT is different from the Harvards and the Cal. Tech.'s, and these students prefer what RIT represents. RIT has been building the third ladder for 175 years. We have to finish building it in our next Strategic Plan.



The Vision Statement in the current RIT Strategic Plan states that RIT “will lead higher education in preparing its students for successful careers over their lifetime.” The President’s Roundtable has suggested that the statement be modified to say RIT “will lead higher education in preparing its students for ‘outstanding’ (instead of ‘successful’) careers” (delete “over their lifetimes”). Thus the “career-focus” ladder appears to be a logical place to begin our discussion of the next RIT Strategic Plan/Dream/Destiny (SP/D/D).

SUMMARY

In this paper, I have attempted to provide the Conceptual Foundation for the next RIT Strategic Plan. I argue that this Plan can be more than what we developed in 1994. It can also be a Dream which sets in motion a journey to RIT’s Destiny. Culture change and momentum, already well underway, will propel our SP/D/D. The “good to great,” “execution,” “B/II,” and “career-focus ladder” concepts will guide this culture change and momentum.

This may be a tougher job than when we developed the Strategic Plan in 1994. In 1994, our task was to recover, maintain, and move ahead incrementally. We wanted to maintain

“good” and strive towards “very good”. We have succeeded in that mission. Now we are talking about greatness, one of a kind, top echelon in everything we do. The challenge is large. The journey long. The road bumpy. I think we can do it. It will be fun. Everyone has to work together for it to happen.

PROCESS

We shall utilize the following process to develop our SP/D/D. There will be a small Steering Committee composed of several vice presidents, deans, and representatives of the governance groups. I will chair the Steering Committee. There will be an “expeditor,” working on a half-time basis, to keep everything and everyone on track, to make sure each group follows through on assignments, and to assure that milestones and timelines are met.

We will appoint several task forces to deal with critical elements of the SP/D/D. The Steering Committee will establish these task forces and their membership. Task forces, for example, could be organized around RIT’s vision and dream, its strengths, its passion, its economic drivers, its execution. Task forces could also focus on various elements of B/II, the external environment, and our constituents.

There will be an SP/D/D trustee committee chaired by trustee Larry Matteson. Each governance group (faculty, staff, and students) will form their own committee with overlapping membership on the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will develop a charge for the SP/D/D process and for each task force. The Steering Committee will establish guidelines for task forces and timelines for the overall process.

We will employ an outside consultant with national stature and experience to advise us. There will be numerous campus forums. The governance groups and President’s Roundtable will have the opportunity to review, comment on, and shape draft reports emanating from the Steering Committee and task forces.

I would like to have the endorsements of the Administrative Council, Academic Council, Student Government, Academic Senate, Staff Council, the Commission for Promoting Pluralism, and President’s Roundtable by June 2004 and Board of Trustee approval by the July 2004 Board meeting. This is an ambitious schedule. Many of you will relate to the process – it mirrors what we did in 1993, leading to the 1994-2004 Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION

We have set forth a most ambitious endeavor. I hope you are as enthusiastic and excited about it as I am. This is an opportunity, for all of us working together, to sow the seeds for a far-reaching and path-breaking destiny for RIT.