



## *21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenge*

By Jim White

The 21st century will challenge the way organizations do business.

They will need to be innovative, adaptable, and able to shift and transform themselves.

For an organization to succeed, every employee will need to exhibit leadership, make decisions and act on opportunities. But with all this change, what are the keys that help to keep a person and an organization on track?

The foundation of the 21st century organization will be shared organizational vision, values and mission.

One of the key characteristics of high-performance organizations and teams is that they have a clear picture of what they are trying to create together they are excited and clear about their basic purpose and they share a common set of values. The values, mission and vision form the core of their identity. These elements constitute the glue that keeps people, teams and organizations responsive and innovative.

Organizations go through cycles as part of their growth and development.

Most organizations start out with a clear purpose and a lot of energy. Organizations in this early stage are having fun and growing. The growth sometimes outpaces the organization's ability to respond to the growing pains. Eventually, employees will feel that the magic is gone out of the work and now it's "just" work. Sometimes a shift in the environment, maturing of a program or a crisis pressures the organization or group to act differently. It needs to change. You need to change.

An opportunity to begin a new phase begins with the realization that the initial energy can be maintained providing we put forth a structure and this begins with the visioning process.

Visioning allows the organization to take a hard look at itself. What does it do, who are we serving, what basic assumption it operates from and what internal processes reinforce its values. Visioning creates the values, the vision and defines its mission and engages the organization in seeing new possibilities from bottom to top and from top to bottom.

The most vital things an organization can do are visioning, planning, goal-setting, and measuring and then hold people accountable with great tenacity. These words are few and simple but are vital to organizational performance.

Attractive visions of the future have great power. I refer to the organization that is organized around a deep sense of values, mission and vision; the Performance-Driven Organization. This kind of organization has tapped the energy that results from its clarity of direction and focus. The Performance Driven Organization has a greater capacity to weather changes in the community and special interest demand because of the clarity of its core purpose. An organization driven by its essence knows its purpose and why it is important. Organizations that are tied to their essence are more powerful, command more commitment from team members and can get more done in a changing environment.

In order to move the Performance-Driven Organization forward we must have alignment between the organizational values, mission and vision and those of each individual. This creates the power of the group to become committed to a common vision. If these values are not aligned, sooner or later, the people experience tension and frustration.

Do you have the leadership skills to lead your organization in the 21st Century?