

CEOs: Where there's a will, there's a better way

When I consider organizational effectiveness and the CEO, I say it is a CEO's overarching accountability, then consider if the individual has the skill, will and mental horsepower to handle the role.

Based on his presentation at SCN, Joey St-Aubin, president and CEO of Canlan Ice Sports, has, in spades, the requisite skills, knowledge, experience and cognitive capability.

What I found most intriguing, though, was the demonstration of his "will." It was a reminder that a truly great CEO — a transformative CEO — must be as inclined to articulate his will as much as articulate profit and loss. Without being permeated with a CEO's will, an organization lacks a vitality that drives sustainable effectiveness.

To what degree, then, has St-Aubin imposed his will at Canlan?

"Will" is motivation and commitment that emerge from attitude and values. To what degree is the incumbent motivated by, and committed to, the work of the role? Does the incumbent exhibit



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the most effective attitude for the role and to what degree are the incumbent's values aligned with the work?

What personal values did St-Aubin demonstrate that align with being the CEO of Canlan? For starters, he loves hockey. He grew up in hockey, almost went pro, and his eyes light up at the thought of new ice. Match that with a life of leading and coaching, and it's clear he values directing and growing teams of

people to achieve goals — literally.

I particularly noted the sport-experience-CEO attitudes St-Aubin demonstrated. A team orientation is ingrained in him: He knows in his bones that team success is only possible when the team is aligned and united.

He crafted the vision statement on his own. How many CEOs do that? He has used his will to ensure every employee has a coherent touchstone on which to align all work.

St-Aubin's defining attitude is a fundamental, energetic optimism: Every challenge is an opportunity. He has demonstrated a willingness to challenge himself and the status quo, to explore options and jump into ingenious re-invention. He said himself he was the autocrat when he joined an ailing Canlan, became the democrat during growth, and is now the great transformer, remodelling the business to stay relevant.

And, how does his will show up in motivation and commitment? I would say it is his innate entrepre-

neurialism and competitiveness. Based on his life in sport, I'm sure St-Aubin would be the first to ask, "If winning doesn't matter, why do they keep score?"

He is a self-confessed serial entrepreneur, choosing, for example, to layer on top of his academic and hockey careers opportunities to "make lots of money." He combines a conviction to work in the business as well as on the business.

In short, if St-Aubin hadn't grown into the opportunity to be CEO of a sports experience company, he would have willed the job into being. His personal, optimistic, team-leadership orientation, combined with his sporting values and a streak of entrepreneurialism, are inseparable from organizational effectiveness at Canlan.

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