



5 Minutes with Greg Toner

By Tim Miles

Tim Miles talks to Greg Toner about why strategy is so important to creating success, leadership and the intangibles, what personally motivates him and the lessons business can take from the Cowboys' success.

Greg Toner on Strategy.....

Why is strategy so important in creating success?

Strategy is the basis for every decision you make in taking your business forward. A successful strategy is clear in helping your business understand its purpose and what you want it to achieve. If you don't have a clear strategy, then you can't have a structure that underpins the success of the business.

What are some of the barriers that get in the way of a successful strategy?

There are four main barriers that I see that get in the way of a successful strategy:

1. **Time.** In the current climate everyone is working fulltime in their business operations and having time to step away is difficult.
2. **Common Understanding.** You need to get people to understand the importance of strategy and to get their buy in.
3. **Out-dated Operating Models.** In this digital age, organisations are operating on old operating platforms that are inappropriate and inefficient.
4. **Change Management.** People need to take some time to reflect on what is required to change and adapt.

Greg Toner on Leadership.....

What does success mean to you? What stops people from achieving success in life/business?

Leadership is about having a clear strategy and purpose, the right people and structure and then empowering people. This means we need to move away from the old hierarchical leadership style of "control" to a more flexible one of "empowering people".

Empowering people is about building trust, open communication, creating an environment that people are comfortable in and providing ideas, particularly for people on the front line who are dealing with customers and suppliers.

What made you step up and take on CEO/leadership roles?

I get enjoyment and fulfilment from empowering people to achieve outcomes. I enjoy creating a strategy to bring change to the benefit of the organisation and to create value.

Over my career, I have worked out that the tangible outcomes you achieve are things such as the financial performance and key performance targets that a business sets and achieves. The reality is that it is the intangibles (such as relationships, customer experience, culture and leadership) that drive the tangible outcomes. As a CEO, it is then important that the people really care about the business and are empowered and motivated to deliver the tangible results.



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Greg Toner on Personal Success.....

What person or event has had the biggest impact on your life/career?

I have worked out that I am motivated by working in a collaborative environment. I pick a job on the person or team I am going to report to and if the relationship is open, trustworthy and they want to make things better. I love to be emotionally connected to do something great.

Have any books or films been critical to your personal success?

I was given a book by the Head of People Development when he left Optus called "[Firms of Endearment](#)". This is where it showed the value of companies that were measured by their intangibles. In the hardest times companies aren't sacking people, they're empowering them. It is about creating a connection with each other and customers.

Connecting is what really counts.

Greg Toner on Cowboys.....

What lessons can business leaders take from the success of the Cowboys franchise?

Have a clear strategy and a desired purpose

Be clear about what sort of culture will perform well under that strategy

Put the right people and leaders in place.

Get people who are focused on the purpose, not themselves, as a measure of their success

Develop a culture of high performance that drives consistency. Consistency makes for greatness.

Build values together.

Teams beat individuals any day of the week.

What's next in 2016 for the Cowboys?

The reality in sport, is the scoreboard always goes back to zero. We will take the time to reflect on lessons learnt from 2015 and challenge ourselves to find new ways of doing things and how to go to the next level. We will focus on reinventing ourselves whilst capitalising on the success we have had to date. Teams that have a clear strategy and purpose will be successful in the NRL in 2016.