How to Understand the Silent Killer Assessment:

I my work and book, *Fit to Compete,* I identify and discuss six "silent killers" that are barriers to any organization's effectiveness. They represent deficiencies in leadership and organizational capabilities that prevent organizations from making the changes needed to create and execute their strategies and achieve their goals.

These "silent killers" were identified by 100 key people below senior management teams across many organizations in diverse industries when they were enabled to tell senior management the "unvarnished truth" about what was blocking their organization's effectiveness. These barriers prevent organizations (company, business unit, function or geographic region, or operating unit) from executing their new strategy or living according to senior management's espoused cultural values.

The assessment is divided into six categories, each a silent killer. If you have place check marks in each or most of the six silent killer categories, your organization is probably ineffective at enacting change as a whole. If most of the items in any given silent killer category are checked, that particular silent killer is playing a strong role in undermining the effectiveness and agility of your organization.

You may use this assessment to evaluate the organization you lead or to ask your key people to assess your organization. The only way to improve your organization's effectiveness is to enable an honest conversation with your people to discuss the barriers so they can give you examples of why and how these barriers are creating ineffective organizational behavior. The Strategic Fitness Process (SFP) described in my book *Fit to Compete* is a time-tested method for enabling such safe conversations.

If you are assessing the organization you are in but not leading it, this survey will give you a qualitative way to evaluate its overall effectiveness. If it is ineffective, the leaders must lead an honest conversation to learn about the sources of ineffectiveness including how they lead from those below therm. If they are not willing to lead such an honest conversation only new leaders can change the organization, but even they would be advised to lead an honest collective and conversation about the source of ineffectiveness so they know what to change and then change it in a way that everyone owns.

"Silent Killers" Organizational Assessment

Please check all that apply to your own organization.

1. UNCLEAR STRATEGY AND VALUES, TOO MANY AND CONFLICTING PRIORITIES

☐ Our strategy may be well developed on paper, but hasn't been translated into a simple, logical and broadly understood "story" for how the business will win and the values that should govern behavior.

☐ We have a lack of clearly defined and articulated values to guide organizational behavior.

☐ Functions & businesses each champion their own priorities leading to conflicting priorities, conflicts over resources and poor execution of our strategy.

☐ People feel overloaded with everything priority one.

2. SENIOR TEAM IS INEFFECTIVE AND NOT REALLY A TEAM

☐ Our senior team operating model is "Hub and spokes" — our leader meets with team members individually to review the results of their function, business and/or region. The whole team rarely meets to review to review the business.

☐ Most of meeting time spent on information sharing and updates on short term operational details, rather than confronting and resolving tough strategic issues. "Death by PowerPoint."

☐ We have little constructive conflict in meetings. The real decisions get made outside of the room.

☐ Senior team members don't speak with a common voice about strategic our strategy and priorities.

3. TOP DOWN OR "HANDS OFF" LEADERSHIP

☐ Our leader tends to get lost in the operational details and works "one level below their pay grade."

☐ Our leader is not visible — he spends relatively little time communicating overall strategy or direction and "forcing" constructive debate to resolve contesting views.

☐ Our leader is conflict averse.

☐ Our Leader does not confront issues or people directly to resolve festering conflicts.

4. POOR COORDINATION/TEAMWORK ACROSS SILOS

☐ The organization we have does not work effectively.

☐ It is painfully hard to execute on cross- functional, business and/or geographic initiatives, often even despite good personal relationships.

☐ Work on horizontal cross-boundary teams is seen as secondary to meeting one's own unit's (function, business or region) goals.

☐ Roles responsibilities and decision rights of functions, business units and or regions are not clear.

☐ There is conflict between different activities that need to coordinate and collaborate.

5. INADEQUATE LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT

☐ Too few managers are capable of leading cross-business initiatives or taking a "general management" business wide perspective.

☐ We keep coming back to the same "usual suspects" when something important needs to get done.

☐ Too few opportunities are provided for leadership and management development.

☐ Our senior team does review leadership talent regularly or career paths that enable the development of general management capabilities.

6. POOR VERTICAL COMMUNICATION

☐ There are few forums for downward communication and discussions about strategy.

☐ People do not feel safe speaking out and up about problems in organizational and management effectiveness.

☐ There are few forums for upward communication where managers and associates can openly and publicly communicate with senior management in a low-risk environment.

☐ Open public discussion of difficult issues goes against the cultural grain.

☐ Our senior leaders rarely if ever ask lower levels to tell them about problems that stand in the way of our effectiveness as an organization or how they can be improved.