



## MIKE DESJARDINS

### *Stop chasing shiny objects and focus on your core business*

the necessary action steps or whether you have the ability to hire from outside the business.

■ **If I say yes to this, what am I saying no to?** With limited resources available executives need to learn the skill of appropriately, with purpose and clear communication, stopping a project or preventing one from even getting off the ground when it does not fit within the strategic framework. Resources misallocated to objectives that should have died on the vine are being taken away from the core opportunities that will help create a more compelling future for the business.

As a leader, working through the answers to these questions with your team to distill down to the core opportunities you should focus on is far more compelling and inspiring than the alternative: reacting by gut feeling to initiatives that you don't feel fit the business, without having a clear reason why. The difference in the engagement level of your team will be huge. ■

*Mike Desjardins is the CEO at ViRTUS ([www.virtusinc.com](http://www.virtusinc.com)), an organizational development consulting firm.*

**S**tagnation is the enemy of progress and growth, but chasing after every opportunity that comes your way can be just as detrimental to your business.

I have a name for these myriad choices that appear like opportunities but in most cases are distracters: shiny objects.

When I ask leaders where they expect their future growth to come from, quite frequently I hear the response, "We have so many opportunities for growth that it's difficult to stay focused."

Therein lies the rub.

Most opportunities are mislabeled as such and end up absorbing valuable time, money and people resources within organizations. These shiny objects are difficult to choose between because no filter is in place to help evaluate the difference between them and a real opportunity that the business should pursue.

Here are four questions you can ask yourself that will act as a filtering mechanism to differentiate between shiny

objects and opportunities.

■ **What are the realities of our business today?** We're talking facts, not opinions here. What is our SWOT+V: strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats and vulnerabilities? (In case you're wondering, the difference between a threat and vulnerability is that a vulnerability can take your business to its knees whereas a threat is an area where you're not able to compete readily against your competitors.) This question can only be answered properly in a culture of candour – a culture where the truth is spoken and can be heard.

■ **What are the simple, underlying patterns, hidden in the complexity of our business, that make us great at what we do?** If we were to capitalize on our greatest strength, what could we become world-class at and as a result what can we not be world-class at? What is the single denominator in the key economic equation for our business success, usually stated as "profit per X" (*Good to Great* by **Jim Collins**. New

York: **Harper Collins Publishers**, 2001]. Finally, what does our business stand for that we are truly passionate about?

■ **Do we have access to the resources of money, people and time?** Many a great idea has been stalled by a lack of

**Executives need to learn the skill of stopping a project when it does not fit within the strategic framework**

access to, or an underestimation of, resources. Passion without the ability to execute is daydreaming. For each opportunity before you, review the necessary action steps and time frames that would be required to reach the end goal. Then take stock of the budget required to support these action plans. Finally, determine whether you have the right people in your organization to tackle