



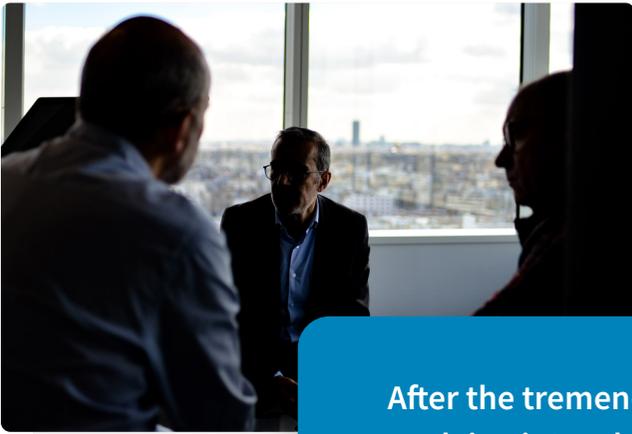
QUARTERLY BUSINESS UPDATE

Key Strategies to Succeed in Q3 2021

Executive Leaders Weigh In
Strategic Focus: Operations
Human Resources, and Finance

888-565-5289 | ceriusexecutives.com

Heading into Q3: *Rebuilding Business and Reimagining the Workplace*



After the tremendous global upheaval of 2020, businesses are still evolving into what life looks like on the other side. That includes a thoughtful return to the workplace, becoming more agile and resilient with business strategies, and rethinking infrastructure and traditional employment models. Leaders everywhere must continue to adapt to a changing business environment, so their organization can emerge stronger.

That's where Cerius can help. Every quarter, we present insights from top executives from different backgrounds and functions. For Q3, we gathered insights from three business leaders—experts in operations, human resources and finance—to help you succeed in Q3.



Kristen McAlister
President and COO, Cerius Executives



Pam Wasley
CEO, Cerius Executives

Three Leaders, Three Insightful Perspectives

Focus: Operations



John J.
Brennan

As businesses advance into Q3 and the second half of 2021, what do you see as the biggest challenges facing business leaders? How are things evolving?

I look far beyond 2021 and far beyond the pandemic. Today's businesses operate amid a hothouse of evolutionary pressures: collapsing industries, distrust of institutions, automation, artificial intelligence, rising inequality, climate change and resource depletion. Not surprisingly, many leaders and organizations find it difficult to respond to this unprecedented degree of change. However, a small but growing number are exhibiting new leadership reflexes and organizational adaptations to ensure their business impact is conducive to life in the 21st century and beyond.

Here in the U.S., citizens are acutely aware of the disparate treatment and inconsistent access to career opportunities, essential services and support, and general life benefits for individuals and families in America. The COVID-19 era and extreme divisiveness

propelled by the U.S. political environment in recent years has undoubtedly contributed to our collective intolerance of the status quo.

We stand at a fork in the road. Over the next few years, both leaders and organizations will face two choices: rapidly evolve toward an equitable and sustainable relationship with our planet's life support systems while positively affecting social change, or delay and face the wrath of angry citizens and alienated customers.

What are a few best practices to help leaders overcome the current challenges? What do you see working well?

The leaders with "new reflexes" realize that in an era of accelerating change, organizations need to innovate rapidly. There is no roadmap and the stakes have never been higher. Leaders *with a genuine purpose* demonstrate the following communications techniques consistently:

5 Techniques that Manifest Purpose:

- **TRANSLATE** – Reduce complexity of "purpose." Break it down into everyday language and actions, for example, via concrete case studies.
- **EMOTIONALIZE** – Let affected people from inside and outside the organization speak and share their experiences in visual, verbal and written form.
- **STORYTELLING** – Start with the story of authentic experiences, including all facets of actual events, then deduce the learnings.
- **SPREAD THE WORD** – Let value ambassadors endorse purpose throughout the organization.

(Cont.)

- **DEDICATE TIME** – *Talk personally with people, integrate situations or events that allow discussions to manifest purpose and related values.*

Are there any strategies you view to be ineffective?

Too often, companies are thrown completely off course by extreme reaction to current challenges without revisiting their overall direction toward the end game. COVID-19 has certainly caused companies to analyze shifts in the marketplace while revising how work gets done and customer deliverables are achieved. I believe leaders should ensure they don't lose sight of their over-arching strategy.

Ineffective strategies ignore social injustice and the needs of stakeholders, employees, customers and the communities in which they operate.

Profit and purpose are converging, and capital markets are moving in this direction. Can business leaders really accomplish their business goals while also advancing society's goals? The pressing question isn't whether leaders should care about advancing society's goals, but how they do so most effectively. For businesses to survive and succeed in today's globalized, hyper-connected world, business leaders must be willing to embrace collaboration as a guiding principle, more so than competition.

Over 80% of millennials report that making a positive difference in the world is more important to them than professional recognition. They no longer believe the primary purpose of business should be to make profit, but rather to create social value. Customers overwhelmingly prefer products tied to a social cause. A significant majority of citizens want changes to how society governs itself—and therefore how problems get solved—and also changes to the corporate status quo.

Capital markets are also moving in this direction. In recent years, socially responsible investing made up more than one out of every four invested dollars under professional management. The world's largest asset managers are calling on companies to explain how their businesses make “a positive contribution to society” beyond just financial performance.

What skillsets do leaders need to navigate through these challenges?

Empathy, authenticity and the ability to motivate and inspire with an unwavering commitment to foster innovation. Setting clear cross-functional collaboration and accountabilities. And always, the ability to communicate the importance of each team member's role while they focus on providing genuine value to customers in ways customers are requesting, not dampened by your company's current capabilities.

ABOUT JOHN

John built several companies from inception to \$300 million revenue in as short as 3 years. He's an inspired leader with a true passion for transforming organizations, developing cultures rooted in urgency and execution. He passionately leads by setting a high standard of performance while developing and supporting a team that can keep pace. He instills in others a contagious level of confidence, competitiveness, and relentless improvement that amplifies the performance DNA of any company.

 [Find John on LinkedIn](#)

Focus: Human Resources



Renée
DeFranco

As businesses advance into Q3 and the second half of 2021, what do you see as the biggest challenges facing business leaders? How are things evolving?

As we move into Q3 and for the remainder of 2021, organizations must continue to adjust to life as we move through the pandemic and beyond. Employees and leaders are experiencing fatigue from working remotely, Zoom meeting overload, professional and family stress all brought on by the pandemic. As organizations move to a return to the workplace, they need to understand the concerns and preferences of their workforce, many of whom desire to continue working remotely. Leaders will now need to reimagine their organizations to become more resilient in the future and challenge the traditional employment models that have been in place forever. Leaders need to seize the opportunity to define new employment models that work for everyone so people have the flexibility they have become accustomed to during the pandemic.

Many organizations were forced to build remote workflows, shift in-person retail to e-commerce solutions, thereby increasing the use of technology and automation to adapt to the new realities brought on by

the pandemic. This shift also created new opportunities for cybercriminals. Organizations are encountering an increasing number of data breaches, phishing scams, viruses and other threats.

As organizations continue to evolve post pandemic, leaders should modify their business models to adapt to the changing environment. They should focus on building a digital transformation strategy and employing remote collaboration tools like the use of instant messaging apps, online file-sharing and editing apps, and audio and video conferencing, to help the organization and employees work effectively in this future of hybrid work.

What are a few best practices to help leaders overcome the current challenges? What do you see working well?

Leaders should take a holistic look at the entire organization with regard to re-evaluating and revising people policies and procedures that may need to be reimaged to fit the new hybrid environment, and consider how these changes will affect their current organizational culture. Many employees, especially new employees, may struggle to connect with the culture in a virtual or hybrid workplace. Ensuring they have the right tools and equipment, as well as leaders reinforcing organizational values on a regular basis, will be imperative to strengthening their culture and maintaining the agility and productivity they may have experienced while fully remote.

Transparency about how decisions are being made with regard to return to work and return to travel, will also provide a sense of comfort and clarity to employees so they can manage their transitions from being fully remote to hybrid. People are more adaptable if they are clear about where they and the organization are headed. Therefore, the more leaders can be intentional and transparent about those transitions, the better it will be for all.

(Cont.)

Are there any strategies you view to be ineffective?

Lack of transparency, resiliency and planning would be highly detrimental to the successful reimagining of the business. As leaders plan the future of their organizations and workforce, they need to be clear about how the workforce and workplace will be reconfigured to maintain or increase the agility and productivity they experienced during the Covid-19 shutdown. Leaders should also be assessing any capability or skill gaps that may now exist as organizational structures have shifted. They need to think about how to apply their workforce in new ways to address their new business needs.

What skillsets do leaders need to navigate through these challenges?

Transparency in communication and resiliency are probably the most important capabilities leaders need to possess in this tumultuous environment. Showing empathy for employees as organizations move from fully remote to a more hybrid model is vital if the expectation is a smooth return to work. These behaviors will build trust and strengthen relationships between leaders and their workforce, which will be essential as we continue on the journey to the next new normal.

ABOUT RENÉE

Renée is a Senior Human Resources Executive and leader with over 25 years of progressive experience including the CHRO of multiple middle market business in the pharmaceutical and consumer products industries. Renée has a proven track record of aligning human resource strategy with business strategy to achieve significant improvements in employee engagement, organizational productivity and management capability.



Find [Renée on LinkedIn](#)

Focus: Finance



Wendy
Worcester

As businesses advance into Q3 and the second half of 2021, what do you see as the biggest challenges facing business leaders? How are things evolving?

As we migrate back into both an onsite and remote workforce, we need to strategically plan how to build up our bench strength with our existing workforce. Part of that work is to competitively attract and retain new talent. In today's world, that will require unique compensation packages including options for remote, hybrid or traditional on-site work environments that give employees the ability to choose what's right for their situation rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

As businesses evolve and change into more AI-driven models and digital transformations, executives need to lean forward to make the capital investments necessary to stay ahead of this curve to stand out in an ultra-competitive marketplace.

The business environment continues to rapidly change into more of an employee and machine-driven AI environment where disruptive technologies become tools of the trade (the new standard toolbox) as we move more into automated AI-based, digital modeling and rapid synthesis of large data sets.

Company leaders—including CEOs, CTOs and CFOs—must work together to not only define the right digital transformation journey, but also fund it and accelerate its adoption.

What are a few best practices to help leaders overcome the current challenges? What do you see working well?

One best practice is applying diversity and inclusive models to establish an environment where employees feel comfortable yet creative to bring their experiences and best strategic thoughts forward. Employees want to feel a part of the team and not be put into boxes. They also want to be encouraged to develop new skill sets and focus on quality not quantity of hours to create the work-life balance they need and expect.

With the right leadership, today's businesses can and should implement strong diversity and inclusion strategies that permeate the entire organization—and build communications campaigns to support those plans and reinforce a feeling of authenticity. This will help all employees to feel comfortable and supported in the workplace, which drives creativity, innovation and long-term engagement (and ultimately better productivity and stronger business results).

Leaders should also drive a strong focus on career development—especially now as more and more employees are exploring their career options. Companies should encourage employees to develop new skills, offer mentorship opportunities, discuss their long-term career plans with managers, and help employees realize the career opportunities available to them at their current organization. In today's dynamic business landscape—where the war on talent rages—a strong focus on employee retention can go a long way to ensuring a competitive advantage and business success over time.

In terms of encouraging work-life balance, organizations (and employees) everywhere are evaluating what the “future of work” looks like. Now that pandemic restrictions are easing—and many companies are returning to their worksites—today's employees are reconsidering their priorities. Many employees have enjoyed working from home—and want to continue. For companies resistant to that possibility, employees are exploring options and entertaining possible job changes.

(Cont.)

Are there any strategies you view to be ineffective?

Micro-managing and creating barriers stifle employee creativity and limit their ability to lean forward and disrupt the status-quo. Team members want to feel a part of the company's success, regardless of their experience, education or lack thereof. They want to be empowered to make decisions and promote their thoughts and ideas with the ability to profit both financially and personally.

To be effective, smart leaders should be flexible with their team members and not work with everyone the same way in a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Instead, they should understand what motivates each individual since some team members has aspirations to become a CEO or CFO someday, while others are motivated by having the time to travel, play sports, or be with their friends and family. Understanding what drives each team member will make for a happier and more motivated team.

ABOUT WENDY

Wendy is an executive with experience in growing early-stage, high-growth disruptive companies focusing on operations, strategic planning, capital raising, FP&A, KPIs, business systems including Oracle, SAP, NetSuite, and Tableau, AGILE process implementations, and accounting. Wendy has been an advisor and/or CFO for multiple start-up companies including Rent.com, Parcel Pending, Gateway Genomics, Mesa BioTech, Anyone Home, Inc. and OpenEnglish.com. Wendy is a CPA (inactive) and has held the CFA designation.

 [Find Wendy on LinkedIn](#)



Need More Executive Advice or Guidance?

Let's Talk - Get Started With a Free Consultation.

Finding the right executive starts with knowing what you need.
Contact us today to learn how we can help you from start to finish.

888-565-5289 | info@ceriusinterim.com