

Making the leap from “vision” to “execution”

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Change can be an electrifying experience for most companies, and probably even more so for General Motors. I have been watching closely the growing popularity of electric cars, and the rapid transformation taking place within the automobile business. GM's recent commitment to build only electric vehicles in less than 15 years reflects a growing awareness that it must move quickly or cede the domestic market to newcomers like Tesla.



GM faces a challenge that is common for companies in traditional industries during times of change. They need to quickly make the leap from vision to execution. Over the last few years, Lumen Technologies faced a similar challenge. We have made progress as we evolve from a traditional telco to an enterprise technology platform. We are working to empower people through technology, because we believe humanity achieves great things through innovation. Our platform allows our customers to capitalize on the emerging digital capabilities of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

We feel these efforts came into sharper focus a few weeks ago, when Gartner released its 2021

Magic Quadrant for Network Services, Global. They positioned Lumen within the Leaders Quadrant, recognizing both our “ability to execute” and our “completeness of vision.”

We operate in a highly competitive environment. We have to execute to be successful, but more importantly we have to execute to make sure our customers are successful, too. Here’s some actions we take that I think make a big difference.

Invest in success—I don’t believe in sales for sales sake. Our goal is to understand our customers, make them resilient, and help them achieve their objectives. Often that doesn’t happen overnight. A few years ago, we won a small piece of business with a company that leases commercial equipment. It wasn’t one of our biggest customers, but our account team wasn’t thinking about the present. Our people had an eye on the future. We invested the time needed to build trust and encourage growth. It paid off. This company recently signed up for new solutions, like SD WAN and edge computing. They may not have foreseen a future that required more sophisticated networking solutions, but we did. So, we were ready when the time was right.

Deliver value that grows over time—Not only do we invest in our customers, but we also invest in ourselves. Over the last few years, we have developed new products and services our customers want while ensuring we have the right infrastructure in place to deliver those solutions. We have also invested in world class partnerships with names our clients know and trust—like SAP, VMware, and IBM, who recently announced our agreement with them to integrate their Cloud Satellite offering with our edge platform. Each of these elements are powerful but the real value comes when we combine our capabilities and solutions into one whole. Our commitment toward continuous improvement means our customers can tap into a partnership that grows in value over time.

Offer human expertise where it can do the most good—We provide the right balance between human and digital. We made extensive investments in systems that give customers the autonomy to take actions without the need to talk to our people if they don’t want to. Our networks are smart and flexible enough to allow customers to increase scale on-demand. At the same time, many enterprises value our expertise as a systems integrator. Our Customer Success teams become key partners within our client’s overall IT strategy, understand their pressing problems, and provide the expertise to solve them. We provide self-service, co-managed capacity, or managed services. We let customers choose the level of human interaction they want.

Change is not easy for anyone, but when clients partner with Lumen, enterprises don’t have to figure out how to translate their vision into action by themselves. Our commitment to be customer-first simply means that we take accountability for what we do, so our clients achieve

the outcomes they want. We recognize it is not enough to be simply great at execution or to have a great vision. You need both because execution without vision is like taking a journey without a roadmap. It's the fastest way to get to nowhere.

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Gartner, Magic Quadrant for Network Services, Global, 2 March 2021, Neil Rickard, Bjarne Munch, Danellie Young

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