Personal Journal for

DOING THE RIGHT THINGS RIGHT

How the Effective Executive Spends Time

By **LAURA STACK**
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President and CEO

Laura Stack, MBA, CSP, CPAE, is best known by her moniker "The Productivity Pro®." Laura is an award-winning keynote speaker, bestselling author, and noted authority on employee and team productivity. She is the president of The Productivity Pro, Inc., a boutique consulting firm dedicated to helping leaders increase workplace performance in high-stress environments. Laura is a past President of the National Speakers Association.

Keynoter

For over 25 years, Laura's keynote speeches and seminars have helped associations and Fortune 1000 corporations improve output, increase speed in execution, and save time in the office. She is a high-energy, high-content speaker, who educates, entertains, and motivates professionals to deliver bottom-line results. Laura is a member of the prestigious *CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame*, which has fewer than 200 members worldwide) and has earned the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation.

Author

Laura is the bestselling author of seven books published by Random House, Wiley, and Berrett-Koehler, including her newest, *Doing the Right Things Right: How the Effective Executive Spends Time* (Jan. 2016). Laura's books have been published in more than 20 foreign editions, and she is a featured columnist for the American Business Journal, LinkedIn, Time Management, and Productive magazines. Laura has produced more than 50 online training programs.

Recognized Productivity Expert

Laura has been featured nationally on the CBS Early Show, CNN, NPR, Bloomberg, the New York Times, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, Entrepreneur, and Forbes magazine. Laura has been a spokesperson for Fellowes, Microsoft, 3M, Skillsoft, Office Depot, Day-Timer, and Xerox. Her client list includes top Fortune 500 companies, including Starbucks, Wal-Mart, Aramark, Bank of America, GM, Wells Fargo, and Time Warner, plus government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service, the United States Air Force Academy, the Census Bureau, the U.S. Senate, and the Department of Defense.

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Table of Contents

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Preface

This *Personal Journal* is the companion workbook to my seventh full-length productivity book, *Doing the Right Things Right: How the Effective Executive Spends Time*. It's designed for you to reflect on what you're reading as you read it (write down your ah-ha's or mindset shifts), and then develop specific goals related to that area (write down your action plans or behavior shifts).

In a sense, *Doing the Right Things Right* is my generation's answer to the great Peter F. Drucker's *The Effective Executive*, perhaps the most influential management book in history. *The Effective Executive* has consistently been in print since its original publication in 1967, and Drucker updated it repeatedly throughout his life. Although I never met or worked with him, I consider Drucker to be one of my greatest professional influences, and a mentor of sorts. *The Effective Executive* is my favorite business book. I've read it at least half a dozen times, and I always learn something new.

But in some ways, Drucker's classic is dated. In 1967, executives were almost exclusively men; women were mostly in secretarial roles, so he assumed executives would be male. I don't intend this as a criticism of Drucker, as it reflected the cultural reality of the time. But gender equality has been steadily increasing over the years, to the point where many C-Suite office holders, including CEOs, are now women. Furthermore, although Drucker anticipated and explicated the role of the knowledge worker in later research, the topic is only lightly touched upon in *The Effective Executive.* The same is true of the electronics revolution that made them so important. *Doing the Right Things Right* weaves both into its fabric as essential parts of the modern business world.

Perhaps more importantly, while Drucker explained the need for executives to act effectively, he didn't always tell us *how* to do so. Nor did he live to see the recent paradigm shift in the business world that rendered long-term strategies unworkable. As I pointed out in my last book, *Execution IS the Strategy,* business has revved up to such a breakneck speed that we can no longer wait for permission to trickle down from the top to take advantage of rapidly changing situations. Five-year plans are impossible to maintain; so are three-year or even one-year plans. Business doesn't stand still long enough to allow it, and those who ignore that fact do so at their peril.

Today, strategic execution can take place at any level, in the moment and on the spot, using whatever tactics are available at hand.

The upshot of the new reality is that almost anyone can be an "executive," in the sense that they execute corporate strategy—not just top-level leadership. So executives can be

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P a g e | **2**

low-level managers, frontline workers, foremen, everyday knowledge workers, or anyone who executes business strategy that effects the bottom line in real-time.

The ever-expanding definition of "executive" has caused significant changes to the worker/management dynamic; no longer do management and worker comprise completely different levels on the work hierarchy. They've become more like points on a continuum. Never has leadership been so close to worker in terms of their needs, authority, and duty. Modern leaders can no longer be autocrats; they must step up as facilitators, coaches, and slayers of red tape, individuals who make it easier for their teammates to get from Point A to Point B faster.

I don't use the term "teammates" loosely here. The best team leaders are also team *members,* a fact they must not lose track of. Their actions make it easier for their team to excel while they not only lead by example and clear the way, but also handle the high-value tasks only they can do. They must work primarily *on* the business, not *in* it. But with the right actions taken at the right time, leaders can adjust to this new normal and make their teams more productive than ever before.

That's why I've written *Doing the Right Things Right: How the Effective Executive Spends Time,* and why I present to you this companion volume to follow along with and take notes in as you read the original. May you enjoy the journey, and emerge from it stronger and more resolute, determined to take your team to the next level and grow your business.

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Highlands Ranch, Colorado
January 2016

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P a g e | 3

Introduction

How does the modern executive—a somewhat different animal from the executive Drucker defined in 1967—do the job both effectively and efficiently? How does the executive at any level mine that intersection of effectiveness and efficiency to get the right things done right?

Key Definitions

Drucker's book distinguishes between being effective and efficient. Here's how I differentiate the two terms:

Effectiveness refers to successfully producing the expected or desired result; it's the degree to which you achieve your objectives, solve problems, and realize profits. In business, effectiveness is summed up by "doing the right things."

Efficiency is the accomplishment of a job with the minimum expenditure of time, effort, and cost—the shortest distance between a goal and a checkmark. In business, efficiency is summed up by "doing things right."

Alone, effectiveness isn't enough to distinguish a good executive, since anyone with the right training or a good manual can do the right things. So can a robot. When effectiveness lacks efficiency, it's often unproductive. A task that should take four months to complete can end up taking fourteen. Additionally, efficiency without effectiveness can go devastatingly wrong. It doesn't matter how well your team climbs Mount Everest if your intention was to climb the Matterhorn.

I'm sure you'd agree that executives should work to be not only effective but also efficient. Doing the Right Things Right combines Effectiveness (doing the right things) with Efficiency (doing things right) to yield the most profitable AND quickest route a leader can take to execute goals. Leaders manage time most productively at the intersection of effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, once you know you're spending time on the right things, you then focus on doing them right.

Who is an Executive?

In today's business vernacular, we usually assume an executive is someone in a senior leadership position. However, the dictionary defines an executive as "a person or group appointed and given the responsibility to manage the affairs of an organization, and the authority to make decisions within specified boundaries."

In reality, an executive is someone who executes—almost anyone with the authority to make significant decisions and whose time is spent producing value and/or managing people for the benefit of the organization. An executive might be an emerging leader, a front-line supervisor, a middle manager, a senior leader, or even an individual contributor who hasn't received a title.

In The Effective Executive, Drucker outlines five effectiveness practices, or what he refers to as "habits of the mind," for executives to follow, which I summarize as:

1. Understand and control where time goes.
2. Focus on results.
3. Build on strengths.
4. Prioritize tasks.
5. Make effective decisions.

The Effective and Efficient Executive

To be both effective and efficient, today's leaders should follow twelve practices (see facing chart). Some of these practices were not as germane in Drucker's time as they are now, or they were considered too obvious to state explicitly. However, priorities have changed over the decades, and sometimes even the obvious must be spelled out.

These twelve practices, which supplement Drucker's work and correspond to the twelve chapters of this book, describe how to do the right things the right way. They are up to speed for our modern times, where flexibility, agility, and on-the-spot, in-the-moment execution rule. Today, an executive not only must do the right things but also must carefully ensure he or she does the right things right, wasting as little time as possible in the process.

Doing The Right Things Right: The Twelve Principles

1. GOALS: Align strategy and objectives
2. CHANGE: Embrace innovation and adaptability
3. COMMUNICATION: Share mission, vision, and expectations
4. DECISION-MAKING: Resolve and execute decisions promptly
5. ENVIRONMENT: Build an open-team culture
6. PERFORMANCE: Forge a results-oriented team
7. MOTIVATION: Harness creativity and loyalty
8. GROWTH: Emphasize continuous improvement
9. VALUE: Focus on high-impact activities
10. TECHNOLOGY: Master data handling and workflow
11. AGILITY: Maximize speed and flexibility
12. BALANCE: Sustain personal health and mental acuity

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P a g e | 5

The 3T Leadership Model

What leaders actually "do" during the day and where they spend their time can be grouped into three leadership activities that I call the "3T Leadership" roles. These three activities (Strategic Thinking, Team Focus, and Tactical Work) also describe the three parts of this book. As shorthand, I'll refer to these 3Ts as THINK, TEAM, and TACTICS. The 3Ts are the chief time management roles for leaders:

STRATEGIC THINKING (THNK)

Acting as the organizational strategist, with the focus on business goals.
The executive monitors the big picture and makes sure the team efforts reinforce the company's goals.

TEAM FOCUS (TEAM)

Serving as the conscientious leader who focuses on employee productivity.
The low- to mid-level executive builds and maintains an effective, productive team as the first step toward high performance.

TACTICAL WORK (TACTICS)

Being the productive performer, focusing on task completion.
The team member in a nonleadership position executes strategy using whatever tactics are available and, as a productive performer, is an executive in the loosest sense of the term.

The "3T Leadership Model" on the facing page not only aptly summarizes the 3T Leadership Roles with their individual components and associated concepts, but also summarizes the content of this book. THINK, TEAM, and TACTICS are found at the center of the chart. The twelve chapter titles (the twelve practices for doing the right things) radiate out from the center. Attached to each title are three themes discussed in that chapter.

In general, as an executive moves up the leadership ladder, the percentage of time spent in each category tends to shift, becoming less tactical and more strategic. This focus may also vary according to the executive's position or immediate project needs. You may not be content with the current mix of your time in these three areas. Perhaps you feel you spend too much time "in the weeds," dealing with day-to-day operational issues, and not enough time with your team. Or perhaps you spend too much time managing your team's work and not enough time focused on strategic activities. With the area requiring the largest investment of time listed first, here's a typical breakdown of the 3Ts for various leadership levels:

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VP/C-Suite
1. Think   2. Team   3. Tactics

Director
1. Team   2. Think   3. Tactics

Manager
1. Team   2. Tactics   3. Think

Individual Contributor
1. Tactics   2. Team   3. Think

Are you starting to see that where you spend your time now isn't necessarily where you should be spending your time? You can get started by taking the 3T Leadership Assessment at www.3TLeadership.com. It will provide insight into your current level of efficient effectiveness as you prepare to read this book.

Start Doing the Right Things Right

Keep the momentum going and continue to develop your time management skills after reading this book! Visit www.3TLeadership.com for free related resources, including a personal journal to take notes as you read, a discussion guide to share with your leadership team, and video lessons to review key learning points.

START *DOING THE RIGHT THINGS RIGHT*

3T

Continue to develop your time management skills! Register to receive these free educational resources: a one-hour webinar with Laura Stack, a summary version of *Doing the Right Things Right,* leader and discussion guides to share with your team, video lessons, and a subscription to The Productivity Pro newsletter.

www.3TLeadership.com

The 3T Leadership Model
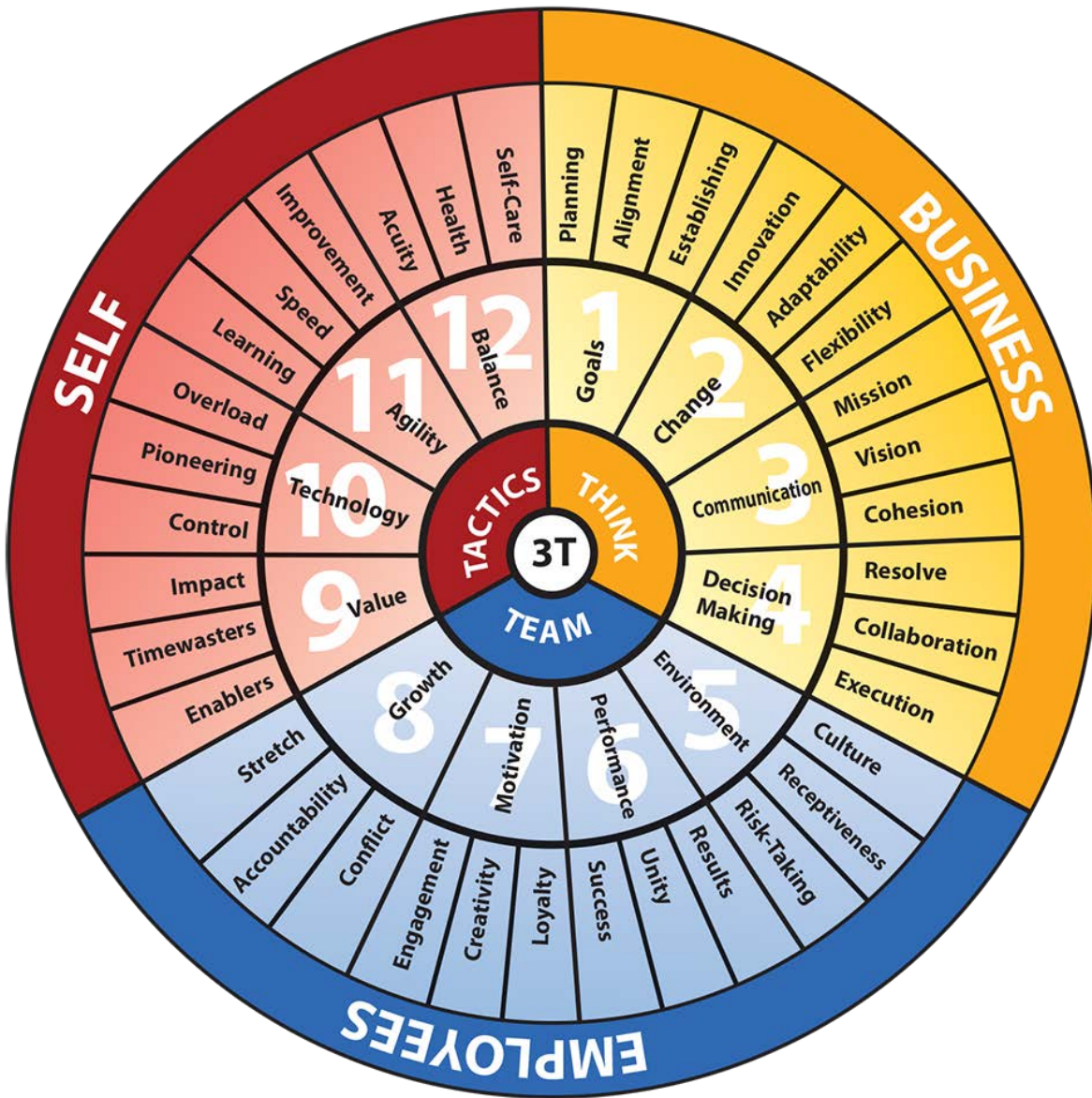
If you haven't already, go to www.3TLeadership.com to take the online 3T Leadership Assessment

PART I: STRATEGIC THINKING

Strategic thinking boils down to one simple question: *What is the desired outcome?* This is how an executive drives organizational strategy, using various methods to maximize results in minimal time, maintain a bird's eye view of the big picture, and ensure the team aligns its goals with those of the organization.

As a leader, you need to set aside time for strategic thinking, so you can take your team from start to finish with the least interference along the way. This makes sense and it's easy to say, but it begs this question: what exactly *is* strategic thinking in the first place?

The Components of Strategic Thinking

Although strategic thinking varies from one team or organization to another, it generally includes these characteristics:

- It focuses on group needs.
- It leverages existing organizational structure and seeks to improve upon it.
- It's cross-functional, presuming and requiring cooperation between groups.
- It has long-term, far-reaching effects.
- It considers what group tactics you can best use to accomplish the strategy.

Applying Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking can be difficult to apply when circumstance—and sometimes people—seem determined to crush it. As an effective executive, you have no choice but to push the envelope of your team's capacities, so you can foresee and avoid potentially explosive traps in the modern business arena.

In addition to market forces and good, old-fashioned competition, you may have to adroitly deal with crises over which you have no control—like death, disaster, and the worst side of human nature. If you can't bounce back quickly, you're of little use to the organization or your team, so have contingency plans in place that cover anything that might happen. Beware, though. You can't possibly plan for everything, so don't paralyze yourself by trying to make your plans too specific.

You also have to know how to take hold of a declining team and shake it back to life, which poses its own set of problems.

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P a g e | 9

Goal setting ties together all the disparate members of a team, as well as the strategies they apply both individually and collectively. It sets a course—a benchmark for the team to shoot for. In a sense, goals are promises to our teams and ourselves, dreams with deadlines that tweak our performance upward. The great thing about goals is that it's as easy to think big as it is to think small. Thinking big not only tests our reach and abilities; it also stretches our mental boundaries.

By its very nature, strategic thinking requires you to learn to make the best decisions you can as quickly as possible, boosting innovation and flexibility, helping your team adapt to circumstances as they change.

Just as importantly, you have to be able to communicate those adaptations to all involved: to explain the new mission, to promote your vision, and to sell teamwork in a way that gets people to take notice without taking offense.

Like a good ship captain, always consult with your officers before making an important decision, taking their viewpoints and suggestions into account. But remember: the decision is ultimately yours, and you have no choice but to make it. If you don't, circumstances will make the decision for you. Once you've made the decision, you and your team have to execute it strategically and, if need be, on the spot.

Remember: Executives *execute*. Execution and results are all that really matter in any business. And don't assume you don't qualify as an executive. This book isn't only for C-Suite personnel, though I believe it will serve them well. An executive can be a front-line manager, an up-and-coming star, a programmer who initiates a productive change in the team process... anyone who strikes while the iron is hot and makes productive changes in the moment.

Chapter 1. Goals: Set Objectives and Align Strategy

Introduction

Goals boost team productivity, because they sow seeds of hope. They give your team something to strive for, especially in a positive, non-punitive environment where you provide valuable feedback on a regular basis. Goals also establish promises you and your team can work toward as you fine-tune performance and boost productivity. In addition to setting goals, regularly reevaluate your progress to ensure you're on the right path, and consider the possibility of course corrections that might serve you better.

As you can see from the chart in the Introduction, this slice of the Strategic Thinking breaks down naturally into three parts:

1. **Planning:** Understand your overall strategic planning process from beginning to end.

2. **Alignment:** Work toward active alignment of your team and individual goals with organizational goals.

3. **Establishing:** Focus on establishing team goals and encouraging your team to take ownership of them.

The reward for successful goal setting and achievement is bigger goals. Good leaders give of themselves. Employees want someone to prepare the way for them, and to be there to guide them. They want you to actually *lead*. When you can do so while sincerely feeling and demonstrating compassion for them, and holding everyone to their promises—including yourself—they'll follow you to the ends of the earth.

Let's take a closer look at the three elements of Goals, and how you can apply them to your workplace situation.

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P a g e | 11

Planning
Understand your overall strategic planning process from beginning to end.

§§

Your team goals should always contribute to or support the organization's overall goals. It's not necessarily easy to achieve alignment, and it's far too easy to drift off course once you have. But it is absolutely crucial to maintain your alignment, or your strategic executions may be skewed or entirely useless.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 28

Questions to Consider

How well do I know my organizational goals?

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_____

Have I made both organizational and team goals transparent enough for my team to understand and work toward them?

_____

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What's the most important goal I need to define for my team, and how can I best communicate its value to them?

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Actions to Take

Clarify the team's planning process, clearing the way between where you are now and where you want to be in the future. List the steps necessary to accomplish this.

_____

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_____

Alignment
Work toward active alignment of your team and individual goals
with organizational goals.

§§

The effective, efficient executive uses alignment to strengthen the team – not only to shape its destiny, but to emphasize the mission and sow the seeds of hope for a better, more productive future. … goal setting begins in the soil of core values and is strengthened by the fertilizer of mission and vision. The goals are the harvest you reap.

Doing the Right Things Right, pp. 29-30

Questions to Consider

Have I made every effort to align my team's goals with our organizational goals?

_____

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_____

If not, how can I most effectively rework our strategic planning process to match those goals?

_____

_____

_____

Do I do enough to emphasize both team effort and individual contributions, and have I effectively focused the team on just a few major goals?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

List the additional efforts you need to take toward fully aligning your team's goals with organizational goals, and the steps required.

_____

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P a g e | **13**

Establishing

Focus on establishing team goals and encouraging your team
to take ownership of them.

§§

Goals tie together all the other factors crucial to modern business success: flexibility, agility, engagement, empowerment, hard work, self-discipline, teamwork, cross-functionality, you name it. They shape attention and provide direction in an increasingly chaotic world. Political theorist Hannah Arendt once wrote, "Promises are the uniquely human way of ordering the future, making it predictable and reliable to the extent that this is humanly possible." Goals are a species of promise, and apply to corporate teams as much as they do to any other human endeavor.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 33

Questions to Consider

Do I keep my team on the same page regarding our team goals?

_____

_____

_____

Do I keep each individual on the same page regarding his/her individual goals?

_____

_____

_____

Have I given my team members something to shoot for—and can they do so in a fair, non-punitive work environment?

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_____

Actions to Take

Consider the quality of your team goal setting. List things you can do to increase team-wide buy-in, more solidly establishing the value of your organizational goals.

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Chapter 2. Change: Embrace Innovation and Adaptability

Introduction

As the saying goes, the only real constant is change—and it's something we must all deal with and accept. There was a time not long ago when executives paid lip service to innovation, but were the first to block it. Now, there's no choice but to innovate if you want to remain relevant. Leaders have become much more adept at plugging innovation into their business and corporate cultures. More often than not, the changes passing through our organizations transform us in ways we must repeatedly take into account.

Embracing and implementing change involves three basic factors:

1. **Innovation:** Encourage innovation among your teammates, helping them nurture and implement new ideas.

2. **Adaptability:** Facilitate your team's adaptability to the agile business reality.

3. **Flexibility:** Embrace chaos to overcome cultural inertia and work around bureaucracy.

Like creatures in the natural world, businesses must adapt or die. But no matter how necessary change may be, you'll frequently encounter resistance; after all, it's much easier to stay the same than to change, since you've got inertia on your side. Don't resist change to your detriment, as the world transforms around you.

In the following pages, we'll consider how the three components of Change apply to you and your team.

Innovation

Encourage innovation among your teammates, helping them nurture and implement new ideas.

§§

One of the many things Peter Drucker taught us was that only two things actually generate profit: marketing and innovation. Everything else is an expense. Nonetheless, many of us don't want to deal with innovation, because it's too much trouble. New ideas push you out of your comfort zone, requiring you to scramble, to work harder, to think more.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 39

Questions to Consider

Do I encourage innovation in my team?

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_____

How might I inadvertently discourage others when they try new things?

_____

_____

_____

How can I implement a non-punitive environment, so we can accept mistakes as part of innovation?

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Actions to Take

Directly encourage innovation and engagement, so workers will be more likely to care about the outcome of their work and take ownership of their jobs. Remember: only innovation and marketing make money.

_____

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P a g e | 16

Adaptability

Facilitate your team's adaptability to the agile business reality.

§§

...the business leaders who are ready and willing to embrace the future will be the ones who prosper for decades to come. You can succeed in the future only by facing today's challenges head on, reframing them as opportunities, and taking advantage of them.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 42

Questions to Consider

Are my team and I prepared for the future, whatever may come?

_____

_____

_____

How do we advance from good to great to awesome?

_____

_____

_____

In what ways can I become a better team leader, one more likely to conquer future challenges?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

List practices, no matter how minor, you can implement to increase your team's ability to adapt to change.

_____

_____

_____

Flexibility
Embrace chaos to overcome cultural inertia and work around bureaucracy.

§§

Inflexible things break, sometimes spectacularly, when stressed. Even metal will come apart if you apply enough strain. So you'll need a flexible approach to survive the business weather. …successful businesses have always adapted readily to change. At no time in living memory — and likely at no point in history — has adaptability been a more desirable business trait than it is today. Change occurs almost daily, whether you want it to or not, so you've got to be able to change course to adapt to new opportunities.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 48

Questions to Consider

How much does continuous improvement figure in my business plan and guide my team's goals?

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_____

Are we flexible enough to bend during change storms?

_____

_____

_____

Can we stop on a dime and immediately head in a new direction? If not, why not?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Implement continuous improvement in everything you and your team do. Record what you need to improve, be more flexible, or measure results.

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 3. Communication: Share Mission, Vision, and Expectations

Introduction

Effective communication sets profitable, productive organizations apart from the also-rans. It can take many forms, but the factors that work best are plain talk, honesty, and cooperation. Your communications must be simple and straightforward, especially when communicating the mission. In some cases, particularly when working with other leaders, you may have to butt heads politely and cautiously. Work hard to sell your ideas, not just to provide an advantage to your team, but also to the organization as a whole.

Communicating Mission, Vision, and Cohesion all contribute to increasing your team's productivity.

1. **Mission:** Communicate the mission in straightforward terms, ensuring your team's understanding in multiple ways.

2. **Vision:** Promote your vision by communicating cleanly and clearly with upper management and your peers.

3. **Cohesion:** Sell cohesion and teamwork, taking extra care when promoting new ideas to your team and your superiors.

One idea can change the world. Planes, trains, and automobiles are all good examples. At the very least, your idea can change your organization. But it won't go anywhere unless you know how to present it to those in power—and fight for it through the worst of their criticism. It may not make it, but who knows? You may end up the world's next Sergey Brin or Steve Jobs. Don't give up on an idea until it's truly dead. Even then, you may be able to resurrect it later as technology and society advance.

Mission

Communicate the mission in straightforward terms, ensuring your team's understanding in multiple ways.

§§

If you can't effectively communicate the organization's mission and your expectations from the very beginning, you'll get nowhere. Study the art of getting it right the first time, which boils down to communicating with the people involved in the way they best understand. It's impossible to be either effective or efficient if your team doesn't understand what they're supposed to be doing in the first place.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 53

Questions to Consider

Have I gone to great pains to make the mission crystal clear to my team members?

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_____

Do I know how to communicate best with each of my team members?

_____

_____

_____

With whom do I need to work to communicate more clearly?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

If the team doesn't have a clear idea of their mission, immediately convene a meeting and let them know immediately. Then publish it, along with the vision. List the steps you can take to promote and clarify both mission and vision.

_____

_____

_____

Vision
Promote your vision by communicating cleanly and clearly with
upper management and your peers.

§§

Clear communication is important in all directions, upward and laterally as well as downward. You'll have to learn to argue effectively and productively with others at or above your responsibility level — because no matter how good-natured people are, if you bring any two together, they'll eventually find something to disagree about.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 56

Questions to Consider

How well do I communicate my ideas to my peers and superiors?

_____

_____

_____

Am I specific and assertiveness enough with my requests for resources and budget?

_____

_____

_____

How can I better promote my vision for my team?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Test your ideas rigorously to ensure they make sense. Learn to better promote your team's needs and visions, while maintaining your place as a team player.

_____

_____

_____

Cohesion
Sell cohesion and teamwork, taking extra care when promoting new ideas
to your team and your superiors.

§§

Sometimes head-butting results from your attempts to promote a new idea, strategy, or beneficial expenditure. In this case, you have to tune up your effective persuasion skills to sell the idea, which requires a different approach to disagreement.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 58

Questions to Consider

What makes my ideas unique enough to be heard, much less implemented?

_____

_____

_____

Have I addressed all the objections and listed all the benefits of my idea?

_____

_____

_____

How can I best accomplish this with both my team and others, showing them how my idea can benefit us all?

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Actions to Take

Refine your efforts to achieve buy-in in ways that maximize team and intergroup cohesion and stability.

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Chapter 4. Decision Making: Resolve and Execute Decisions Promptly

Introduction

Too often, indecision rules in the workplace, because decision-makers are afraid to make mistakes. Yet the occasional mistake is the price of effective decision-making; it's better to take a wrong turn than no turn at all. Once you've made a decision, trade theory for action and start moving. You can change direction as necessary. And don't assume that disagreement within the team is something you should squelch: friction can be positive, as long as it helps lets you see all sides of the story before you make a final decision.

Decision-Making breaks down to three primary concepts:

1. **Resolve:** Resolve indecision quickly. Don't simply *react* to the world as it changes; be *proactive* to change it.

2. **Collaborate:** Emphasize collaboration and the value of teamwork with your teammates.

3. **Execute:** Avoid procrastination, encouraging immediate strategic execution and implementation.

Action overcomes fear—and ideas are worthless until you take action. So once you have your ducks in a row, get started and meet the challenge head on. You can take care of the details as they arise. Stop dragging your heels and get to it, selecting the easiest, most direct path to success—exercising simplicity, careful direction, practicality, speed, and flexibility on the way.

Resolve

Resolve indecision quickly. Don't simply *react* to the world as it changes;
be *proactive* to change it.

§§

There are dozens of reasons — maybe hundreds — for staying safely within your comfort zone rather than stepping out into the dangerous, prickly world of change. Some may even seem logical. After all, you will face change whether you like it or not, so why deliberately add even more to the agenda? Well, there's the old "stagnation is death" argument: If you don't change, you can't grow. But maybe you don't care about growing, only surviving.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 64

Questions to Consider

How fast is our team decision-making process?

_____

_____

_____

Are we flexible about facing challenges and adapting as things change?

_____

_____

_____

Can we act decisively in the face of uncertainty?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Implement a more effective, flexible, and rapid decision-making process. List the ways you can make this process more logical and decisive.

_____

_____

_____

Collaborate

Emphasize collaboration and the value of teamwork with your teammates.

§§

Sometimes the collaborative approach can result in workplace conflict. But friction isn't always a bad thing, especially when you leverage it by giving everyone a voice in decision-making through healthy debate. This strengthens the team, allows constructive change, and short-circuits problems.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 69

Questions to Consider

Do I give my teammates enough of a say in decision-making?

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_____

_____

Do we discuss our goals enough to perceive all the potential problems?

_____

_____

_____

Do I allow the team members to disagree enough to support innovation and supplant groupthink?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Make team collaboration a primary goal for decision-making, at least within the constraints of time. List ways to accomplish this.

_____

_____

_____

Execute

Avoid procrastination, encouraging immediate strategic execution and implementation.

§§

Once you've made the decision, execute! When it comes to productivity and success, execution trumps all. No matter how well you've designed your strategy, nothing happens if you don't get it done.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 72

Questions to Consider

How firm are my team's milestones and deadlines?

_____

_____

_____

Do I accept too many excuses for failing to meet them?

_____

_____

_____

How can I simplify the strategic execution process, and help my teammates hone their execution skills?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Improve your team execution process, focusing on (a) embracing flexibility so you can turn on a dime if the situation warrants; (b) helping your team improve its performance; and (c) never making success contingent on a particular step or item.

_____

_____

_____

PART II: TEAM FOCUS

Effective, efficient executives build ROI for their teams, because doing so benefits the entire organization. It starts with genuine concern for the team members and their performance—an approach that previous generations of executives might have found a little too touchy-feely for their liking. Some still do.

But during the past generation or so, something unusual has happened: executives have evolved from boss to team player. Oh, they're still in charge, but in the current business environment, smart leaders realize they get further by forming partnerships with their employees.

Modern executives act mostly as visionary facilitators, even cheerleaders, rather than as strategy imposers. They drive strategy with team input as part of their leadership role, and encourage team members to deploy their own tactics for achieving strategies. Why? By necessity. Strategy is more fluid and responsive to change than ever before, so everyone has to execute in whatever way works best at a particular moment.

Since the Great Recession hit in 2008, managerial and rank-and-file jobs have begun converging. No longer can leaders consider themselves completely distinct from non-managerial teammates. Business has always been a collaborative endeavor. In the future, it must become even more so to facilitate efficient execution and greater productivity.

Executive Improvement 101

You depend on your teammates at least as much as they depend on you—probably more. So before detailing how to maintain a team focus, let's consider the basics first.

Basic Principle #1: Sincerely View Employees as Your Greatest Asset

Everyone *says* they do this, but in our precarious economy, some leaders still see employees as replaceable. To some extent they must be. No one—even you—should be indispensable, partly so people can be promoted but also so the company can survive without them if they die, fall ill, or leave. But they're not interchangeable machine parts. They're people. If you take care of them, they'll take care of you.

In a knowledge-based economy, your teammates become especially valuable, because their skills are completely portable—they live in those few pounds of gray matter between their ears. Treat them well so they'll stay with you. Good workers cost a lot to replace.

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P a g e | 27

Care for your team, too—don't act like a distant eminence more worried about your annual bonus than your people. Not to be cynical, but it's easier for them to like you if you care about *them*—and if you make it obvious you do. If your people feel happier, they'll perform better, and you'll all prosper as a consequence.

Basic Principle #2: Communicate Leadership by Word and Deed

Talk is cheap. If you can't keep a promise, don't make it. Otherwise, ask your people what would increase their job satisfaction and performance—and then pursue those factors.

Promises are important, particularly when goals are concerned. Similarly, don't demand the kind of hard work and focus you won't do yourself. You'll have their loyalty if you're in there actively working with them, insofar as your duties allow. You won't if you roll in at 10 a.m. and leave at 4 p.m. to play golf, even if you're schmoozing with a potential client.

Basic Principle #3: Unlock Their Enthusiasm and Energy

Find reasons for your team members to pour their discretionary effort into their work. Empower them in every way possible; share your authority; provide top incentives in whatever forms work best; and tackle your own work with enthusiasm and verve. Taking into account the need to do your own job, remain as accessible as you can and don't micromanage. Instead, trust your folks to do what they need to do and make it easier for them to do it. Allowing your people to do their jobs without too much interference can work wonders.

Basic Principle #4: Fight for Them

Protect your team from both the ups and downs of the economy and from misguided cost-cutting efforts initiated higher up. If lower-level managers at the electronics giant Circuit City had fought for their experienced floor-personnel back in 2007, when C-Suite execs replaced them with untrained newbies, the company might not have gone under. Some leaders can be shortsighted when it comes to protecting their own compensation.

Basic Principle #5: Provide Training

Teach your teammates to ask themselves, "Did I pay for myself today?" If the word is no, they either need to work harder, or they need more training. Give it to them so

everyone can benefit. Make the option available to anyone who qualifies, and allow them as much room to improve as they can handle. You'll more than earn back the cost in increased productivity and goodwill. For example, I've recovered the investment made in my office manager's WordPress training by huge margins.

Remember, in the end, what matters is ROI, not initial cost. If you can make more money by improving your employees' performance than you spend on doing so, then do it. When employees specifically tell you how you can help them boost their productivity, listen up!

Chapter 5. Environment: Build an Open Team Structure

Introduction

Sometimes a team culture forms spontaneously, evolving out of a set of core values combined with corporate mission, vision, and basic goals. But the efficient, effective executive takes a direct hand in guiding team culture while working to maintain a positive culture where it already exists. The work environment has recently moved toward a more open structure marked by increased agility, flexibility, and speed. To get ahead, stop overthinking business, fearing change, and losing focus. Simplify the complex challenges, and bounce back when something doesn't work as expected.

The three environmental factors to consider as you implement or improve your team structure include:

1. **Culture:** Simplify workflow and build team culture.

2. **Receptiveness:** Guarantee receptiveness while accelerating workflow.

3. **Risk-taking:** Challenge your team to do better, while encouraging innovation, creativity, and risk-taking.

Consistent productivity requires a culture that encourages simplicity, speed, and flexibility. Team members must be receptive to new things, especially innovation—which means rewarding risk-taking, lest unproductive habits or boredom set in. If you can help your employees fall in love with the *process* of their work, they'll never be bored. They'll always have something to anticipate or polish. Teach them to anticipate the reward that comes after the humdrum, especially that sense of accomplishment.

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Culture
Simplify workflow and build team culture.

§§

Business is becoming more complicated, competitive, and unpredictable by the day. Those in leadership positions must be constantly aware of this reality, because the decisions made affect the lives and careers of everyone on the teams, and sometimes influence the fate of the entire organization. Every once in a while, you have to stop, take a good look around, and breathe deeply — and then do whatever it takes to reduce the outrageous complexity everyone faces.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 84-85

Questions to Consider

In what ways can I simplify team workflow, building a team culture in which it's easier for my teammates to be productive?

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_____

_____

What can I eliminate to make life easier for everyone?

_____

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_____

Do our projects and tasks have sunset clauses, or do they linger far beyond their usefulness?

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Actions to Take

Apply simple business rules to your work processes. List ways you can eliminate elaborate decision-making and process flow frameworks.

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_____

Receptiveness
Guarantee receptiveness while accelerating workflow.

§§

Three- to five-year strategic plans no longer work; they go stale within months. … Front-line employees need the permission and the flexibility to work with any tactics available to them to execute in the moment – to do what's required to achieve company goals. Therefore, you have no choice except to make your business move faster, without sacrificing quality.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 88

Questions to Consider

Have I made every effort to clear my team's path, actively working to improve their productivity?

_____

_____

_____

Do I keep an eye on the big picture, and encourage efficiency, innovation, and diversity of thought and experience on my team?

_____

_____

_____

What else can I do to increase team receptiveness?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Tank up with high-octane fuel and make sincere efforts to increase receptiveness of continuous improvement among your team members. List ways to do that here, and compare them to your existing methods.

_____

_____

_____

Risk-Taking
Challenge your team to do better, while encouraging innovation, creativity, and risk-taking.

§§

When bright people combine their intelligence with drive and hard work, they can achieve much more than average employees can. But as you build and refine team culture, you'll consistently have trouble challenging your best and brightest enough to keep them engaged with their work… bright people tend to bore easily when faced with the status quo... The solution? Challenge them!

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 92

Questions to Consider

Do I offer my best and brightest true challenges… or the same old brass rings?

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_____

_____

Have I given them a chance to succeed in something that truly matters?

_____

_____

_____

Do they have enough work on their plates to keep them consistently busy?

_____

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Actions to Take

Give your team members projects with a real chance of failure, because (a) they may just succeed with a blue-sky project; and (b) they need to test their limits. Offer them gold rings instead of brass ones—and keep them so busy they never have time to be bored.

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P a g e | 33

Chapter 6. Performance: Forge a Results-Oriented Team

Introduction

The best teams are so close-knit and results-oriented that productivity is a given. It all depends on trust and mutual respect, factors that naturally boost productivity. Everyone on the team must act as integral and active parts of the team. Move forward with positive energy, developing the talents of your team members so you'll inevitably enhance performance. A few rough edges may prove useful, by generating sparks of creativity and innovation that boost productivity even higher. There may be times when you'll have to be ruthless to revitalize your team, clearing out negative attitudes and unprofitable processes rather than people.

This part of the wheel breaks naturally into three basic ideas:

1. **Results:** Teach your team that results matter first, emphasizing substance over style.

2. **Unity:** Encourage unity, heading off clashes along the way.

3. **Success:** Increase your chances for success, making sure you're productive in the right ways.

Let me repeat: results matter first. No matter how busy you are, if you're not posting worthwhile results, something's gone wrong. Take enough time off to study what's missing, bringing your whole team in on the task. Forge a cohesive, unified team with a well-defined work ethic and goals that benefit the bottom line. Work with your team to repair productivity, then push through into miracle territory. It takes more than just bringing your team back up to a decent productivity level. You need to make a quantum leap forward to maximize your impact and pull the organization forward.

Results

Teach your team that results matter first, emphasizing substance over style.

§§

Perception creates reality in most people's minds, but this tendency can lead you astray. You might think a person with feet up on the desk and eyes closed is wasting company time, as one efficiency expert did when hired by Henry Ford. Ford informed him one of the man's ideas had saved him millions of dollars and noted, "At the time, I believe his feet were planted right where they are now."

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 98

Questions to Consider

Do I confuse "busy" with "productive"?

_____

_____

_____

Is style more important than actual substance on my team?

_____

_____

_____

Have we gotten stuck on old "best practices" that haven't changed with the times?

_____

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_____

Actions to Take

Recouple performance and reality, and emphasize that the only thing that really matters is *results.* List some ways you can measure not only team performance, but also each team member's individual performance as well.

_____

_____

_____

Unity
Encourage unity, heading off clashes along the way.

§§

Cohesive teams are more productive than those with internal problems or those who simply aren't on the same page at all times. It's up to you to enhance your team's performance by holding them together in every way possible.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 103

Questions to Consider

Am I playing my part as a member of the team, as well as a leader?

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_____

_____

Am I accessible, without chaining myself down with excessive availability?

_____

_____

_____

Am I good at mediating disputes between team members, and redirecting that passion toward productivity?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

List ways you can increase your team's unity on all levels, from preventing personal clashes to captaining the team.

_____

_____

_____

Success

Increase your chances for success, making sure you're productive in the right ways.

§§

Even if you're not part of the problem, you have to make a sincere effort to be part of the solution. No matter how well you run your own team, you'll have weaknesses that can undermine your strengths if you're not careful. I believe in maximizing strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses, but at the same time, you should know your weaknesses so you can work around them — and root them out whenever possible.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 109

Questions to Consider

How can I chop out the processual "deadwood" without damaging the makeup of my team?

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_____

What are our team's biggest Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats?

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_____

How can we capitalize on our opportunities?

_____

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Actions to Take

Engineer a quantum leap in productivity. Partner with your team on the mission, working with them to lay out the roadmap from where you are to where you want to be while you clear the way. List points along this process.

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_____

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P a g e | 37

Chapter 7. Motivation: Harness Creativity and Loyalty

Introduction

Good leaders internalize the factors that motivate their team members, so they can use them to boost productivity. Invite your teammates on a journey by using the ABCs of motivation. Empower them in ways that make them your partners in success, asking for and considering their ideas and opinions. Meanwhile, take hold of your own creativity, finding ways to harness it, passing those ideas on to your teammates. Never lose sight of the fact that they *are* your teammates; you're a team member, not just a leader. Always seek employee loyalty. This won't come naturally, so find ways to demonstrate your gratitude for a job well done and tighten team cohesion at every turn.

Motivation can be broken down into three basic concepts:

1. **Engagement:** Ensure your team members all own, understand, and practice engagement**.**

2. **Creativity:** Unleash creativity and productivity on your team, using the ABCs of Motivation.

3. **Loyalty.** Maximize loyalty, treating your teammates with respect, trust, and gratitude.

In the modern workplace, where it's easier for employees to work outside a centralized location and be their own bosses, the key to high team performance is to form a partnership with your teammates. Invite them on a productive journey, and make it both enjoyable and fulfilling so they take it more seriously, engaging with and owning their jobs. Validate their value to the team, and you'll enjoy a level of cohesion that makes others teams jealous, wondering how you managed it.

Engagement

Ensure your team members all own, understand, and practice engagement.

§§

Those of us who've worked in an environment in which leaders actively encourage engagement can testify to its effectiveness. The basic recipe for ensuring engagement is surprisingly simple, though the ingredients and precise amounts needed can vary according to the workplace and team. … People are more willing to own their jobs and invest more discretionary effort if there's a payoff, though it doesn't have to be monetary.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 116

Questions to Consider

Have I made a sincere effort to explain each team member's place in contributing to our team and organizational goals?

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_____

Am I willing to respect and trust my team to do the work, without unreasonable censure if something goes wrong?

_____

_____

_____

Do I provide positive motivation, while effectively tracking our progress?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Prepare a list of ways to increase the engagement level on your team, no matter how unlikely those ways seem—and dedicate yourself to coming as close as you can to making them come true.

_____

_____

_____

Creativity
Unleash creativity and productivity on your team.

§§

Allowing your team to unleash their creativity on your collective business problems is an excellent way to motivate them to donate their discretionary effort to the organization. It costs you nothing extra, except for a willingness to relinquish absolute control of your team, and it can deeply benefit your organization. So encourage them to think of novel ways to boost the company's profit. It's in everyone's interest, it's cheap, and as with Forrest Gump's box of chocolates, "you never know what you're gonna get."

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 123

Questions to Consider

Do I allow my team to set aside time for creativity?

_____

_____

_____

Do the organization and I encourage innovation, or do we dismiss the ideas our workers bring us?

_____

_____

_____

Do we penalize those who try to innovate? If so, why?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Encourage your crew members to study other disciplines. Let your team innovate without fear of punishment—and seriously consider any ideas they bring you that may increase productivity or fatten the bottom line.

_____

_____

_____

Loyalty

Maximize loyalty, treating your teammates with respect, trust, and gratitude.

§§

…employee loyalty need not be a thing of the past. No one expects lifelong loyalty anymore, but you can increase loyalty to gratifying levels if you make a few adjustments to the way you do business.

Doing the Right Things Right, pp. 125-126

Questions to Consider

Do I lead by example, focusing on my work the way I want my teammates to focus on theirs?

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_____

_____

Am I generous with my praise when warranted, making it clear that the praise is genuine?

_____

_____

_____

Do we, as a team, get together to celebrate milestones like anniversaries with the company, birthdays, and completed projects?

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Actions to Take

Harness the power of gratitude. Make yourself a part of the team, not just a leader, so your team members know you're on their side—and genuinely *be* on their side.

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Chapter 8. Growth: Emphasize Continuous Improvement

Introduction

At the team level, cohesion depends on growing together as a team, until individual team members interlock smoothly into one efficient entity. A mature team develops features that naturally boost productivity. The effort starts with you. You can clarify these factors and avoid problems by using metacognition to learn not only how *you* think, but how your team members think as well. Among other things, a quality leader accepts both credit and blame when it's due. He or she also acts on constructive criticism without overreacting to the pain that accompanies it. Using your emotional intelligence while balancing your head and heart serves you well here.

The key terms for growth through continuous improvement include Stretch, Accountability, and Conflict.

1. **Stretch.** Stretch your team's abilities.

2. **Accountability.** Emphasize accountability, encouraging teammates to take responsibility for their needs, shortcomings, and errors.

3. **Conflict.** Overcome conflict while helping your teammates accept criticism.

What fails to grow and change will stagnate or die. So commit yourself to team wide growth, and clear the way for your people to follow. You'll experience growing pains, an inevitable part of the process; but don't flinch or quit. The only way to improve is to keep trying until you've got something down so well it costs you no pain to move forward; but even then, you have to maintain a high level of performance. Accountability will keep you on the straight and narrow; without it, you sink into complacency, a pit you may never climb out of again.

Stretch
Stretch your team's abilities.

§§

Growth occurs on all levels in an organization – or at least, it should. Lack of growth may not result in death, but it does lead to stagnation, which causes damage or death in the long run. While you have to center growth on your team to best benefit the organization, individual growth at the leadership level and cross-team development also affect team growth.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 132

Questions to Consider

Have I harnessed the power of metacognition, using it to understand both how I think and how my teammates think?

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_____

_____

Have I instilled effective habits in my teammates?

_____

_____

_____

Have we found our perfect synergy equation yet?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Think about how you and your people think. Work to make them more efficient, more dependent on multiple skill sets, synergetic, and more accountable to themselves and others. Experiment until you find your team's ideal synergy equation.

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P a g e | **43**

Accountability

Emphasize accountability, encouraging teammates to take responsibility for
their needs, shortcomings, and errors.

§§

When you use employer *thinking versus* employee *thinking — and you treat your business as your own — you and your teammates are more likely to be held accountable for what you do or fail to do. Accountability means following through on your promises and accepting the consequences when things go wrong… How accountable you hold yourself depends on the extent to which you refuse to blame others or extenuating factors…*

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 136

Questions to Consider

Do I invest my discretionary effort and correct my own deficiencies instead of complaining about how the world's against me?

_____

_____

_____

How seriously do I take personal responsibility?

_____

_____

_____

How about my teammates?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Make accountability your team's watchword. Use *employer* thinking versus *employee* thinking to become engaged in your work, and hold yourselves accountable for what you do and don't accomplish.

_____

_____

_____

Conflict
Overcome conflict while helping your teammates accept criticism.

§§

Growth hurts—especially when it drags you along faster than you like. You've explored how you have no choice but to change along with the business world, lest you and your team fall behind. This is an integral part of growth: that and bearing the pain even as it eats at you. Like a professional athlete, you don't ignore it; you simply find ways to handle it until you can fix it—and learn from the situation in the meantime.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 138

Questions to Consider

How well do I handle constructive criticism about myself?

_____

_____

_____

How do I handle conflict or a difference of opinion from another team?

_____

_____

_____

Do we continue with continuous improvement efforts even when we've fixed a problem?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Face the pain without flinching. Accept constructive criticism and learn from it. Listen more, talk less; ask for specifics; take corrective action; and follow up with your critics to see how you're doing.

_____

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PART III: TACTICAL WORK

Truly successful executives are those who can thoroughly mine the intersection of efficiency and effectiveness to maximize their value and their team's—whether that team is a small group or an entire division, department, or organization.

Recall that effectiveness is *doing the right things*; efficiency is *doing things right*. The ores from which you smelt the alloy of both, Doing the Right Things Right, are the tactics by which you get things done and achieve strategic execution at the right time in the right place.

As a rule, you don't simply stumble across productivity—and it doesn't strike you out of the blue like a gift from Heaven. Purposeful productivity of the type you need boils down to three keys: Excellence, Planning, and Effort—with a fourth component: quality.

Commitment to Excellence

To achieve your goals requires nothing less than a determined attitude to do incredible work. Think of attitude as leavening in a cake: without it, your team won't rise to the occasion. It's your responsibility to encourage team commitment to excellence in every way possible. Build an experienced, talented group, and then make each team member feel that visceral need to create a product or service that will carve out a large slice of the market share.

Typically, a commitment to excellence arises through factors such as these:

- Leadership by example.
- A culture of cooperation.
- Motivation.
- Employee empowerment.
- Full engagement.

Intelligent Planning

Planning comprises the basic batter of your productivity cake, the body that gives the leavening something to act on. That means you need to give your teammates enough time for their research, work, and strategic thinking. Look at what's going right (so you can continue it) and what's going wrong (so you can fix it). This leads to informed step-by-step planning, followed by goal setting and a point-by-point productivity plan. Do your deep thinking, set your milestones for each piece of the project, and only execute once you have enough information to do so—not a moment sooner or later.

Focused Effort

Here's the heat that provides the energy and synergy that turns your goopy batter into a structured, final product. Your teammates will conduct the execution on the front lines; your primary job is to facilitate their progress and keep encouraging them. Clear away obstacles, elicit advice, tap the knowledge of those outside the project, insert necessary changes with minimal disruption, block distractions, and keep an eye on the competition. Arrange the environment so your people can sink safely into the task at hand, becoming so focused they lose touch with the rest of reality for a short time.

Inextricable Quality

Once you've carefully selected, thoroughly mixed, and baked your productivity ingredients, a delicious result is inevitable. But remember: the final quality depends on you and your careful, heartfelt guidance. Some say a cook is only as good as his or her ingredients; I say the cook is only as good as the person's sense of purposeful productivity.

However you slice it, well-prepared tactical work guides, supports, and refines your final product: productivity. Like a catalyst in chemistry, it's not exactly a part of that product, but without it, the final result would not exist.

Chapter 9. Value: Focus on High-Dollar Activities

Introduction

Your skill at time management determines how well you manage not only your own productivity, but also your team's. Most of us try to handle both in a manner both efficient and effective, but many leaders don't do this well enough. We often waste more time than we should by trying to multitask or by letting other people steal our attention a minute at a time. Limit your day-to-day activities to those that make best use of productivity at the team level.

The three key components of Value include:

1. **Impact.** Maximize your personal impact, valuing yourself and your time highly.

2. **Time-wasters:** Clear time-wasters for your team, making it easier for you and your team to be productive**.**

3. **Enablers:** Institute value enablers**,** such as policies against timewasting attitudes and activities.

Time is money, so value your time highly, and focus on the high-value tasks only you can do. Determine how you can use your team members more effectively, and make a sincere effort to eliminate as many timewasters as you can, in both your personal work life and your team's. Value enablers like knowing what NOT to do as well as what to do, and squeezing all the extra time out of your meetings, will help you push your team's performance through the roof.

Impact

Maximize your personal impact, valuing yourself and your time highly.

§§

Time is your most precious resource. We all get the same amount, and once it's gone, there's no resupply. So use what you have to maximize your impact. … make a serious effort to constantly value your time. Understand why your time matters as much as everyone else's, if not more, and how to conserve it in both personal and team ways.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 148

Questions to Consider

How well do I value my time?

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_____

_____

Do I know its hourly value, and base my tasks on that?

_____

_____

_____

Am I delegating enough low value tasks to my team members?

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Actions to Take

Think in terms of tradeoffs. Delegating low value tasks to those who can do them better and cheaper is just the beginning. Look at ways to save time and money within your team, from telecommuting to avoiding false economy.

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P a g e | **49**

Time-wasters

Clear timewasters for your team, making it easier for you and your team to be productive.

§§

You've no doubt learned how to apply self-discipline, or you wouldn't have made it as far as you have in your career. Now apply that discipline to your team to ensure that they're not wasting valuable time either.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 153

Questions to Consider

What do I personally do that wastes time (and I know it)?

_____

_____

_____

How well have I rooted out timewasters that affect my whole team?

_____

_____

_____

What more do I need to do to make their time more productive?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Remove distractions, clarify priorities, intercept red tape, and provide your teammates with higher levels of authority. Learn how to say NO to people who want to steal your time or your team's, and make it stick.

_____

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P a g e | 50

Enablers

Institute value enablers, such as policies against timewasting attitudes and activities.

§§

Every second you or your team members save goes toward increased productivity. Sometimes, knowing what not to do is the best thing for you – though this fact becomes difficult to recognize when you focus so tightly on what you can do strategically that you miss the obvious choices regarding what not to do.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 156

Questions to Consider

Have I taught my team members how NOT to pick their next tasks?

_____

_____

_____

Have I made enough of an effort to tweak meetings so we all save time?

_____

_____

_____

What's our policy on gossip and similar timewasters?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Know how NOT to pick your next tasks, and make a "Not-to-Do" list for your team to follow. Refuse to allow discussions of politics or religion, denigration of any group, gossip, ducking responsibility, and defeatist thinking.

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 10. Technology: Master Data Handling and Workflow

Introduction

Technology has been a double-edged blessing to business. On one hand, it's helped make modern workers more productive. Cloud computing alone has greatly simplified access to anywhere/anytime information. However, technology can be tyrannical. Not only do you risk a flood of new work triggered by "timesaving" inventions, new technology sometimes makes it easier for others to steal proprietary information. Worse, you can become so dependent on your technology you can't live without it.

Three key terms define the general categories of action that help you handle technology and data without letting it overpower you.

1. **Overload**. Deal effectively with information overload, setting goals to smooth workflow and efficiently handle information.

2. **Pioneer**: Apply a pioneering approach to new technology.

3. **Control**: Establish tight control over your technology.

Properly harnessing modern technology is crucial to maximizing work productivity. The keyword in that last sentence is *properly*. Over-eager adoption without proper study can result in wasted time, social media and Internet addiction, and drooping productivity. You have to maintain tight control over your technology, and cut what's outdated or just doesn't work. You'd kick anything else with a bad ROI to the curb, so do the same with your techno-tools.

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Overload
Deal effectively with information overload, setting goals to smooth workflow and efficiently handle information.

§§

Social researcher Richard Saul Wurman once calculated that every issue of the New York Times contained more information than the average person in Elizabethan England learned in his or her lifetime. Wurman published that observation back in 1987 — before the information explosion we call the Internet really got started. Imagine how much worse it is today.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 165

Questions to Consider

Have I done everything reasonably possible to cut back on my emails?

_____

_____

_____

Do I effectively handle the information I receive each day?

_____

_____

_____

Do I use the right communication methods to receive and pass on information?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Adopt a triage mentality toward information. Reduce your information intake, and check email only at specific times of the day.

_____

_____

_____

Pioneer
Apply a pioneering approach to new technology.

§§

New technology can have its dangers, especially in the workplace. Improperly implemented, it can slow or stop productivity. Additionally, inexperienced or malicious users can leave backdoors open for hackers and identity thieves to waltz right in and steal or corrupt data. So before you dive in, dip a toe in the waters first.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 168

Questions to Consider

Do I keep abreast of technological advances that can aid my business—or have the potential to kill it?

_____

_____

_____

Am I using my current technology to its full potential?

_____

_____

_____

How can I protect myself in case something goes wrong?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Before adopting a new technology, study it thoroughly. Determine how it will affect your workplace, count the costs, and ask yourself whether it will generate more work than it saves. Have an exit strategy in place, in case you need to roll it back.

_____

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P a g e | **54**

Control
Establish tight control over your technology.

§§

Ideally, the only purpose of a tool is to gain and leverage an advantage. But often this comes with a price. The mobility offered by automobiles comes at the price of gasoline, maintenance, and insurance costs, for example. Sometimes the tool is just too easy to use, so we use it for everything, blurring the line between work and personal applications. Modern information technology is a prime example of the latter.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 173

Questions to Consider

Do my team and I waste too much time on social media? Do we even need it?

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_____

_____

To what extent have we allowed our technology to control us?

_____

_____

_____

Are its demands too tyrannical?

_____

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_____

Actions to Take

Know when to tune out and turn off so you can spend time with family and friends. Slip the electronic lease. Technology is your tool, not the other way around.

_____

_____

_____

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P a g e | 55

Chapter 11. Agility: Maximize Speed and Flexibility

Introduction

These days, strength flows from agility. That means responding to each change with speed and flexibility, whether it's a new client demand or a paradigm shifting without a clutch. Handling new challenges on the fly, swerving onto a new course, stopping suddenly and reversing direction—it's all in a day's work for the modern business professional. At the end of the day, all that really matters is results. No one can afford to just mark time. Nor can you let paralysis or procrastination slow you down, and you certainly you can't ignore Team ROI.

Agility breaks down into these key components:

1. **Improvement:** Stress improvement by focusing on genuine, quantifiable results.

2. **Speed.** Emphasize speed and flexibility while adapting to the need of the hour.

3. **Learning.** Use learning as a way to boost ROI while helping team members with their training.

Maximizing agility more than pays for itself, not just financially but productively. You work faster, you're more flexible, and in general, things get easier when all the factors come together. Good, consistent training is especially important in terms of employee confidence, performance, productivity, reduced turnover, and dollars earned on the bottom line. Treat these as positive expenses—just as you would any initiative that promises to increase profits and benefit everyone all the way down the line.

Improvement
Stress improvement by focusing on genuine, quantifiable results.

§§

If you're having trouble determining whether your team is productive or just busy, assume the latter. Productivity should be glaringly obvious. … It boils down to this: productive teams produce results; busy teams produce busywork. Unless you work for an organization such as an international charity in which results aren't immediately apparent, it shouldn't take you more than five minutes to determine if your team is being productive.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 179

Questions to Consider

Have meetings been stealing too much of our time?

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_____

Is my team proactive, or reactive?

_____

_____

_____

Do we measure our results with an eye toward constant process improvement?

_____

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Actions to Take

Clarify your goals with your team, and take a close look at your team ROI on a regular basis. Build in backup, hire for redundancy, cross-train, document all procedures, and plan for the future. Measure everything.

_____

_____

_____

Speed

Emphasize speed and flexibility while adapting to the need of the hour.

§§

One aspect of flexibility leaders often overlook is that their managing style has to change according to the situation or person. For example, you may have to be more stringent during crunch time to complete a project on time within budget, but that need only be temporary before you return to your normal laid-back self. You also have to understand how to handle individual team members — and know when they need a manager as opposed to a coach, or vice versa.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 184

Questions to Consider

How well do I switch between my roles as a manager and coach?

_____

_____

_____

Am I flexible enough to maximize the help I provide my teammates?

_____

_____

_____

Do I respond quickly to requests?

_____

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_____

Actions to Take

Sometimes your team needs a manager; sometimes it needs a coach. Determine which one fits your current needs, and how to flip quickly between them.

_____

_____

_____

Learning

Use learning as a way to boost ROI while helping team members with their training.

§§

Business "efficiency" has evolved beyond its classic dictionary definition, which is essentially minimizing the resources required to do something. That's fine as far as it goes — but what if the thing done right isn't the right thing? If your mechanic changes the wrong tire on your car, it doesn't matter how efficiently he does the job; you've still got a flat tire. As Drucker said, "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all." What we really want, then, is effective efficiency.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 188

Questions to Consider

What would I love to be able to do to boost ROI if it were possible?

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What's the closest I can come in the real world?

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Do I provide my team with the right tools to maximize success?

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Actions to Take

Encourage your team to leverage technology and education to increase their personal and team ROIs. Provide them with the training they need. Set and track efficiency goals.

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Chapter 12. Balance: Sustain Your Physical and Mental Health

Introduction

You might think that the need for a decent work/life balance would be obvious to anyone, but white-collar workers tend to be more driven than most. We forget that brainwork can be just as tiring as physical labor. Sometimes, this results in overwhelm, and ultimately a workflow breakdown you have to rebuild from. This takes time, so it's better not to go there in the first place. Don't work yourself to death. Make a priority of maintaining your health through the proper diet, hydration, exercise, sleep, and breaks. You especially have an obligation to take care of your mental health.

Here's how to find the balance that makes the work/life equation bearable.

1. **Self-care.** Value self-care, and urge your team members to do the same.

2. **Health.** Maintain your personal health.

3. **Acuity**. Work to sharpen your mental acuity.

My specialty as a productivity expert is showing people how to do more in less time. I practice what I preach and get a tremendous amount of work done. I'm an expert at work/life balance, because it's absolutely necessary. My life revolves around my loved ones, so I want to spend as much time with them as possible.

In a world where agility, flexibility, speed, and innovation have become watchwords, you can easily get overworked and overwhelmed. I believe doing too much causes you to *lose* your mental edge, *not* hone it. You aren't a robot. You can't work nonstop. You must take a little time to back up, breathe, take care of the fragile vessel of your human body—and give yourself a break. Literally. Then you can get to work anew.

Self-Care
Value self-care, and urge your team members to do the same.

§§

These days, many in the white-collar world are just plain exhausted, stumbling along from one crisis to another and never getting the R&R we need. Let's suppose you've joined that trend, and your personal productivity has taken a nosedive. … Now what? Every second you're out of the race, you and those depending on you fall further behind. So leap into action, resolved to restore your vitality in record time. But how do you revive your productivity? Do what you do when your computer crashes: a hard reboot.

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 194

Questions to Consider

Have I been ignoring my self-care?

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Am I wallowing in frustration because I seem unable to move forward—or am I falling behind?

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_____

If so, how can I escape this vicious cycle and refresh myself so I can repair my productivity?

_____

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_____

Actions to Take

Stop ignoring your physical and mental health. Do a productivity reboot. Accept that you're stuck and hit Restart.

_____

_____

_____

Health
Maintain your personal health.

§§

Clearly, productivity alone doesn't keep us healthy. In fact, the exact opposite is true. As psychotherapist Nathaniel Branden points out, "Productive achievement is a consequence and an expression of health and self-esteem, not its cause."

Doing the Right Things Right, p. 195

Questions to Consider

Do I feel well enough to be productive?

_____

_____

_____

How is my mental health?

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_____

_____

What can I do to improve the Big Five health factors in my life?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Good health arises from maintaining the following practices: good sleep, a healthy diet, hydration, exercise, and mental fitness. Make time for them even when you don't want to.

_____

_____

_____

Acuity

Work to sharpen your mental acuity.

§§

Did you know that smart people actually think faster than "regular" people do? … The smarter the person, the faster the mental speed. For me, this begs the question: does being smart make you think faster, or does thinking faster make you smarter? The jury's still out on that, but I suspect it's a bit of both.

Doing the Right Things Right, pp. 198-199

Questions to Consider

How effective is my mental focus?

_____

_____

_____

Do I take the time to talk to others to help me frame my thoughts and process data?

_____

_____

_____

Do I relax and recharge often enough?

_____

_____

_____

Actions to Take

Relax. Cut back on your to-do list. Learn to focus, exercise your memory and intellect with puzzles, and spend time with friends and family. Take your breaks, and have fun when you can.

_____

_____

_____

My Conclusions

What challenges am I/was I having that motivated me to read *Doing the Right Things Right: How the Effective Executive Spends Time* (my goals)?

What has changed for me since reading this book and completing this personal journal (my insights, ah-ha's, and changes in mindset)?

What am I going to do to ensure that real change actually does take place in my life (my most important action steps)?

I would love to share your learning and insights with you! Please email me at
Laura@TheProductivityPro.com with the above. Thank you for the honor of
reading my work.