

# The Power Of Execution... How Not To Get Things Done

by Barry Wishner

## The 9 dumbest reasons why leaders "can't" or "don't" make things happen.

"There are risks and costs to a program of action but they are far less than the long range risks and costs of comfortable inaction." — President, John F. Kennedy

Do you have what it takes to create a "can do" environment?

A leader really has no power to get stuff done. They only have the ability to create an environment that is comfortable, keeps people excited about the goal and challenged to complete it. You're fooling yourself if you believe that your power comes from your title or the location of your office or parking spot. Good leaders get people to do things because they're totally committed and they have a clear picture of the target.

"Effective Execution" separates the best performing leaders and their companies from the competition.

The difference between successful people and companies, and everyone else isn't that they're smarter but rather that they're better at execution. The cavemen were the first to learn this. The rewards didn't go to those who worked the hardest pushing the rock; the rewards went to those who pushed the rock the farthest. "NO A Plus" for perspiration.

Here is a list of the 9 dumbest reasons why leaders "can't" or "don't" make things happen.

### 9. Great Decisions Produce Great

#### Results. Bah Humbug!!

Talking about doing something is not the same as doing it. When you've made the decision to do something it's just the beginning of the process, not the end. Example: Can-Do leaders make the decision to build a better mousetrap. They design it, they build it and then they get it to market before the competition.

Exceptional performance is the sum of hundreds of actions and decisions that take place within companies. Great decisions need great execution! Great execution is seeing what everyone else is seeing and then doing something with it that's never been done before.

### 8. Go back to the good old days.

#### Big mistake.

In an attempt to avoid making mistakes, some leaders continue to do things the way they've always done them. No longer do you have the luxury of hibernating and hanging out until the warm weather comes.

A state of suspended animation is caused when people and their organizations are superstitious. They spend more time defending the status quo and the old way of doing things, more because of the fear of the future than their love of the past.

"Don't sit on the shore and be satisfied, choose to chance the rapids and dare to ride the tides," Garth Brooks, Lyrics "The River."

The time to change is when things are going well. Tip toeing in today's marketplace is the fastest way to commit business suicide and go the way of the dinosaur.

Mel Ziegler created The Banana Republic and sold it, he created Republic Tea and sold it, he is now creating ZoZa (urban performance wear).

To be successful, leaders and their organizations have to avoid DITWLY, (**Did It That Way Last Year**).

## **7. All priorities are created equal and the more priorities the merrier.**

### **Where do I begin...?**

"I can't do what 10 people tell me to do so I guess I'll remain the same," Otis Redding, Lyric "Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay."

In physics, no two things can occupy the same space at the same time. So why do you assume multi-tasking is a good thing? Ever feel like your to-do list is getting out of control? Or have you ever had the brilliant idea of rolling out 10 priorities and then after you've rolled them out, no one pays any attention to them? Create a "stop doing list" of those activities which fail to focus on results and outcomes.

Great leaders are great simplifiers. Bill Gates took 1000 policies and procedures at Microsoft and reduced them to 60. The richest man in the United States realized the importance of simplifying the process. He saw a problem and took action to fix it.

Execution cannot be another program or flavor of the month. To guarantee that an execution plan becomes a reality, you have to put it on the top of the agenda. This helps you avoid the trap where you roll out a program and your people are more worried about the content than they are about doing what it takes to make it happen.

## **6. More meetings and more information guarantees the right answer.**

### **WRONG — They guarantee confusion!**

The average CEO spends 80% of their time getting ready for and attending meetings. The 20% that's left hardly seems like enough time to 'get stuff done.'

Information doesn't provoke action. Knowing about it and doing something about it are entirely different. The only time information becomes valuable is when it is courageously executed. Avoid the myth that it's easier and safer to sit around and intellectualize. It's Not!

"Doing something actually requires you to do something." Dr. Phil McGraw

When was the last time you did something different after attending a workshop or a meeting and received new information?

## **5. Failure is not an option.**

### **Can you remember how much you learned from your last failure?**

The real secret is to reward success and failure, and punish inactivity and sloppy execution.

The secret to failure is to fail fast. A perfect example is the Edsel. It has been thought of as the biggest failure of all times in the automotive industry. The biggest failure is actually the 1955 DeSoto. Even though the public showed they weren't interested in buying the car, they continued to produce it for another 10 years. The Ford Motor Company pulled the Edsel off the market when they realized it was a loser. The reality is that leaders get paid to produce results not to be right all of the time.

"Success is measured by your ability to maintain enthusiasm between failures." Winston Churchill

"I'd rather be a failure at something I enjoy than a success at something I hate," George Burns.

If you're unwilling to create a risk taking environment and you're intolerant of mistakes and failures, you're not moving forward and being competitive. You pay the same price for doing something half way as you do for doing it all the way. Why not do it all the way?

## **4. Accessibility is only necessary when there is a problem to resolve.**

### **Stay hidden and you'll never know when things are going wrong.**

In today's competitive environment, great leaders check their egos at the door. It's about team members, not them.

"The greatest problem that people in leadership positions face is the problem of hemorrhoids." Peter Drucker

A desk is a dangerous place to view your customers and employees. When was the last time you met with a customer face to face to find out what you're doing right or what you're doing wrong and what you can do to improve? When was the last time you sought out an employee to tell them they were doing a great job?

Employees want to see you and feel they can relate to you. Harry Kraemer, the CEO at Baxter, keeps in touch with his employees. They have the ability to communicate directly with him at his Internet address, AskHarry.com.

Face time counts. It allows your people and your customers to get to know you as a person and what you stand for. It helps to build trust with your customers and energize your staff.

## **3. The big eat the small. WRONG!!**

### **It's the fast who eat the slow.**

You've got to run just to stay in place. If you stand still you're going backwards. "Speed, Speed, Speed" is the name of the game. It used to take a company 10 years to go bankrupt; it can now be done in 10 months.

"You can Xerox anything that's standing still but you can't copy anything that's moving." Mike McClelland, Retired President and CEO, Do-It-Best Hardware

Today's board of directors have put their CEOs on notice. "Fix things quickly or we'll find someone who will."

## **2. Mission and Vision Statements have to be lengthy and complicated.**

### **No Way! This formula guarantees failure!**

Leaders are often drawn to the sexiness of an elaborate vision, but it's the focus on simplicity and the discipline of execution that makes the real difference.

The more people who understand the mission and vision, the more likely it will get executed. A simplified mission enhances the opportunity for buy in and adoption.

Consistent execution only occurs when each individual acts in alignment with the strategic interest and values of the company. If you take care of your troops, they'll take care of the mission.

Take the example of California Pizza. They have a one word mission statement, "ROCK." Every one at California Pizza, from the executive office to the restaurant associates, remembers what "ROCK" stands for... R=RESPECT, O=OPPORTUNITY, C=CARING, K=KINDNESS. At Modell's Sporting Goods, their mission is "Listen, Respect, Respond." I can remember that and so can their employees.

## **1 . Hire people who are talkers and not doers.**

### **Just what you need... more noise.**

"The time for talking is over, the time for action is now," Willie Nelson, Lyrics "Red Headed Stranger."

There is a sign on the wall at Netscape, which reads: "Building a great company requires 3 things, People, People, People." But all people are not created equal in business. It's no longer enough to look at a persons resume to see what they've done in the past. You should be asking, "what can you do for me tomorrow?"

Tomorrow's successful leaders will be those who become connoisseurs of talent and focus on hiring A people with A ideas who produce A results vs. Boring people with Boring ideas who produce Boring results.

Today's successful companies will be those who focus on hiring employees who have energy and enthusiasm and push to improve the process and get stuff done.

Barry Wishner's behind the scenes interviews of high-powered business leaders, news making entrepreneurs and ground-breaking mavericks provide a cross-industry perspective into how they make things happen.

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