Does it Matter?

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Introduction

Vision is 1% and Alignment is 99%. Jim Collins and Jerry Porras coined this phrase in the Harvard Business Review article, *Building Your Company's Vision* (September –October 1996).

You could consider good ideas "vision" and execution the equivalent of "alignment". Quite simply, all the good ideas in the world are worth little without people who execute on the good ideas and make them effective (getting results).

In the business world, there are numerous idea generators on the topics of leadership, strategy, management, team and every other imaginable aspect of business. The ideas of these thought leaders are broadly dispersed to the masses in the form of keynote speeches, books, articles, audio CDs, and seminars accompanied by a stream of handouts, workbooks, videos, and assessments, etc.

But have you ever wondered why there is so little real execution of these ideas within businesses and other organizations? One sees very little change in organizations and their results. We do find, however, management trends and fads changing quite frequently, each seeming to leave more quickly than they came, replaced by the "next new thing". The market place jumps to the "new thing" sure that it will be the answer to their organizational problems and the catalyst for better results. And on it goes.

Does it Matter?

Why do we care about getting to execution and results? It would be an easy answer to this question to say we do not care. Yet this would seem to be

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contrary to most organization's intentions let alone contrary to human tendency. Why do so many executives express frustration when talking about all their strategic plans and ideas...that they did not get accomplished? Why do individuals get so frustrated when setting New Year's resolutions year-after-year...that do not get completed?

Based on a survey of all the materials that are being sold to "help" people and organizations, many of them repeating the same messages, it would seem that people genuinely have an interest in getting the knowledge implemented within their organizations. At least they have a genuine interest in getting to the results touted by the advertisements or the case studies. Organizations generally want to be successful. They generally want to see better results. Herein lays the answer to the question: "do we care about getting to results?" The answer is yes.

What are Causes of the Problem?

The problem in getting to results is generally not the lack of good ideas. Many of the ideas have been born and tested in successful organizations or by minds gifted in concept creation. There are many great ideas. In fact, the ideas across different sources are many times repetitious giving a "familiar ring" to new material while reinforcing our current knowledge. Similarly, it is generally not for the lack of distribution of the good ideas that keeps an organization from results. Witness the plethora of books, seminars, etc. that are available to the public. Let alone the quick access to knowledge accommodated by our current media and internet channels.

If it is not the lack of good ideas or the lack of distribution of these ideas, what is causing this "gap" between the knowing and doing, between thought and action, between idea and execution, between theory and application?

It could be a number of things but here are some observations from our business experience on the fundamental reasons for this gap:

- **Lack of choosing the few**

Many organizations will try to implement too many new ideas at one time rather than choosing one or two ideas to implement to the point of habit before moving on. An individual or organization will have more success by selecting based on priority.

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• Lack of a strategic framework
In order to identify which “few” you should implement, it is vital to have a strategic framework against which to prioritize. A framework also helps you place new knowledge into the proper category, discipline or function.

> *For example, asking questions like: Is this new knowledge, on a better way to approach our tactical marketing, consistent with our brand? Is it consistent with our sales approach? Is it aligned with our strategy? Overall, a strategic framework allows you to speed up the decision making process when bringing new knowledge back into the organization.*

• Lack of a process
Most organizations have not developed a process for the integration of new ideas or knowledge into the organization. A process would simply clarify:

- Based on our strategic framework does this fit with the “few” that we are or should be currently implementing?
- What is the most efficient way to educate the rest of the organization on this new knowledge?
- Who is accountable for ensuring this is gets implemented all the way to habit?

• Lack of self-discipline
It can be simple to see why something needs to be implemented or even, sometimes, how it should be implemented. However, it is hard to do because it requires us to stay focused on the task and see it through to completion. Forcing change related to new knowledge within an organization takes consistent effort.

• Lack of togetherness
Many times new knowledge is learned by one person or a few people in the organization who then try to convince the rest of the team or organization the merits of adopting this new knowledge. Since the other people within the organization were not present first-hand to receive the new knowledge they are more reticent to change. Not because they hold anything against the individual, it’s just that they are not sure what the other person is really talking about. “Things get lost in the translation”, is the saying.

Yet, we still send people in our organizations off in all different directions for learning new knowledge.

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• Lack of consistency
Consistency is generally required to see results in any endeavor. Very rarely will an organization see results show up quickly on the bottom line. The financial bottom line is a lagging indicator of success. Frequently, individuals and organizations do not stick to applying the new knowledge long enough to see the results. And even if they have begun to see results, if the new knowledge in not yet ingrained as a habit, it will not be able to stay when attention wanes.

In a society where immediate results are demanded, and expected, there can be a tendency to change some course of new knowledge implementation before it has had time to bring about the desired change or result.

• Lack of common terminology
This is a seemingly minor problem yet can cause significant problems in execution of new ideas. In a technical environment, say engineering or medicine, specific words have specific meaning. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the areas of strategy, management, team or leadership. If people within an organization do not take the time to create their own clear terminology, resources can be wasted on differences that emerge strictly based on misunderstanding.

• Lack of accountability
The best form of accountability is peer pressure. Unfortunately many organizations do not have an executive team that is comfortable holding each other accountable.

CEO Advisors look to “fill the gap”, through creating unique processes that address these fundamental problems holding organizations back from execution and results. We choose a few, simple tools and then create processes for consistently applying those tools over time. These processes incorporate elements that offset the fundamental reasons for this gap between ideas and execution. We feel it is more effective to choose a tool (idea) and use it consistently over time as opposed to constantly switching tools (ideas) looking for the next best answer to the organization’s lack of results.

The CEO AdvantageTM is one of the unique processes we have created and is specifically designed to help companies translate their vision into execution and results. Companies using The CEO AdvantageTM have been able to “fill the gap”. They have been able to get to execution and results. The CEO AdvantageTM helps to accomplish this through enabling business coaches in the advising of CEO’s and executive teams of middle market organizations on that all-important “system” – the executive system.

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The executive system is merely the system for how an organization performs in the following areas:

- Long-term strategic thought,
- Strategic execution process, and
- Building a healthy team and organization

Why is the executive system such an important system for middle market companies? Pre-middle market stage is what we call the entrepreneurial company stage. To be successful, an entrepreneurial company needs to put systems in place for the various functional and performance areas. For example, systems need to be developed for sales, marketing, service/product delivery, and financial management, to name a few. To move beyond the entrepreneurial stage into the middle market, a business needs to then develop and refine an executive system. It is the system that sits over the top of the other systems.

As a CEO Advisor we have a unique process and materials for use in working with middle market businesses. Repeating from above, vision is 1% and alignment (or execution) is 99%. We have the vision for how The CEO AdvantageTM can have an impact on helping organizations translate their vision into execution and results. We want to use The CEO AdvantageTM to get these tools and disciplines into the minds of middle market CEO's and Executive Teams, so they can translate their vision into execution and results.

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