

“The way to link the three core processes of any business – the people process, the strategy, and the operating plan – together, to get things done on time”

EXECUTION – THE DISCIPLINE OF GETTING THINGS DONE

As one of the world's most acclaimed CEOs, Larry Bossidy is more than qualified to advise on how to deliver results and get jobs done. Together with Ram Charan, advisor to senior executives and boards of directors, Bossidy has written the New York Times bestseller, *'Execution – The Discipline of Getting Things Done'*. (From this point onwards, we will refer to this book simply as *'Execution'*). Bossidy and Charan have pooled their knowledge and experience into one book on how to close the gap between results promised and results delivered, that people in business need today.

This 2002 book is Bossidy's first step in his new role as Author following an incredibly successful business career beginning at General Electric in 1957 and ending as CEO of Honeywell in 2002. The book went on to become an international best-seller, selling over 500,000 copies worldwide.

"Execution breaks with the tradition of many business books by focussing on the things people do at work rather than on the way in which they do them."

Through 'Execution' Bossidy and Charan are giving a name to:

1. The missing link.
2. The main reasons companies fall short of their promises.
3. The gap between what a company's leaders want to achieve and the ability of their organisations to deliver it.
4. Not simply tactics, but a system of getting things done through questioning, analysis, and follow-through.
5. **The way to link the three core processes of any business – the people process, the strategy, and the operating plan – together, to get things done on time.**

There are a large number of CEOs who fail in their roles. Many would say that the failure is due to a weak or wrong strategy but the point made by Bossidy and Charan is that it is not the strategy itself that is wrong, rather the fact that it was not executed well.

“In 2000 alone, 40 of the top 200 CEOs in America’s Fortune 500 list were removed from post – not retired, but fired or made to resign. When 20% of the most senior business people in a country lose their jobs in just one year, something must be wrong.”

This has become a pattern since then and in these businesses, it is not only the fired CEO who suffers but the rest of the business and in some cases, those on the periphery such as suppliers and customers.

Execution is not about micromanaging. “Micromanaging is a big mistake. It diminishes people’s self confidence, saps their initiative, and stifles their ability to think for themselves...There’s an enormous difference between leading an organisation and presiding over it. The leader who boasts of their ‘hands-off’ style or puts their faith in empowerment is not dealing with the issues of the day.”

So how do you spot an executing leader? “...leaders who excel at execution immerse themselves in the substance of execution and even some of the key details. They use their knowledge of the business to constantly probe and question. They bring weaknesses to light and rally their people to correct them. The leader who executes often does not even have to tell people what to do; they ask questions so they can figure out what they need to do. In this way they coach them, passing on their experience as a leader and educating them to think in ways they never thought of before. Far from stifling people, this kind of leadership helps them expand their own capabilities for leading.”

There are seven essential business characteristics of a leader who is in charge of execution:

- First off, this person knows their people and their business. They are in touch with the day-to day realities, they are in amongst the action and they know their organisation and their people completely, and their people know them.
- Second is ‘insist on realism’ there is a tendency towards hiding mistakes and avoiding confrontations, a failure to admit that they don’t always have the answers.
- Third is the setting of clear goals and priorities. Focus on a few, easy to grasp, clearly realistic goals and priorities.
- In fourth position is ‘follow through’. It’s all very well setting these goals and priorities but not so good if no one

takes them seriously and you fail to follow them through.

- The fifth behaviour is rewarding those who achieve specific results. Seems obvious doesn't it? Yet still many corporations do such a poor job of rewarding the performers.
- The sixth point also seems pretty obvious but again is not always practiced; 'expand people's capabilities through coaching'. Share the knowledge and skills you have learned along the way. Leave behind future generations of highly successful leaders.
- Finally 'know yourself'. Be comfortable with your strengths and don't be destroyed by your weaknesses.

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