

A Book Report on
Discovering Execution
(The Key to High Performance Organizations)
By Miles Kierson & Gary Tomlinson

(Book Summary by Tom Willingham)

FOREWARD:

- Lack of execution is the biggest issue facing organizations today.
 - Less than 20% of organizations actually achieve their strategic plans.
 - Most managers don't understand the concepts of managing execution so they end up chasing the symptoms.
- Definition of Execution:
 - Execution is clarifying, deploying and achieving organizational initiatives.

YOUR INVITATION:

- Everything you do that is purposeful takes execution.
- What would be possible if your organization had a competency in execution?
...EVERYTHING
- You're invited to discover and master execution!

PREFACE: – WHY YOU NEED TO DISCOVER EXECUTION

- Execution is like air in that it is everywhere and invisible, but it too has properties that need to be discovered and understood.
 - However, execution is unlike air in that when air is lacking we know it.
- Until we discover execution and its properties we can't get better at it.

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS EXECUTION?

- Set aside what you think you already know about execution.
- Larry Bossidy & Ram Charan, Execution: "The Discipline of Getting Things Done"

- “Execution is not just something that does or doesn’t get done. Execution is a set of behaviors and techniques that companies master in order to have a competitive advantage.”
- “It is a discipline of its own. In big companies and small ones, it is the critical discipline for success now.”
- Execution is everything you do to fulfill the purpose of an activity.
- Execution happens at the individual level.

CHAPTER 2: THE LANGUAGE OF EXECUTION

- “All you do at work is speak and listen.” ...but what is our skill level?
- Current language of execution generates negative reactions to words like:
 - Promises, Commitment, Accountability, Holding Others Accountable, Discipline, Initiative, Responsibility, Goals, Stretch Targets.
- We need to create a new language of greatness around the topic of execution.

CHAPTER 3: THE EXECUTION CYCLE

- Requests and Promises are performative words (performing/doing) vs. describing words (thinking/feeling).
 - Request is asking someone to do something.
 - Promise is when they say they will do it.
- REQUEST => PROMISE => FOLLOW THROUGH cycle.
 - Often Requests are not clear.
 - Often Promisor doesn’t mean it.
- Journey to Execution Mastery.
 - Make the commitment.
 - Practice keeping your promises.
 - Be aware of Execution Cycle and push it through completion.
 - Adopt and use an Execution Management System.

CHAPTER 4: RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK MATTER

- Relationships are the foundation for creating High-Performance Organizations.
- What is the purpose of your relationships at work?

- The purpose of relationships at work is to enhance the success of the organization.
- Need to dedicate time to develop quality relationships.
 - You and those around you need to be clear on their responsibilities and goals.
 - You need to spend time meeting with manager and employees to review progress toward responsibilities and goals.
- Critical relationships:
 - Manager, direct reports & peers are your partners.
 - Their success is key to yours and the organization's success.
- Question: "Don't have time?"...what else could be more important?
 - Need to set aside time every week to check in.

CHAPTER 5: COMMITMENT: THE SECRET SAUCE

- A commitment, as a declaration, is saying some future event will happen because you have committed yourself to it.
- Commitments vs. Promises.
 - Promise is made to fulfill something and often doesn't involve others.
 - Something you know you can do.
 - "I will do my best."
 - If kept, you "kept your word."
 - Commitment is a response to a larger request and requires planning.
 - Something you may not know if you can accomplish.
 - "I will do whatever is legal, moral and ethical to achieve it."
 - If kept, you "deliver results."
- Without commitment, nothing extraordinary will be accomplished.

CHAPTER 6: MANAGING EXECUTION

- If you are going to master execution you will need to manage execution.
- Most senior executives believe they have a system in place to manage execution, however, it is likely not a "system" but a loose collection of unrelated processes.
- Question: "Would you say your company has a core competency in managing execution or in execution itself?"

- The purpose of an execution management system is more important than the tool itself.
 - Everyone must be clear about Initiatives, Vision, Mission and Core Behaviors.
 - Everyone must have a written Agreement about what they will focus on and accomplish during the next year.
 - Manager will approve and discuss monthly with employee.
 - Direct reports will do the same with their staff.
- An execution management system, like KeyneLink, makes it easier to stay on track and, without one you're playing Russian roulette with the results.
- CEO or CXO (Chief Execution Office) must be responsible for execution.

CHAPTER 7: THE JOURNEY TO MASTERY OF EXECUTION

- Execution exists.
- There is a language of execution and a cycle that drives it.
- It requires continued focus, management and commitment.
- “What is mastery? At the heart of it, mastery is practice. Mastery is staying on the path.”
- What does mastery of execution look like?
 - Stretch targets are set every year and 75% to 80% achieved.
 - Great place to work because of culture of “gentle accountability.”
- Example of commitment: JFK speech about going to the moon.

CHAPTER 8: THE RESISTANCE TO GETTING BETTER AT EXECUTION

- The Forms of Resistance (Hurdles):
 - Until people discover execution for themselves, they really don't see the value of it.
 - People who have never been held accountable for results are terrified of the idea of it.
 - People don't keep their promises.
 - Above all, most people really just want to be comfortable. (Change is hard).
 - The organizational drift is built on avoiding discomfort. (Status quo is easier).

- The language of execution can be a turn-off. (Afraid to hold others accountable).
- Lack of courage and commitment on the part of the senior executive. (Abdicate their responsibility).

CHAPTER 9: OKAY, SO NOW WHAT?

- Recommended steps:
 - Commit to Discovering Execution.
 - Practice the Language of Execution.
 - Be prepared for Resistance and set up employees for success.
 - Practice using the Execution Cycle.
 - Nurture and Develop Relationships at work.
 - Adopt a System to Manage Execution.
 - Stay on the path in your Journey to Master Execution.

About Tom Willingham:

Tom Willingham is the President of The Hampton Group, an Operations and Management Consulting Firm he founded in 2003 to help middle market companies in Southern California achieve superior performance levels.

Tom is certified in the KeyneLink™ Process and has worked with KeyneInsight and their network of consultants to discover the significant impact Execution Management can have on organizational performance and share this message with CEOs and business leaders. You can contact Tom at tomw@thampton.com and learn more about The Hampton Group and its services at www.thampton.com.

Message from Gary Tomlinson:

Thanks to Tom Willingham for writing this book summary on “Discovering Execution” It’s important to understand this document should not take the place of you reading; “*Discovering Execution – The Key to High Performance Organizations*” by Miles Kierson and Gary Tomlinson.

You can engage Gary at gary@garyetomlinson.com. To read his other book reports or book reviews visit his website at www.garyetomlinson.com.

