



The Manager of Execution

By: Richard Hagberg, Ph. D. and Jack Forem

HCG INSIGHTS Spring 2006



**Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked;
leadership is defined by results.**

-Peter Drucker

Effective leaders – and great leaders – can be found among all the Three Pillars of Leadership. But when it comes to achieving results, Managers of Execution are without peer. These are the people who can be relied upon to get it done. As individuals, they finish what they start and produce what they say they will produce. As leaders, they make sure that others do the same.

The central orientation of Managers of Execution is toward productivity, effi-

ciency, setting practical goals, staying focused and on task, and getting results. If you are not this type and you don't have one on your team, you will have problems. Meetings won't start on time. Deadlines will get slipped. Projects won't get driven to conclusion. Critical details will get overlooked. People won't be held accountable. Even with the best of intentions and an inspirational vision, you're not likely to get maximum results.

Managers of Execution (ME)

are the world's administrators. They provide clarity, focus, structure, and direction. In thousands of organizations around the globe, ME's serving as chief executive officers, chief operating officers, project managers, and heads of manufacturing insure that their organizations' objectives move step by step toward successful completion.

Managers of Execution are natural experts in managing their own performance as well as the performance of others. They are exceptionally self-

“ Execution— getting the task done, making it happen— is the most unappreciated skill of an effective business leader.”

- Louis Gerstner, former Chairman and CEO, IBM

disciplined. Their approach to problems is methodical, steady, and precise. They are the hardest working of all the Three Pillar types. More than Visionary Evangelists, and far more than Relationship Builders, ME's work their way to the top in business, government, the military – wherever they happen to be. Here are a few examples of the ME profile, some of whom we'll be discussing later in the article: Michael Dell, Jack Welch, Warren Buffet, Condoleezza Rice, Larry Bossidy, Lou Gerstner, Hilary Clinton, Henry Ford, IBM founder Thomas Watson, George Washington, Colin Powell, California Senator Diane Feinstein, Dick Cheney, Tiger Woods, Vijay Singh, basketball coach Bob Knight, Queen Elizabeth I, eBay CEO Meg Whitman, and Martha

Stewart.

Where the Visionary Evangelist is creative and charismatic, and the Relationship Builder is warm and people-centered, Managers of Execution are down to earth, realistic, and reliable. Their practicality and drive for excellence down to the last detail are often *required* in organizations, to insure that the high-flying but not necessarily practical Visionary's ideas come to fruition, or to balance the sensitive RB who may not be sufficiently tough-minded, decisive, prepared, or persistent to get the job done on time and with the highest quality.

ME's are highly organized individuals who bring structure to organizations in which they work. They are planners and list makers, systematic thinkers who are good at setting goals and hitting targets. They like things to be neat, efficient, and under control. They are persistent and dependable. To honor their commitments and make sure the job gets done, they are willing to work harder and longer on a project than most people. And yes – they tend to be workaholics.

Warren Buffet, the brilliantly successful investor and world's second richest person, not only fits the profile of the Manager of Execution; the

majority of the companies he invests in are conservative, reliable organizations run by other Managers of Execution. In the 2000 version of his

In “ Good to Great”, Jim Collins’ best selling study of leaders who have successfully led organizational transitions to a higher level of performance, he says: “ Throughout our research, we were struck by the continual use of words like disciplined, rigorous, dogged, determined, diligent, precise, fastidious, systematic, methodical, workmanlike, demanding, consistent, focused, accountable, and responsible.” All these terms fit our data on the characteristics of the Manager of Execution.

much-read annual letter to shareholders, Buffet spelled out his investment preferences with this quip: "We have embraced the 21st century by entering such cutting-edge industries as brick, carpet, insulation, and paint. Try to control your excitement."

NATURAL STRENGTHS

Our research at HCG has uncovered very specific reasons why executives and managers with the Manager of Execution leadership style excel at getting results. Here are some of the high points.

They focus on productivity and bottom line results

HCG once had a client nicknamed "Bottom Line Bob." That was not just an apt description of Bob, it also captures in a nutshell much that needs to be said about Managers of Execution. Sometimes it seems that all ME's live for is the bottom line: to get results, accomplish their objectives, and see projects through to completion. They have a clear picture of what they want to accomplish, they set goals – both long-term and short-term – line up the steps to achieve them, and follow through every step of the

"You have to get very expert people, delegate to them a lot of responsibility, make sure you have confidence in them. You've got to measure it, you've got to supervise it, you've got to check on it."
- Fred Smith,
CEO, FedEx

way.

In the thousands of 360 assessments we have carried out at HCG, we have heard this trait described repeatedly. For example:

"When a job has to be completed by a certain time, Steve makes sure it gets done. He expects results and ensures that his team has the information, resources and support to allow them to deliver in a timely manner."

"High output. Strong work ethic. Always very focused on results. Great follow

through. Obsessed to complete all assigned tasks."

"When you work with Diane, the objectives for the project are laid out up front. This keeps the focus and helps achieve objectives in a timely manner."

In their virtual obsession with the bottom line, ME's excel at controlling costs and insuring that ventures the organization pursues turn out to be profitable. As a young man, "Bottom Line Bob" was a talented and hard-working All American basketball player who shot 93% from the free throw line. Later, he brought the disciplined execution skills he learned while playing basketball to the business world.

ME's like Bob are always calculating what it will take to succeed. They are cautious about business expenditures and careful to stay within budget. No wasted motion. No wasted money. In companies where the only way to survive is through strict self-restraint, profit margins are small, and only the most efficient survive, they thrive.

They set a high standard of dedication, hard work, and commitment

Managers of Execution are

“ Unless you are willing to drench yourself in your work beyond the capacity of the average man, you are just not cut out for positions at the top.”

*- James Cash
(J.C.) Penney*

what we often refer to at HCG as “ models of commitment.” They not only work hard, they work a little harder than everybody else. They are willing to stay late, come in early, take work home, and skip breaks and lunches in order to complete projects on time and well. They don’t like loose ends. They don’t give up. They like to reach closure.

An executive said of his boss, “ Al will go the distance, and he definitely leads by example. Sometimes, he is almost over committed to the organization since he will work on vacation days, late hours, early hours, etc. It’s almost too much. He works so hard and consistently that he makes us feel guilty for ‘slacking off’ after only 10 hours!”

They are dependable, conscientious and responsible

Managers of Execution almost invariably have strong personal values and a compelling, uncompromising sense of responsibility. They’re committed to doing what they say they will do – but even more, they’re committed to doing what they believe is right. In a conversation, you might hear an ME say, “ My values seem to be a little old fashioned by modern standards.”

They are good boy scouts and girl scouts. (If you look a bit below the surface, you’ll find that a major source of motivation for these people is fear of violating the strict demands of their conscience; it’s as if someone is looking over their shoulder all the time, judging them. They have lots of “shoulds” and “oughts.”)

Most ME’s have a deep commitment to living what some have called a values-driven life. “ Although her position is one of constant demand, Michelle does not hesitate to do the right thing, no matter how hard it may be,” one executive said of her co-worker. “ Because of her high integrity level, she simply could not live with herself if she didn’t do what is morally and ethically correct.”

This personal commitment to values makes ME’s in leadership positions good at setting organizational standards and holding people to them. They’re very strict with themselves about meeting their deadlines, honoring their

HCG Client 360 Assessment

“ Rolf’s energy & commitment are never ending. Dedicated is an understatement. He truly loves the business, and doesn’t expect to be recognized or commended for doing his job. The more he accomplishes, the more energy he gets. No joke.”

“ He leads by example. I can’t think of someone who I respect more for his work ethic, attitude, and commitment.”

commitments, and doing what's expected, and they make others toe that line as well. They don't cut themselves, or anybody else, much slack.

They emphasize excellence

ME's have high standards when it comes to excellence. They set challenging goals and won't accept mediocrity or substandard performance. They demand top performance, both from themselves and from others, and are the greatest champions of quality. "Barbara expects nothing from others that she doesn't ask of herself," said an admiring colleague. "I think her standards are so much higher than most people's that she drives them to grow."

Or in another's words, "John has very high standards for the team and himself. He stretches his direct reports and accepts nothing less than the best. He rewards well and provides excellent recognition; however, you have to perform to get it."

In their organizations, Managers of Execution are always on the lookout for ways to improve performance. They are, as we'll see a bit later, the quintessential system-builders, efficiency experts,

and the ones who re-design and re-engineer existing processes and systems.

"Steve brings his sports background and competitive nature into his business dealings. He will NOT lose! He makes that very clear. He's not satisfied with just being good, he wants to be the best. When our goals are achieved he's not the one who gets the credit, but the team. When we fail to meet the goal, he's the one who takes the heat for the team."

This attitude often carries over into their personal lives as well. Self-improvement is one of their guiding themes. They are always ready to attend a workshop or read a book in the effort to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

This contrasts with the other two Pillars. Visionary Evangelists usually think they are already way ahead of the game just as they are, though

they will pick other people's brains for ideas to make their business more competitive. Relationship Builders are usually too caught up with people to spend much time sharpening their skills. But Managers of Execution will devour books, listen to tapes and CDs on the drive to work (when they are not on their cell phones telling people what to do!) and attend numerous seminars aimed at self-improvement and improving their performance.

They plan, prioritize, and maintain focus; they don't get sidetracked

As might be expected, Managers of Execution are superb planners. Although they are not strong on long-term vision, it's almost as natural as breathing for them to set priorities, establish short-term goals, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish milestones for accountability. They don't like going into situations without knowing what they can expect, and they are rarely distracted or set off course by unimportant details or activities. Though their days may be filled with meetings, conference calls, and countless interruptions, they take them all in stride, deal with them efficiently, and

continue straight ahead. They stay focused on their top priorities, whether it's their own personal goals and "assignments" or the goals of the organization. They do not get sidetracked.

Their focused presence helps bring order to chaos and provides the organization with structure. Once they have done their analysis – which will be rigorous – and established an action plan, they follow through. Unless circumstances absolutely demand modifying the plan, they will stay the course. They don't like changing direction. And they keep following up until the project reaches its conclusion.

They take charge

No one has to ask Managers of Execution to take charge. In fact, you may have to stop them! If given half a chance, they will start issuing orders and acting like the boss. It's not because they are burning with a grand vision that they wish to implement (like Visionary Evangelists), nor are they power seekers with a drive to dominate others or be recognized as Number One. So why do they rush in to take charge?

Primarily, they feel it's their

The Manager of Execution Profile in the World of Sports

Beyond top management, there's not much need for Visionary Evangelists in sports. Nor do Relationship Builders play a decisive role, though they do boost morale and encourage team spirit. The primary need in sports is pretty simple: **winning**. That's why, because of their work ethic, self-discipline, perseverance, and commitment to delivering results, most professional athletes fit the personality profile of Manager of Execution. This is especially true of high-performance, in-the-sport athletes, such as Lance Armstrong, Tiger Woods, Vijay Singh, and Annika Sorenstam. Unlike team members, coaches— and all salaried personnel, including CEOs who collect their wages and corporate perks even when sales are slow and stock prices tank— these people must execute: their reward is based directly and exclusively on their individual performance.

duty toward others. This reflects their personal values and sense of responsibility. For one thing, ME's have high ethical standards and care quite genuinely about doing what's right. Convinced that they know what's right and what's wrong, they want to insure that decisions are made and actions carried out in ac-

cordance with those values.

It's also about competence. ME's not only think they know what's morally right, they also believe they know how to do things the right way, or if they don't, they can figure it out. They feel – and their experience testifies that it is true – that they can be

Lou Gerstner Rescues and Rebuilds IBM



When Louis V. Gerstner took over as Chairman and CEO of IBM in 1993, the mammoth corporation — an industry leader for more than half a century — was a sinking ship. Two books published that year suggested that Big Blue was dying. One said, “The question for the present is whether IBM can survive. From our analysis thus far ... we think its prospects are very bleak,” and the other asserted that “IBM will never again hold sway over the computer industry.” Gerstner himself, vigorously courted by the company, says “I was convinced... the odds were no better than one in five that IBM could be saved, and that I should never take the position.”

But Gerstner, an experienced and successful executive who had formerly headed up both American Express and RJR

Nabisco, did take the job, and stayed until 2002. When he took the reins of the organization, its stock price had declined from a high of \$43 in 1987 to \$13. The previous year, 45,000 people had been laid off, and Gerstner downsized by another 35,000. Revenues were in the toilet, largely because mainframe computer sales — the source of 90% of IBM’s profits — were drastically lower as PCs claimed an ever-larger market share. The organization was drowning in its own bureaucratic redundancy. “We were bloated,” Gerstner says. “We were inefficient.” When Gerstner came on board, IBM’s various divisions retained 70 different advertising agencies, worked with 266 different ledger systems and employed 128 “chief information officers.”

By the time Gerstner departed, after a vast and sweeping reorganization and re-engineering, the company was number one in the world in numerous categories, including IT services and custom-designed, high-performance computer chips. The stock price (adjusted for splits) had increased in value by 800 percent (!), and the workforce grew by about 100,000 people. It was an \$86 billion dollar company operating in 160 countries. More significantly, it had changed the face of the computer business, placing services, rather than either hardware or software products, at the heart of the industry.

The leadership principles Gerstner expresses in his autobiographical reflections on his years at IBM (*Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?*) show him to be a prototypical Manager of Execution. Here are some of his own words:

Shortly after assuming the CEO position, at a press conference: “There’s been a lot of speculation as to when I’m going to deliver a vision of IBM, and what I’d like to say to all of you is that the last thing IBM needs right now is a vision. What IBM needs is a series of very tough-minded, market-driven, highly effective strategies for each of its businesses — strategies that deliver performance in the marketplace

and shareholder value.”

“Execution – getting the task done, making it happen – is the most unappreciated skill of an effective business leader.”

“Execution is really the critical part of a successful strategy. Getting it done, getting it done right, getting it done better than the next person is far more important than dreaming up new visions of the future. All of the great companies in the world out-execute their competitors day in and day out in the marketplace, in their manufacturing plants, in their logistics, in

their inventory turns – in just about every thing they do.”

“Execution is all about translating strategies into action programs and measuring their results. It’s detailed, it’s complicated, and it requires a deep understanding of where the institution is today and how far away it is from where it needs to go. Proper execution involves building measurable targets and holding people accountable for them.”

“Execution is the tough, difficult, daily grind of making sure the machine moves forward meter by meter, kilometer by kilometer, milestone by

milestone. Accountability must be demanded, and when it is not met, changes must be made quickly.”

“My kind of executives dig into the details, work the problems day to day, and lead by example, not title. They take personal ownership of and responsibility for the end result. They see themselves as drivers rather than as a box high on the organization chart”

“Superb execution is not just about doing the right things. It is about doing the right things faster, better, more often, and more productively than your competitors do.”

counted on to get it done, to take care of it, whatever “it” happens to be. Their sense of identity is that they are the “go-to guy,” so they have the confidence to step up to the plate and deal with whatever comes along.

Also (though they might not admit this or even be aware of it) they have an insistent need to turn whatever situation they find themselves in into a *controlled* setting. They don’t like uncertainty and unpredictability, and being in charge is a way of reducing their discomfort.

They excel at developing and re-engineering systems and processes

Effective, successful organizations operate on the basis of lean and powerful infrastructures, well-thought-out and carefully designed systems and procedures that serve their goals. Organizations with outdated or inefficient systems – for design, production, accounting, communication, etc. – are unlikely to outperform their competitors and may not even achieve their goals.

Managers of Execution, with their tidy desks, intelligent filing systems, and orderly

lives, excel at designing systems, bringing order to chaos and improving efficiency. This has rock-bottom importance for all enterprises, but it’s particularly vital as a business evolves beyond the entrepreneurial stage, when the inspirational leadership and innovative thinking of a Visionary Evangelist founder is no longer sufficient to carry it forward. As the organization grows in size and complexity and involves more people, the need emerges for workable systems and clear-cut, repeatable processes.

ME’s are ideally suited for the task. They take a cool and detached look at old ways of

"Sue is one of the most organized individuals I have ever met. Her meetings are always well planned, and she keeps conversations focused on the issues at hand. She always assigns clear roles and responsibilities to team members."

"An example of how organized Todd is: When I first came here, a thoughtful, thorough project plan, including objectives and deliverables, had been established prior to my arrival to start the project."

"In spite of tremendous difficulties, she's kept her program on-track through perseverance and always looking for a way to make it move forward."

doing things, identify inefficiencies and recurring problems, and continually update and redesign operations to maximize effectiveness. They bring to the table their natural strength as analytic, system-

atic thinkers and methodical problem-solvers.

Of course, re-engineering is not only important at the post-entrepreneurial stage, it may be necessary at any stage of an organization's life, when things have gone stale or profitability has declined. A new vision may be required, or perhaps a perfectly valid vision simply needs to be revived by updating and improving the way the organization operates.

They hold people accountable

"When a job has to be completed by a certain time, Brad makes sure it gets done," one co-worker remarked on a 360 assessment. "After a meeting, when he walks away you know what the goals and expectations are."

Managers of Execution tend to be very clear about what they want done. They translate those expectations into goals for others to fulfill, and they hold people accountable for getting the desired results. How do they do this?

They clearly spell out roles, goals, and tasks that must be accomplished.

They establish milestones that will show them if a project is on track.

They use objective standards to measure outcomes against the established goals.

They reward achievement and confront poor performance.

This behavior sets them apart from many Visionary Evangelists, who can be quite fuzzy about assigning responsibilities or providing details about execution. Relationship Builders, too, may be a bit loose in laying out expectations and lax in confronting inadequate performance. With ME's, you know what is expected and where you stand.

"I have been very impressed not only by the way Chuck gets results, but also the way he is always improving on the systems and set-ups that he has created."

They are decisive

Managers of Execution are willing to make difficult decisions, and when they make them, the decisions are firm

Andrea Jung CEO and Chairman of the Board, Avon

When Andrea Jung was named chief executive of Avon in 1999, the venerable door-to-door cosmetics company (founded in 1886) was struggling to overcome a growing perception that it was old-fashioned and out of date. The first female CEO in the company's long history, the glamorous Jung, daughter of Chinese immigrants, was ready for the challenge.

"Once you fall in love with what Avon can be," she said, "you see it as one of the biggest strategic and corporate opportunities for, not a turnaround, but a makeover, in the history of companies. That's a professional turnaround to me."

"I'm the type who wants to get it all done at once," she said of herself. Others have described her as "highly decisive" and having a "no-nonsense style." One colleague said she might approve a detailed, million-dollar ad campaign in as little as 15 minutes. In typical Manager of Execution style, she set out with gusto to redesign the company from top to bottom.



Some of her initiatives:

Placed products in stores for the first time in Avon's history.

Overhauled the company's operations, cutting 10 days off its inventory turns and dramatically reducing product development cycles.

Updated Avon's colors, textures, fragrances, and packaging.

Fired the ad agency and brought in a new one.

Eliminated one third of the catalog items.

Increased the number of sales reps from about 3 million to 4.5 million (worldwide).

Setup Avon retail kiosks in shopping malls.

Greatly expanded into foreign markets.

Inaugurated an array of new products and services, including jewelry, clothing, vitamins, nutritional supplements and a men's catalog.

In the process of doing all this, one observer wrote, "she's given herself a career makeover, with her name cropping up on shortlists of candidates to turn around bigger companies."

How far Jung plans to take Avon beyond selling lipstick and cold cream door to door is evident in the first words that greet a visitor to the company's website: "Our vision is to be the company that best understands and satisfies the product, service, and self-fulfillment needs of women globally. Our dedication to supporting women touches not only beauty—but health, fitness, self-empowerment and financial independence."

“ Linda does an outstanding job of prioritizing and planning her work. She clarifies duties, responsibilities and, expectations for others.”

and unambiguous. They reach their conclusions without unnecessary delay, even in tough situations; they don't waffle, equivocate, or hem and haw. “ Dana is always clear-cut in her decisions and her decisions are prompt and clearly understood,” said a high-level executive evaluating a protégé.

They are decisive, but not impulsive. They gather and analyze facts (remember how methodical they tend to be) and rely on careful reasoning before they make up their minds. Unlike Relationship Builders, their decisions are “thinker” decisions, not “feeler” decisions. “ Roberto has the ability to collect and review information and come to prompt decisions that take short term goals and long range plans into consideration. He can quickly separate the wheat from the chaff. Has a good sense of what is important and what is not. Does not have to beat it to death to make a decision.”

When they are strong (when

their Personal Grounding is high, as we have discussed in the first article) they will not act like little tyrants, making what may seem like arbitrary decisions without explaining why. They will ask for input, discuss the issue with those who have vital information or experience, and, if questioned, they will take the time to explain their reasoning.

Because they are decisive by nature, they may sometimes make decisions based on partial information, just to get things rolling. However, if they are well grounded, they will be open to changing direction as new information comes in.

They are practical and realistic

Another trait that helps Managers of Execution to be effective leaders is that they are realists – about work loads, limits, how much they (or their team, department or division) can take on and get completed, how much things are going to cost, and so on. In other words, they're good at accurately evaluating a situation. This ability to make realistic assessments helps them determine how long a job will take and what will be required to get it done. As

People with the Manager of Execution profile have a reputation for being totally action oriented. But they are very much thinking people, whose thinking is pragmatic and deliberate. ME's like to learn about practical approaches and solutions, and they will read business books about how to improve quality, increase productivity, and so on. They are not much interested in abstract thought, though; theory is often too “fuzzy” for them.

we've seen, they'll make detailed and comprehensive plans, set goals, establish priorities, spell out tasks and create timetables for others, and hold them accountable to get their part of the job done.

Other people sometimes complain that the way Managers of Execution evaluate situations is negative or pessimistic or that they lack a “can-do” attitude. This is not really fair, and may be because their naturally cautious and realistic style contrasts

Michael Dell Creates a New Business Model

Michael Dell is probably the best example of a pure Manager of Execution in the business world today. Everyone knows the story of how Dell started building and selling computers in his dorm room at the University of Texas as a 19 year old; now, just over 20 years later, he is ranked #18 among the world's richest people (with a personal net worth of \$16 billion) and his company is on track toward a goal of \$60 billion in annual sales by 2007.

When he started out, Dell's business model — making computers to order and selling directly to the customer without middlemen — was sneered at, but it has set the standard for the computer industry. His company has overtaken IBM, HP, Sun, Apple, and mail-order competitor Gateway to become the world's largest computer maker. Surely one of the most efficiently operating companies on the planet, Dell rightly prides itself on its discipline and speed in both manufacturing and distribution. It has well over 500 patents for business processes, let alone its product innovations. This is just what system-creating, efficiency-obsessed Managers of Execution do best.

ME's also demand accountability, and this is one of Michael Dell's primary rules.



"There's no 'The dog ate my homework' at Dell," he states. The company is determined to avoid all mistakes — and if one occurs, it must be fixed immediately, with no excuses.

Also typical of Managers of Execution is Michael Dell's lack of ego. When he received 360 degree feedback indicating that he was perceived as impersonal and emotionally detached, he called a meeting for his 20 top managers and, according to a recent *Business Week* article, "offered a frank self-critique, acknowledging that he is hugely shy," which can make him "seem aloof and unapproachable." As the article states, those key leaders knew that Dell is an "off-the-charts introvert," and that standing in front of them like that was far from easy. The ego-busting didn't stop there: Dell had the video of his talk shown to thousands of the company's managers.

Last year, Dell handed the CEO title to long-time working partner Kevin Rollins. When asked about sharing the company leadership and relinquishing the job title, Dell replied, "Quite frankly, I'm not really concerned about that. I'm concerned about 'What do we have to get done to be successful?' There's way too much to get done to have a proprietary interest in who's going to do it, or even worse, who's going to get credit for it."

It's impossible to micromanage an international company with over 40,000 employees, but Michael Dell probably would do it if he could. According to *Business Week*, "he maintains pinpoint control over the company's vast operations by constantly monitoring sales information, production data, and his competitors' activities." He communicates via BlackBerry and allocates two hours every day to responding to emails. As GE's CEO, Jeffrey Immelt notes, "Michael can be a visionary and he can tell you how many units were shipped from Singapore yesterday."

Michael Dell's company is surely the realization of a remarkable vision. And yet, he does not seem very interested in changing the world by inventing the "next big thing." What he does best is to build the current big thing more cost effectively, and get it out

to customers faster than anyone else.

In partnership with Rollins, a numbers-crunching former top tech consultant (i.e., another Manager of Execution) who has worked with Michael Dell since 1993 and now runs the company's day-to-day operations, Dell continues to roll out new products (printers, servers, data storage equipment, etc.), enter new markets, maintain its discipline and efficiency – and grow.

with both Visionary Evangelists and Relationship Builders, who both tend to be optimists. RB's are positive and upbeat by nature; VE's are so enthralled by their vision that they can't imagine it won't come to fruition. Managers of Execution look carefully at all the details, they take into account the strengths and weaknesses of people and systems and, therefore, are aware of things that could go wrong and problems that could occur. They take all that into consideration in their planning. Thus, the goals they set tend to be realistic and achievable, and the deadlines they establish in order to meet objectives can be met, although often demanding a stretch.

CHALLENGES AND AREAS OF VULNERABILITY

For all their great strengths and their ability to bring projects to fruition with excellent results, Managers of Execution also have areas where they are potentially vulnerable. As we have seen with the Visionary Evangelist and the Relationship Builder, these weak spots are usually the shadow side of their strengths.

As the RB's warm and compassionate nature can also show up as an inability to be decisive and make tough decisions, and the VE's charisma and confidence can manifest as narcissistic arrogance, so the Manager of Execution's potential strengths can also show up as problems.

Our extensive statistical research at HCG, as well as our observations of leaders over more than two decades of high-level coaching and consulting, has uncovered many of these weaker areas. Here are some of them, followed by a few suggestions for improvement.

They need to be in control

One of the predominant characteristics of Managers of Execution is their drive to cre-

ate order and bring things under control. This shows up in such "positive" qualities as designing systems, formulating detailed plans, holding people accountable, and their tendency to step in and take charge. But it can also show up in more "negative" ways. One HCG client painted the picture this way: "Bret does not tolerate it well when things don't go as planned. He likes to be in complete control of every detail."

When it's simply a tendency to be neat, organized, and efficient, it is healthy and productive. But when it's a compelling need to have *everything* organized and under control, from your sock drawer to your file cabinets and a squeaky clean desk with every item in its "proper" place, and when you let all your reports know that things around here have to be done in "just the right way," then it borders on – and in extreme cases may be – what is known as *obsessive compulsive personality disorder (ocpd)*.

The truth is, business as it is conducted today encourages and promotes people with obsessive-compulsive tendencies, who are driven to be in control of their circumstances down to the last detail. Business is about gaining control over ever-shifting markets and

What Frustrates People About Managers of Execution?

Here's a fascinating snapshot of how subordinates, peers, and superiors view the ME's vulnerabilities and areas needing development

Subordinates:

- 1 - They rarely offer coaching, and when they do, it tends to be critical and negative.
- 2 - They fail to provide praise and recognition.
- 3 - They need to become more effective at building teams.
- 4 - They should be more open to input and ideas.
- 5 - They don't delegate.

Peers:

- 1 - They are rigid, not adaptable.
- 2 - They don't facilitate conflict resolution.
- 3 - They don't build teams.
- 4 - They don't create buy-in.
- 5 - They are insensitive to people's feelings.

Superiors:

- 1 - They don't delegate, so they spin their wheels, trying to do too much.
- 2 - They lose their emotional control and composure.
- 3 - They lack social astuteness, including the ability to read and respond diplomatically to individuals and the organization.
- 4 - They are ineffective at being agents of change.
- 5 - They don't find and attract talent.
- 6 - They fail to create buy-in for their ideas.

chaotic world events; it's about the attempt to manage the way things go – drive down costs, open up markets, bury competitors. To “manage” means to take command rather than to flow with the natural course of events. It's about controlling rather than accepting.

Our research suggests that behind this urge to map everything out lies a strong dose of insecurity. For all their obvious competency and power, these people are uncomfortable in a world in which anything can happen. Ambiguity and uncertainty, vagueness or imprecision make them uncomfortable and uneasy. They want to know what to expect. These are the people who, before going on a trip, even a vacation, need travel timetables, hotel reservations, and a schedule of events. They don't want to be surprised by what comes from around the corner.

Faced with a world that seems chaotic and unmanageable, they feel vulnerable. Their way of dealing with this is to try to get people and events under control.

Here are typical ways the ME's need to be in control may show up. See how many you recognize in yourself or others:

"Freedom is the greatest when the ground rules are clear. Chalk out the playing field and say, Within those lines, make any decisions you need."

*– Dick Brown,
chairman and CEO,
EDS*

Because of their need for security and predictability, many ME's find comfort in unambiguous doctrines, established belief systems, models that help them understand, tried and true approaches, and familiar routines.

They often perceive change as a threat, and frequently have trouble adapting to changing circumstances. People around them may feel that they actively, even stubbornly resist change, both in business and in their personal lives. They may feel threatened by new ideas that challenge their comfortable belief systems. This can lead to a dogmatic insistence that they are right and you – along with everybody else who doesn't agree – are wrong.

Even under the best circumstances, Managers of Execution do not tend to be inno-

vators or disturbers of the status quo. On the contrary, they tend to be quite attached to existing patterns and structures. People who take risks can drive them crazy. From their point of view, risk takers are not organized, they're not dependable, they don't get results... so what good are they?

They lack creativity. The ME's need for everything to be orderly and structured militates against originality and inventiveness, which require openness to chaos and unpredictability. Order is a good thing when the goal is productivity, cranking out "x" widgets in a "y" time-frame with the least amount of wasted motion and material – but it is pretty much the opposite of innovation and creativity. The need for all the ducks to line up in a row doesn't leave much space for visionary thinking.

You may be thinking, "That means that the Visionary Evangelist, who is an innovator who thrives on change, and the Manager of Execution, who needs order and stability, are like polar opposites." In this area that is true. And because it is almost impossible for these two sets of characteristics to exist in the same person, every leadership team needs both a VE and an

Although Larry Bossidy appears to be a Manager of Execution, he is well aware of the downside of this personality style. Perhaps that is why he has been so very successful. Here is his take on micromanaging:

"Micromanaging is a big mistake. It diminishes people's self-confidence, saps their initiative, and stifles their ability to think for themselves. It's also a recipe for screwing things up – micromanagers rarely know as much about what needs to be done as the people they're harassing, the ones who actually do it."
– Larry Bossidy

ME. They are complementary and vitally important to effectiveness and success.

Relationships are not their strong suit. Dealing with people involves many variables, including feelings, which are far too unpredictable and uncontrollable for these folks.

They are micromanagers who often fail to delegate responsibility and empower others

Because their standards are so high and they have a compelling drive to meet their commitments successfully – or to put it another way, because of their need to be in control of both outcome and process – ME's sometimes feel that the only way to get something done right is to do it themselves. If the job is too big for one person, you will often find them hovering over others and micromanaging every detail. They have a very difficult time stepping back, delegating responsibility, and empowering others to help them get the job done.

Rather than leveraging the energy and talent of others – a critical leadership skill – they often feel they don't have time to involve others, to tell or show them what needs to be done. It doesn't get immediate results! They feel they can't afford to let people learn as they go. They fail to see that in the long run, allowing their people to grow will result in greater achievements and higher productivity.

Thus they often end up working extremely long hours, try-

ing to do everything themselves. This is poor strategy, and easily leads to burnout, fatigue, and stress

When leaders micromanage and fail to delegate responsi-

“Probably Jeffrey's biggest weakness is that he delegates tasks well but doesn't empower or delegate authority.”

bility, the consequences are significant, as many people have commented on their 360 evaluations:

People who work under them feel stifled, even demeaned. They feel that leadership/management does not trust them and believes they need to be constantly supervised. “I would like to see more trust for those of us on a management level. In order for us to grow, we are going to have to take some risks. We are all capable in our own right. Less control will give you more in the end. We are aligned on our goals – how about letting us make some decisions and work out our plans? Isn't it okay to make mistakes in this organization?”

People who don't have the chance to grow from working through obstacles and difficulties feel dissatisfied and

stuck in what they perceive to be a dead-end job. This does not bring out their best efforts. As one person said in evaluating his boss, “He is very much a micro-manager. If you don't let people try (and yes, fail sometimes) they will most certainly fail when they are put in a new position. I think his anxiety over doing a good job makes him hesitant to delegate as much as he should. He needs to learn to deal with people in a respectful manner and allow them independence.”

They are demanding task masters, free with criticism, stingy with praise

With their high standards and their uncompromising conscience and sense of responsibility, Managers of Execution have clear expectations of how things ought to be done. Not only do tasks have to be accomplished, they have to be carried out to a high standard of timeliness and quality. And, they have to be done “the right way,” that is, *their way!* This is fine so long as you live up to their expectations, but when you don't, look out. They can be critical, demanding, and insensitive to the impact their criticisms and demands may have on people.

Tough Boss Softens Up: Andy Pearson, former CEO of PepsiCo

When Andy Pearson was CEO of PepsiCo, Fortune named him one of the ten toughest bosses in America. Highly successful (he drove revenues from \$1 billion to \$8 billion), Pearson ruled with an iron fist and “a fanatical devotion to the numbers.” Relentlessly demanding and “brutally abrasive” – and proud of it! – he had management effectiveness rated every year, and systematically fired the bottom ten to twenty percent. One executive said, “He was brutal. He’d just beat the crap out of us. I remember one time he told us, ‘A room full of monkeys could do better than this!’”

After retiring from PepsiCo, Pearson wrote articles for the Harvard Business Review, then was recruited as the founding chairman of Tricon (now Yum Brands), the world’s largest restaurant chain (if you’re willing to call KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, Long John Silver’s and A&W “restaurants!”) with nearly 34,000 eateries in 100 countries. He continued to be fabulously successful, but this attitude – and his leadership style – has changed.

An article in Fast Company entitled, “Andy Pearson Finds Love,” sums up the difference. “Great leaders find a balance between getting results and how they get them,” Pearson tells the interviewer. “A lot of people make the mistake of thinking that getting results is all there is to the job... Your real job is to get results and to do it in a way that makes your organization a great place to work – a place where people enjoy coming to work, instead of just taking orders and hitting this month’s numbers.” This tempered attitude draws in a softer, Relationship Builder style.

He has learned to listen, and to mentor other executives. In his words, “Ultimately, it’s all about having a more genuine concern for the other person.” As many hard-driving executives learn later in their lives, Pearson has discovered the value of people – that they are more than mere “resources.” “You say to yourself,” he comments, “If I could only unleash the power of everybody in the organization, instead of just a few people, what could we accomplish? We’d be a much better company.” Combining this attitude with his former strengths seems an unbeatable combination. Indeed, HCG research has shown that leaders who combine the Manager of Execution and Relationship Builder pillars get the best results.

Many admit they are content to sacrifice relationships in order to get results.

Because ME's tend toward perfectionism, it is very easy for them to find fault – after all, very little in this world is actually perfect! They are as tough on themselves as they are on others, but this is of little comfort when you are on the firing line. They tend to see what's wrong; all the little mistakes capture their attention more than the big things that are right. They are rarely satisfied.

Part of what makes them seem so demanding and difficult to work for is that they freely express their criticisms, but you can only extract praise from them with great effort. They fall short in their ability to appreciate and convey appreciation to others for work well done. To them, it's no big deal when people do a good job. After all, good results are what they *should* be getting! One employee expressed this very sharply: "Larry's ideas of rewarding good performance are probably the most stingy that I have seen in my career. He expects so much of people, that he doesn't naturally praise unless it is the most amazing and glorious result." Of course, this has negative long-term consequences, as another per-

son pointed out: "Sue would increase loyalty and create a more rewarding place to work if she praised people more often."

Visionary Evangelists, with their exalted vision and their gift for expressing it with eloquence and passion, can elicit loyalty and dedication from members of the organization. Relationship Builders can also bring out people's commitment and engagement because of the warm "family" feeling they tend to build around them. But Managers of Execution, who *can* build dedicated teams, can also unwittingly produce an "us vs. them" mentality, where the atmosphere degenerates into the "boss" placing demands on the workers and the workers rebelling, resisting, and resenting. Not a happy working environment.

They are conservative and risk-averse

Managers of Execution tend to hold to tradition, maintaining what is useful from the past. They don't rush into change just for the sake of novelty, and they are likely to be skeptical of anything that challenges tradition or that is new and untried. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," they

might say.

Also, because they are realists who look coolly at the facts, when confronted with the possibility of change they can discern risks and potential difficulties that visionaries may not see. The result is that they may not be willing to be agents of change even when change is needed; they may even resist change, causing the people who work with them to see them as an obstacle or impediment to progress.

When they do recognize the need for change (for example, to re-engineer an internal system for greater efficiency or productivity) they can become intolerant and demanding if the people under them don't go along unquestioningly. They are mystified when others don't see that the new way is the right way. They expect conformity. They assume the team will line up around what's been agreed to or decreed from above, and may not allow disagreement or even much discussion. Subordinate behavior that they can't control causes them to become afraid that things will go wrong and get screwed up. This is another reason they tend to micro-manage and refrain from delegating authority.

They are not socially astute – they tend to misread people and organizational/political dynamics, and are not diplomatic

If you live or work with someone who fits the Manager of Execution profile, you've probably been won-

*“ You can be totally rational with a machine. If you work with people, sometimes logic has to take a back seat to understanding.”
– Akito Morita, founder of Sony.*

dering when we were going to get around to this topic. Indeed, one of the biggest problem areas for ME's – perhaps *the* biggest – is social relationships and interpersonal dynamics. These are results-oriented, number-crunching, get-it-done individuals, whose strengths generally lie outside the realm of interpersonal relationships. They have very little predisposition for dealing with actual, living, breathing human beings. Their colleagues, superiors and reports – as well as their spouses and children – often complain that they are out of touch, don't listen, and don't show consid-

eration and respect for others.

Many ME types make up the ranks of the world's geeks and nerds; they are our engineers, scientists, and behind-the-scenes researchers. Often shy and unsure of themselves with people, they withdraw into the world of objects they can manipulate and control, like numbers and computer programs. You would probably find that most accountants and CFO's are Managers of Execution. They love spreadsheets, lists, charts, and calculations; too often, they are insensitive to the people side of the equation. They get results – but often at the expense of people's feelings. When in management or leadership roles, they can make “tough” decisions with relative ease, telling an employee, “We've crunched the numbers. We're losing money, we need to cut our workforce by 4,000, and your job is expendable. You're of no further use to the company. Goodbye and good luck.”

This is something people who work with ME's clearly see. “Pat has demonstrated the ability to drive projects to completion – even if he has to ruffle a few feathers in the process,” said one. Another commented on a 360 evaluation, “While Felice certainly gets high marks for results

and productivity, sometimes her approach is abrupt in relation to how she interacts with her employees.”

Here are eight ways Managers of Execution may fall down in dealing with people:

THEY ARE NOT OPEN TO INPUT – THEY DON'T LISTEN.

As a general rule, ME's are not good listeners. Even when they try to listen, they're not good at it. They don't come across as open minded or willing to work with new input. This is partly because of their need to be in control, and their abiding sense that they have the best answers. But it is also due to their tendency toward rigidity. They know how careful they are in making decisions, gathering data and considering every conceivable angle before making a choice. Once they do settle on an opinion or formulate a plan, they get fixed in their views. They have a goal, a model, they know where they're going – toward what they envision will bring greater efficiency, productivity, and results – and it's very difficult to change their minds or get them to consider new ideas.

RATHER THAN BEING ADAPTABLE, THEY ARE OFTEN RIGID, UNBENDING, AND STUBBORN. Because

Although all ME's tend to be deficient in social adroitness and can be unaware of social protocol and basic principles for getting along with others, this is less true of female ME's. Women – and this is based on our data, not our intuition or prejudices – read people better and know how to respond in a way that doesn't make waves or create enmity. However (again, fact-based) women are more predisposed toward emotional outbursts. Male ME's are more narrowly and exclusively focused on task than women are, and are more uncomfortable with emotions.

they are so conservative and almost constitutionally allergic to change, ME's can be very difficult to work with. It's frustrating to deal with somebody who just won't listen, and whose black and white thinking ("my way or the highway") leaves no room for discussion or negotiation. There's none of the give-and-take that gives juice to relationships and makes them re-

warding, enjoyable, and productive. With them, it's a one-way street: they give (orders, opinions, instructions, etc.) and you take!

That's especially true when the ME is in a position of power or authority. But what about when you are the leader, managing people who are ME's? It will help if you keep in mind their need for order, structure, and certainty. They like things to be straightforward and uncomplicated. The messiness and unpredictability of life and of group dynamics – for example, the often non-linear way groups and teams throw ideas on the table and feel their way toward a solution or decision – can be very distressing for them. They get uneasy with situations that are too fuzzy or open-ended. Thus, these are not the individuals you want to place in assignments where things are likely to be ambiguous and in flux; they will be uncomfortable and may not perform well.

THEY NEED TO BE RIGHT. When ME's are not well grounded and are operating from the "shadow" side of their personality rather than from integrity and strength, their ego seems to require that they be right – all the time. Naturally, this can frustrate and alienate other people,

who do not look upon the ME as infallible and superhuman. ME's tend to surround themselves with people who think and work the way they do, who organize things the way they do, whose style is like their own. While VE's will make use of anyone who can further their goals, and RB's will naturally forge bonds with even the most diverse individuals, ME's are quite insular and prefer to work with people just like them. Although they think they're open minded, they have little tolerance for other views and styles. This can lead to problems in succession planning, when ME leaders try to perpetuate their leadership style in an organization that might be badly in need of fresh perspectives and new skills.

THEY ARE PRONE TO EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS AND UNPRODUCTIVE CONFRONTATIONS. The Manager of Execution's commitment to quality, combined with their need to be right and in control of both process and results, can make them highly volatile and explosive. As we've mentioned, they have high expectations and set lofty goals, both for themselves and for others, and they do their best to live up to those standards. When other people's

Bob Knight Results at Any Cost

One of the most successful college basketball coaches of all time, Bob Knight exemplifies both the strengths and weaknesses of the Manager of Execution.

On the positive side of the ledger, hardly any other coach in history can boast of achieving results equal to Knight's. Like all Managers of Execution, he insists on quality performance from his players, who rarely defeat themselves with poor passing or shooting. Winner of over 800 games, he is a four-time national Coach of the Year. In 1984, he won the "Triple Crown" of coaching, taking the NCAA and NIT titles as well as an Olympic gold medal. Sixteen of his former assistant coaches have gone on to become head coaches.

Knight is known as a "demanding disciplinarian" with a "hard-nosed approach." As his citation in the Basketball Hall of Fame states, "Bob Knight coached teams are mirror images of the head man: disciplined, tough, smart, focused, tenacious." These words are written in praise. But there is another side to it



To some, Knight's way of treating his players is controlling and intimidating. His "drill sergeant" style has often been called abusive. "He ran his team more like a boot camp than a basketball program," the *National Review* wrote. His explosive temper has repeatedly gotten him in trouble, the most famous episode being an on-camera display when he threw a folding chair across the floor while arguing with a referee. He was also filmed grabbing a player by the neck.

A man who once played under Knight praised him for "the drive in Coach that makes him such a great motivator, a great tactician, spending hours and

hours on the game, having a single focus on how to make the team as good as it can be." Knight's style, said the player, "was challenging physically and mentally," and he added, "There's a fine line between getting on a guy so hard you bury his spirit and getting on him so he works harder." That style worked for some, and not for others.

People seem to either love Coach Knight or hate him. In the words of one detractor, "Knight demands respect, yet very rarely gives any. He demands loyalty, yet is quick to turn on anyone who... has been disloyal to him... Knight teaches discipline and seeks perfect execution from his players, yet he has very little discipline over his own behavior, and has repeatedly failed to turn his attention toward his own flaws... His view is always correct; others are always wrong."

At HCG, we have heard similar words spoken about many a manager and leader. When a person's life is all about "getting results at any cost," the results may come, but the price is often very high.

“ Bert needs to listen to others more and be less imposing with his own opinion.”

performances don't match up, anger boils up in them and they often don't seem able to contain it.

Many leading psychologists have pointed out that anger frequently stems from having a model of the world that's different from how the world actually is. When there's a gap between our expectations and what life presents to us, we can become frustrated, upset, and angry. The expectation of

“ If you go through life convinced that your way is best, all the new ideas in the world will pass you by.”

- Akito Morita, founder of Sony

Managers of Execution is that others will be as responsible, dependable, and single-minded about getting results as they are, and when that doesn't happen, they can explode.

Because of this tendency toward angry outbursts, people often perceive Managers of

Execution as kind of scary. Their emotional excesses intimidate both co-workers and reports, which tends to shut down communication. People are afraid to talk to them. They become unapproachable.

This is a blind spot for them. We have seen repeatedly that when they receive feedback about their tempers from co-workers, they are surprised. They view themselves as quite stable and even-tempered. They don't seem to be aware that they become upset and angry (often over trivial things), and that their behavior is hurtful to others.

THEY MISREAD PEOPLE.

Some people seem to be born with the ability to read other people. It's almost as if they have special antennas that help them tune in and intuitively grasp what others are thinking and feeling, and how to respond. Managers of Execution are *not* in this club! In general, they are not very sensitive to the social domain. They tend to be oblivious of other people's feelings and needs, nor are they tuned in to the social dynamics and politics of the organization. This lack of social savvy often causes them to lose out politically.

They also tend to be some-

what blunt and not very diplomatic, and are quite unaware of the impact this has on the people around them.

Meg Whitman, CEO of eBay, is one of the most successful executives in the world. Perhaps it's partly because she combines her Manager of Execution strengths with the social savvy of a Relationship Builder:

“ I think sometimes when a new senior executive comes into a company, the instinctive thing to do is to find out what's wrong and fix it. That doesn't actually work very well. People are very proud of what they've created, and it just feels like you are second-guessing them all the time. You are much more successful coming in and finding out what's going right and nurturing that. Along the way, you'll find out what's going wrong and fix that.”

– Meg Whitman, CEO, eBay

Because they tend to be insensitive and not attuned to the social dynamics or the prevailing culture, when they take over a company or are assigned to lead a team, they usually attempt to impose their own model rather than trying to adapt to the strengths and weaknesses they have just walked into.

THEY CAN BE SO INTENT ON GETTING THINGS DONE THAT THEY FAIL TO CONSIDER THEIR EFFECT ON OTHERS.

A common perception of top-level Managers of Execution is that they are kick-ass, take-no-prisoners hatchet men, like “Chainsaw Al” Dunlap and other high-profile CEOs who make their reputation as turnaround experts. This is far from the general rule, yet in their zeal to make everything work in the most efficient way, ME’s can and do make the tough decisions, slash out wasted operations, and even eliminate divisions and fire thousands of workers without batting an eye. This can be extremely effective – but they can also be so intent on getting things done that they fail to consider the impression they make and the human and social consequences. For them, it’s all about the numbers. They are thinking only of getting the results and delivering on their

commitments.

What this means is that their emphasis on getting tasks accomplished – which is at the core of their great strength – can come at the expense of building positive, constructive relationships. This is a shame, because *our research shows that leaders who combine the best of the Manager of Execution pillar with the Relation-*

The ME’s predisposition to avoid confronting conflict situations is different from the Relationship Builders’, who want to make all sides happy and are sensitive to how other people feel. ME’s tend to regard HR issues as pretty much a waste of time. They want to get the job done and have little patience for dealing with emotional and personal concerns.

ship Builder pillar get the best results. That seems to be the magic formula for achieving maximum effectiveness.

Because it is fairly rare for any one leader to combine to a high degree the skill sets of more than one pillar (and almost impossible to combine all three), leaders who want to

be most effective need to construct top-level teams comprising all three strengths. We will talk more about this important consideration in a future article.

THEY ARE NOT GOOD AT MANAGING CONFLICT OR FACILITATING CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

No one really relishes taking the time to stand between warring parties and trying to reconcile them, but it is an important role that leaders must sometimes play. Those who have a higher degree of awareness about their own internal conflicts and dynamics, and who are more socially perceptive, can navigate these conflict situations more adroitly.

Managers of Execution, it must be said, do not generally handle either their own emotions, or conflicts between individuals and groups very well. When a conflict is brought to them, rather than mediate between the conflicting parties or facilitating a solution through dialogue, they often play “Solomon,” make a quick decision and dictate a solution – “This is how it’s going to be” – that may not be the best. They may even become irritated with the conflicting parties and lose their temper, making the situation worse than it was before.

In every organization there will always be disagreements and disconnects, and people who won't do what you want them to do. This can usually be worked out if you talk about it, but if you don't the pressure will build up below the surface and eventually explode. Leaders need to step in and deal with conflict situations – but in a way that generates a solution people can live with and continue moving forward.

THEY ARE GENERALLY NOT THE BEST COACHES. A final consideration in the “people” department is that Managers of Execution, on the whole, are not great coaches. It's not so much that they don't have the ability – they just don't want to take the time. When they do coach, it's very rarely the personal sort that involves listening, guiding, or helping someone map out a long-range career development trajectory. Because they try to keep their own feelings under wraps and are not comfortable dealing with other people's emotions either, they are rarely willing to engage in the type of coaching that involves personal issues, such as conflict resolution or helping people overcome resistance to new job demands. With them, it's strictly business.

They *are* willing to focus on

business goals and performance – and they're usually more than willing to share “what you did wrong!” They are definitely not cheerleader types. As one person wrote on her 360 review, “I do not feel that I get regular feedback; and then, only when I have done something poorly, which is not very encouraging.”

Here are some other 360 comments expressing similar experiences:

“A challenge for Casey is helping someone else walk down the success path. I know I could use more consistent feedback, so I can tell if I am producing the expected results.”

“Little if any coaching has taken place. He needs to offer more support to those who are less experienced.”

“I have not seen Carole working with her team on career development.”

To sum up: The ME's bluntness and general lack of social skills translates into ineffectiveness at building relationships, and can severely curtail their ability to get buy-in for their projects. Unlike Relationship Builders, these people do not create harmonious and supportive relationships

or gather a crowd of loyal supporters who will follow wherever they lead. People are not likely to weep when ME's leave the organization.

They may fail to create strong teams

Managers of Execution, being such first-rate planners, organizers, and managers, can and sometimes do excel at structuring teams and populating them with the right people for high achievement. But they also have many traits that work against effective teamwork. One crucial obstacle is their tendency not to delegate tasks and responsibilities; this can bar them from fully utilizing the strengths and abilities of others.

Also, ME's almost invariably prefer the orderliness and predictability of an authoritarian, top-down management style over a cooperative way of working with others. Even when they try, their ability to build teams and to work effectively with them is hampered by their tendency to be autocratic, which means they don't really listen or allow input from the team members. They are further hampered by their typical cluelessness about social dynamics.

The crux of the matter is that

Managers of Execution don't genuinely value relationship building or culture development. Their attention is on the task: getting things done. Somehow, they just don't understand that a smoothly functioning team, whose members feel good about each other and their leader, will be more engaged and more pro-

"Leaders need to be aware that they are leading. Sometimes I get so involved in what I am trying to accomplish that I forget that others are watching and waiting for me to give direction."

– David Vargas

ductive.

They also tend to regard a team, which is made up of autonomous and unpredictable individuals, as something that must be directed and controlled. They're generally not flexible enough to flow along with group process, as team members learn to brainstorm, delegate, and find their way forward step by step. ME's are not inclined to be democratic; they don't like to share power. In their need to be in control, they can be combative and confrontational; this

spoils the atmosphere needed for effective teamwork.

They tend to develop tunnel vision

Leadership is usually – and correctly – associated with broad vision. The best leaders seem to have a global perspective, an awareness of trends beyond their immediate sphere of influence, an understanding of how their own piece fits in the context of the whole.

Managers of Execution, though outstanding at driving projects to successful conclusion, concern themselves with internal operations rather than external developments and trends. They are brilliant at getting the most out of the immediate situation, but they tend to miss the big picture. They can be blissfully unaware of what's going on out in the world; emerging trends and opportunities don't come onto their radar screen. They see what is, rather than what is possible.

Another way of saying this is that they often have tunnel vision. They are focused on what is right in front of them, on tactical planning and successfully executing the plan. This is their great strength, the quality that puts them at

the top of the list of achievers. But it's a double-edged sword. The other side is that they can become so obsessed with details that they can't see the overall strategic implications. As the old saying goes, "They can't see the forest for the trees." It's almost as though they put their heads down and plow ahead, never looking up to take their bearings until the job is done. As one client characterized a colleague, "She only seems able to focus on the specific task that she is trying to complete at that moment."

To some extent, ME's are aware of this. On questions about work style on the HCG personality assessment, they will say things like, "When I am working on a project, I often can't rest until it is completed," and "When trying to solve a problem, I always persist until I find a solution." They have a powerful drive to get things completed, and can become obsessive about solving the problem at hand or accomplishing the immediate task, no matter what the potential consequences for others or for their own health. Which brings us to our final point:

They often drive themselves too hard and become stressed

No picture of the Manager of Execution would be complete without this fundamental point: They almost invariably have a compulsion to work too hard, driving themselves to their limits and beyond. They work long hours, take on too much responsibility rather than delegating to others, feel personally responsible for the outcome, and blame themselves if they fall short.

This attitude is dangerous. Getting exhausted and stressed out reduces effectiveness. You can't think straight when you're too tired. Efficiency suffers. Health is threatened. In short: it's self-defeating, especially for people who are virtually obsessed with producing the best results.

Stressed people also are volatile; on a short fuse, they easily blow up. Relationships suffer. In their quest for results, they often have "no time" for people and their human needs and concerns. They "get it done" – but unless they learn to balance their drive for success with other aspects of life, they may pay a big price for their achievements. Often they

don't learn this till later in life, when the heart attacks arrive, the wives depart, and the children say, "I hardly knew my dad. He was never around." Though this has more typically been a male behavior pattern, it is surely true of women ME's as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the hints we have sprinkled into our description and discussion of Managers of Execution, here are a few recommendations that can help ME's manage their careers more effectively.

Find an organization that fits your style

People who are primarily Managers of Execution – without much of the Visionary Evangelist or Relationship Builder in their personality profile and leadership style – fit best in an organization where risk-taking and innovation are not the highest priority. They feel at home and perform most effectively in solid, conservative, and usually well-established companies where discipline, quality, values, and systematic thinking are called for. These are companies like the ones Jim Collins identified in *Good to Great*, and Michael Treacy

Interviewer: *On a more personal note, how do you maintain work-life balance?*

Fred Smith (CEO of FedEx): *Well, that's part of the discipline that you have to bring to your job. Anybody who works themselves into exhaustion or incoherence, doesn't have the discipline to do the job to begin with.*

and Fred Wiersema, in *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, speak of as "Operationally Excellent."

ME's do not do as well in companies or industries where the speed of change is fast, such as technology, communications, and biotech, and where leading-edge product development and constant innovation are crucial. Of course, this is a generalization: even the stodgiest companies need some degree of vision, and even the most fast-paced tech firms require people who can formulate and implement systems.

Don't be afraid of the spotlight

Managers of Execution rarely want to be the center of attention. Up on the dais, center stage, is not where they like to be. The attitude they project is, "I'm just here to get things done; it's about the job, not about me."

They tend to be introverted, modest, shy, and lacking in social confidence. Keeping this in mind, it is interesting to speculate that their typical drive for control may not be due to a runaway ego, so much as a compensatory mechanism for their inherent shyness and insecurity.

The fact that ME's don't like the spotlight, don't crave being noticed, and don't push for recognition often contributes to the fact that others may not notice them! This is directly opposite Visionary Evangelists, who exude charisma and are the kind of people all eyes turn toward when they enter a room. Relationship Builders, too, while not spotlight-seekers, are warm and engaging; they make a good impression on others. ME's usually prefer to sit in the background, content to let others stand up and be seen.

So here's a suggestion: Because of your dislike for the

spotlight, you may not get credit for your accomplishments. If you're too focused on getting things done, and you assume that your results will speak for you, you'd better know: it may not happen. You may need to take the initiative and promote the accomplishments of your group.

Remember that leaders need followers

Try not to forget that you're working with other people, in

"There are not many people in management – if any – who are more dedicated or who have given more of themselves to make it a better place. Many times when the credit is due to Chip it is given to others but you never hear him complain."

a social context. And that you need those people to help you achieve your objectives.

Building and maintaining employee loyalty is one of the key factors in sustained business success. That's always true, but over the next 20

years, the war for talent and for retention of highly sought-after people will become an increasingly serious concern. Depending on how you treat people, you'll find yourself surrounded with loyal, engaged followers willing to go the extra mile, or resistant, resentful followers who are in it just for the paycheck and who will move on as soon as an opportunity arises. If you push exclusively for execution and results, people are going to think you regard them as little more than means to an end. That attitude is sure to undermine loyalty. People don't like to be seen as interchangeable parts.

Because this kind of impersonal behavior is a problem for so many Managers of Execution, we won't hesitate to speak directly: You've got to learn to be more human and relate to people! If you don't pay attention to employees and their concerns, you could create an organization that drives employees away – employees you really want to keep.

Gray can be beautiful, too

In common with many Managers of Execution, you may tend to see things in absolute, black and white terms. This is

very understandable. The feeling of certainty and of knowing where you stand that comes from having definite rules and a clear sense of right and wrong, can be very reassuring in a chaotic world. But it is one thing to apply this kind of absolutist thinking to moral and ethical problems, and quite another to try to apply it to business decisions. Standards are imperative, but sometimes exceptions have to be made. In the increasingly complex and interactive global business environment, there is a constant need for negotiation and compromise. The all or nothing, "my way or the highway" mode of thinking just doesn't work. Try to see how it looks from the other side's perspective. This is especially crucial if you are dealing with people from another culture, whose values may be quite different or even opposite your own.

Don't get locked in. Try to be more open and flexible

As an ME, you may find that your strong tendency to gravitate toward order and routine causes you to get stuck in a rut. This can limit your openness to new knowledge and new experiences, and curtail your willingness to take a chance or go in a new direction when it may be

needed. At times a leader is called upon to be an agent of change. This means challenging the status quo, supporting fresh perspectives and trying out new approaches. The comfort you feel with established ways could prevent you from playing this role effectively. Ask yourself if the situation calls for a new style or methodology. Don't get locked into your old models. Success may require a new line of action, a different approach. If others around you are saying that something new is needed, don't immediately assume they are wrong; try to listen.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the positive qualities of the Manager of Execution profile, as we did in the first half of this article, at their organizational skills, sense of responsibility, dependability and decisiveness and all the rest, you might come to the conclusion that these are the ideal managers and leaders. And indeed, they are, and can be, some of the very best.

But it's not so simple. The negative qualities we have just finished talking about can turn potentially brilliant ME's into tyrannical, obstinate, and closed-minded leaders who

can make the workplace so difficult a place to be that good people will simply run away. Their attention to detail and obsession with results may blind them to developments outside their narrow focus – shifting markets, competitors' new strategies, and a thousand other factors – that may squander the organization's competitive advantage. This brings up two very important considerations.

First, since almost no leader – and almost no individual – holds in himself or herself the qualities of all three Pillars of Leadership, every leader really must see to it that he or she gathers together a balanced team. As we pointed out in the first article, the balance may be different for different circumstances. For example, an entrepreneurial enterprise may need to be strong in Visionary Evangelists, with less need for Relationship Builders or system-creating, get-it-done Managers of Execution. A turnaround situation, where success lies not in innovation or product development but in exacting and efficient execution, calls for the balance to lean toward Managers of Execution. And whatever the special circumstances, all organizations need some percentage of Relationship Builders, who can enliven

human values and feelings, and stimulate cooperative energy and team spirit in the office or on the production floor. We cannot say often enough that for maximum effectiveness, all three Pillars must be represented in any team or organization.

Now here's the second consideration. In these articles on the Three Pillars of Leadership, we've seen that each Pillar has its positive qualities, its strengths and natural skills, as well as its weak and vulnerable areas. We've also seen how virtually the identical quality – the ME's tendency toward orderliness, for exam-

ple, or the Relationship Builder's desire to please everyone and not hurt anyone's feelings – can be either a strength or a weakness, depending on – what? What is it that swings the individual in one direction or the other? What is the factor that determines whether the desire to create harmony and positive feelings serves to uplift a group of people toward greater team effort and productivity, or creates an environment in which employees feel they can get away with anything because they won't be held accountable? What separates the charismatic Vi-

sionary Evangelists who inspire their organizations to work around the clock to develop a new product and bring it out quickly and well, from the arrogant s.o.b.'s who insult employees, or squeeze people for all they can get and then drop them, on the way to making a personal fortune while leaving others in the dust?

The difference is what we call Personal Grounding and Contextual Grounding. These, fortunately, are qualities and skill sets that can be developed. And it is what we will be discussing in the upcoming articles.