

## **Execution Discussion Guide** **Guide by Mark R. Elliott\***

### **WHY EXECUTION IS NEEDED**

#### **Introduction**

*"... I saw that leaders placed too much emphasis on what some call high-level strategy, on intellectualizing and philosophizing, and not enough on implementation." 6*

*"Execution is not just tactics- it is a discipline and a system." 6*

*"The main requirement (for execution) is that you as a leader have to be deeply and passionately engaged in your organization and honest about its realities with others and yourself." 7*

What are the key questions we must answer as part of our key processes? (2)

#### **Chapter One: The Gap Nobody Knows**

*"When companies fail...the most frequent explanation is that the CEO's strategy was wrong. But the strategy by itself is not often the cause. Strategies most often fail because they aren't executed well." 15*

*"Unless you translate big thoughts into concrete steps for action, they're pointless. Without execution, the breakthrough thinking breaks down, learning adds not value, people don't meet their stretch goals, and the revolution stops dead in its tracks." 19*

*"Execution is a systematic process of rigorously discussing hows and whats, questioning, tenaciously following through and ensuring accountability." 22*

*"Execution is a systematic way of exposing reality and action on it. Most companies don't face reality very well." 22*

*"On organization can execute only if the leader's heart and soul are immersed in the company... the leader is the only person in a position to achieve that understanding. And only the leader can make execution happen..." 24*

*"Organizations don't execute unless the right people, individually and collectively, focus on the right details at the right time." 33*

#### **Chapter Two: The Execution Difference**

*"Every great leader has had an instinct for execution. He has said, in effect 'Unless I can make this plan happen, it's not going to matter.'" 35*

## BUILDING BLOCKS OF EXECUTION

### Chapter Three: Building Block One

#### Seven Essential Behaviors

- Know your people and your business
- Insist on realism
- Set clear goals and priorities
- Follow through
- Reward the doers.
- Expand people's capabilities
- Know yourself.

*"Being present allows you to connect personally with your people and personal connections help you build your intuitive feel for the business as well as for the people running the business." 63 (How can this be done in our settings?)*

*"Leaders who execute focus on a very few clear priorities that everyone can grasp." 69*

*"Clear simple goals don't mean much if nobody takes them seriously. The failure to follow through is widespread in business, and a major cause of poor execution." 71*

*"Whatever your styles your aim is to ask the questions that bring out the realities and give people the help they need to correct problems." 76*

*"It takes emotional fortitude to be open to whatever information you need, whether it's what you like to hear or not." 78*

### Chapter Four: Building Block Two

*"In an organization the hardware (strategy and structure) is inert without the software (beliefs and behaviors).*

*"You get what you measure for, and it's a straightforward process."*

Pp 99-100 GE's meetings... would this make sense in a church setting?

*"Truth over harmony, Candor helps wipe out the silent lies and pocket vetoes, and it prevent the stalled initiative and reword that drains energy." 103*

*"The key is that people act their way to thinking because they're driven for results." 105*

*"You change a culture of a company by changing the behavior of its leaders." 105*

*"To build an execution organization, the leader has to be present to create and reinforce the social software with the desires behaviors and the robust dialogue. She has to practice them and drill them relentlessly in the social operating mechanisms." 106*

## **Chapter Five: Building Block Three:**

*“An organization’s human beings are its most reliable resource for generating excellent results year after year. Their judgments, experiences and capabilities make the difference between successes and failure.” 109*

*“When the right people are not in the right jobs, the problem is visible and transparent. Leaders know intuitively that they have a problem and will often readily acknowledge it. But an alarming number don’t do anything to fix the problem...” 118*

*“Getting things done through others is a fundamental leadership skill. Indeed, if you can’t do it, you’re not leading.” 125*

*“Leaders who can’t work through others often end up putting in untold hours, and pushing everyone else to do them same.” 126*

*“There’s nothing sophisticated about the process of getting the right people in the right jobs. It’s a matter of being systematic and consistent in interviewing and appraising people and developing them through useful feedback.” 137*

## **THREE CORE PROCESSES OF EXECUTION**

### **Chapter Six: The People Process**

*“The people process is more important than either the strategy or operations processes... to put it simply: if you don’t get the people process right, you will never fulfill the potential of your business.” 141*

*The people process...*

- 1. evaluates individuals accurately*
- 2. provides a framework for identifying and developing leaders*
- 3. fill the leadership pipeline.*

*“Identifying the match between the right person and the right job is not always as clear cut... sometimes it means replacing an excellent performer with a person who is better equipped to take the business to the next level.” 145*

*“The people process begins with one on one assessments, but when developed and practiced as a total process, it becomes incredibly effective as an execution tool.” 177*

### **Chapter Seven: The Strategy Process**

*“Few understand that a good strategic planning process also requires the utmost attention to the hows of executing the strategy.” 178*

*"...you as a leader have to ask whether and how your organization can do the things that are needed to achieve its goals. Developing such a plan starts with identifying and defining the critical issues behind the strategy." 178*

*"If a strategy does not address the hows, it is a candidate for failure." 179*

Questions a strategic must address... page 188-89

*"An astonishing number of strategies fail because leaders don't make a realistic assessment of whether the organization can execute the plan." 195*

*"Strategy planning needs to be conducted in real-time, connected to shifts in the competitive environment and the business's own changing strengths and weaknesses." 198*

### **Chapter Eight: Conducting a Strategy Review**

*"The strategy review is also a good place for the leader to learn about and develop people." 209*

Key questions to ask... p. 213ff.

*"When a business decides on a new strategy, it needs to have a dialogue about the quality and aptitude of the people involved." 220*

### **Chapter Nine: The Operations Process**

*"What you need is what you find in companies that execute: a robust operation process, centered on an operating plan that links strategy and people to results." 226*

*"The strategy process defines where a business want to go, and the people process defines who's going to get it there. The operating plan provides the path for those people." 227*

REACT: what did you think of building a budget in three days? 231ff.

*"Synchronization means that all the moving parts of the organization have common assumptions about the external environment over the operating year and a common understanding- the left hand know what the right hand is doing..." 232*

*"Debate on assumptions is one of the most critical parts of any operating review..." 236*

### **Conclusion**

*"You have a budget, but do you have the actions plan the budget should represent. We see countless cases where the numbers are assembled painstakingly and presented expertly but have little to do with the reality of running the business." 268*

\*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that tend to find themselves on the bottom of most pastor's stack. Many pastors have found them helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.