



7 Habits Author Stephen Covey Says Lack of Managerial Direction and Too Many Goals Keep Businesses From Achieving Top Goals

June 8, 2004

Workers Need Four Basic Disciplines of Execution

SALT LAKE CITY, Jun 8, 2004 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Stephen R. Covey, author of the best-seller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, believes the major reason businesses fail or remain mediocre is not due to the market or product, but because they lack the ability to take their high-level goals and strategies and translate them into concrete actions.

"U.S. workers have so many goals to work on, they can't stay focused on and execute their organization's top three goals," said Covey, vice chairman of FranklinCovey. "They need clear direction from senior level management as well as their direct supervisors in distinguishing the difference between goals which are merely important and those which are wildly important-those which must be reached or nothing else matters."

The results of FranklinCovey's Execution Quotient (xQ) survey of 26,500 U.S. workers in more than 150 companies revealed that only one in seven U.S. workers could actually identify his or her organization's top three goals. Additionally, in a separate FranklinCovey xQ study of 12,182 workers across 18 industries, only 14 percent of workers said their work team stays diligently focused on their most important goals.

"Organizations either have too many goals or they change them too often or they simply don't have any and, in most cases, goals that do exist are vastly under communicated," said Covey. "Just because the formal leaders are clear on what they want to achieve doesn't necessarily mean that those on the front line, where the action actually happens, know what the goals are."

Covey suggests that creating a clear line of sight from the top of the organization to the front line is critical to the implementation of organizational goals.

"Everyone in the organization must have an understanding of what the goals are and how they themselves fit in the picture of achieving those goals," Covey said. "After all, in a very real sense, the front line produces the bottom line."

The FranklinCovey study of 12,182 workers also revealed that only one of every five workers feels passionate about the top goals of his or her organization.

"People may know what the goals are, but too often, they haven't bought into them. Often, employees feel no ownership, they have no input into what it's going to take to achieve the goals and they aren't emotionally connected. Where there is no involvement, there is no commitment," Covey said.

Additionally, U.S. workers spend only 49 percent of their available work hours on their most important work goals. The remaining time is spent on tasks that require immediate attention and less important activities. The research suggests that workers are often so distracted by these tasks that they neglect the most important things.

FranklinCovey's solution to the organizational execution dilemma is for organizations, work teams and employees to implement the following four disciplines of execution:

- * **Discipline 1 -- Focus on the Wildly Important**
Traditional thinking: Workers can effectively accomplish six, eight or even 10 important goals at once.

New thinking: Workers who narrow their focus on a few key goals have a greater chance of achieving those goals with excellence.

Principle: To achieve results with excellence, workers must focus on a few well-crafted goals rather than working on multiple tasks with mediocrity. Too many goals, conflicting or not, lead to confusion, burnout, decline in quality, and loss of focus. Goals must be specific and clear, explicitly linked to corporate strategy, broken down into bite-size chunks, measurable, and deadline-driven.

- * **Discipline 2 -- Create a Compelling Scoreboard**
Traditional thinking: Once the goal has been communicated, workers will know the organization is serious about it.

New thinking: Workers are not really serious about a goal until they start keeping score.

Principle: Creating measures and a compelling scoreboard that is

accessible, visual, engaging, attainable and concise ensures that workers have the same understanding of goals and can see when they are winning or when course correction must be made.

- * Discipline 3 -- Translate Lofty Goals into Specific Actions
Traditional thinking: If workers know about the goal, they will know what to do about it.

New Thinking: Goals will never be achieved until everyone on a work team knows exactly what needs to be done to achieve them.

Principle: For workers to achieve goals they've never achieved before, they must do things never done before. They must be able to actually put that goal into action, breaking it down into new behaviors and activities at the front line. Workers must:

- Create new results through new behaviors. Workers must identify new or better behaviors by replicating that which is done superbly well already, or by creating better behaviors by using their own imagination and creativity.
- Plan weekly, using a planning system. Workers must break down their work team's top goals into weekly, bite-sized chunks. They must stay focused on the three most important objectives to be accomplished each week to move the work team's goals forward. Scheduling time to work on the most important two or three objectives that must be accomplished each week is vital.

- * Discipline 4 -- Hold Each Other Accountable -- All of the Time
Traditional thinking: As long as the goal is clear and compelling, people will remain focused and committed to it.

New Thinking: Maintaining commitment to the goal requires frequent team engagement and accountability.

Principle: Workers must know they are being held accountable and they must hold each other accountable for their performance. Maintaining commitment to the goal requires frequent team accountability. Traditional staff meetings won't suffice. Better processes are needed for engaging the work team and reporting on results:

- Team meetings should center on the wildly important goals that have the most significant, positive impact on the organization, not on the minutia that dominates most meetings.
- Conduct triage reporting: Workers engage in quick reporting, reviewing scoreboards and follow-through. Successes are celebrated and trouble spots are identified.
- Find a third alternative: Workers engage in solving problems through utilizing the creative, problem-solving wisdom of the team.
- Clear the path: Workers turn to their manager and work team for help in order to meet their key goals.

"If management will utilize these disciplines in partnering with employees to align goals throughout the entire company, execution of top company goals are more apt to be achieved," said Covey.

To review the complete report of the FranklinCovey xQ survey, visit www.franklincovey.com/about/press/2004/xq_report.pdf. For a summary of the report, visit www.franklincovey.com/about/press/2004/xq_summary.pdf.

The FranklinCovey Execution Solution

The FranklinCovey Execution Solution emphasizes individual, team and organizational effectiveness and alignment of goals throughout an organization. Effectively assessing how sharply employees focus and execute on their organization's key objectives, and then inspiring and engaging them to achieve those critical goals together, is vital to the success of every organization. These important business practices can be achieved through

proper training, tools and measurement. The process includes the xQ questionnaire, which measures how well individuals, teams and organizations focus on and execute their organization's key objectives. Core elements of the solution include: xQ measurement, FOCUS: Achieving Your Highest Priorities workshop, The 4 Disciplines of Execution workshop, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People workshop, The 4 Roles of Leadership Workshop, and the FranklinCovey Planning System.

For more information about the xQ service, the FranklinCovey Execution Solution, or to register for a FranklinCovey workshop, visit www.franklincovey.com/forbusiness/solutions or call 1-800-868-1776.

The 4 Disciplines of Execution

The 4 Disciplines of Execution is a one-day, facilitator-led workshop in a corporate, onsite or public workshop setting. It provides four clear steps that ensure focus and execution on the organization's top priorities. When the workshop is deployed at every level within an organization, performance of individuals, teams and the organization increases. Leaders and team members are clear on the organization's top priorities and share a framework of accountability to achieve the goals.

About FranklinCovey

FranklinCovey (NYSE: FC) is the global leader in effectiveness training, productivity tools, and assessment services for organizations, teams and individuals. FranklinCovey helps companies succeed by unleashing the power of their workforce to focus and execute on top business priorities. Clients include 90 percent of the Fortune 100, more than 75 percent of the Fortune 500, thousands of small and mid-sized businesses, as well as numerous government entities and educational institutions. Organizations and individuals access FranklinCovey products and services through corporate training, licensed client facilitators, one-on-one coaching, public workshops, catalogs, more than 140 retail stores and www.franklincovey.com. FranklinCovey has 2,000 associates providing professional services and products in 39 offices and in 95 countries.

Available Topic Expert(s): For information on the listed expert(s), click appropriate link.

Stephen R. Covey

http://www.profnet.com/ud_public.jsp?userid=349861

SOURCE FranklinCovey

Debra Lund, +1-801-817-6440, debra.lund@franklincovey.com, or
Nick Paulenich, +1-801-817-5276, nick.paulenich@franklincovey.com, both of
FranklinCovey

http://www.franklincovey.com/about/press/2004/xq_report.pdf