

How to Improve the Management Wins for Winning More Business Through 7 Proven Strategies



By: Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

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Introduction

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to eat that management elephant one bite at a time so that you could truly know that you are going to increase your management wins? These 7 strategies may help you do just that.

Successful management teams understand that organizational success is much more dependent upon the effectiveness of their teams than any other market influence. Robert H. Waterman recognized the importance of people in business when he wrote that organizations exist for only one purpose: to help people reach ends together that they couldn't achieve individually.

So the question that management faces on a daily basis is really three-fold:

- How can we or I improve the wins for the team, the department and the organization?
- How do we close the gaps between today's outcomes and the desired future results?
- How do we or I create a positive return on investment (ROI) for the resources expended in trying to improve the wins for the team?

During my experiences as both a process improvement and performance improvement consultant, I have come to realize 7 business strategies for executive teams to increase their management batting average and create a positive return on investment (ROI) for the resources expended.

1. Build People Skills – Where is the Focus within your organization on job specific skills or people skills?
2. Focus on Strengths – Why do winning teams win because of the strengths or weaknesses?
3. Implement Executive Coaching – How can you increase the productivity of your people while multiplying the bottom line results?
4. Identify Real Problems – What is truly keeping you from reaching that next level of success?
5. Create Alignment – Are your daily actions causing waste, reducing performance and actually setting your people up to fail?
6. Embrace Consistent Goal Achievement – How can your people achieve business goals when they probably cannot achieve personal goals?
7. Secure Measurable Results – Why are you in business?

Are these the only strategies? Absolutely not! However from my 25 plus years in both the business and educational arenas, I believe that these are the top 7 business strategies that need to be incorporated if management truly wants to increase its wins.

Leanne Hoagland-Smith

P.S. Since these strategies evolve from a strategic plan, there is a presumption that a strategic plan exists and the challenge is in the execution of that plan or ***eating the elephant one bite at a time.***

Chapter One

Build People Skills

Over 70 years ago, Napoleon Hill realized that success for businesses comes from the people within those organizations. However, many organizations still fail to grasp this realization because soft skills still are viewed as secondary to job specific skills.

One of the executive coaching activities that I employ when working organizations through a change management process is to ask these three questions and listen to the responses:

When a person is promoted here at XYZ Company, it is usually because of her or his job specific skills or people skills? Usually 99% will agree that promotions are because of the job specific mastery.



As a person is promoted up the management ladder, what skills will that individual need? Job specific ones from the initial promotion or interpersonal (people) ones? Again, 99% will agree that interpersonal skills are primary to the success of that individual while job specific skills are secondary.

Within your organization as you promote your people, where is the focus on the education and training? People skills (what some call soft skills) or job specific skills? And once again, 99% will respond to job specific skills.

Then all of a sudden, the light bulb appears almost magically over the heads of many within the room. Management suddenly understands part of the reason for the difficulty or gap in creating winning business teams and realizing success.

People development from individual to team building is a necessary strategy to close the gap between planning and execution within the change management process. Those interpersonal or soft skills are much more critical to the success of any organization and can quickly turn a positive cash balance into a negative one. Remember, the old adage:

"People don't leave companies, they leave managers."

To improve your management team and increase your business wins begins by assessing your business goals and including the necessary people development processes to catapult you ahead of your competition.

Chapter Two

Focus on Strengths

Before the book, *Now Discover Your Strengths*, was published, I discovered first hand the second reason why training of new supervisors or managers fails to be as successful as originally planned. During the first facilitation session for some incoming supervisors and managers, I conducted the following exercise.

On the sheet of paper in front of the participants, I asked them to quickly write down in 3 minutes all the strengths that they bring in their new role as supervisor or manager. Very few pencils were in action except for the President of the firm.

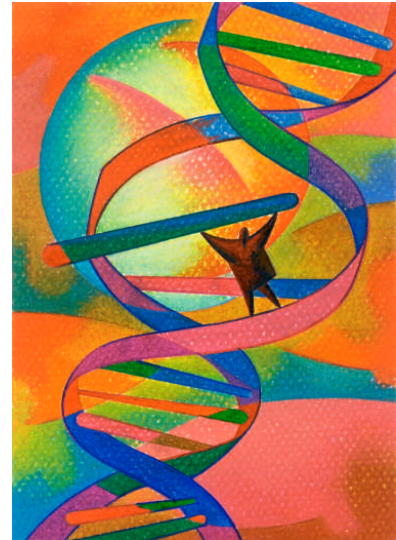
After the time was up, I asked them to quickly write down in 3 minutes all the weaknesses that they bring in their new role as supervisor or manager. For most of the participants, the pens literally flew off the table.

During the debriefing of this activity, the group discussed their responses. Most of the participants didn't believe that they had any strengths and if they did have strengths to list them would be bragging.

I then asked the following questions: Why do winning teams win? Because of their strengths or because of their weaknesses? Everyone agreed winning teams win because of their strengths. All of a sudden, I could see the participants having the light bulb click on over their heads. Collectively as a group, they realized that the success of the company depended upon their strengths and how to leverage or focus those strengths toward the task or goal at hand.

This experience confirmed that the negative conditioning that we receive in early childhood and that is reinforced through the educational process continues to follow us into the workplace. The collective beliefs that our weaknesses take first place in our psyche while our strengths take second place is another reason why change in management is not as successful even when the incoming management team have excellent credentials.

If you wish to improve the outcomes from your management leadership team, you may wish to conduct this exercise to see where their internal focus or locus is. This activity may also help to explain why training and development are not as successful as they should be. Training is about learning a new skill. However, development is about improving the quality of that skill and to do so may require more reflection and introspection. By remembering that winning teams win because of their strengths may help your company improve their change management process and to take the organization to that next level of success.



Chapter Three

Implement Executive Coaching



Executive business coaching is a proven management strategy to help increase the management wins for business teams whether Fortune 1000 companies or small businesses. A recent report by Management Research Group released in May of 2006 that surveyed 6,000 companies and 800,000 individuals in 100 counties suggested that executive coaching by its focus on the whole person increases the effectiveness of the management team as leaders.

In an earlier study of a Fortune 500 company in 2001, Dr. Merrill Anderson of MetrixGlobal determined that coaching resulted in a 529% return on investment (ROI). For every dollar spent in coaching, \$529 were returned to the company through increased performance. Additional studies from Dell, IBM, Kodak and other companies have helped to catapult this new business and change management strategy.

Sports teams have known for years that a good coach creates a winning team and winning teams achieve more goals. Coaches have the ability to build relationships with their charges and create an environment of introspection and reflection. Coaching is not a new strategy, but one that is showing increased measurable results within the business world.

For example, an internal report of the Personnel Management Association suggested that when training is combined with coaching, individuals increased their productivity by an average of 86% compared to 22% with training alone. Another survey by Manchester, Inc. of 100 executives discovered that coaching provided an average return on investment of almost six times the cost of coaching. The Hay Group reported that 40% of Fortune 500 companies used Executive coaching.

Executive coaching can increase the management wins for any team provided there is:

- Alignment to the strategic plan
- Identification of pre-determined benchmarks
- Selection of results focused executive coaches
- Implementation of a proven coaching process
- Continuous improvement or quality processes in place
- Corporate culture where top management **"walks the talk"**

Yes, executive coaching is a proven strategy and may be just the solution that you are seeking to increase your management wins. Just make sure that if you implement this solution, that it is not a silo solution, but one that works with the entire organization.

Chapter Four

Identify Real Problems

A quick story:

During the annual meeting, the CEO of a manufacturing company informed her executive team that she wanted to achieve a 10% growth during the next 12 months. The VP of Operations made plans to purchase new manufacturing equipment for new products while the VP of Marketing & Sales began to implement a plan selling existing products. The CFO decided to cut budgets to capital improvements and marketing. All three executive team members believed that their actions would help achieve the 10% growth.

And the results of their actions are only symptoms of a greater, real problem – lack of alignment supported by poor communication.



Many times in business, symptoms are confused with problems. One area that this is especially evident is within the area or department of human resource training and development. Employees are trained on new skills and receive lots of new knowledge for a specific performance issue. Within a short time, performance problems for that same issue re-emerge and training is viewed as not solving the problem. Hence, when a budget crunch arises, HR is one of the first departments to suffer because this department is viewed as being a problem due to poor results. Yet, the real problem was not the knowledge training, but failure to identify the attitudes or habits. The authentic question to ask is not "Do they know it?" but "Do they want to do it?"

Another short story:

During a recent presentation, a business owner received the following challenge. If 10 of his 100 employees named the top 3 current organizational goals, would he receive the same answers from everyone or would he receive 5, 10 or even 25 different goals? The business owner shook his head and responded, "No, I am sure that I would receive more than 3 goals."

When looking at this situation, the symptom is having multiple responses of the 3 current goals. The true problem is again alignment and communication.

One solution to identifying the actual problems is conduct an organizational assessment based on known criteria such as [Baldrige](#). Research suggests that **Baldrige** is one of the best predictors for organizational success. If you are truly committed to creating a winning business team, then having the ability to clearly separate the symptoms from the real problems will enhance your bottom line.

Chapter Five

Create Organizational Alignment

When the wheels of a car are not properly aligned, the performance of the car suffers. The driver may experience the following:

- Difficult steering
- Bumpy ride
- Uneven tire wear
- Delay in arriving at the destination

A leader (driver) who is in charge of a team or organization (car) may experience the following with poor alignment:

- Difficulty in leading the team or organization
- Additional obstacles or bumps in the road
- Unplanned use of valuable resources
- Missed target dates



Organizational alignment is when everyone is not only focused and rowing in the same direction, but using the same size paddles and rowing toward exactly the same goals. To achieve such alignment begins with an executable and sustainable strategic plan. Without a plan of who does what by when, achieving strategic alignment becomes even more difficult.

An executable strategic plan begins alignment through visioning and values statements. These two statements help to keep everyone focused on where the management sees the organization going and what behaviors will be employed as everyone works together to keep going. Then from the research of both external and internal factors, a mission statement is created with specific goals. From these goals, both marketing and sales plans evolve and are all directed toward achieving the mission.

These 3 statements when shared and embraced by everyone keep daily actions directed toward the desired results and increase the daily performance of everyone involved. In other words, these statements lay the foundation for a business culture of high performance. Proper alignment helps to ensure that no one is set up to fail. Of course, if you would rather drive a hard to steer car over a bumpy road and spend extra money on gas and tires, that choice is yours. However, if you truly wish to work smarter and not harder, maybe it is time to take an alignment check and make those adjustments where necessary.

To begin you may wish to ask yourself this question:

When was the last time I read my strategic plan?

Chapter Six

Embrace Consistent Goal Achievement



During the last 5 years when speaking to or working with organizations, I have personally surveyed well over 1,000 individuals from small business owners to Fortune 1000 executives and have learned that *everyone wants success*. Yet, if this is true, then **why don't we as organizations or as individuals have more success?**

The answer to this question lies within the ability to consistently plan, set and execute goals. However, the knowledge and skills necessary to learn how to set goals is not a recognized course in most high schools or even colleges. Without knowledge and skills,

developing positive attitudes and habits necessary for goal achievement are even more difficult to realize.

Years ago, Zig Ziglar recognized that consistent goal success must include specific criteria much like the proportional ingredients in any favorite recipe. **The S.M.A.R.T. Goal** criteria (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistically Set High, Target Date/Time Driven) are well accepted among most goal achievement workshops. However, in today's world, goal achievement must include the **W.H.Y.** - Written, Habit Forming and Yours.

When individuals learn how to set and achieve their own goals, the likelihood increases for management to achieve theirs. The challenge by management is to link organizational goals to personal goals. By helping employees first achieve their own goals, this will catapult organizational efforts and employees begin to take ownership of business goals.

To further increase the wins for management means to infuse goals within other areas such as performance reviews and project management. Of course total success is dependent upon an executable strategic plan that is regularly shared and updated with all employees.

Employees should also have their own strategic plan or action plan that looks to six key areas of personal development: mental, physical, family, social, career/financial and ethics/beliefs. When these areas are balanced to the four key areas of the organization that being time management, productivity, sales and leadership, creates the **what's in it for me** (WIIFM) that leads to **what's in it for us** (WIIFU).

Consistent goal achievement is both a skill and an attitude. When management embraces this simple strategy, the organization can quickly double results and move forward at warp speed.

Chapter Seven

Secure Measurable Results

Results and **accountability** are two big buzzwords in today's global market place. What results are you achieving? Who is accountable for achieving those business results? Are two of the more frequently asked questions from the boardroom to the loading dock to the classroom.



Since organizations are in business to make money through various sources of revenue, one would think that management would have a process in place to ensure results are consistently being managed and achieved. Yet, during the last 5 years, what I have learned is that many businesses from small business owners to mid size firms with revenues exceeding \$20 million do not have an executable strategic plans. These businesses operate by the seat of the pants philosophy or what I affectionately call spray and pray. ***(Spray it on the wall or within the organization and hope it sticks or delivers results.)***

Imagine for a moment the cost of airline tickets if pilots could just begin to fly and not plan the best route? And, how many airplane collisions would potentially happen without written and filed flight plans? Some executives in management spend more time planning their vacations than they do they lives or their businesses.

Measurable results begin with an executable and written strategic plan outlining and delegating who does what by when. Through written goals that embrace the W.H.Y. S.M.A.R.T. goal criteria, measurement and therefore accountability are integrated throughout the business culture.

Some key areas to measure are:

Weekly & monthly department goals of sales, units old, etc.	Number of new clients
Number of referrals leading to new clients	Average sale's costs
Cost to acquire a client	Cost to keep a client
Employees' attendance and productivity	Sales to close ratio

Each company should construct their own dashboard of key indicators that need to be watched on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. A business dashboard is very similar to a car's dashboard that monitors key systems within the vehicle allowing the car to perform at maximum levels. Additionally, dashboards provide the first glimpse of potential problems from a drop in sales to an increase in production costs.

By having a positive attitude regarding measuring the results, the management team can increase the wins for their organization and even for themselves. As the old adage goes:

Success breeds success.

About Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.



Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S. founder and president of **ADVANCED SYSTEMS**, has over 20 years in management and leadership along with almost 10 years in education. She has [spoken](#) at national conferences on leadership for both adults and youth as well as performance based educational reform solutions. Leanne has [designed and facilitated workshops](#), curriculums, programs and seminars for businesses, manufacturing, not for profits, educational organizations and governmental agencies. Her [articles](#) have been published nationally in a variety of journals and newsletters. As the process specialist, she works with individuals to connect their Passion to Purpose to **DOUBLE** Performance through executable strategic plans along with the business and interpersonal skills necessary to **"pull it off."**

She has co-authored a forthcoming book [M.A.G.I.C.A.L. Potential™](#) *7 Capacities to Go Beyond Purpose to Achieve*. Her ongoing efforts with her clients continue to produce numerous models and tools to help her clients reach new levels of success including the **S.W.I.N.G.S. Model for Effective Facilitation®** and the **Competency and Behavior Pyramids®**. Currently she is working on a new book exploring how leadership can harness the three forces of planning, execution and measurement.

Leanne believes that performance improvement does not have to be rocket science because very few people come to work thinking how they can "mess things up." The real issue is that most individuals have never been developed to maximize their potential. **Such dramatic change must come from within each individual. Yet, most training and learning is at least 90% externally directed.** For change to be sustainable, each individual must **want to change** because no one, absolutely no one, can change anyone's behavior for an extended amount of time.

Please visit www.processspecialist.com and explore the site from free articles to learning about the secret to success. Yes, there is a secret, well it really isn't a secret, but most people just fail to see the secret because in the words of Marcel Proust:

*"The true voyage of discovery is not seeking new landscapes,
but seeing with new eyes."*