
Sales Execution Made Simple

A Business Efficacy Publication for Sales Management

Much is being said these days about "execution." Everyone believes at some level what Business Efficacy espouses, "talk is cheap, intent is useless, and execution is everything." Although people possess the desire to execute, it is the belief about what it takes to execute that impedes the process. Management appears to value the novel while placing less importance on doing common things uncommonly well.

If you want execution, the answer may be right in front of you - keep it simple. Keeping it simple is not easy. It requires resisting tendencies, cultural norms, and old beliefs and instead applying focus, discipline, and commitment to doing a few things uncommonly well. Here are four critical success factors for execution to become a reality.

First, start with a simple plan. Most plans are complex, lengthy, technical, verbose, and unrealistic. Why is this the case? Because the individual creating the presentations and other related communications is driven by the underlying belief, "more is better." The drive to look intelligent, creative, and innovative takes over resulting in plans that have no chance of execution. These colorful plans wind up collecting dust on the shelves.

- **Resist:** Trying to demonstrate value through elaborate plans.
- **Execute:** Designing a plan that is pragmatic, succinct, simple, understandable, and doable.

To be perceived as brilliant, one needs to create a plan that gets put into action, drives real change, and generates results.

Second, never assume everyone understands what he/she is to do once they've heard the plan. Sales managers and executives tend to be great communicators, and therefore, they usually favor the idea of launching plans at meetings with great fanfare. The underlying belief is to introduce the plan at the meeting, assuming everyone understands what to do. In actuality, most walk away asking, "what does this say about my role and responsibilities?"

- **Resist:** Assuming people can figure out on their own what changes are required of them.
- **Execute:** Clarifying for each individual, level by level, what he/she is to continue doing, start doing, and/or stop doing that, if implemented, would get the plan put into execution.

People want to be successful and participate in executing a quality plan. Most of the time, however, they need assistance figuring out what that looks like at his/her level, and within his/her specific job, given current routines and performance.

Next is finding the courage to take risks. Risk taking is not a common value or practice frequently exhibited within the business world. Most people are apprehensive to be first when it comes to implementing change. Many wait and watch to see if others are going to take that initial step and start first.

- **Resist:** Waiting for the change to start with others.
- **Execute:** Change your own behaviors first, demonstrate courage, resilience, persistence, and a belief in the actions expected. You might be surprised to find that others will follow your lead.

Senior leaders need to demonstrate the seriousness of the plan by modeling the change first within their own scope of responsibility, and then by holding direct reports accountable for implementing his/her part of the plan.

Lastly, demonstrate patience and stay the course. Managers don't intentionally quit execution. Unconsciously, they don't expect it to work or generate the desired outcomes. They begin to accept mediocre change and slowly the plan becomes something that resides on paper. Moving on to another plan appears to have a better chance of success than staying the course.

- **Resist:** Accepting mediocrity which results in the plan falling by the wayside.
- **Execute:** Resilience in staying the course and expecting excellence.

It is uncommon for a management team to stay the course on any given plan. Within most organizations the culture is to continually expect a new program, initiative, or strategy. Little patience is given for the plan to generate results. This puts pressure on managers to create new plans.

As Business Efficacy continues to work with organizations to drive execution, we see time and time again organizations which want an easy answer. They want an incentive program, training program, tracking system, or quarterly rallies to be the answer to getting change to happen.

Those who are passionate about execution must be focused, disciplined, and passionate about tackling the simple tactics above and have the resilience, persistence, and tenacity to stay the course for a long enough period of time to allow change to happen. The real magic is in keeping it simple. This won't be easy, but it is the only path to success. Remember, do the ordinary - just do it exceptionally well.