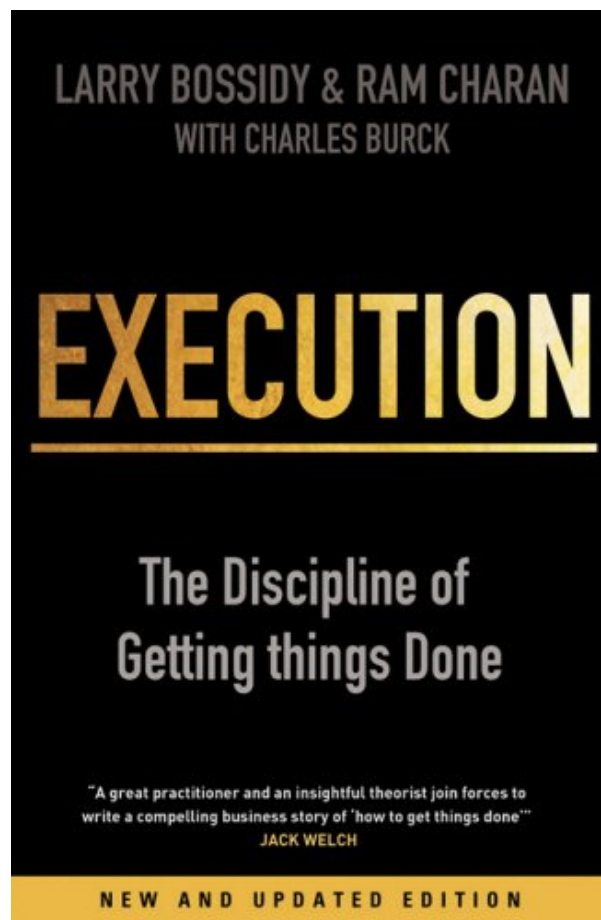


EXECUTION: THE DISCIPLINE OF GETTING THINGS DONE BY LARRY BOSSIDY, RAM CHARAN, CHARLES BURCK



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EXECUTION

The Discipline of
Getting things Done

"A great practitioner and an insightful theorist join forces to
write a compelling business story of 'how to get things done'"

JACK WELCH

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Review

"It's rare to find a book like this that blends smart practice with intelligent articulation of how to get things done. Do yourself a favour. Buy it." Boston Globe "A how-to book for the can-do boss." BusinessWeek

About the Author

Larry Bossidy is the retired chairman and CEO of Honeywell International and has served on the boards of GE, Merck, and JPMorgan Chase. He is coauthor, with Ram Charan, of *Confronting Reality*. Ram Charan is an award-winning teacher and highly sought-after advisor to CEOs and senior executives, as well as a director of Tyco Electronics, Austin Industries, and Emaar MGF. He is a distinguished Fellow of the National Academy of Human Resources and the author of *What the CEO Wants You to Know*, *Know-How*, *Owning Up*, and *The Talent Masters*.

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When Execution was first published in 2002, it changed the way we did our jobs. By analysing the discipline of getting things done, it helped thousands of business people to make the final leap to success. Now, Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan reframe their empowering message for a world in which the old rules have been shattered and radical change is becoming routine. For the foreseeable future: - Growth will be slower. But the company that executes well will have the confidence, speed and resources to move fast as new opportunities emerge. - Competition will be fiercer, with companies searching for any possible advantage in every area. - Governments will take on new roles in their national economies. And companies that execute well will be more attractive as partners and suppliers, and better prepared to adapt to new waves of regulation. - Risk management will become a top priority for every leader, and every company will be looking for the edge in detecting new internal and external threats. Forget formulating a 'vision', then leaving others to carry it out: Execution shows you how to link together people, strategy and operations - the three core elements of every organisation - and create a business based on dialogue, intellectual honesty and realism. With case histories from the real world - including such recent examples such as the diverging paths taken by Jamie Dimon at JPMorgan Chase and Charles Prince at Citigroup - Execution provides the realistic and hard-nosed approach to business success that could only come from authors as accomplished and insightful as Bossidy and Charan.

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Most helpful customer reviews

412 of 428 people found the following review helpful.

The Discipline of Getting Done With This Book

By Andrew Schonbek

My dogged desire to get through this book ruined the first half of a windsurfing vacation in Aruba.

It's very, very dry going, and at the end one wonders what, if anything the authors really had to say.

It sounds on the surface like cutting edge management practice. For instance Bossidy and Charan introduce the concept of "the social software of execution" as a key element for creating the framework for cultural change in the organization. They go on to elaborate, "A key component of software is what we call Social Operating Mechanisms". At this point I was on the edge of my chair, ready to absorb what was being teed up as an idea of potentially transformational impact. So what are Social Operating Mechanisms? The authors go on to explain, "These are formal or informal meetings, presentations, even memos or e-mail exchanges - anywhere that dialogue takes place".

Wow - this is really deep stuff...

One wonders why the authors don't simply refer to communication rather than Social Operating Mechanisms. And, as a separate matter, the lack of literacy is surprising. Since when, for example, are memos and e-mail exchanges places?

Stripped of all of this, what the authors have to say is simple common sense that can be summarized as follows:

- * Successful companies have the important ability to get things done (or execute).
- * Good leadership (knowing people, setting clear goals, following through, etc.) is a prerequisite of execution.
- * Reward systems, communications, and feedback processes need to foster action and provide incentives for getting things done.
- * Some people are more capable than others are to get things done. These are the people that should be put in positions of authority in the organization.
- * Strategic plans need to reflect the real world and link to operational plans. They also need to be tested for feasibility in the context of the organization's capabilities.

None of this is rocket science, that is until one begins to cloak it in management techno speak such as that described above.

And one more thing. The editor should have had a "robust conversation" with the authors about their overuse of the word "robust". It's really annoying.

247 of 268 people found the following review helpful.

Check your own personality for execution traits

By Peter Leerskov

What's left to say about this book on execution? With 130 online reviews many issues are covered already. One point's missing, though. Look at the reviews; they are divided into two camps. The reviewers either think this is a mediocre book with very basic ideas (management 101) or they see the light. The latter realize that there's no need for new acronyms or faddy words in the management-speak. "Execution" is about getting

things done, being persistent and realistic, as well as managing the 3 core processes; strategy (why? and what?), operations (how?) and people (who?).

Building a performance culture is never as easy as it sounds. Looking back a few years, try to recall a few of those companies with great media attention and grand strategic visions. Many of them failed. And many of them will fail again and again, because the heroes are strategic visionaries that never bothered to deal with the issue of execution; continually and personally making sure that things were actually done. You know, when all is said and done, usually more is said than done...

If you found this book fascinating, you'll probably have some of the execution traits hidden in your personality preferences. If you want to check it out, you might visit some of free Internet sites for a test (e.g. keirse.com). For a business, I believe it's paramount to make sure that you have a well-balanced team on all levels in the hierarchy. This also includes having enough executives with execution traits. Advice: Don't assume you have it; test it!

Conclusively, this is a great book. I liked it so much that I even also bought the audio version! The reason for the audio version is that these execution ideas simply are needed to be absorbed over several readings (or listenings). Otherwise, you won't be able to start changing your behavior (which you can change, unlike your innate preferences). While commuting, I often turn the CDs on and find it inspiring to forget about traffic jams and just getting the views of Charan and Bossidy in their own voices. However, I do agree that the book easily could have been shorter.

Peter Leerskov,

MSc in International Business (Marketing & Management) and Graduate Diploma in E-business

84 of 90 people found the following review helpful.

Tips for the CEOs and Group Heads of Large Conglomerates

By Donald Mitchell

Larry Bossidy is clearly a five-star leader, and Ram Charan is a gifted consultant and teacher. It surprised me that their book didn't work as well as I had hoped.

Execution's title confused me. Hopefully, you won't have that problem. I thought Execution would be all about how to take a strategy and operating plan and implement them well. Instead, Part III makes it clear that Execution is about meeting overall financial objectives through being an effective organization in setting strategies and operating plans to serve customers well while building an organization that can implement the plans for outperforming competitors. Part I, by contrast, makes it sound like Execution is only about implementation, noting that almost all organizations have the same strategies (or can quickly get them from consultants), access the same top talent and can easily acquire and employ competitively effective innovation.

I also thought Execution would apply to all business people. Instead, the context for most of the AlliedSignal (Honeywell International's name when Mr. Bossidy became CEO there the first time) and General Electric examples which dominate the book is that of the CEO or group executive to whom divisions report in a large conglomerate. In this sense, Execution is like reading the latter chapters of Mr. Welch's book, Jack.

The main difference between Jack and Execution is that Execution tries to build a framework for the book's concepts while sharing examples (mostly of failure) from other organizations. Mr. Charan's sections of the book mostly focus on that positioning. Mr. Bossidy mostly tells about his own experiences at AlliedSignal and Honeywell. Mr. Bossidy, of course, worked with Mr. Welch at General Electric for many years. Mr. Bossidy reports that you could take execution for granted at GE, but that it was lacking at AlliedSignal when he arrived. The two coauthors alternate in providing long monologues on the chapter topics and subtopics.

Three aspects of Execution are valuable to almost any business leader: how to hold a strategy review

(chapter 8), building an organization (chapter 5) and the "Dear Jane" letter to a new leader (conclusion).

For those who would like to become CEOs and heads of divisions of large, disparate organizations, Mr. Bossidy's many anecdotes from his experiences at Honeywell International about how to do the leader's job will provide a valuable model that can be used repeatedly. In many such organizations, there are no good leadership examples and this book can help fill the gap.

Here's the book's structure:

Part I: Why Execution Is Needed

Chapter 1. The Gap Nobody Knows

Chapter 2. The Execution Difference

Part II: The Building Blocks of Execution

Chapter 3. Building Block One: The Leader's Seven Essential Behaviors

Chapter 4. Building Block Two: Creating the Framework for Cultural Change

Chapter 5. Building Block Three: The Job No Leader Should Delegate -- Having the Right People in the Right Place

Part III: The Three Core Processes of Execution

Chapter 6. The People Process: Making the Link with Strategy and Operations

Chapter 7. The Strategy Process: Making the Link with People and Operations

Chapter 8. How to Conduct a Strategy Review

Chapter 9. The Operations Process: Making the Link with Strategy and People

Conclusion: Letter to a New Leader

Execution addresses these problems. First, many company and division heads have little knowledge about the businesses or the most important functions and processes needed to prosper. Boards, for example, often bring in a brilliant person who has performed as a "role player" elsewhere, and they cannot scale up into the CEO job. When a company has had poor leadership, its processes and organization also become weak and it's hard to get anything done. There are several poignant examples including Richard Thoman at Xerox and Richard McGinn at Lucent Technologies. It's hard to fix that problem. It took years at AlliedSignal and can be quickly lost (which happened in the two years after he retired the first time). That's why Mr. Bossidy had to come back to restore execution (as he means it) at Honeywell International. Lacking these perspectives, the business system is misdirected (see *The Fifth Discipline*).

Second, many leaders make bad assumptions about their circumstances. Acting on those assumptions makes matters worse.

Third, companies plan to pursue strategies for which they lack the processes and organizations to implement. The strategies need to match the ability to execute.

As a solution, you as leader must:

--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."

I was uncomfortable with many of the examples. The unending praise of Dick Brown at EDS didn't seem to make any sense knowing that EDS's stock melted down and he was asked to leave. He was in big trouble when *Execution* was written, having encouraged his people to grow by taking on large unprofitable new accounts. It seems like he might have been executing the wrong strategy, one that couldn't be executed. Most of the "failure" examples are anonymous which makes them less credible and less compelling. Finally, Dell is heralded for executing very well (which it certainly does). However, in describing how the company has evolved its business model to outperform competitors, *Execution* fails to notice that its business model innovation has been essential to success. No competitor has this business model. *Execution's* assumption that

everyone can have the same strategy ignores research that shows that business model innovation creates unique strategies and superior execution compared to making the old business model and strategy more efficient.

Unless you are shooting to be CEO of GE or Honeywell International, I suspect that you would do better to read Good to Great for getting ideas related to improving effectiveness.

After you finish this book, ask yourself what one thing you could improve would make the most difference in your organization's performance over the next week, month, quarter, year and three years.

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