

BusinessPlus+ Newsletter

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Business Essential Briefs: The Four Disciplines of Execution

By FranklinCovey Institute



Every year, organisations globally spend more than \$30 billion on strategy creation—and more than 80% of those strategies fail. FranklinCovey’s **The 4 Disciplines of Execution methodology** provides the framework for organisations seeking to increase strategic execution by creating a culture of high performance.

Discipline 1: Focus on the Wildly Important



The prefrontal cortex, the brain’s gateway, is designed to deal with teaspoons rather than tidal waves. Focus matters.

Business research has shown that only 15 percent of employees know their organisation’s most important goals—either there are no goals or they have too many goals.

Focus on less to accomplish more. Start by selecting one **Wildly Important Goal (“WIG”)** instead of trying to work on a dozen goals all at once. We are not suggesting you ignore the work necessary to maintain your daily operation. **We are suggesting you narrow your focus to work on what you want to significantly improve.**

Most intelligent, ambitious people don’t want to do less. Especially if it means saying no to good ideas. They are wired to do more, but there are always more good ideas than there is capacity to execute.

When you choose a WIG, you identify the most important objective that won’t be achieved unless it gets special attention. In other words, your normal course of business won’t make it happen.

To define a WIG, identify where you are now, where you want to be, and by when. Said differently, you define a starting line, a finish line, and a deadline. Psychologically it is important to have a single measure of success. This is the discipline of focus, and it’s the first step in creating a winnable game.

Discipline 2: Act on the Lead Measures

While a **lag measure** tells you if you've achieved the goal, a **lead measure** tells you if you are likely to achieve the goal. No matter what you are trying to achieve, your success will be based on two kinds of measures: Lag and Lead. Lag measures track the success of your wildly important goal. Lags are measures you spend time losing sleep over. They are things like revenue, profit, quality, and customer satisfaction. They are called lags because by the time you see them, the performance that drove them has already passed. You can't do anything to fix them; they are history.



A lead measure tells you if you are likely to achieve your Wildly Important Goal.

Lead measures track the critical activities that drive or lead to the lag measure. They predict the success of the lag measure and are influenced directly by the team. An example of a lag measure is weight loss. Which activities or lead measures will lead to weight loss? Diet and exercise! Proper diet and exercise predict the success of weight loss, and they are activities that we can directly influence. Simple enough but be careful: even the smartest people fall into the trap of fixating on a lag measure that they can't directly influence. This is because lags are easier to measure and they represent the result we ultimately want. **Think of a lead measure as a lever that moves your Wildly Important Goal.**

Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard



If your team doesn't know whether or not they're winning, they are probably on their way to losing.

The right kind of scoreboard motivate players to win. People play differently when they are keeping score. If you doubt this, watch a group of teenagers playing basketball. See how the game changes the minute scorekeeping begins.

The lag and lead measures won't have much meaning to the team unless they can see the progress in real time. Bowling through a curtain is not that much fun. **Discipline 3 is the discipline of engagement.** People perform best when they are emotionally engaged, and the highest level of engagement comes when people know whether they are winning or losing.

The best scoreboard is designed for and often by the players. A player's scoreboard is quite different from the complex scoreboard that coaches love to make.

Discipline 4: Create a Cadence of Accountability



Each team engages in a simple weekly process that highlights successes, analyses failures, and course-corrects as necessary, creating the ultimate performance-management system. The cadence of accountability is a rhythm of regular and frequent team **meetings that focus on the Wildly Important Goal.** These meetings happen weekly, sometimes daily. They ideally last no more than 20 minutes. In that brief time, team members hold each other accountable for commitments made to move the score.



Unless we consistently hold each other accountable, the goal naturally disintegrates in the whirlwind.

The secret to Discipline 4, in addition to the weekly cadence, are the commitments that team members create in the meeting. One by one, team members answer a simple question, “What are the one or two most important things I can do this week that will have the biggest impact on the scoreboard?” In the meeting, each team member reports first if they met last week’s commitments, second if the commitments move the lead or lag measures on the scoreboard, and finally which commitments they will make for the upcoming week.

People are more likely to commit to their own ideas than to orders from above. When individuals commit to fellow team members instead of only to the boss, the commitment goes beyond professional job performance to become a personal promise. When the team sees they are having a direct impact on the Wildly Important Goal, they know they are winning, and nothing drives morale and engagement more than winning.

Additional Resources

- The FranklinCovey Institute paper “*Turn your Average Employees into High Performers*” can be accessed [HERE](#)
- The Growth Faculty paper “*Ten Best Methods for Improving Accountability*” can be accessed [HERE](#)

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