



The Effective Executive

Strategies for getting the most from your staff so you can focus on visioning, planning and coaching.

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I used to be a terrible leader. Years ago, I was working as a help desk representative in an insurance company, and my manager decided to hire someone to work under me. I had no management or leadership experience and had no training before the employee was hired. I did what most managers with no experience do; I managed by instinct. I thought my job was to tell her what to do and to answer her questions. Needless to say, I was a poor leader, and I'm sure she did not think highly of me or my skills. Shortly after hiring my first employee, I started taking leadership courses and working on my skills. I was not an overnight leadership sensation. It took focused effort and learning before I was able to effectively influence others.

Many executives move up through the ranks with very little leadership training and coaching. They learn to navigate their way through management issues and get things done in spite of their lack of leadership skills. Years later, they are held to a new standard and told they must improve. Yet after working the same way for years and years, learning how to lead can be like learning a new language. It takes time, effort and practice.

At the executive level, your focus needs to be on the most important key result areas. Many executives spend their time on the trivial issues and details which suck up

their time and leave little time for visioning, planning and coaching. Leading through people is one of the most important skills to ensure you are an effective, successful executive. Here are five strategies for getting the most from your employees so you can focus on what's really important.

Define Key Result Areas

The key result areas are the functions in your position that only you can do. They are what you were hired for and why your position was created in the credit union. They are not things that can be delegated or outsourced. Typically there are about three to five key result areas for a position. These are the most important aspects of the job that bring value to the organization. They are not the little things that can be handled by your staff.

For example, if you are a marketing executive, your key result areas might be: develop a strategy for increasing profitable members, develop a member communication strategy to increase visibility and awareness, and coach and develop your direct reports.

As a leader in the credit union, these are the areas you should be focusing on every day. Your monthly, weekly and daily to-do list should be derived from these key result areas. You should start your day focused on

these important areas and train your staff to handle the other projects and tasks that roll up into these areas. Unless you consistently focus on these areas, you will spend your time dealing with operational fires that constantly impede on your time.

Shift Your Focus: People First Then Things

Most leaders are so caught up in the day-to-day issues and tasks, that they spend very little time in the area that will yield them the best return on investment: their people. As an executive coach, this is an area where I see many leaders start to derail; they put a lot of focus on results and outcomes, and little or no focus on the people side of things. Specifically, they lack the leadership competencies to develop relationships with their employees and engage and develop them.

To be the most successful, executives need to shift this focus. More time should be spent on getting things done through employees rather than doing the work or micromanaging processes. This requires developing and coaching employees to improve their performance and build your team bench strength. Developing employees allows you to delegate tasks so you can focus on the areas where you bring the most value: planning and strategizing. Many leaders struggle in this area because they see their value in

