



Impact Your Organization's Results:

Turn Average Employees Into High Performers

By **Chris McChesney**

Author, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*,
and Global Practice Leader, FranklinCovey

FranklinCovey



Move Your Middle

Your organization has pockets of great performers and extraordinary teams. And then there's everyone else.



Whenever you have variability in performance, you have variability in results. The key to creating great results is institutionalizing high-performance behaviors at scale.

By applying some basic truths about human motivation, you can turn average employees into high performers and typical teams into powerhouses. Moving your middle has dramatic results on your organization's overall performance.

It's hard to overstate the impact of moving your middle, even a modest amount. It's like charging \$8 per user vs. \$10 per user for a subscription service. On the surface, it's a mere \$2 difference. But multiply it across 10 or 20 users—for every account in your customer base—and that modest increase adds up to a far more profitable business.

More Than a Memo

So, what does it take to move the middle?

Begin by understanding that leaders can implement change in two ways: through the stroke of a pen, and by promoting behavioral changes. The most sustainable changes almost always fall in the latter category.

Sure, the stroke of a pen has its place. But it's going to take a lot more than a memo to significantly boost your customer-satisfaction scores, adopt a consultative sales approach, or systematically reduce cost overruns—or make any other change that truly matters for your business. It's going to require more than your team members' compliance to be successful. It will require their commitment.

Understandably, it's very easy to assume people are the problem. Not necessarily. As W. Edwards Deming, father of the quality movement, taught: Anytime the majority behaves a particular way a majority of the time, people are not the problem. The problem exists within the system.

A leader must own that.

Here are four basic fundamental principles leaders can use to move their middle performers.



**Sustainable
behavioral change
requires more
than compliance.
It requires
commitment.**

Discipline 1:

Focus on the Wildly Important

Less is more. There will always be more good ideas than you and your teams have the capacity to execute.



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

Key word: capacity. Understandably, smart, ambitious leaders want to do more. But the truth is, the more you try to do, the less you actually accomplish.

Focus has an almost magical effect. The sun's scattered rays are too weak to start a fire, but focus them with a magnifying glass, and they'll light a fire in seconds. Similarly, focus your team. Focus yourself. Light a fire!

Make it clear to your team what the one Wildly Important Goal® (WIG®) is. A specific focus allows the team to easily distinguish between what is truly the top

priority and what is the whirlwind. The whirlwind is the day job: all of the work, energy, and attention required to keep the organization running, the doors open, the operation humming along — the very thing that makes it so hard to execute anything new.

Focus on your one extremely important goal, your Wildly Important Goal, your WIG.

“

You can ignore the principle of focus, but it won't ignore you.”



Discipline 2: Act on the Lead Measures

All actions are not created equal.



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

80 percent of your results are a by-product of 20 percent of your activities. Discipline 2 is all about leveraged activities that your high performers are already doing. In order to move your middle, begin tracking two types of metrics: leads and lags.

Feedback from lag measures — which track progress toward your Wildly Important Goal — is history by the time you receive the data: revenue, market share, and customer satisfaction, for example. While your most important targets will be lag measures, paying attention to lead measures is what gets you to those targets.

Lead measures track the most high-impact things your team must do to reach the WIG. A lead measure is predictive of the goal, and it's something your team members can influence.

Consider the goal of losing weight, for example. While the lag measure is pounds lost, a lead measure may be exercising a certain number of hours each week or consuming a certain number of calories each day. Both of those measures are within your control and predict what the scale will ultimately reveal.



“

Looking at lag measures is the equivalent of ‘driving a car by looking in the rearview mirror.’”

—W. Edwards Deming,
quality-movement pioneer

Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

People play differently when they're keeping score.



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

Discipline 3 is the principle of engagement: The highest level of performance always comes from people who are emotionally engaged, and the highest level of engagement comes from knowing the score.

Great teams know at every moment whether or not they are winning. They must know. Otherwise, they don't know what they have to do to win the game. A compelling scoreboard tells the team where they are and where they should be, information essential to team problem solving and decision making.

The kind of scoreboard that drives the highest level of engagement is one designed solely for—and often by—the players. And it must be so simple that members of the team can determine if they are winning or losing. If not, their Wildly Important Goal will be abandoned in the whirlwind. The truth is that if your team doesn't know whether or not they are winning, they are probably on their way to losing.

Discipline 4: Create a Cadence of Accountability

Until you apply Discipline 4, your team isn't in the game.



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

Yes, the game is set up, the Wildly Important Goal identified, lead measures articulated, and scoreboard created. Until people are making and keeping commitments and a cadence of accountability is happening, your team is seated on the bench.

Based on the principle of accountability, unless we consistently hold each other accountable, the goal naturally disintegrates in the whirlwind.

The cadence of accountability is a rhythm of regular and frequent meetings of any team that owns a WIG. These meetings happen weekly, and ideally last no more than 20 to 30 minutes. Each week, one by one, team members answer a simple question: "What are

the one or two most important things I can do in the next week, outside of the whirlwind, that will have the biggest impact on the scoreboard?"

Team members create their own commitments, and they make those commitments to each other. The sense of accountability becomes more personal — job performance becomes a series of promises to the team.

Weekly meetings allow the team to adapt to challenges and opportunities that can never be seen in an annual strategic plan. In this way, the plan is adapting as fast as the business is changing. In the shifting whirlwind, the WIG doesn't get lost.

“

Nothing is more motivating than belonging to a team of people who know the goal and align themselves to get there.”

—Chris McChesney



Your People Want to Win

People want to contribute meaningfully. They want to have long-term impact. And they do their very best work when they're part of a disciplined organization — the kind with the conscious, consistent regimen needed to execute Wildly Important Goals.

The financial impact of failing to execute organizational objectives can be huge. The human cost, lost talent, may be even more significant. Nothing is more motivating than belonging to a team of people who have a goal that matters — and who know their individual contributions are making a difference.

Make no mistake, these disciplines work, and they work every time. They move the middle by solving a leader's greatest challenge: executing on a behavioral goal in the midst of the whirlwind.

A recent study found that 85 percent of executives don't have or are dissatisfied with the tools they have for executing their must-win strategies. FranklinCovey's 4DX® OS app is a tool that gives you visibility and transparency on your lower middle, and top performers around the key leveraged behaviors that drive your results.

FranklinCovey provides leadership development solutions that will help you turn all your managers into Multipliers. Our world-class performance-improvement solutions — delivered Live-Online or Live In-Person — are designed to help you execute on your organization's key breakthrough results.

More than 100,000 teams in business, government, and education have partnered with FranklinCovey to implement The 4 Disciplines of Execution. Act now and receive a complimentary executive overview. A FranklinCovey execution expert will meet with your executive team to share how you can implement the 4 Disciplines to drive results.

To learn more, email us at info@franklincovey.com, visit franklincovey.com,

Or call us at:

1-888-868-1776



