

# 10 Top Tips for Outstanding Success

Whether you are about to do market planning, introduce new lean manufacturing processes, or simply put in a concerted effort to win new customers, one thing is common.

How well any of this works, and for how long, is down to the capability and will of your people and the influence you have on them. Great systems and ideas, poorly implemented, lose much of their potential value.

So here are 10 top tips for making your organisation more successful, faster and for longer.

- 1) Set yourselves up mentally to succeed
- 2) Know where you're going and why
- 3) Only do what's relevant for getting there
- 4) Mind how you think
- 5) Align your decisions with where you're going
- 6) Get and keep everyone fired up
- 7) Let your people live the dream
- 8) Remember - you get what you focus on
- 9) Know what works and do more of it
- 10) Plan backwards



Plus a bonus -

- 11) Start 'Stop doing'

## Tip 1) Set yourselves up mentally to succeed



Have you or your management team ever broached a new challenge thinking - "Remember the last time we tried this: it didn't work then, why should it be any different now? Can we do it? What if it doesn't work? " If so, this can make life difficult for you before you have even started.

Like really successful people begin by - (a) recalling specific times when you've been successful, (b) reminding yourself you can therefore overcome any difficulties, (c) thinking of yourself as a successful person, (d) believing in your ability to succeed and in what you want, because strong self-belief will invariably bring out the best in you, (d) knowing what skills, approaches and techniques have brought you success, so you can now use them again, (e) being aware of how you (re)act under pressure, as you'll need disciplines and habits to keep you positive and focused on what you want.

Notice what sort of chatter is going on within the management team. If there are any 'ifs' and 'buts' the language and thinking needs to change to 'we can', 'we will'. A facilitated session is often the best way of getting all the 'baggage' out in the open and establish the beliefs that will be most conducive for succeeding. Personal coaching can often help to bridge gaps where there are fundamental differences in belief and confidence about how the organisation will deal with its challenges.

### Tip 2) Know where you're going and why

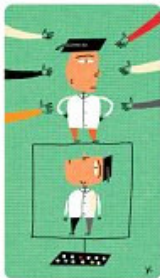
Unless the strategies, plans and objectives are set in the context of the organisation's purpose and long term aspirations (the vision), there will be an ever widening gap between what is actually, and what needs to be, achieved.



With a clear purpose and aspirations it will be easier to separate out those decisions, improvements and investments which could be classified as 'flavour of the month', so you can concentrate only on those which are the most logical and relevant for moving the business towards where you want it to go. Thinking just short-term may help you with the here and now, but it will only partially help you with great results and survival over time. Your Business Plan needs to reflect this.

If you haven't done it yet, as a management team work at establishing the "What's the point?" of the business. Having a clear purpose, which is not simply expressed in financial terms, does provide a corporate sense of meaning. It then makes it easier to describe what the organisation aspires to, and what its ultimate goals are.

### Tip 3) Only do what's relevant for getting there



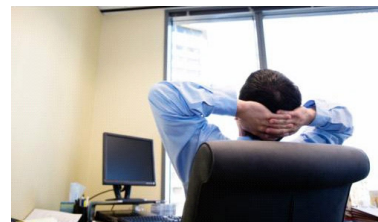
If you've put time and effort into establishing a clear future path for the business, so you know what you're in business for and what you're aspiring to, you need to have in place clear principles that reflect what your business stands for (usually referred to as 'values'). Since this shapes how you want be seen to be operating, it is critical that the way the business and its people function is in accordance with these values. Values encapsulate the organisation's outstanding features, and as such they reflect the attitude of the business to its customers, its employees and its community.

Use this then to question what you do and the way in which you do it. For example, are you recruiting, selecting, promoting and rewarding the right people for the right reasons? Are you giving preference to technical traits and disregarding the individual's 'fit' with colleagues and the organisation generally? The right skills and wrong approach can cause internal friction. The right approach, but with inadequate skills, can easily be addressed by training. When faced with how to respond to a customer issue, do you adhere to the organisation's principles even though it may feel painful or costly at the time?

Every time you have to make a decision or take action, ask yourself "Is this in keeping with how the company wants to operate? Does it help us towards our aspirations?" Because if the answer is 'no', then change tack and do something different.

### Tip 4) Mind how you think

People often underestimate the effect that a CEO and a management team's state of mind can have on how they manage the business. Each member of the team will have emotions and feelings that create internal chatter causing hesitation, doubt, insensitivity to others, postures, and stances. This may lead them to make totally inaccurate assumptions about people and situations, to the point where they say, do and decide on things that aren't always in the best interests of the business.



We all have maps of the world which assume that people should operate and behave in a way that meets our expectations. Others, of course, also have their own maps of the world which lead them to work according to what they think is right. What is right to anyone is a function of the values and beliefs they hold; and when these fail to match between people tensions and stress kick in. Typically we might see this in 'communication gaps' between managers and employees when both parties make assumptions about the world the other is in.

Engaging people's energy and interest is about getting into and understanding their worlds. So if your expectations of others don't seem to be going according to plan and getting you anywhere, then it's time to pause and find out what's going on in their worlds. When you find out what's driving them to be the way they are, accept it because for them it's quite normal, and that's their world.

**Tip 5) Align your decisions with where you're going**



The typical business decisions of - will this make or save us money? Will it improve customer loyalty? Is this the direction we want to move in? Will it make us a better employer? Will it change our impact on the community? - require answers that don't just satisfy immediate concerns, but importantly strengthen the longer term viability and success of the organisation.

Why is it then some companies appear to be seduced into spending money on technology that is impressive and appealing, but not necessarily essential for where they are going? Why do some invest in services that are not in keeping with the sort of business the company aspires to be? Why are some happy to spend money training their employees without really knowing what difference in performance they want it to make?

Similarly as you decide where to allocate your resources, they should only go into activities that will accelerate your progress towards where you are taking the company and what you want it to become renowned for. If you are more concerned about your short-term goals, the same will apply as those goals in turn should be stepping stones towards the longer term aspirations.

**Tip 6) Get and keep everyone fired up!**



Only your people can make the company's aspirations come true. Only they can determine how quickly and easily you achieve your objectives along the way. Most employees choose to work for their company, and they do so in the hope that they will get something out of it. As they spend a high percentage of their waking lives working in the company they also want to feel it's worth their time and effort.

People don't join a company and will it to fail: they want it to succeed because everyone will benefit. So why is it so many companies seem to ignore people's desire and willingness to get involved and make it a better place for customers and themselves? Constant flows of new ideas and innovations need energy and people who feel inspired and valued.

As well as skill it's people's emotional energy that gets great results, and that means managers injecting energy in the first place. Senior management needs to believe in the company's aspirations and talk enthusiastically about them. They need to help everyone relate to the part they play in the company's path to success so they can experience a real sense of purpose. Having a sense of purpose gives meaning to what one does and makes it much easier to want to get up and come to work.

Make sure it's not simply a 'tick in the box' exercise. Everyone needs to know and understand where the business is going, why and the part they will play. Create the right environment and they will get excited about giving their best.

### Tip 7) Let your people live the dream

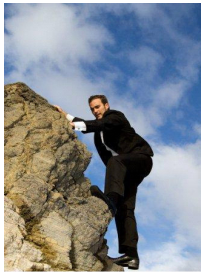
All team managers face a choice. Their people either do what they have to because it's required of them: or they do what they believe is best for the business because they want to contribute to what the company aspires. They will invariably follow the signals from their boss about just how much autonomy they have for thinking on their feet and the likelihood of criticism if they use excessive initiative.



If you want to create 'wow!' experiences for your customers your people must have the freedom to do whatever is necessary at the time. Yes, this does test managers' beliefs about letting their people have discretion, and yes, invariably it ends up as controlled discretion. Whilst that is an understandable risk containment stance your employees will actually interpret it as lack of trust in them.

But it's not empowerment at any cost. It's balanced: that is as a manager you agree with your people the appropriate degree of involvement, interest and support they want, and should have, from you.

### Tip 8) Remember - You get what you focus on



People will quickly pick up on what you pay attention to, what you treat as important and a priority, and what gets talked about in meetings.

Focus actually becomes a twin challenge of concentrating on moving towards the long term aspirations of the company and addressing the short-term goals that will help it get there. Too often, though, the focus is short-term only, and is about worrying about what is needed to get by. The challenge is to balance the two, because only by also taking the longer term view as well can you be sure that your decisions and actions are actually benefiting the company's aspirations.

Concentrate on cost reduction, and eventually people will forget to treat income generation with any urgency. Concentrate on fault finding and before you know it there's a fear/blame atmosphere emerging. Develop a hypersensitivity about what customers want, and customer centric thinking is likely to become contagious throughout the company. If you keep talking at every opportunity about the need to 'wow!' your customers, instinctively everyone else will start to do likewise.

Conversely if as a management team you keep questioning your ability to deliver certain results and allow the self-doubt to weigh on your minds, almost certainly you will start to notice it in your decision and risk taking, and before long it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### Tip 9) Know what works and do more of it

A key feature of people who are exceptional performers is that they know what works for them and enables them to produce outstanding results. Like the farmer who consistently harvests perfect crops, they make a point of constantly repeating what works, and so are able to keep performing at a consistently high level.

Do you know what produces great results in your company? What is it about the strategies, policies, processes, working practices and ways of thinking that create success? Just as one looks to identify and use particular skills and abilities in an individual, so one can do the same with an organisation's capabilities. But, our natural ways of thinking tend to concentrate us on things that aren't working and need rectifying. Whilst this is an important part of continuous improvement, if we ignore what works we are effectively failing to exploit the company's full potential.



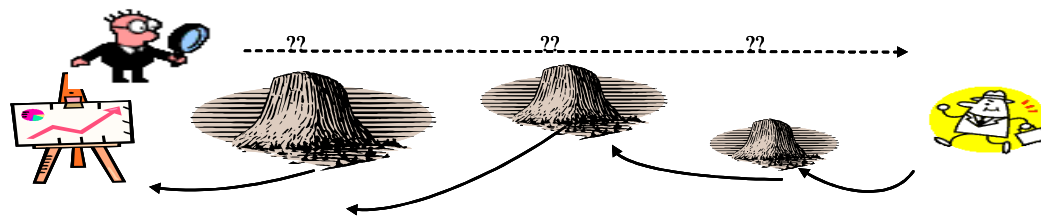
For example, we spend an inordinate amount of time looking for people's weaknesses and ways of developing them; and we invariably then take for granted all the things they're good at. Imagine what could be achieved if we really got to understand their strengths and concentrated on finding ways to make fullest use of them. And, yes, it may require the 'corporate system' to adapt itself so these people can be given roles and jobs in spite of apparently not fitting with job grading policies.

So when things go well, stop and review what's worked (i.e. the activities, processes, approaches, skills etc), and then repeat them.

#### Tip 10) Plan backwards

Most of us tend to plan by thinking forwards, deciding what will represent appropriate objectives for the company, and then setting the relevant measures. The challenging environments in which we operate will invariably throw up all sorts of difficulties in our minds as we think about the best way of implementing our plans. In the worst cases we may even end up altering our plans if we come to believe they are too difficult to achieve. Often, though, we embark on them but get frustrated and disillusioned as we wonder what we will actually end up achieving.

There is an alternative way to creating plans and measures which can significantly increase people's optimism and chances of success. Plan backwards by:



A) Deciding where you want to end up at the end of a particular time period. Build a rich description of it: consider it from different standpoints - customer, employee, shareholder, community perspectives. What will be going on? Will people see, hear and experience?

B) Asking "What will we have done to have made this happen?" To answer it, do a mental exercise. Track back towards the present and notice what issues the company has addressed, what it's done, introduced, changed etc. Note them and treat these as key activities to be undertaken. As you track back also ask yourself - "What measure at this point will be telling me that we're on track?" These become your metrics.

C) Working your way right back to the present and being aware of what has been the last issue to have been addressed, which is in fact your first action step.

Almost certainly by doing it this way you will have more easily identified your action agenda and pre-empted issues that may not have appeared till later on, and importantly you will know where to start.

...and the **bonus tip** (see over)

### Tip 11) Start 'Stop doing'



Most people are quite used to action planning and then taking the action to get things done. We tend to associate action planning with what we need to start doing, being an essential aspect of good implementation. But in our haste to get on with the action, how often do we stop and ask if there are things we shouldn't be doing any longer?

Ask yourself:-

- Do I keep promoting products or services which aren't wholly relevant to the sort of organisation my company wants to be, or where it wants to go?
- Am I still investing in things that I shouldn't be?
- Do I still have policies that were fine for how the organisation used to be?
- Is there anything about my company culture that is handicapping?
- Is there any creeping bureaucracy that slows things down, yet no-one challenges?

Anything that isn't totally relevant to helping you get to where you're going, and fast, will detract from reaching peak performance and will slow you down. So start a 'stop doing' list and become disciplined in updating it and managing these constraints out of the system.

**Interested in applying these Tips to yourself or your business?**

**For a free initial discussion contact us on:**



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