

# The Execution Focused Manager

Compiled by the TVRLS team based on the book “Managers Who Make a Difference”,  
Authored by Dr. T. V. Rao: IIMA Books, Random House, 2011.



You don't beat people with surprises,  
but with execution  
John McKay (Football Coach)

**T**oday's manager has evolved from being the achiever of someone else's goals to that of a dynamic entity. In fact it goes further, where s/he may be required to initiate new goals, define a vision, chart out a course of action, and ensure its completion while constantly looking out for continuous improvements. The point to note is that in the midst of all these changes, one aspect of the manager that has remained constant is the importance of execution.

Managers are required to undertake the following activities in today's context:

Doing  
Achieving  
Visioning

All 3 activities require a huge execution focus. Execution plays a vital role in determining the overall success and accomplishment of goals.

Doing  
This requires commitment and relentless perseverance towards completion of tasks. Belying the folklore, it is obvious that 'executing' is not merely 'doing'. Typical 'doer managers' ensure they perform all



duties. Such managers and employees are needed in every organization, carrying out what has been spelt out and ensuring that basic operations keep moving and tasks are accomplished.

#### Achieving

If employees remain 'doers' all through, then they don't grow and organizations also do not grow. Growth requires moving from being just a 'Doer' to an 'Achiever'. Achievers set new standards and benchmarks. Achievers are also doers, the key difference being that they also provide leadership to their teams. Here, excellence in process execution is got through focus on transforming tasks and ensuring constant value addition rather than simple delivery.

#### Visioning

Here the manager enters a different league and is commonly termed a Visionary. While 'Achieving' includes accomplishing results and goals, visioning includes articulating vision and establishing new destinations by setting and achieving seemingly unattainable goals. It takes courage, confidence, passion and hard work. Social workers like Kiran Bedi, Aruna Roy, Medha Patkar-all have hard work in common and are good examples of execution. Similarly, people like Dr. Kurien, Narayna Murthy, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Abdul Kalam, Venu Srinivasan, Suresh Krishna, M V Subbaiah

and other new era leaders have set up new ventures in various fields. 'Visioning' includes building teams and making lasting impressions on individuals, teams and the organization.

Thus, 'Execution focus' is required, irrespective of the type of manager.

The important qualities of the execution focused manager are Providing a sense of ownership and setting clear cut goals. People or teams play a crucial part in ensuring execution excellence. To ensure that their energy is channelized appropriately, the manager has to set clear cut goals, both short and long term. Managers need to be discerning and resourceful enough to collect critical information about business development, strategy formation and performance improvement, and share the same with their teams. These goals have to cascade down to a team or individual level, and thus the managers have to ensure ownership and accountability. Execution focused leaders have to be agile and versatile-their job demands them to multitask efficiently. It also requires them to assess status on a regular basis, always keeping sight of the end goals.

Execution focused leaders also tend to possess high efficacy and are active and interactive with the people and the environment. They

demonstrate persistence while solving problems and show strong commitment. They motivate and engage team members by periodically reminding them of the overall purpose and the difference they make. They inspire them to achieve the objectives with ideas, and support their development. They allow free discussion, encourage suggestions, recognize efforts and reward contributions through genuine appreciation. They have a positive view of people and possess a desire to use their competencies for the common good.

#### Conclusion

Managers with an execution edge possess a high level of self confidence and internality, with positive effects on their dealings with people and goal achievement. In The Extraordinary Manager, a study of 80,000 managers who went through 360 degree feedback, Zenger and Folkman observe that getting results is the first step to success. If one gets results, maintains good interpersonal relations and also gets the team to commit to achieving goals, one is already 80% successful. But to be an execution focused leader-manager, one needs to transcend this stage. As Aristotle said "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit."

For more on Execution Capabilities of Leaders read "Managers Who Make A Difference" by T. V. Rao: IIMA Books, Random House, 2011.

Image Source: <http://www.salesstudio.nl/images/momentum.jpg>

