Agovia

Management Concepts Series – 2010

* Common-Sense Guidelines for Successful Organizations *

	Management Concept #5 *Stop Reading – Start Leading*
Active Management Pillar Applicability Identity Planning Execution Behavior Awareness	Much of the time spent reading management literature is a misdirection of energy and effort. There's not much new under the sun and if it is new, it's probably so esoteric that most organizations shouldn't worry about it until they've mastered their basic blocking and tackling. Most management books are akin to worrying about lead poisoning as you are shooting yourself in the head. This isn't to say the concepts you find on shelf after shelf of at the thrift store are not valid. They are! They work. It's all good stuff. But it's also endlessly recycled and repackaged in order to (are you ready?) take money out of your pocket. Pick a relevant methodology or framework and stick with it. Choose a relevant one and focus on the discipline of making it effective. TQM, MBO, BPR, ITIL, etc. . . They all work. Your job is to make sure they are used as an effective *tool* to help you get where you want to go. They must not become an end in themselves and they must not be used for cookbook management. Take your native abilities as a manager and leader and use them to be sure any work done using any method is firmly connected, line-of-sight, to your definition of success. Finally, remember, many times you don't need a "methodology" at all. You may just need a sheet of paper with ten metrics on it that you follow every day. You will find, if you enforce discipline around the obvious and controllable items, they become operational; the mythical well-oiled machine. You can stop fighting the alligators and actually drain the swamp. When you are about to buy a new book about the world being flat or guerrilla marketing or ways to keep your workers happy without actually doing anything substantial, ask yourself a question: *Am I about to do something that will result in a positive change for my organization or am I avoiding the ten things I already know need to be done?* Then, act accordingly.

Stop Reading – Start Leading

Walk into any managers' office (including mine) and you will almost certainly find a common decorator accent: the shelf of management books. Ask almost any management person what management methodologies or frameworks they have used and you will likely get a capsule run-down of the management, planning, and technology flavors of the month from the last 20 years. Familiar names include:

- ❖ Business Process Reengineering
- ❖ Total Quality Management
- ❖ Management by Objective
- ❖ Information Technology Infrastructure Library
- ❖ Value Analysis
- ❖ Kaizen
- ❖ The Learning Organization
- ❖ Performance Prism
- ❖ Balanced Scorecard
- ❖ Etc.
- ❖ Etc.
- ❖ *ad nauseum*
- ❖ *and then some. . .*

Note: For an interesting listing, see Value Based Management web site (valuebasedmanagement.net). It takes your breath away!

As a visual aid, here is one of my shelves (almost all bought at Goodwill):

Now: The test:

1. Ask them: how many of the management methods or books are still being used?
2. Ask them: (better: those working for them) how much effect the tools had?
3. Ask them: why or why not?

But here's the thing: They actually do work. . .

Each of the methods listed and the books shown actually do work. Each one is a gem. They are the result of experience and discipline and have proved successful for the authors and usually others as well. If used properly, they give you an extremely high return on the amount you spent to acquire them. For a minimal investment, you can avoid the trial and error of developing your own unique methods.

But, to quote Pogo: *We have met the enemy and he is us.*

You only need to buy the idea once. Then you need to use it with discipline and rigor. Continual repurchasing and restarting with different flavors of management is avoidance. Worse, the spending of major ducats on consultants handle the basic management jobs of control, operational people management, and accountability for results will inevitably lead to "speed bump" management and flaccid leadership.

Note on Consulting: Consultants should be used like Tabasco or saffron: to bring something different to the mix: a little 'POW!'; a little spice. They should not take the place of the meat and potatoes or even the salt and pepper.

Choose one and go

In order to achieve stability, predictability, and success, you should select a set of tools and:

1. Use them with consistency, accountability, and rigor
   a. The methodology used will have an opportunity to build on itself
   b. You will come to understand it better and better over time and will be able to optimize the tool rather than learning a new one every year or so
   c. Your organization will learn to speak the same language and even develop a culture of shorthand knowledge that is a foundation for effective collaboration
2. Connect their use to outcomes and the achievement of your definition of success
   a. Any toolset you adopt should be part of a cause/effect dynamic leading to results.
   b. If you budget, it should be used as part of a planning system that results in the optimal amount spent to achieve optimal outcomes. However, the budgeting goals are simple cost-control or creation of an "allowance" of spendable funds, those will be the goals you achieve rather than organizational success.
   c. If you use a Balanced Scorecard and that is the measure of performance, you will likely get a balanced scorecard as opposed to results.

Don't spend too much time polishing your tools; use them rigorously to achieve your success.

A note on overkill: Use the simplest toolset you can get away with. If a simple report with expenses, holdover, sales, customer retention, etc. will fill the bill, go for it. Keep an eye out for methodologies, frameworks, etc. that take on a life of their own and cease providing value commensurate with the effort they require.

About Agovia Consulting

Agovia is your partner in crafting common-sense plans, execution governance, and management practices that are laser-focused and, by design, create your results and your success. We help you solve your problems today and help assure your success tomorrow through management practices built on outcomes, results, and achievement.

Managing to Success

Success requires the alignment and coordination of many factors. Enterprises must be competent at, not only the elements of their core mission, they must also have the ability to create and maintain the infrastructure that surrounds and supports that mission.

What We Do

Agovia is a management consulting firm. It's what we do. Picture us a management fitness coach. Weh help you develop and strengthen the skills you need to succeed. We have provided consultation and solutions to multiple industries including: Information Technology, Insurance, Universities, and Homeless Services. We bring you the support, advice, and driving facilitation that allow you to stop "planning" and start getting results.

Services

- ❖ **Positioning for the Win**
- ❖ **Identity Development (Mission & Vision)**
- ❖ **Team Effectiveness Coaching**
- ❖ **Strategic and Tactical Planning**
- ❖ **Planning and Governance Training**
- ❖ **Organization Turn-Around**
- ❖ **Retreat Facilitation**
- ❖ **Runaway Project Services**
- ❖ **Problem Solving – A Cultural Effective Approach**
- ❖ **Conflict Mediation**
- ❖ **Team/Function Start-Up**

Trust yourself

Experience tells us that most of the time you do know what you are doing. You are the expert in your core domain area. The challenges businesses often encounter are nuts & bolts issues: organization, clear vision, discipline, management infrastructure, and communication. Sometimes you just need a catalyst.

We can help.
We listen.
We pay attention.
We work with you

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