

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

1 Abstract

This document was written as a course-document for the Rushmore course 2111 “Drucker on Executive Development”. It covers the aspect ‘Effective Executives’.

After reading the document you should have a clear understanding of how effective executives – or better still, all effective people – work.

The document is divided into the parts:

- Effective Practices
- Habits to be effective

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ABBREVIATIONS

4 Abbreviations

CEO Chief Executing Officer

INTRODUCTION

5 Introduction

Why think and write about a separate topic like ‘Effective Executives’? Why write about *effectiveness*? The reason is that CEOs or senior executives have a very varying and widespread job to do. If you look closely at the job ladder in a company, you can easily recognise that the job demands increase and change the higher you climb up the ladder. You will deal with more and more people. You will deal with more and more problems. You will deal with more and more decisions. You will deal with more and more meetings, telephone calls and other communications. But you don’t have more time! So the simple outcome of this survey is that you have to think about how to work effectively. How do you have to structure your work, your time and your delegations to be able to handle the huge number of tasks you have to do?

Executives, managers, or individual professionals are expected to make decisions in the normal course of their work with significant impact on the performance and results of the whole business.

In the life of executives there exist 4 major realities over which she/he has essentially no control:

- The executive’s time tends to belong to everybody else (e.g. an important customer or the superior).
- Executives are forced to keep on ‘operating’ unless they take positive action to change the reality in which they live and work.
- She/he is within an *organisation*
- She/he is *within* an organisation

Effectiveness is a habit. A habit is a regularly executed practice and therefore effectiveness can be learned.

EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVES

6 Practices**6.1 Know Your Time**

Effective executives know where their time goes. They work systematically at managing what little of their time they can bring under their control.

To be effective, particularly if you are an executive, you need to be able to dispose of time in fairly large chunks. To have small segments of time at your disposal will not be sufficient, even if the segments add up to an impressive number of hours. The chunks must be large so that you can use them effectively.

The larger the organisation, the less actual time will the executive have, and the more important will it be for her/him to know where her/his time goes.

6.1.1 Eliminate Unnecessary Actions

Ask yourself “What happens if the task is not done or not done by me?” before you start doing it. The result is clear: if you think the result will be the same, whether you do it or not, don’t do it.

What happens if the task is not done or not done by me?

6.1.2 Delegate Tasks

Ask yourself “Which of the activities on my time log could be done just as well, if not better, by somebody else?” before you start doing it. You will find more things you can delegate than you think now. Executives tend to do everything by themselves, because they were used to doing it in their past. Look again at the job ladder. When you start working in a company you have to work on tasks. You are required to act on, and not to distribute, work. When you go up the ladder, then the number of tasks will increase. At first you will try to solve all of them by yourself as you did in the past. Even if you learn to delegate some of them you will still try to solve *as many as possible* by yourself. As a CEO you think differently: *not solve* but *delegate* as much as possible. If you don’t learn to delegate as much as possible, and the sooner the better, you will create a bottleneck. Too many

problems will remain on your desk. Too many people will wait for your decisions, which will of course harm your business.

Do not solve but delegate as much as possible.

6.1.3 *Don't Waste Your Time By Wasting Other People's Time*

Effective executives have learned to ask systematically and without coyness: "What do I do that wastes your time without contributing to your effectiveness?" To ask this question, and to ask it without being afraid of the truth, is a mark of the effective executive.

It might sound strange, but this *asking* is a very powerful tool and it is unfamiliar, too. Consider weekly meetings. They are held, because they are weekly (as the title says). Nobody asks for justification of the meetings. Nobody asks for the agenda; the agenda is similar every week. If you ask your colleagues, many of them will complain about these regular meetings, because they don't benefit from meetings. The colleagues receive too little information in the meetings to justify them spending so much time at the meetings. But very few people will ask their superior to stop or to change the meeting, because this would be like a criticism of the superior and criticism is unpopular. In this situation nothing will happen and many people waste a lot of time. The trigger should come from the superior. Ask your subordinates if they want the meeting or not. Ask your subordinates if you can change something so that less of their time is wasted. If you have created an environment of trust, you will get honest answers and much time can be saved.

I once tried to avoid this problem just on *my* decision. I was a project team leader and I regarded our weekly team meetings as superfluous. I regarded the meetings as time wasters for the others and myself. Without asking my team I decided not to hold weekly meetings. I communicated any information via e-mail and telephone calls. This went well for about 4 months. Then our project ran into an even more difficult situation where intensive communication and internal group discussions were needed. Suddenly my team asked me to hold daily meetings to communicate problems and solutions immediately. This example showed me that my decision not to hold weekly meetings the months before was correct. It also showed me that we had trust, because my team asked me to change my leadership style. Fortunately it also showed me that it would have been better to ask my team and not just decide! I am sure that we lost some weeks of improved communication, because they did not complain about lost information immediately, but only when

the necessity became too urgent. If I had asked them regularly about 'team meetings', then they would have told me earlier that they needed some. I learned that many meetings are superfluous and that subordinates appreciate having as few as possible. I also learned that it is always beneficial to ask subordinates *how often, when and in which style* they would like to have meetings. You are the executive. You have to take the action – also in respect of asking about meetings and other time wasters.

Ask your subordinate how you can avoid wasting their time.

6.1.4 Reduce The Number Of Meetings

In a well-organised organisation few meetings are necessary. Everybody knows what to do and how to do it well. Meetings are not to distribute information, but to solve problems and to bring a task force together. If an executive spends too much time in meetings, then she/he automatically knows that the organisation is not well structured. It is more worthwhile to spend time on thinking and evaluating how the organisation can be changed, in order to avoid meetings, than to hold the meetings.

In my opinion effective executives focus on the question "What do I have to do to reduce the number of meetings in the future?" Effective executives evaluate their organisation in respect of communication flow. The better the information flow is, the fewer meetings are necessary to distribute information.

How can you evaluate the communication flow in your organisation? How can you improve the communication in your company?

In the evaluation phase you have to get answers from your subordinates. Ask them questions like:

- How often do you need assistance?
- How long do you wait for assistance?
- Do you know whom to contact in case you have questions?
- Do you know where to find information related to the task that you have to do?

Ask your subordinates to answer these questions. If you are a CEO of a huge organisation, then you will not evaluate the answers by yourself, but you will delegate this to department leaders.

As a second step you can ask your subordinates, which kind of information they need to do their tasks.

You will figure out, by analysing step one and two, which information and which communication channels your subordinates need to do their jobs.

Analyse *which* information you will distribute, *when* you will do it, *how* you will do it and *where* you will store it. Verify the outcome of your analysis with your subordinates.

As a final step you will communicate to everybody how you will distribute information. In my opinion emails and Intranets¹ are useful tools to distribute information. If you use these methods, then you define, when you will distribute the information, and other people can read the information when they like. You don't have to find time when everybody can join a meeting.

If executives clearly communicate how they distribute information, they need fewer meetings for distributing information.

Meetings should only be held for solving problems and not for distributing information.

6.1.5 Control When You Want To Do What

Once an effective executive knows how much time she/he spends for which tasks, she/he should determine which tasks are her/his real business and what makes a real contribution to the organisation. As a next step she/he is going to define the time when she/he is going to perform a certain task. To make this task most effective, it is essential to be undisturbed. If an executive wants

to be effective, then she/he should tell her/his secretary to avoid interrupting her/him. The executive should not be disturbed by any phone-call or unexpected visit. The larger the time chunks for the executives are, the better she/he can use the time. Any unwanted interruption harms the actual task, because she/he will probably lose the thread.

This is a point that the executive can actively change and control. To be effective you should do so.

Decide and communicate when you want to do something. Avoid interruptions.

6.2 Focus On Outward Contribution

Effective executives focus on outward contribution. They gear their efforts to results rather than to work. They start out with the question, “What results are expected of me?” rather than with the work to be done.

The focus on contribution turns the executive’s attention away from his own speciality, his own narrow skills, his own department, and toward the performance of the whole.

Every organisation needs performance in the following areas:

- It needs direct results
- Building of values and their reaffirmation
- Building and developing people for tomorrow

So the focus of an executive must lie on contributing to achieving these results and not on solving isolated problems.

Effective executives know what they expect to get out of a meeting, a report, or a presentation and what the purpose of the occasion is or should be. They ask themselves: “Why are we having this meeting: do we want a decision, do we want to inform, or do we want to make clear to ourselves what we should be doing?” They will insist that the purpose be thought through and spelled out before a meeting is called, a report asked for, or a presentation organised. They insist that the meeting serves the intention to which they have committed themselves.

Gear your effort to outward contribution and to the global target of the company.

Don't look at isolated problems but for results that are for the benefit of the company.

6.3 Build On Strength

Effective executives build on strengths – their own strengths, and the strengths of their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. They also build on the strengths in the situation, that is, on what they can do. They do not build on weakness. They do *not* start out with things they can't do.

6.3.1 Staffing

Effective executives focus on the question: “Where is the strength of the person and for what can this strength be used.” They don't consider an existing weakness as being a reason not to assign a person to a task. If a person has strengths that fit them for a task and one weakness that does not endanger this task, then this person is to be preferred for the task ahead of a person who has no job related strength and no job related weakness.

Look for what a person can do. A weakness in another discipline is no reason to reject her/him for a certain task.

The effective executive first makes sure that the job is well designed. If experience tells him/her otherwise, she/he does not hunt for a genius to do the impossible. She/he redesigns the job.

Define clearly any task and job and what you expect as a result.

Another fact is that effective executives seek to make a job demanding and big. This helps the employee to grow as she/he executes the job. The employee can develop, which in turn is a strong motivator.

For profitable organisations the problem lies in the time needed. The more simply a job is constructed, the faster a new employee can successfully complete it. This is cheaper than defining a

demanding job, for which it takes much time to train a new employee. But in the long-term the employee is not fully stretched and becomes discontented.

Define demanding tasks for the long-term satisfaction of the employee.

6.3.2 *Building On The Strength Of Your Superior*

Until now we have discussed the effective executive focusing on their own strength and the strength in their subordinates. This is just part of the picture. If you want to become an effective executive, then build also on the strength of your superior. Sometimes people believe that they have more chances to climb up the ladder, if they are better than their superiors are or if their superiors fail. This is a wrong assumption. If managers fail, there is no rule that one of their subordinates will automatically replace them, and very often people out of other departments or companies will replace a former superior. If you want to grow, then it is useful to support your superior. Don't harm your superior, but do everything possible to help him succeed.

If you, as an executive, want to change something and you believe in your own strength, you often need, nevertheless, some support. Most often you need it from your superior. If you believe in your own strength, then why not believe in her/his strength? Effective executives believe in the strength of their superior and they take the strength of their superior into account for their targets. They inform and discuss topics with superiors. Build on the strength of your superiors so that they can support you.

Effective Executives build on strength; they also build on the strength of their superior.

6.4 **Concentrate On a Few Major Areas**

Effective executives concentrate on the few major areas where superior performance will produce outstanding results. They force themselves to set priorities and stay with their priority decisions. They know that they have no choice but to do the most important things first and the second most important things not at all. The alternative is to get nothing done.

A second point is that they concentrate. Effective executives do one thing at a time. If they don't know how to continue one job, they put it down and start another one. When they want to continue with the old subject, they put down the second one they started. They don't try to do two things at once.

Effective executives follow the next rules in every area of their business:

- They do not under-estimate the time for a task.
- They never expect that everything will go right, but they expect problems or issues.
- They do their work with an easy pace but keep going steadily.

6.4.1 How To Deal With The Past?

The question "How to deal with the past" is a complex question which should be handled as a main topic. But I would like to discuss this topic with respect to the point "just one thing at a time".

In principle, executives are responsible for the health of the organisation. E.g. they are responsible to increase the company's profit, or to increase the number of employees. To achieve this, they have to check regularly to see if the strategy of the company is still working. Ask yourself "Would I choose the same way again or wouldn't I?" If your answer is "No", then you should change the company's strategy.

I regard the change of a company's strategy as one of the more complex things. From my point of view in such a situation the executive can not focus only on the future. In most situations the executive must keep the old business running to earn some money while building up the new strategy. In today's business environment a company can not afford to make a reconstruction lasting 2 years and in these 2 years the company receives no earnings. So the company must be lead in two ways: first keep the old business running and secondly build up the new structure of the company. Most often this is done with the same staff, which means that the number of employees working in the old business reduces.

Huge companies are bound to customer relationships. If a company wants to change its business, then it has to take care that the old customers are still maintained (otherwise financial penalties can arise).

In times of change a CEO could assign responsibility for the old business to someone else, in order to focus solely on the main business – the company's new strategy. The problem is that the CEO nevertheless is responsible for the whole company in the eyes of the shareholders. For this reason she/he can not focus 100% on the new business but must have a look at the old business as well even if she/he assigned the responsibility to another person.

To stress my point again: I agree that usually an effective executive just focuses on one task, but in special situations, like the strategy change of the company, it is inevitable that he/she will have to focus on several tasks in parallel.

Try to do just one thing at a time.

6.5 They make effective decisions

Effective executives finally make effective decisions. They know that this is, above all, a matter of system – of the right steps in the right sequence. They know that an effective decision is always a judgement, based on 'dissenting opinions' rather than on 'consensus on the facts'. They also know that to make many decisions quickly means to make wrong decisions. What are needed are a few, but fundamental, decisions. What are needed are the right strategies rather than isolated decisions.

Effective executives know that the most time-consuming step in a process is not making the decision but putting the decision into effect. Unless a decision has been put into practice, it is not a decision but at best a good intention. This means that, while the effective decision itself is based on the highest level of conceptual understanding, the action to carry it out should be as close as possible to the working level and as simple as possible.

6.5.1 Elements Of The Decision-Process

Effective executives follow the next described steps to make effective decisions:

- Is it a generic, recurrent or current problem?
- Define the specification which is the answer to the problem. Specify the boundary conditions. Don't specify details. At this point in time the main idea or the main concept must be defined.
- Think about what is 'right' and what would be 'wrong'. You know that later you have to make compromises, but if you have not specified what is 'right', then you run into the danger of making the wrong compromises later.
- Convert your concept into action. To make this effective, answer the following questions: "Who has to know of the decision?" "What action has to be taken?" "Who is to take it?" and "What does the action have to be so that the people who have to do it *can* do it?"
- Define how to get feedback and how to evaluate whether or not the decision and the related actions resulted in benefit for the company.

Make decisions that can be put into practice.

7 Habits Of Effective Executives

In the chapter 'Practices' we focused on the question "How do effective executives behave?" We found out the techniques that effective executives use to be effective in the previous chapters. In this chapter we will additionally check the *habits* of highly effective people.

What is a habit?

- *Knowledge* is the theoretical paradigm. It is the '*what to do*' and '*the why*'.
- *Skill* is the '*how to do*'.
- *Desire* is the motivation in respect of the '*want to do*'.

A habit is something of which you have knowledge, skill and desire.

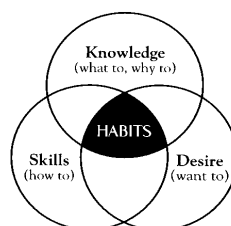


Figure 1: What Are Habits? ²

As simple as this seems to sound, as fundamental it is: in your working life you will often meet people who know *what* to do, but some will not know *how* to do it. You will meet people who know *how* to do something, but some will simply *not want* to do so. This will be one of the biggest problems you will have to struggle with. Many people don't see the necessity of doing more than is absolutely necessary. This is a big problem for huge companies. When you are working for yourself, then you will always do as much as possible. Your motivation will be as high as possible. When you work in a company where you are far away from making any decisions and where you sometimes don't understand decisions, then your motivation will be low. This underlines that it is not enough to know what to do and to know how to do it. *Maybe most important is the desire to do it.*

I learnt to put this topic into practice, because I regarded it as important and feasible to exercise. First I learnt to regularly remind myself that I like to do my job. Doing so I built up a positive attitude towards my job. Then I detected that this went well in daily business but not in stressful situations. After I recognised this, I learnt to remind myself in stressful situations that I have to like these situations in order to work effectively. This was not always possible but it helped a lot. I gradually learnt that stressful situations were a challenge and that they helped me developing myself. After all it is not necessary anymore to remind myself because 'the want to do' became an attitude.

*In order to make something a habit in your lives, you have to have all three: knowledge, skill and
desire.*

7.1 Taking The Initiative

One important habit of effective people is to be active. They know that they, and not others, are responsible for their lives. They know that they can, or better still must, act on their own lives. They prefer to direct their lives, in contrast to being directed by others.

Effective executives are also proactive in their jobs. They don't wait until they are forced to take a decision, but they regularly check their businesses for upcoming problems. Whenever they see something that looks strange, they contact the people responsible. If they do so, they are able to

detect upcoming problems earlier than if they waited for them to pop up. Therefore they are able to remove a problem before it becomes one.

You will be most effective in what you do when you know what you want to achieve. Define a target for yourself and remember it whenever you do something. Check regularly if what you do brings you toward your goal.

The same is valid for taking decisions. Effective executives don't want to do things twice. If they have to decide something about a topic, then they seek to find the only valid final solution. They always try to find the solution that solves the cause of the problem and not the symptom of it.

I know many leaders and most of them are taking the initiative. I compared their attitudes and their work products with the attitudes and the outcome of non-active leaders. One difference is that active leaders have more time to think about problems. If you are pro-active then you always look for something that might become a problem. By doing so you can start finding solutions *before* problems arise. I know from experience that leaders normally just have short time frames to solve problems. If they are pro-active in advance then the short time frame is not a problem for them, because they have time to solve problems before requests come.

If you are pro-active, then you will have at least two advantages compared with non-active people:

1. Your decisions are faster available.
2. Your decisions are better, because you have more time to analyse problems.

Effective Executives are taking the initiative.

7.2 A Personal Mission Statement

Effective executives are internally consistent. They have clear guidelines in their lives. Every one of their actions is consistent with their most important inner values.

I would like to explain the idea: did it ever happen to you that you did something as you were asked to do, but you were nevertheless discontented? If this once happened and you analysed the reason for your discontent, then you might have detected that your previous actions were against what you really believed. I would like to give an example. Assume you are a tree cutter and you are asked to cut down a tree in a short time. If you will do so, you can be content. Your superior will praise you. Unfortunately you really love nature. You love trees and you deeply loved this tree. In such a situation you can be as good as possible, but you will never be content.

This simple example shows you that you have inside you some (maybe unknown) governing values. If your daily actions are not consistent with these governing values, then you will not be happy in your job. In such a case you will never be 100% effective. It's simply impossible.

Highly effective people investigated which governing values they have. They defined for themselves long-term goals that are consistent with their governing values. They also defined for themselves short-term goals that lead to their long-term goals. Finally, their daily actions are serving their short-term goals.

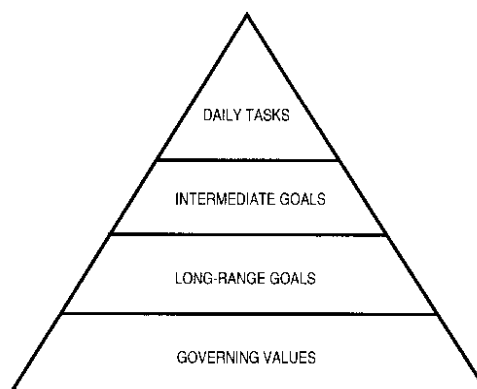


Figure 2: Productivity Pyramid ³

If you build up such a picture for yourself, then you will be internally consistent. This consistency will be noticeable to your colleagues. They will appreciate it. More importantly, if your colleagues don't feel this internal consistency – if they don't feel your personal mission goals - then it will be more difficult for you to convince them of anything.

You have to be internally consistent to be convincing.

7.3 Personal Integrity

Independent will and personal integrity belong to each other.

Let's start with personal integrity. This is one of the most precious attitudes of highly effective people. They keep their commitments. Highly effective people make and keep their commitments to others and to themselves. They regard commitments as an honour and not just as a joke. Such people put a high value on keeping their word.

This thinking and acting makes them independent. They learned first to think of what they can do, before they commit to something. That makes them independent from others. They check what they can do and then they do it. They don't depend on others to fulfil their commitment, because this will often fail.

In my opinion 'keeping commitments' is one of the most important attitudes of effective people. If you only commit to something that you can really do, then it saves your time, because you know how to comply the commitment. It also saves the other person's time, because she/he doesn't need to verify regularly your work status. If you keep your commitments then you save a lot of time.

Effective people keep their commitments.

7.4 Delegation

Highly effective people are able to delegate. Delegation can be done either to time or to other people.

If you do something by yourself, then you delegate to time.

If you delegate a task to time, then you think toward efficiency.

If you delegate to another person, then you think toward effectiveness.

Delegation to others means that you give away a task to another skilled and trained person. It enables you to act on other tasks. You save energy for the next challenging tasks. Delegation to others means growth for individuals and for organisations.

Trust can be the highest form of motivation. It can bring out the best in people. Unfortunately, this is not always true. You may meet people in your life to whom it is impossible to delegate anything. They will simply not do a task you give them in time or in quality.

I found the following reasons for such behaviours: people who don't act on delegated tasks as expected, prefer to put aside their own problem; they help other colleagues or learn other people's jobs. Some are unable to handle their time. They assume that they need one hour and indeed they need a whole day. Some are simply not willing to work under pressure. For the last mentioned people it is a game to work more slowly than they should. They focus on proving that they can not work so hard.

I assume that highly effective people are able to delegate their work to the *correct* people and highly effective people are able to find other effective people around them. They will not delegate tasks to incompetent people.

From my own experience I can say that delegation is a difficult topic. The problem is that you normally don't learn to delegate. Nobody teaches you that. Nevertheless, when you occupy a high position in a huge company then there is no way out: you have to delegate tasks, because you can not do anything alone. Fortunately some CEOs or senior executives have many years of experience. During their life they learnt by exercise how to delegate. They started with minor delegations and after some time they delegated more important things.

It is interesting to recognise different leadership styles in respect of delegation. Some leaders delegate without checking if the assigned person can do the task. If the assigned person fails then the person is held responsible for any harm and not the executive who assigned the person.

Other executives delegate tasks to people who can do it. In this case the executives need more time to find correct persons and the executives need much knowledge about the company and the subordinates.

I think exactly this is the problem. The former executives are often:

- Managers who join the company after years of working in others companies.
- Young persons.

If such people become directly senior executives or CEOs then they have no chance to know the subordinates and it takes much time until they know the whole company. For these reasons the executives can hardly find the correct person for a task.

The latter executives often climbed up the ladder in the company. They know the subordinates, the colleagues and the company. For these reasons their delegations are more profound.

Effective Executives are able to delegate tasks to correct people.

7.5 Relationships

To build up a good colleague relationship or any other partnership, the following aspects are important:

7.5.1 Understanding The Individual

It is obvious, but many people forget it: people are not equal to each other. Effective executives respect that colleagues behave differently and that not everybody can perform equally. It is important to accept the differences. Highly effective executives learned how to deal with the different types of colleagues and how to get the most out of every colleague. Effective executives honestly appreciate any colleague who gives her/his best, regardless of how difficult it is to handle the person.

7.5.2 *Attending To The Little Things*

Effective executives don't forget the little things that make a relationship worthwhile. E.g. they don't forget a colleague's birthday, or they care for colleague's flowers during their vacation.

7.5.3 *Keeping Commitments*

It may be superfluous to mention it, but effective executives keep their commitment not only to their superiors, but to everybody – also to their subordinates.

7.5.4 *Clarifying Expectations*

Effective executives define clearly what they expect from any relationship.

7.5.5 *Showing Personal Integrity*

Effective executives have personal integrity. They not only tell something, but they honestly mean it. They believe in what they say. They not only demand something, but they set good examples.

Highly effective executives apologise sincerely when they make a mistake.

7.5.6 *Negotiations*

You have to know that different kinds of relationships exist:

- win-win
- win-lose
- lose-lose
- lose-win
- No Deal

You will not always be able to influence a negotiation in the direction you prefer, but when ever you can do so, keep in mind that in the long-term a win-win situation is most worthwhile. Several

factors (e.g. country, background, history, or financial situation) might influence a negotiation. As a result you will not always be free to influence the direction.

The essence of principled negotiation is to separate the person from the problem. It is essential to focus on the problem and not on the position. You always must seek to invent options for the benefit for all involved parties. Being inventive and creative for mutual gain is the best habit for negotiations.

I regard 'relationships' as tremendous important if you want to work effectively. Do others a favour. They will remember the favour when you need them. Be kind to everybody, then they will like to work together with you. Appreciate everybody, then they will appreciate you. Try to distinguish between business and private affairs. If you don't agree with colleagues with respect to their work products then you should be able to talk with them about private things during a break. This makes life much easier. After private talks during a break the work atmosphere is more relaxed and you collaborate better.

Effective executives appreciate relationships. They know how to build up and how to cherish relationships.

7.6 Empathic Communication

This is a key issue. First always try to understand your counterpart and then try to be understood. Even when you believe you know what your counterpart will tell you, ask him first. Never assume that you know her/his argument and read something into her/his wording. Imagine you sometimes delegated a task to a colleague and you often had problems with the result. It's normal that you become adapted to such a situation. Some time it is human that you will not ask anymore "Why did you not do this and that?" You will just "know" the reasons. If you blame your colleague without asking her/him and she/he is innocent this time, it will be hard for you to repair your reputation.

A key rule is first try to understand your counterpart and then seek to be understood.

7.7 Synergy

What is synergy? Simply defined, it means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

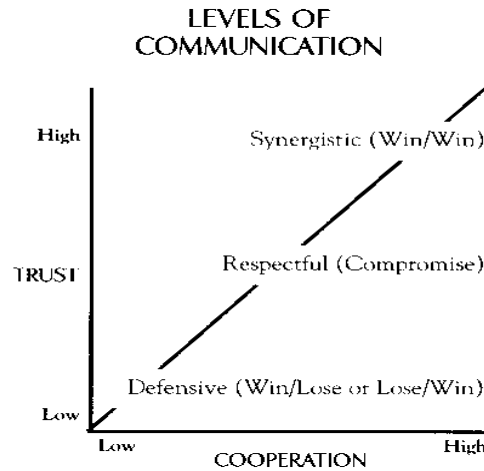


Figure 3: Level of Synergies ⁴

The person who is truly effective has the experience to recognise his own perceptual limitations and to appreciate the various resources available through interaction with the hearts and minds of other human beings.

If you take a closer look at this subject then you might detect a development in the lives of executives. When they start working, they have to work individually. Their superior evaluates their own results. Contrary to these early years, in their executive positions the result of their work is that the 'whole picture' is in line. They have to bring various people around their table to make things happen. If two people complain about the same subject then the executive should make them talk to each other. The executive will be the person who will seek for synergy to solve or to side-step a problem. Her/his job changed her/him from someone who solves a problem alone to someone who lets others collaborate so that the outcome will be a joint product.

The point is that seeking for synergy became a habit of highly effective executives. This seeking is done automatically; it is not a must, but it is fun and a hobby for them.

Highly effective people seek synergy. They appreciate the value of synergy. They like to bring various people together.

7.8 Balance In Renewal

Effective executives establish an environment where everybody can renew all 4 dimensions of their nature:

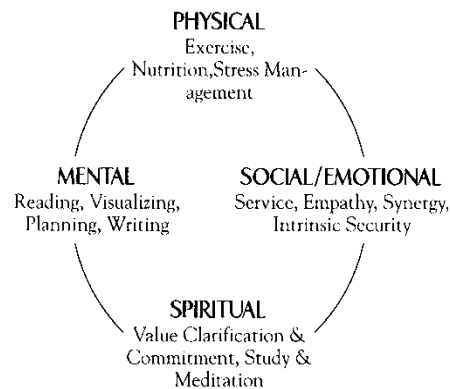


Figure 4: 4 Dimensions Of Nature ⁵

When I started working I just had to take care of myself. There was no special need to look at the feelings of my colleagues; I just did it somehow unconsciously. I mainly looked at finding my way, for defining my goals and for seeking the way to reach my goals.

Whenever you occupy a leading position or whenever you want to work effectively, this is not enough. You have to handle the interpersonal area more often. It is common to ask how your colleague feels or to share information about vacations and weekends.

You should try to find a way in your team to renew everybody's resources: you can do this by establishing regular breakfasts together with your team or breaks that everybody joins in. You can establish bicycle tours; but it is most important that you recognise that your success is mutually related to the success and well being of your subordinates. It is not necessary to have a peaceful environment. Of course there can be quarrels or different opinions about certain work aspects. Nevertheless keep in mind the need to establish places or times where work is set aside, where problems are not discussed and where everybody can relax. If you establish such a working

environment, then you will not forget that you are working together with other human beings with feelings and interests of their own.

Effective executives establish an environment where everybody can renew all 4 dimensions of their nature.

7.9 How Habits Develop And Change

A human being can, and hopefully will, develop through the following steps:

Dependence -> Independence -> Interdependence

When you are born, you are *dependent*. One of your first main decisions is to *become independent*. As a consequence you will become active. Most often the next developmental process is to focus on personal principles. Some people also manage the next developmental process - *interdependence*. If you really want to be effective, then you will appreciate the collaboration of other people. You will like the company of other people. If you feel like this, then you became interdependent.

To work or to become interdependent means to work and to live together with others. They have to rely on you and you must rely on them. Such a relationship does not come automatically. It has to grow.

In my opinion leaders have to encourage and to train their subordinates to work together. Leaders can directly influence this process by talking to their subordinates or by establishing environments that enhance interdependent work.

One example is room size. In my opinion it is useful to define tasks that can be done by at maximum 8 persons. This team should sit together in one room to enhance interdependent work.

Another example is the availability of colleagues. If an executive wants to enhance interdependent work, then his/her colleagues must have time to support their colleagues. I know a company in which it was usual to work interdependently. Unfortunately the number of employees decreased dramatically. The workload per person became so much that people refused to support their

colleagues unless their superior told them to do so. I regard this as ineffective. The colleagues forgot how to work interdependently. They lost the feeling for teamwork. The executives in this company recognised the 'reduced collaboration' and tried to get rid of it by changing the allocation per person. They gave their subordinates more time per task so that the subordinates could support other colleagues in case of urgent questions. This strategy was successful.

A third example is training. I know people who prefer to work alone. I think executives waste their time if they try to 'change' this person and force her/him to work interdependently. Nevertheless I know other people who like to work together with others but simply don't know how to do it. Leaders should train their team members to work interdependently. Ask them to work together on several tasks instead of working one person on one task. Tell your colleagues that you expect teamwork and interdependent work. Show your subordinates that you practise interdependent work. Show your colleagues that you don't know everything but that you also contact other persons in order to get support. If your subordinates recognise that you appreciate and practise interdependent work then they will work interdependently, too.

Interdependence is an attitude of highly effective executives.

FINAL STATEMENT

8 Final Statement

Hopefully you now have a clear picture of the way effective people work and their habits. I just wrote about a few things how you can work effectively, because it is easier to remember 5-7 points than a huge list. The focus was on the key elements of effective work. For me *time-management*, the *focus to the end*, and *seek the positive* are the elements with which effective executives deal most.

I would like to stress again that habits are a result of *knowledge*, *skill* and *desire*. The listed habits are mainly related to *communication* and *relationships*. This was done purposely, because the success of effective executives deeply relies on their ability to deal with other people. Technical background is not the key anymore, but the relationship to colleagues and customers. Effective executives build up a network, in which they work and live. They like to work and to live with others.

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NOTES

¹ Intranets are information networks based on the Internet Protocol (IP) technology. Intranets are comparable with the World Wide Web (WWW) but are only accessible inside a company. Only employees have access to the Intranet of a company contrary to the WWW where everybody has access right.

² “The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People”, (1999), S. R. Covey, p.13

³ “The 10 Natural Laws Of Successful Time And Life Management” (1995), H. W. Smith, p.66

⁴ “The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People”, (1999), S. R. Covey, p.75

⁵ “The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People”, (1999), S. R. Covey, p.83