

Get It Done: Ten Ways To Ensure Effective Results

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There has never been a higher premium on getting effective results. While technology has improved productivity, we know that productivity is not the same as effectiveness.

In fact, much of the time, people continue to over-promise and under-deliver. Costs run higher than expected. The best of efforts are less effective than we would like, and take longer than we would hope. Results can be disappointing. Naturally we as leaders are looking for new ways to ensure effective results. What levers can we pull to set up for greater success?

Based on 18 years of business leadership, coaching, and consulting experience—and with that I include both success and failure—I've developed ten "Key Effectiveness Factors" (KEF) that can be used to greatly enhance the effectiveness of any project, goal, or even political objective. The more of these factors that are present, the higher the likelihood for success.

1. Apply only highly motivated and capable people in the right roles. Do not involve unmotivated or less capable people.
2. Empower these people to be creative while functioning within clear values, guidelines, and milestones.
3. Identify from the start a clear and detailed picture of the desired outcome.
4. Create a culture where people are rewarded for being brutally honest.
5. Supply adequate people, dollars, and technology to the task at hand.
6. Build in challenges that maintain creative tension.
7. Implement a simple yet profound success measurement.
8. Set up reliable, honest, and concise reporting on progress and issues.
9. Establish clear consequences linked to the success or failure of outcomes.
10. Structure a feedback approach that detects and corrects errors.

Of course, these are not the only factors that work. You can "get it done" without one or more of them. But the fewer that are present, the greater the cost in resources and the ultimate realization of the complete vision. If these ten factors are all present, I've found the likelihood of success is quite high indeed.

Let's take a closer look at them:

KEF Number One: Apply only highly motivated and capable people in the right roles. Do not involve unmotivated or less capable people.

This is critical if and only if effectiveness is among your highest priorities. Getting the right people onboard, and avoiding or removing the wrong people

can be a challenge. We have many reasons for choosing or retaining people. Those reasons are often unrelated to strong motivation and performance. As Jim Collins found in his rigorous study of companies that sustained great performance over long periods of time, "The right people don't need to be tightly managed or fired up; they will be self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best results and to be part of creating something great." Setting high standards for the people you choose to include is critical to any objective.

KEF Number Two: Empower these people to be creative while functioning within clear values, guidelines, and milestones.

To get the most out of your people it is key to show them the playing field on which they will play along with the values, guidelines, and milestones required to win. You then need to let them play in their own way, which requires trust on your part. It's more effective to be clear about these guidelines and your intended outcomes, than to attempt to ride herd over every detail. Your team needs clarity about practicalities like values, deadlines, revenue, and cost. They also need to know the concerns you want addressed, and what you consider an outstanding outcome. Key to success is making your heartfelt intentions succinct, clear and memorable from the start. This practice of clarity and delegation increases the likelihood of surviving the head-on collision between plan and reality.

KEF Number Three: Identify from the start a clear and detailed picture of the desired outcome.

Too often this most important step is skipped in the interest of "moving along." But leaders need to take the time to define right up front what outcomes will not just satisfy but delight them. Today's rapid pace diverts many from the discipline required to take this step. Replacing deliberate clarity with "helpful" assumptions is too often the norm, done "in the interest of time." *Unspoken assumptions are the seeds of disappointing outcomes.* Leading with the courage necessary to pause and clarify will dramatically enhance outcomes, and provide an excellent model for your organization.

KEF Number Four: Create a culture where people are rewarded for being brutally honest.

Sustained and extraordinary results require a culture in which those you lead are rewarded for telling you, and their colleagues, the truth. Take inventory of the culture you create each day. As a leader, you need to be on the lookout for reluctance or hesitation regarding full disclosure. Addressing any issues about disclosure enables effective teamwork, and delivers reliable information on which to base your leadership decisions.

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KEF Number Five: Supply adequate people, dollars, and technology to the task at hand.

Either a shortage or glut of resources is problematic. Having too little means not being able to get the job done. Having too much means extra weight, and potentially causes complacency. The fast-paced culture invites us to jump in now and be more precise about resource needs later. Developing a clear understanding of resource requirements takes more time than we tend to allow. It takes leadership to carve out the time to understand resource needs from the very beginning. Doing a great job of estimating and allocating resources from the start, and re-evaluating them regularly are critical for success.

KEF Number Six: Build in challenges that maintain creative tension.

Competent, highly motivated people tend to work best when they are challenged. It is important to identify what motivates each person on an individual level. It's no less crucial to discover the nature of the skills and capabilities they *want* to develop. Doing so will help you keep the challenges fresh and stimulating. This creative tension ensures your best people find themselves moving forward. In this way, you are able to retain competent, motivated people while improving the chances for shared success.

KEF Number Seven: Implement a simple yet profound success measurement.

How do you measure success? If it's not crystal clear to you and your people, perhaps it's time to look more closely at your definition of success. A great measure for success is both clear and memorable, integrating the goals you are striving to achieve. Most importantly, it needs to reveal whether you are moving closer to—or farther from—your objective. Such a beacon can communicate volumes in a straightforward way, becoming the standard for action throughout your organization.

KEF Number Eight: Set up reliable, honest, and concise reporting on progress and issues.

A clear picture of progress and issues requires three elements: reliability, honesty, and brevity. Low reliability or trustworthiness of information causes significant issues. Incomplete or anecdotal information leads to bad decisions. Too much information will create an inability to focus on what's important. Careful and ongoing attention to each of these aspects—reevaluating your reporting throughout the process—will greatly increase the likelihood of success.

KEF Number Nine: Establish clear consequences linked to the success or failure of outcomes.

A useful milestone is a checkpoint on the progress of an activity that—if missed—threatens the success of the overall effort. This type of milestone provides needed clarity throughout the entire process. The consequences of not achieving milestones or outcomes are too often glossed over. It's the role of the leader to make sure that the rules of the game are defined from the very beginning. In this way, the standard for success and failure will be clear to everyone throughout the process, and no one can be surprised when consequences—either positive or negative—follow.

KEF Number Ten: Structure a feedback approach that detects and corrects errors.

Outcome is a result of process. The most powerful processes are designed to identify and correct errors throughout. Building in an error-detection and -correction feedback system will improve the quality of intended outcomes. The process itself will learn from its mistakes, becoming more effective over time. The “ah hah!” moments are best encountered early, and definitely *not* at the end, when it's too late.

Using the Key Effectiveness Factors.

How can you apply these Key Effectiveness Factors to your effort, project, or business goals? One way is to make each Factor worth ten points. This will make it easy to use them as a convenient assessment and correction tool. Take a good, hard look at each one, assigning a score on a scale of one to ten. Once you do that you will not only have an overall picture, but you will also know where additional focus is needed.

Armed with that information, you can then apply solutions appropriately, ensuring effective results.

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