October 2013 - Issue #92

Welcome from Lisa

I'm thrilled that October has arrived, and the fall season has started. Pumpkin spices fill the air (including as many trips as I can fit in to Mimi's for their pumpkin pancakes - my favorite!).

I'm happy to leave September behind as it was a sad month. The good news is that my dad is recovering from his stroke at home, and he's making good progress. He truly appreciates the "little things" such as McDonald's chocolate sundaes and spending time with his grandson.

Unfortunately, my Aunt Martha (also my Godmother) fought a hell of a fight with a series of medical issues including a nasty blood clot and passed away in late September. Known for facilitating family gatherings, adoring her nieces and nephews (and grand-nieces and nephews), a sharp mind and quick study (including spotting a deal from miles away), a love for travel with her husband of 56 years and her potato salad and hams - she will be missed. Here is my favorite photo from a long time ago as she looks so happy (I'm just a few years older now):

Remember to share your memories of your loved ones--especially during the holiday seasons when families get together.

Now that we've made the rounds through each of my service lines, I'm back to Eagle Eye. Thus, this month I focus on a topic close to my heart and passion - Eagle Eye Execution. Successful companies do it well.

IN THE NEWS
Please check out my latest speeches, articles & quotes:
- *Amazon* picked up my ExecSense webinar "Best Practices for Supply Chain Consolidation".
- Published "Why Do So Many Projects Go Awry?" in *Project Times* and "5 Steps to Choosing the Right ERP System and Avoid Costly Mistakes" in *Softengine*'s blog.
- Quoted in *SAC's* " What to Do When You Lose a Key Customer".
- Enjoyed speaking at APICS 2013 in Orlando, as a guest lecturer at Norco on "Supply Chain Technology" and at the Claremont Rotary on "Where Does My Stuff Come From?"

Check out my Linked In Company Page and follow me if you enjoy the value. I'd appreciate it!

I'm also thrilled to be offering a complimentary webinar on Nov 13th for my newsletter subscribers, "Leverage Social Networks to Drive Business Results" - sign up now!

Last but not least, I'd like to extend an invitation to my APICS Inland Empire Chapter's exclusive opportunity to participate in our fall executive panel & networking symposium on "Meeting the Skill Gaps to Prepare for the Resurgence of Manufacturing & Logistics in Southern California" - limited seating so sign up now. (If you have trouble signing up, just email me).

Enjoy,
Lisa

Email
LMA Consulting Group, Inc.

P.S. Please think of me if you should know anyone who would like to elevate business performance & accelerate cash flow. I will take good care of your referrals!

In my experience as a global business consultant and former VP of Operations, I've yet to find a business that failed solely due to a poor strategy; however, I've seen many die a slow (and sometimes sudden) death due to poor execution. Execution is an often overlooked secret to success - it isn't glamorous or exciting to discuss (at least not in comparison with the latest fads); however, it is the bedrock essential to delivering bottom line business results.

Even though I typically am called into clients to help elevate business performance derived through topics such as supply chain and operations management, my technical expertise on those topics rarely if ever relate to why the preponderance of my business is repeat business; instead, they call me back because I partner with them to ensure results occur. I've often termed this "making it happen" - and recently updated it to "eagle eye execution".

The following strategies are of upmost importance when it comes to execution: 1) Leadership & Culture. 2) Focus. 3) Exemplars 4) Follow-up

1. Leadership & Culture: Have you ever seen a successful company with weak leaders? Doubtful. I haven't. Undoubtedly, solid execution requires exceptional leadership - no exceptions.

What does this entail? Leaders must start by conveying where the company is headed (vision), why it's of importance, and how the employee adds value and contributes to the vision. Additionally, collaborative goals must be established, performance management systems should be in place, immediate feedback (both positive & constructive) is a must, training, development & career paths should be a natural part of the discussion………and the list goes on. Leaders must ignore the temptation to focus on inputs (# of hours worked, tasks and activities); instead focus on results. Help employees develop plans, gain resources and overcome roadblocks to achieving the results. Celebrate success.

Culture shouldn't be an afterthought unless you'd prefer failure. What set of beliefs govern behavior? What does your culture support? Does your culture appreciate collaboration or individualism? For example, are you compensated and rewarded for team contributions or individual contributions even if at the expense of the team? Do leaders say one thing and do another? Don't bother executing until your leadership and culture are in sync with your goals.

2. Focus: It's amazing what focus alone can accomplish. For example, a few of my clients have suffered for years with nagging problems. Of course, they tried many alternatives to resolve the issue and were frustrated. After we were able to resolve the problem working together, they often said that although they thought my technical skills would help to resolve the problem, it had little to do with it. Instead, focus was the secret weapon.

Once focus is placed on a select few root causes, seemingly insurmountable roadblocks disappear. The interesting thing about this is that it is as simple as it sounds but it is not as easy to implement as it sounds. Why? Designing and improving processes and leveraging systems and technology requires focus; however, aligning people takes an exaggerated focus. How do we align disparate functions and people with conflicting goals and managers with a common focus? Go back to point #1!

3. Exemplars: Another secret ingredient to execution success is to identify exemplars. Who are the influence leaders in the organization? Who sets an example that others will follow? They'll come from some seemingly strange places - certainly not in positional power oftentimes. Take a step back and find them - once you watch and observe, you'll wonder how you missed it before.

Bring the exemplars into the fold. Ask them to trial the new program or process. Incorporate their feedback. Ask for their support. Empower them. Soon the rest will follow.

4. Follow-up: I'm fondly known as a pit terrier when it comes to follow-up. We can attribute or blame this on my mom! However, it is a key reason for my success; I cannot count the times I've succeeded through determination alone. If you're interested in execution success, follow-up isn't an option.

A few tips from the pit terrier gene pool: 1) Start with a solid plan. 2) Ruthlessly identify priorities. 3) Ask questions about the priorities. 4) Listen to the answers (sounds obvious but isn't nearly as easy as it sounds). 5) Do not shy away from roadblocks and messy issues. 6) Continually improve your communication & presentation style as it's essential in handling the messy issues. 7) Be upfront and trustworthy. 8) Track metrics but only focus on noteworthy ones. 10) Remain vigilant.

Execution is essential in today's new normal business environment. Improving business performance can be a constant struggle. Thus, what could be more important than being known as a rare person or company who consistently delivers results in a collaborative and engaging manner?

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
Strategy Doesn't Fail in Formulation; It Fails in Execution

The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain
Why Care About Supply Chain Risk?

As this topic came up frequently at the APICS 2013 conference and has affected almost every one of my clients in the last year in some manner, I thought it would be good to think about why we should care:
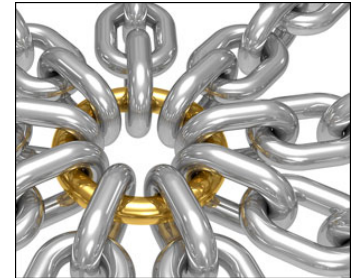
1. **Natural disasters** - Heard of any earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanoes or hurricanes? One of the companies I worked for was one of the only buildings not destroyed in a few miles square area during a hurricane - as fortunate as it was, the facility couldn't function for a while as no one could get in or out (unless via a helicopter)
2. **Political unrest** - Certainly, we hear about political unrest, danger areas, fly at your own risk zones, etc. every day. Since there are very few companies who have been able to trace back their entire supply chain, it's very likely something in your supply chain will be affected sooner than you think.
3. **Labor unrest** - Even if you are lucky enough not to be affected by political unrest or natural disaster, how likely is it you'll avoid labor unrest as well? Strikes occur in manufacturers, ports, transportation providers, distribution centers, etc. Just ask the folks dependent on the LA ports during the last strike…
4. **Theft** - For my research for a recent webinar I led on the most common incidences of fraud that COO's should be aware of, I gained a new appreciation for how often theft occurs inside companies. That is nothing in comparison to what can happen in today's extended supply chains!
5. **Security** - The advantage of technology is that it can be leveraged to drive business results with minimal resources and effort. The disadvantage is that the more dependent on technology, the more risk that a disruption or outage will directly impact your business.

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
What are the Latest Supply Chain Trends?

ERP Implementation Stars

I've found that successful ERP implementation project leaders are unsung heroes as few executives could or should understand the 1000's of moving parts & critical elements to achieving success. What are a few of these key elements?

1. **Start with a goal** - What are you expecting your system to do? Hopefully not jumping jacks through rings of fire - outrageous? No. Because of the # of moving parts, it is a challenge to grasp; thus, it is incumbent on us to boil it down and gain clarity.
2. **Develop a roadmap** - No point jumping into training and debates on how to set up key functionality if you haven't developed a roadmap. How will you get from here to there? How will your processes change? What are the impacts?
3. **Think design** - Design is a critical element when it comes to integrating the process and system into a sustainable solution going forward. Ask design experts for help as it requires someone who sees connections and down-the-line impacts most don't.
4. **Focus on critical requirements** - The critical requirements which have the most impact on your business from a systems perspective (what's unique to your industry or business from a systems perspective or something which is a competitive differentiator) should gain the majority of your focus.
5. **Celebrate Your Project management Gurus** - The rest is a continual planning, assessment, re-design, metric tracking and follow-up on the critical path timeline. Organization, follow-up, leadership skills are a must. Appreciate that these unsung qualities will make or break your success.

Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
ERP Implementation: Secrets to Success

Retaining Top Talent - a Must for Success

Retaining top talent should always be a priority; however, in today's market, losing even one top player can make the difference between success and failure.

Since the recession, employers have expected employees to be generalists. In essence, employees at all levels in an organization are expected to wear multiple hats seamlessly. At the same time, people are getting tired. In some cases, they've worked for years with minimal or no pay increases while expanding their responsibilities. Although they might be appreciated, often times, they do not know it. Perception is reality. Therefore, I've seen a trend in my clients and in my networks of folks beginning to change jobs. This is creating a panic as they leave huge gaps in their wake.
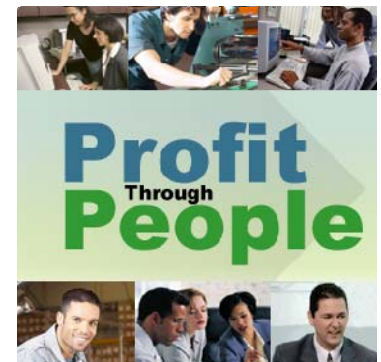
For example, at one of my clients, an entire department left the company over the course of 6 months. That might be considered a black hole! On the other hand, I know of folks in my networks who get job queries frequently who are committed and stay the course. Let's guess which companies those are? The ones that have performance management systems in place with leaders who collaborate on goals, appreciate employees, provide challenges, address the roadblocks (even the unpleasant ones) etc. Interestingly, those who have managers who are willing to provide constructive feedback and address problem employees are much more likely to stay than those who steer clear of the conflicts.
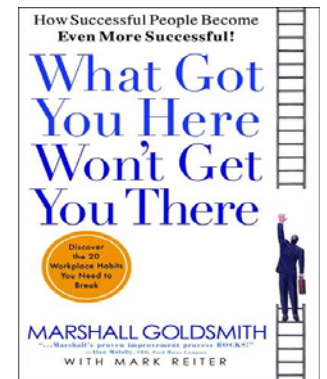
Did you like this article? Continue reading on this topic:
Critical Priority: Retaining Top Talent.

Recommended Reading

What Got You Here Won't Get You There

A great book on how to be successful in achieving your career goals - and how the subtle nuances matter.

Click here to order.

Connections

- My APICS (Association of Operations Management) Inland Empire Chapter is launching a fall executive panel & networking symposium - the topic will be skill shortages in the workplace and we'll have an executive viewpoint and training & education experts on the panel. Join us.
- My Ontario ProVisors group of trusted advisors is searching for attorneys and HR professionals. If you know anyone who fits the bill, please refer them to me.
- A high-quality finance and accounting recruiter colleague who recently moved to Houston TX is looking for connections to CPA firms & companies in need of top talent in the Dallas area. Please email her.
- An executive recruiter and colleague continues to look for high level Operations & Supply Chain leaders for a build-to-order/ mass customization manufacturing company serving the technology industry. If you know of someone to refer, please email me.

NOTE: To submit an item for this section, please send me an email with a short description of your needs and an email address. Please note that NOT all requests will be published as it must fit the guidelines and align with the Profit through People brand.

What is *Profit through People*?

I've used the Profit through People brand since my newsletter's inception in 2006 as it resonated with me. Although I consult on topics within each of my service lines--Eagle Eye Strategic Focus, The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain, the Systems Pragmatist & Profit through People--I find that people are key to success in every situation. If you are interested in elevating your business performance, please contact us.

Email: landerson@lma-consultinggroup.com

Web: www.lma-consultinggroup.com

Phone: 909-630-3943