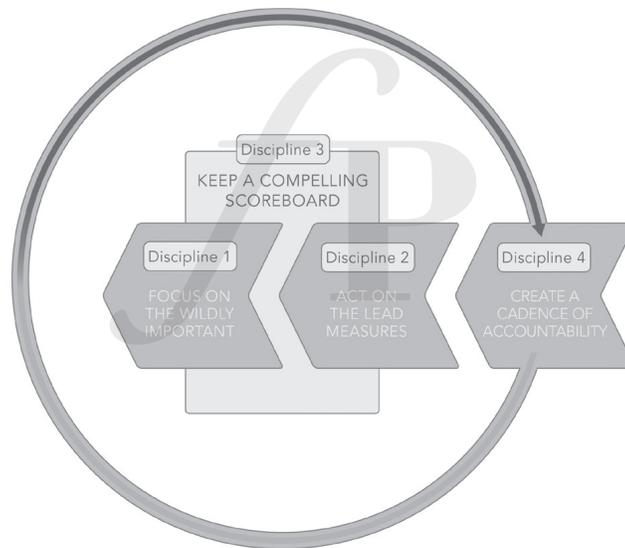


Section 1

The Four Disciplines of Execution



The 4 Disciplines of Execution are all about producing great results. The disciplines point from right to left because great teams execute from right to left—they hold themselves consistently accountable for performance on lead measures, which in turn drives achievement of wildly important goals.

The compelling scoreboard, Discipline 3, is central because it displays the success measures on the goals for all to see.

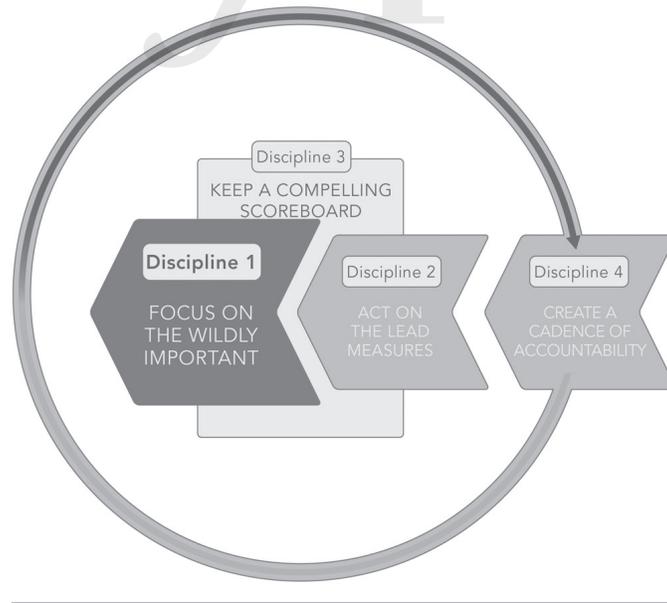
The cadence of accountability, Discipline 4, surrounds the other disciplines because it holds everything together. The circling arrow symbolizes the practice of regular, frequent accountability for the success measures on the scoreboard.

SP

Discipline 1: Focus on the Wildly Important

The first discipline is to *focus* your finest effort on the one or two goals that will make all the difference, instead of giving mediocre effort to dozens of goals.

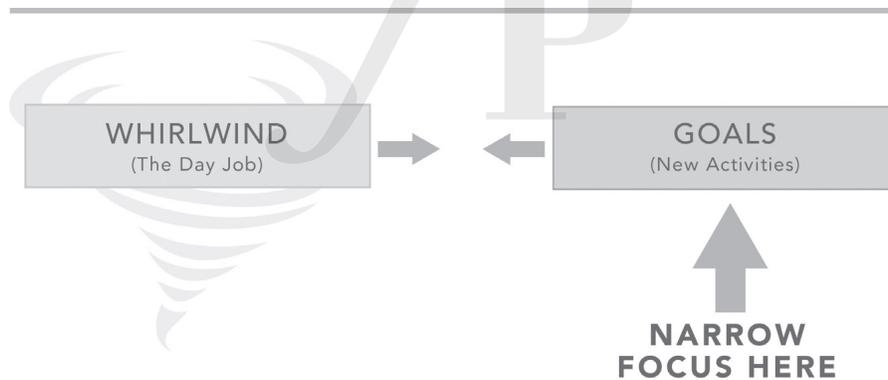
Execution starts with focus. Without it, the other three disciplines won't be able to help you.



THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

Why do almost all leaders struggle to narrow their focus? It's not because they don't think focus is needed. Every week, we work with dozens of leadership teams across the world and, almost without exception, they acknowledge that they need greater focus. Despite this desire, they continue to find themselves with too many competing priorities, pulling their teams in too many different directions. One of the first things we want you to know is that you are not alone. The inability of leaders to focus is a problem of epidemic proportions.

We also want you to know that when we talk about narrowing your focus in Discipline 1, we are not talking about narrowing the size and complexity of your whirlwind, although, over time, attention to WIGs might have that effect. Your whirlwind includes all of the urgent activities that are necessary to sustain your business day to day. Focusing on the wildly important means narrowing the number of goals you are attempting to accomplish beyond the day-to-day demands of your whirlwind.



Practicing Discipline 1 means narrowing your focus to a few highly important goals so you can manageably achieve them in the midst of the whirlwind of the day job.

Simply put, Discipline 1 is about applying more energy against fewer goals because, when it comes to setting goals, the law of diminishing returns is as real as the law of gravity.

DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

NUMBER OF GOALS (In addition to the Whirlwind)	2-3	4-10	11-20
	↓	↓	↓
GOALS ACHIEVED WITH EXCELLENCE	2-3	1-2	0

Your chances of achieving 2 or 3 goals with excellence are high, but the more goals you try to juggle at once, the less likely you will be to reach them.

If a team focuses on two or even three goals beyond the demands of their whirlwind, they can often accomplish them. However, if they set four to ten goals, our experience has been that they will achieve only one or two. They'll be going backward! If they go after eleven to twenty goals in addition to the whirlwind, they'll lose all focus. Confronted with so many goals the team members will stop listening let alone executing.

Why is this so?

The fundamental principle at work in Discipline 1 is that human beings are genetically hardwired to do one thing at a time *with excellence*. You're probably thinking—proudly—that you're great at multi-tasking and can get a lot of things done at the same time. But to the wildly important goal you want to devote your best effort. Steve Jobs of Apple had a big company to run, and he could have proudly bought many more products to market than he did; but he chose to focus on a handful of “wildly important” products. His focus was legendary. And so were his results. Science tells us the human brain can give full focus to only a single object at any given moment. You can't even give your best effort to driving a car while talking on a mobile phone and eating a burger, let alone juggle multiple important business goals at once.

MIT neuroscientist Earl Miller says, “Trying to concentrate on

two tasks causes an overload of the brain's processing capacity. . . . Particularly when people try to perform similar tasks at the same time, such as writing an email and talking on the phone, they compete to use the same part of the brain. Trying to carry too much, the brain simply slows down."⁵ If this is true of simple tasks like processing emails and phone calls, think of the impact of losing focus on the goals that could transform your business.

The prefrontal cortex, the brain's gateway, just can't handle the daily flood that comes at us, because it is designed to deal with teaspoons rather than tidal waves of information.

In our culture of multitasking, according to Professor Clifford Nass of Stanford University, "The neural circuits devoted to scanning, skimming, and multitasking are expanding and strengthening, while those used for reading and thinking deeply, with sustained concentration, are weakening or eroding."

What's the consequence? "Habitual multitaskers may be sacrificing performance on the primary task. They are suckers for irrelevancy." (Another term for the *primary task* is the WIG.)

"Improving our ability to multitask actually hampers our ability to think deeply and creatively. . . the more you multitask . . . the less deliberative you become; the less you're able to think and reason out a problem," says Jordan Grafman of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke in the USA.⁶

Of course, you don't have to overload the brain. You can leverage the brain's capacity to concentrate superbly on one *wildly important goal* at a time, while still being aware of the other priorities. There's no better illustration of this principle than an airport control tower.

Right now more than a hundred airplanes might be approaching, taking off, or taxiing around, and all of them are very important, especially if you happen to be on one of them! But for the air traffic controller, only one airplane is *wildly important* right now—the one that's landing at this moment.

The controller is aware of all the other planes on the radar. She's keeping track of them, but right now all her talent and expertise is solely focused on one flight. If she doesn't get that flight on the ground

DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

safely and with total excellence, then nothing else she might achieve is really going to matter much. She lands *one airplane at a time*.

WIGs are like that. They are the goals you must achieve with total excellence beyond the circling priorities of your day to day. To succeed, you must be willing to make the hard choices that separate what is wildly important from all the many other merely important goals on your radar. Then, you must approach that WIG with focus and diligence until it is delivered as promised, with excellence.

That doesn't mean you abandon all your other important goals. They're still on your radar, but they don't require your finest diligence and effort *right now*. (Still, some of those goals might never be worthy of your finest diligence and effort—some of them never should have taken off in the first place!)

People who try to push many goals at once usually wind up doing a mediocre job on all of them. You can ignore the principle of focus, but it won't ignore you. Or you can leverage this principle to achieve your top goals, one at a time, again and again.

CONVENTIONAL THINKING	4DX PRINCIPLE
All of our goals are Priority 1. We can successfully multitask and succeed at five, ten, or fifteen important goals. All we need to do is work harder and longer. . .	Many of our goals are important, but only one or two are wildly important. We call them WIGs. They are the goals we must achieve. Our finest effort can only be given to one or two wildly important goals at a time.

THE LEADER'S CHALLENGE

So, here's the big question: Why is there so much pressure toward expanding, rather than narrowing, the goals? If you understand the need to focus, why is it so difficult to actually do it?

You might say that, as a leader, it's because you can always see more than a dozen existing things that need improvement and another

THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

dozen new opportunities you'd like to be chasing on any given day. On top of that, there are other people (and other peoples' agendas) that can be adding to your goals, especially if they are from higher up in the organization.

However, more often than any of these external forces, there's one real culprit that creates most of the problem: you. In the words of the old cartoon, *Pogo*, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Although the tendencies that drive you to the higher side of the scale are well-intentioned, in a very real sense, you are often your own worst enemy. Being aware of these tendencies is a good place to start. Let's examine a few of them candidly.

One reason you may drive your team to take on too much is that, as a leader, you tend to be ambitious and creative. You are exactly the kind of individual organizations like to promote. The problem is that creative, ambitious people always want to do more, not less. If this describes you, you're almost hardwired to violate the first discipline of execution.

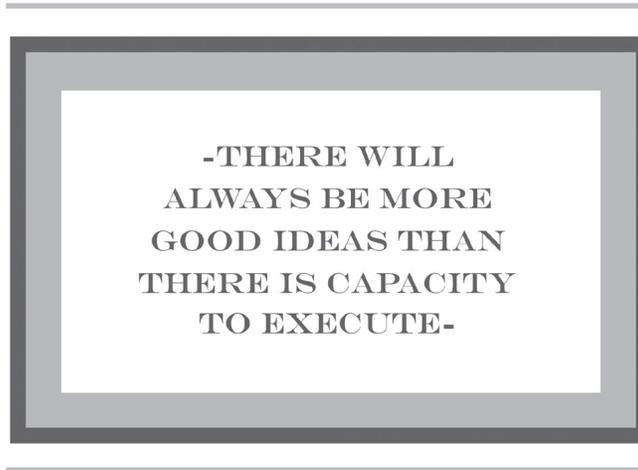
Another reason you might lead your team to go after too many goals is to hedge your bets. In other words, if your team pursues everything, then it seems likely that something might work. It also ensures that, if you fail, no one can question the level of effort your team gave. Even though you know that more is not better, it *looks* better, especially to the person above you. So, you may resist the increased accountability for results that would come with fewer goals and instead rely on the sheer volume of effort to drive your success.

However, the greatest challenge you face in narrowing your goals is simply that it requires you to say no to a lot of good ideas. 4DX may even mean saying no to some *great* ideas, at least for now. Nothing is more counterintuitive for a leader than saying no to a good idea, and nothing is a bigger destroyer of focus than always saying yes.

What makes it even harder is that these good ideas aren't presented all at once, wrapped in a nice little bundle so that choosing among them would be simple. Instead, they filter in one at a time. Alone, each idea seems to make so much sense that it's almost impossible for you to say no, so you fall into a trap of your own making.

DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

We believe all leaders facing this challenge should have this quote prominently displayed in their offices:



We can't overemphasize the importance of focusing on only one or two WIGs at once. It's counterintuitive, but it must happen.

Before Apple was named company of the decade in the United States by multiple sources,⁷ then COO Tim Cook (now CEO) said this to the company's shareholders:

"We are the most focused company that I know of or have read of or have any knowledge of. We say no to good ideas every day. We say no to great ideas in order to keep the amount of things we focus on very small in number so that we can put enormous energy behind the ones we do choose. The table each of you are sitting at today, you could probably put every product on it that Apple makes, yet Apple's revenue last year was \$40 billion."⁸

Apple's determination to say no to good ideas has had devastating consequences for their competitors. We once worked with a manufacturer that competed directly with Apple's iPhone. When we met with the leader responsible for creating a new interface to compete with the iPhone (How would you like that assignment?), he was more than a little discouraged. "It's really not fair," he said, shaking his head. "Between our domestic and international operations we make over forty different phones. They only make one."

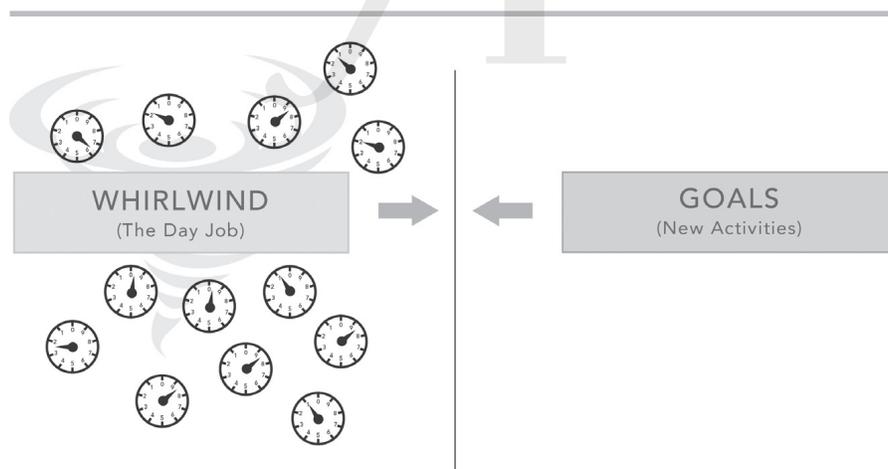
THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

As Stephen R. Covey says, "You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, unapologetically—to say no to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger 'yes' burning inside."

Once you understand the importance of saying no to good ideas in order to keep your team's focus narrow, you can avoid the first of two focus traps. However, the second trap, trying to turn everything in the whirlwind into a WIG, is even more common. Once caught in it, you try to turn everything in the whirlwind into a goal.

Within the whirlwind are all of your existing measurements for running the organization today, illustrated below as dials. It's perfectly appropriate for your team to spend 80 percent of their time and energy sustaining or incrementally improving the whirlwind. Keeping the ship afloat should be job one, but if they are spending 100 percent of their energy trying to significantly improve all of those dials at once, you will have lost your focus.



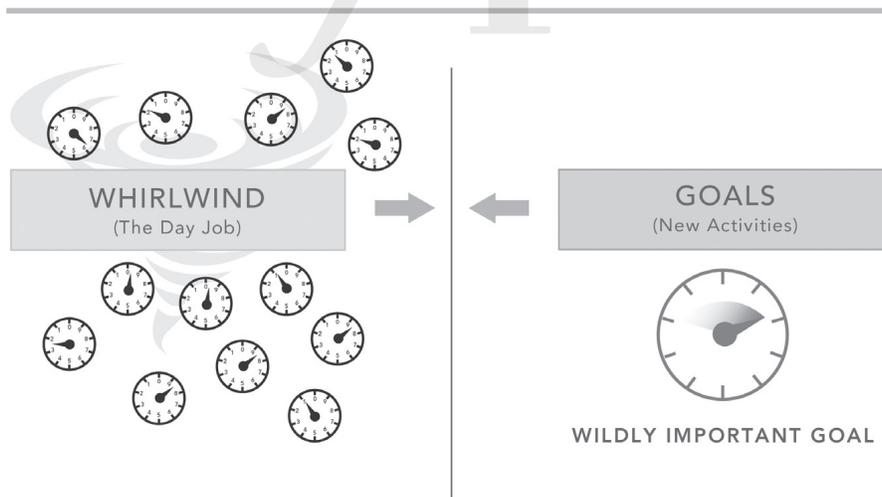
In the organizational whirlwind, people track countless numbers—finances, customer satisfaction scores, product life cycles, and so forth. A new, wildly important goal can get lost in this storm.

DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

Applying even pressure to all these dials is like trying to make holes in a piece of paper by applying even pressure with all your fingers. You can't press on any one dial with enough force to drive a change in human behavior. Many of the dials require dozens of changes in human behavior in order to move them. Focusing on one WIG is like punching one finger through the paper—all your strength goes into making that hole.

Unless you can achieve your goal with a stroke of the pen, success is going to require your team to change their behavior; and they simply cannot change that many behaviors at once, no matter how badly you want them to. Trying to significantly improve every measure in the whirlwind will consume all of your time and leave you with very little to show for it.

So, beyond avoiding these two focus traps—refusing to say no to all the good ideas and trying to make everything in the whirlwind a goal—what should you do? Narrow your focus to one or two wildly important goals and consistently invest the team's time and energy into them. In other words, if you want high-focus, high-performance team members, they must have something wildly important to focus *on*.



While you don't lose track of the numbers in the whirlwind, Discipline 1 requires intense focus on one number—the measure of success on the “wildly important goal.”

IDENTIFYING YOUR WILDLY IMPORTANT GOALS

A wildly important goal (WIG) is a goal that can make all the difference. Because it's your strategic tipping point, you're going to commit to apply a disproportionate amount of energy to it—the 20 percent that is not used up in the whirlwind. But how do you decide which of many possible goals should be your WIG?

Sometimes, the choice of a WIG is obvious, but at other times it can be confusing. If you try to select your WIG by asking yourself what's most important, you may find your mind running in circles. Why? Because the urgent priorities in your whirlwind are always competing to be the most important and a very good argument can usually be made for choosing any one of them.

To illustrate this problem, imagine the leadership team in a manufacturing plant having this conversation: "I'm telling you, quality is the most important thing and it should be our WIG!" says one person. "Well don't forget, it's our production that pays the bills around here," says another. "I'm sorry, but I disagree with both of you," says a third. "Safety has to be the most important. Have you ever had one of your people seriously hurt in an accident? If you had, you'd agree."

The result is frustration and confusion, along with an inevitable (and paradoxical) loss of focus.

The problem in this conversation is that the leaders are asking the wrong question.

In determining your wildly important goal, don't ask "What's most important?" Instead, begin by asking "If every other area of our operation remained at its current level of performance, what is the one area where change would have the greatest impact?" This question changes the way you think and lets you clearly identify the focus that would make all the difference.

Remember, 80 percent of your team's energy will still be directed at sustaining the whirlwind, so ignore the temptation to worry that by making one or two goals most important, your team will ignore everything else. And once you stop worrying about everything else

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going backward, you can start moving forward on your WIG. In the words of Discipline 1, you can focus on the wildly important.

Your wildly important goal will come from one of two categories: either from within the whirlwind or from outside it.

Within the whirlwind, it could be something so badly broken that it must be fixed, or it could be a key element of your value proposition that isn't being delivered. Poor project completion time, out-of-control costs, or unsatisfactory customer service are all good examples. However, it could also be an area in which your team is already performing well and where leveraging this strength could result in significant impact. For example, increasing patient satisfaction in a hospital from the 85th percentile to the 95th percentile could increase your revenue dramatically.

Outside the whirlwind, the choices tend to be about repositioning yourself strategically. Launching a new product or service, either to counter a competitive threat or seize a huge opportunity, could be a WIG that would make all the difference. Remember that this type of WIG will require an even greater change in behavior, since it will be completely new to your team.

Whether your WIG comes from within the whirlwind or outside it, your real aim is not only to achieve it, but also to then make the new level of performance a natural part of your team's operation. In essence, once a WIG is achieved, it goes back into the whirlwind. Every time this happens, the whirlwind changes. It isn't as chaotic, chronic problems are resolved, and new performance levels are sustained; in essence, it's a much higher performing whirlwind. Ultimately, this is what enables your team to pursue the next WIG from a stronger foundation.

Sometimes, choosing your WIG is about more than selecting the aspect of your business where the greatest results are desired; it's about a WIG so fundamental to the heart of your mission that achieving it defines your existence as an organization.

We got to work with the new president of a large thrift-store chain just as he was asking himself these questions. His predecessor

had put the company on a firm financial and operational footing, updating marketing and advertising, the look and feel of the stores, and the accounting procedures. When we got into the WIG discussion, some of his reports thought this emphasis needed to continue. Others wanted more emphasis on hiring more disabled workers. Still others argued that their top WIG should be growth. The range of choices was baffling.

To help the team find common ground, the new leader asked everyone to ponder the mission of the organization: “To promote self-reliance among the disabled and displaced.” With the company in a solid financial and operational position, could it be that the area where they now wanted the greatest results might be more directly related to their mission?

Gradually, a WIG emerged from this experience; one they had not even considered before: “Help disabled workers find jobs outside our organization that can sustain them.” While they couldn’t hire every disabled person in their region, they had the operational capacity to train thousands in the retail business and find better jobs for them, so that they could escape from dependency. The organization’s new measure of success? “Increasing the number of disabled people placed in sustainable jobs.”

This WIG transformed the organization. They helped thousands become self-reliant and find a new sense of self-worth, while sustaining the day-to-day financial and operational results that made their mission possible.

FOCUSING THE ORGANIZATION

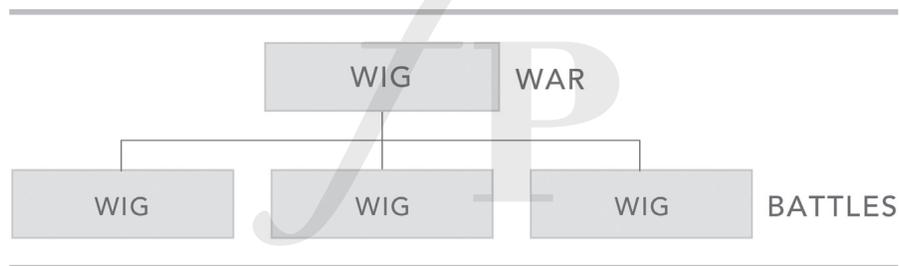
Up to this point, we’ve talked a lot about narrowing the focus as it relates to you and your team. This in itself is a huge challenge. Narrowing the focus for an entire organization or even a large portion of an organization, however, is a much bigger challenge. We’ll cover this in more detail on page xxx. So we want you to gain a high-level understanding of the rules for applying Discipline 1 organizationally before we move into Discipline 2.

DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

Rule #1: No team focuses on more than two WIGs at the same time.

This rule acts like a governor on an engine. When you are deeply into the 4 Disciplines of Execution there may be dozens or even hundreds of WIGs across the entire organization, but the key is not to overload any single leader, team, or individual performer. Remember, they are all dealing with the incessant demands of the whirlwind. Keep this rule in mind as you consider the remaining three rules. If you violate this one, you will have lost your focus as an organization.

Rule #2: The battles you choose must win the war. Whether it's a military conflict, or the war on hunger, cancer, or poverty, there's a relationship between battles and wars. The only reason you fight a battle is to win the war. The sole purpose of WIGs at lower levels in the organization is to help achieve the WIGs at higher levels. It isn't enough that the lower-level WIGs support or align with the higher WIGs. The lower-level WIGs must *ensure* the success of the higher WIGs.



For example, a provider of Internet financial services we worked with knew they had to increase revenues from \$160 million to \$200 million by fiscal year end in order to fulfill the expectations of their investors. A new outside-sales team committed to provide \$8 million of new revenue and the major-account division committed to the other \$32 million.

What about the other major division—the technology team? What role did they play in this revenue WIG? Did they have any role at all? At first, they felt left out of the WIG.

After some careful research, they determined that the most impactful lower-level WIG they could set for themselves would be to

improve their record for continuous, uninterrupted service. This was a major criterion new customers would use to choose a provider—perhaps the most important criterion. As it turned out, this group had to fight the key battle in achieving the WIG, which in turn cleared the path for the other divisions as well.

Once the top-level WIG is chosen, the next question is critical. Instead of asking “What are all the things we could do to win this war?”—a common mistake that results in a long to-do list—ask, “What are the fewest high-impact things we could do to win this war?” The answer to that question determines which and how many lower-level WIGs will be needed to achieve the top-level WIG. As you begin to choose the battles to win the war, you have begun to both clarify and simplify your strategy. This process will be covered in detail on page 000.

Rule #3: Senior leaders can veto, but not dictate. The highest levels of execution are never reached when the strategy is devised solely by the top leaders of the organization and simply handed down to the leaders and teams below. Without involvement, you cannot create the high levels of commitment that execution requires. While the senior leaders will undoubtedly determine the top-level WIG, they must allow the leaders at each level below to define the WIGs *for their teams*. This not only leverages the knowledge of these leaders, but also creates a greater sense of ownership and involvement. Simply put, they become more engaged in a goal that they choose themselves and that supports a worthy organizational goal. Senior leaders then exercise their right to veto if the battles chosen are not going to win the war.

Implementing Discipline 1 enables an organization to quickly turn a broad strategy into clearly defined WIGs at every level. It is not solely a top—down process, but neither is it exclusively bottom—up. Through this process, the senior leader’s choice of the overall WIG brings clarity (top down), and allowing the leaders and teams below to choose their WIGs (bottom up) brings engagement. In the process, the entire organization mobilizes around the focus that matters most and takes ownership for driving the result.

Rule #4: All WIGs must have a finish line in the form of *X to Y by when*. Every WIG at every level must contain a clearly measurable result, as well as the date by which that result must be achieved. For example, a revenue-focused WIG might be: “Increase percent of annual revenue from new products from 15 percent to 21 percent by December 31st.” This *from X to Y by when* format recognizes where you are today, where you want to go, and the deadline for reaching that goal. As deceptively simple as this formula may seem, many leaders often struggle to translate their strategic concepts into a single *from X to Y by when* finish line. But once they’ve done it, both they and the teams they lead have gained tremendous clarity.

Typically, however, goals lack this kind of clarity. We constantly see goals like these that no one can achieve because there’s no finish line; no way of telling whether you completed the goal or not and where you stand at any given point:

- From a major global retail company: “Improve inventory processing.”
- From a British publisher: “Develop and strengthen new and existing client relationships.”
- From an Australian tourist authority: “Influence effective tourism workforce development in Queensland.”
- From a European investment firm: “Successfully convert our portfolio to a life-cycle strategy.”
- From a multinational agribusiness company: “Identify, recruit, and retain the best employees.”

These goals lack the measurement that can tell the team when they’ve won the game. “Improve inventory processing?” How much? “Strengthen new client relationships?” How do we measure “stronger”? “Successfully convert a portfolio to a life-cycle strategy?” How will we know if we’ve done that?

Effective lag measures look like this:

THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

- “Improve inventory processing by increasing per-year inventory turns from eight to ten by December 31.”
- “Raise our client-relationship score from forty to seventy on the loyalty scale within two years.”
- “Move 40 percent of our customers from fixed categories to life-cycle categories of investments within five years.”
- “Launch the new CRM solution at an 85 percent quality beta rating by the end of our fiscal year.”

If a goal is wildly important, surely you should be able to tell if you’ve achieved it or not. The formula *from X to Y by when* makes that possible.

In setting a finish line, we often hear the question, “Over what period of time should the achievement of a WIG be spread?” Our answer is, “It depends.” Since teams and organizations often think and measure themselves in terms of a calendar or a fiscal year, a one-year time frame makes a good starting point for a WIG. That said, remember that a WIG is not a strategy. A WIG is a tactical goal with a limited time frame. We’ve seen some WIGs that take two years and some that take six months. The length of a project-based WIG, such as “Complete the new website within budget by July 1,” will usually correspond with the time frame of the project itself. Use your own judgment. Just remember that a WIG should be within a time frame that balances the need to create a compelling vision with the need to create an achievable goal.

SHOOTING FOR THE MOON

In 1958, the fledgling National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had many very important goals like this one: “The expansion of human knowledge of phenomena in the atmosphere and space.” It sounded like many of the goals you hear in business today: “Become world class . . .” or “Lead the industry . . .” Although the leaders at NASA had ways to measure various aspects of this goal,

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they lacked the clarity of a defined finish line. They also lacked the results that the Soviet Union was producing.

But in 1961, President John F. Kennedy shook NASA to its foundations when he made the pronouncement “land a man on the moon and return him safely to the earth before this decade is out.” Suddenly, NASA had a formidable new challenge, the war it would fight for the next ten years, and it was stated in exactly the way WIGs should be stated: “X” is earthbound, “Y” is to the moon and back, and “when” is by December 31, 1969.

Just a glance at this table⁹ shows the difference between conventional organizational goals and a true WIG.

NASA'S GOALS IN 1958	NASA'S GOALS AS OF 1961
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The expansion of human knowledge of phenomena in the atmosphere and space; 2. The improvement of the usefulness, performance, speed, safety, and efficiency of aeronautical and space vehicles; 3. The development and operation of vehicles capable of carrying instruments, equipment, supplies, and living organisms through space; 4. The establishment of long-range studies of the potential benefits to be gained from, the opportunities for, and the problems involved in the utilization of aeronautical and space activities for peaceful and scientific purposes; 5. The preservation of the role of the United States as a leader in aeronautical and space science and technology and in the application thereof to the conduct of peaceful activities within and outside the atmosphere; 6. The making available to agencies directly concerned with national defense of discoveries that have military value or significance, and the furnishing by such agencies, to the civilian agency established to direct and control nonmilitary aeronautical and space activities, of information as to discoveries which have value or significance to that agency; 7. Cooperation by the United States with other nations and groups of nations in work done pursuant to this Act and in the peaceful application of the results thereof; 8. The most effective utilization of the scientific and engineering resources of the United States, with close cooperation among all interested agencies of the United States in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, facilities and equipment. 	<p><i>"I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." –John F. Kennedy</i></p>

THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

Consider the 1958 goals:

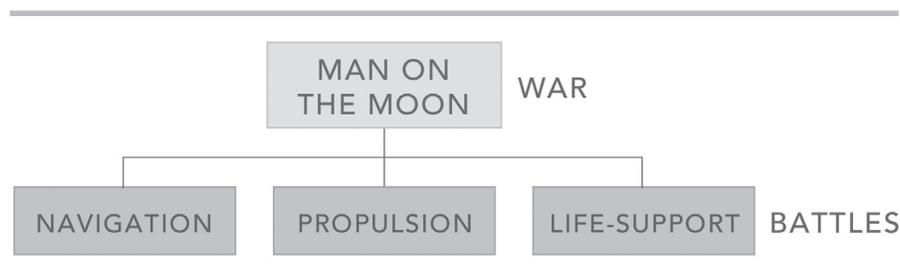
- Are they clear and measurable?
- How many are there?
- Is there a finish line for any of them?

So, what kind of results were these objectives driving for NASA? Russia went into space first with satellites and cosmonauts while the United States was still blowing up rockets on launchpads.

Contrast the 1958 goals with the 1961 goal: one clear, measurable WIG.

Now, with its reputation at stake on the world stage, NASA had to determine the few key battles that would win that war.

In the end, three critical battles were chosen: navigation, propulsion, and life support. Navigation posed the formidable challenge of moving a spacecraft through space at eighteen miles per second to a precise location on the moon, which was also moving rapidly in its elliptical orbit around Earth. Propulsion was no less of a challenge because a rocket heavy enough to carry a lunar module had never yet achieved a velocity sufficient to break free of Earth's gravitational pull. Life support was the most critical of all because it required developing a capsule and landing module that would keep astronauts alive, both for the journey to and from the moon and while they explored the moon's surface.



President Kennedy's speech also included another key aspect of Discipline 1—saying no to good ideas—when he acknowledged that

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were many other worthy objectives that the country would not pursue in order to achieve this goal. But, as he asked, “Why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? . . . That goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”¹⁰ In this way, he narrowed the focus of NASA to a finish line whose achievement became one of the most important ventures in human history.

What do you think happened to accountability within NASA when the challenge of putting a man on the moon was publicly announced? It went through the roof. This is particularly clear when you remember that the spacecraft they would use had only a tiny fraction of the computing power of the smartphone in your pocket. Even worse, the engineers and scientists still had no operational technology for winning the three necessary battles. Looking back, you might say human beings had no business being on the moon in 1969.

Now, consider a different question: When accountability soared, what happened to morale and engagement? It, too, went through the roof. Most leaders find this surprising. We tend to think that when accountability is at its highest, the pressure makes morale go down. The reality is the opposite: Narrowing your focus increases both accountability and the engagement of your team.

When a team moves from having a dozen we-really-hope goals to one or two no-matter-what goals, the effect on morale is dramatic. It’s as though a switch exists in every team member’s head called “Game on!” If you can throw that switch, you have laid the foundation for extraordinary execution. When President Kennedy said to the moon and back by the end of the decade, he threw that switch.

Can you remember what it’s like to be part of a team when the game-on switch is activated? It’s a remarkable experience. Even though you still have to deal with the whirlwind and its myriad demands, you also have a finish line, something clear and important at which you can win. Even more meaningful, it’s something whereby every member of the team can see that their contribution makes a difference. Everyone wants to feel that they are winning and that they are con-

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tributing to something meaningful. And, when times are tough, they want it even more.

When we started on this journey years ago, we did not intend to focus on defining or even refining strategy. However, we quickly learned that the line separating strategy and execution is blurry. Applying this first discipline will sharpen your strategy more than you think it will. But what it will really do is make your strategy executable.

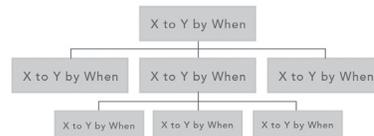
Think of it this way: Above your head is a thought bubble, and inside that bubble are all the various things for which you're responsible, as well as opportunities you wish you were pursuing, new ideas and concepts, problems you know you need to fix, and a lot of "whats" and "hows" to get it all done. Your bubble is complicated and chaotic. It's also completely different from the bubbles above every other leader.

This is why Discipline 1 requires you to translate your strategy from concepts to targets, from a vague strategic intent to a set of specific finish lines. The four rules for implementing Discipline 1, outlined above, give an entire organization a framework for doing this successfully. (For more examples and process steps, see sections 2 and 3.)

**FROM: VAGUE
STRATEGIC INTENT**



**TO: SPECIFIC
FINISH-LINES**



Too many organizational goals are hazy and imprecise, leaving people wondering "what" they are supposed to do and "how" they are supposed to do it. Discipline 1 provides clear, unmistakable finish lines so people know exactly what success looks like.

DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

Finally, remember that the four rules of focus are unforgiving. At some point, you will want to cheat on them, even just a little. We know. We often want to do the same inside our organization. However, what we've learned is that the rules governing focus are like the rules governing gravity: They aren't concerned with what you think or with the details of your particular situation. They simply yield predictable consequences.

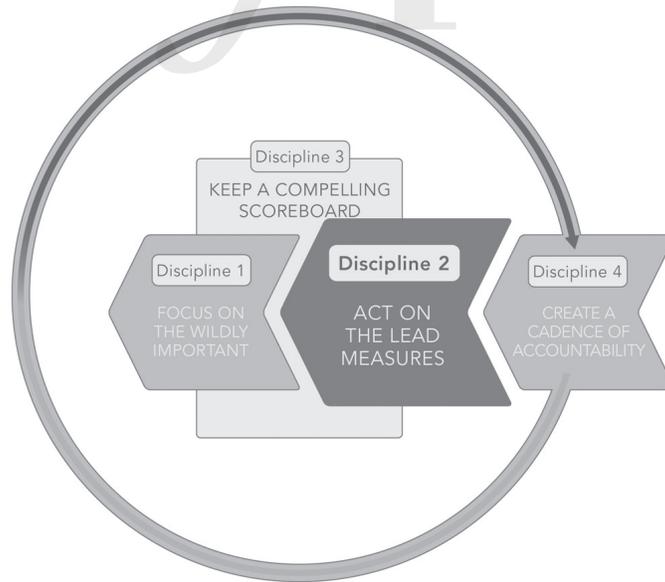
When you think about it, the principle of focusing on the vital few goals is common sense; it's just not common practice. In one of Aesop's fables, a young boy put his hand into a pot full of hazelnuts. He grasped as many as he could possibly hold, but when he tried to pull out his hand, he found the neck of the pot was too narrow. Unwilling to lose his catch, and yet unable to withdraw his hand, he burst into tears and bitterly lamented his disappointment.

Like the boy, you might find it hard to let go of a lot of good goals until you start serving a greater goal. As Steve Jobs often said, "I'm as proud of what we don't do as I am of what we do."¹¹ Discipline 1 is about defining that greater goal, and it *is* a discipline. In Section 2 of this book, we'll give you more guidance about the exact process of defining an organizational WIG.

Discipline 2: Act on the Lead Measures

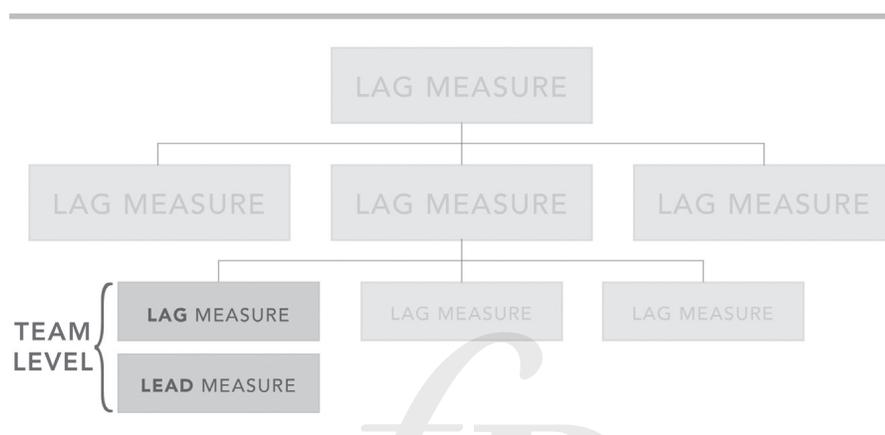
The second discipline is to apply disproportionate energy to the activities that drive your lead measures. This provides the leverage for achieving the lag measures.

Discipline 2 is the discipline of leverage. Lead measures are the “measures” of the activities most connected to achieving the goal.



DISCIPLINE 2: ACT ON THE LEAD MEASURES

Discipline 1 takes the wildly important goal for an organization and breaks it down into a set of specific, measureable targets until every team has a wildly important goal that it can own. Discipline 2 then defines the leveraged actions that will enable the team to achieve that goal. The illustration below shows the relationship between lag measures and lead measures at the team level.



While a lag measure tells you if you've achieved the goal, a lead measure tells you if you are *likely* to achieve the goal. While a lag measure is hard to do anything about, a lead measure is virtually within your control.

For example, while you can't control how often your car breaks down on the road (a lag measure) you can certainly control how often your car receives routine maintenance (a lead measure). And, the more you act on the lead measure, the more likely you are to avoid that roadside breakdown.

Once you have defined your wildly important goal it would seem natural, even intuitive, to then create a detailed plan listing all of the specific tasks and sub tasks required for achieving the goal in the coming months. But with Discipline 2, that's not what you are going to do.

Long-term plans created by most organizations are often too rigid. They lack the ability to adapt to the constantly changing needs

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and environment of the business. Not surprisingly, they also end up on your shelf collecting dust after only a few months.

With Discipline 2, you do something quite different from that.

Discipline 2 requires you to define the daily or weekly measures, the achievement of which will lead to the goal. Then, each day or week, your team identifies the most important actions that will drive those lead measures. In this way, your team is creating a just-in-time plan that enables them to quickly adapt, while remaining focused on the WIG.

CONVENTIONAL THINKING	4DX PRINCIPLE
Keep your eye on the lag measures: the quarterly results, the sales numbers, pounds lost. Stress out. Bite your nails while you wait.	Focus on moving the lead measures. These are the high-leverage actions you take to get the lag measures to move.

LAG VERSUS LEAD MEASURES

Let's drill down into the distinction between lag and lead measures. A lag measure is the measurement of a result you are trying to achieve. We call them *lag* measures because by the time you get the data the result has already happened; they are always lagging. The formula *from X to Y by when* in a WIG gives us a lag measure, but WIGs are not the only lag measures in your world. The whirlwind is full of lag measures such as revenue, accounts payable, inventory numbers, hospitalization rates, asset utilization, and so forth.

Lead measures are different; they foretell the result. They have two primary characteristics. First, a lead measure is *predictive*, meaning that if the lead measure changes, you can predict that the lag measure also will change. Second, a lead measure is *influenceable*; it can

DISCIPLINE 2: ACT ON THE LEAD MEASURES

be directly influenced by the team. That is, the team can make a lead measure happen without a significant dependence on another team.



In Discipline 2, you create lead measures, the movement of which will become the driving force for achieving the WIG. In the months ahead, your team will invest consistent energy toward moving these lead measures and, as we have seen with hundreds of teams, this investment will be the key to their success.

We strongly believe that understanding lead measures will be one of the most important insights you take from this book.

Let's explore the two characteristics of a good lead measure further by first assuming you have a WIG to "Increase corn production from 200 tons to 300 tons by September 1." The *X to Y* of corn tonnage is your lag measure. You know that rainfall is an important factor in corn production, so rainfall can be predictive of the corn harvest. But is it a good lead measure? No, because you can't influence the weather to produce the right amount of rain. Rainfall is predictive, but it isn't influenceable. Rainfall fails the test because both characteristics are equally important. Other measures, such as soil quality or fertilization rates, however, easily meet the test.

Now take another illustration with which many people are intimately familiar: a WIG of achieving weight loss. Obviously, the lag measure will be your weight as reflected by the bathroom scale. If you format this WIG correctly, you might define it as "Decrease total body weight from 190 pounds to 175 pounds by May 30" (*from X to Y by when*). This is a good start, but what are the lead measures that

will be predictive of achieving the goal and, equally important, that you can influence? You would likely choose both diet and exercise, and, of course, you'd be right.

These two measures fulfill the first characteristic of being predictive: Reducing calories consumed and increasing calories burned strongly indicates that you'll lose weight. Just as important, however, these two lead measures are also directly influenceable by you. Achieve these two lead measures at the level specified, outside your daily whirlwind, and you will see your lag measure moving when you step on the bathroom scale.

LEAD MEASURES CAN BE COUNTERINTUITIVE

There's a problem with lead measures. Where do leaders normally fixate, on lead measures or on lag measures? That's right. As a leader, you've likely spent your entire career focusing on lag measures even though you can't directly affect them. And you're not alone. Think about your last meeting with the other leaders in your organization. What were you discussing, analyzing, planning, and agonizing about? Lag measures and, usually, your inability to move them.

For example, it's easy for schoolteachers to measure the reading levels of students with a standardized test. Often, they obsess over these lag measures. However, it's harder to come up with lead measures that *predict* how students will do on the test. The school might hire tutors or reserve more time for uninterrupted reading. In any case, the school is likely to do better if it tracks data on time spent reading or in tutoring (lead measures) rather than hope and pray that the reading scores (lag measures) will rise of their own accord.

We see this syndrome every day all over the world and in every area of life. The sales leader fixates on total sales, the service leader fixates on customer satisfaction, parents fixate on their children's grades, and dieters fixate on the scale. And, in virtually every case, fixating solely on the lag measures fails to drive results.

There are two reasons almost all leaders do this. First, lag mea-

DISCIPLINE 2: ACT ON THE LEAD MEASURES

asures are the measures of success; they are the results you have to achieve. Second, data on lag measures is almost always much easier to obtain and more visible than data on lead measures. It's easy to step on a scale and know exactly how much you weigh, but how easy is it to find out how many calories you've eaten today or how many you've burned? That data is often hard to get, and it can take real discipline to *keep* getting it.

Here's a warning: Right about now you might be tempted to oversimplify what we're saying.

If you're thinking something like "So, all you're saying is that if you want to lose weight, you should diet and exercise? What's revolutionary about that?" then you've missed the point of Discipline 2.

There's a huge difference between merely *understanding* the importance of diet and exercise and *measuring* how many calories you've eaten and how many you've burned. Everyone knows you should diet and exercise, but the people who actually measure how many calories they've eaten and how many they've burned each day are the ones actually *losing* weight!

In the end, it's the *data* on lead measures that makes the difference, that enables you to close the gap between what you know your team should do and what they are actually doing. Without lead measures, you are left to try to manage to the lag measures, an approach that seldom produces significant results.

W. Edwards Deming, the management and quality guru, said it best when he told executives that managing a company by looking at financial data (lag measures) is the equivalent of "driving a car by looking in the rearview mirror."¹²

Lead measures also eliminate the element of surprise that a sole focus on lag measures can bring. Imagine this scenario: You and your team have been working hard on a goal to improve customer satisfaction. It's your most important measure and the one on which your bonus is based, and the new customer satisfaction scores have just arrived in your inbox. As one of our clients expressed it, you are about to have one of two reactions: "Oh, cool!" or "Oh, no!" But either way, there is nothing you can do to change the results: They are in the past.

That same client also pointed out, “If luck is playing a significant role in your career, then you’re fixating on lag measures.”

We couldn’t agree more.

Now, imagine instead that you are tracking the two most predictive lead measures of customer satisfaction, and for the past three weeks your team has performed well above the standard on those measures. Do you think your experience will change when the new customer satisfaction results arrive? Absolutely. It will be like stepping on the scale knowing that you have met your diet and exercise measures every day. You already know that the lag measure will change.

DEFINING LEAD MEASURES

“Increase annual water production from 175 million liters to 185 million liters by December 31.” That was the WIG for the water-bottling plant of a large beverage company when we began working with the senior executive in charge of supply chain to implement 4DX. The plant had been struggling to meet its targeted water production levels for several years and the leaders were anxious to identify the lead measures that would drive water production to new levels.

We began by asking them to discuss what they thought a good lead measure for increasing annual water production would be.

“Monthly water production,” they quickly answered.

Sorry, we said, that won’t work.

They seemed confused. “Why not?” asked the plant manager. “If we hit our monthly water production targets, then we’ll hit our annual production, right?”

“You’re absolutely right that monthly water production is predictive of annual water production,” we replied, “but monthly production isn’t any more influenceable by your teams than annual production. All you’re doing is identifying a different lag measure that you can get more frequently than annual production. It is still a lag.”

This dialog is very common when teams first determine lead measures, and unfortunately, the leaders at the water plant still weren’t quite getting it.

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To help, we asked them what their lead measure would be for monthly water production.

“Daily water production!” they responded.

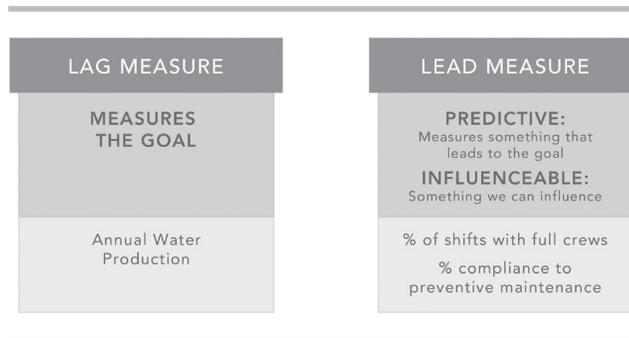
We knew that we weren’t getting through. The discussion grew more animated until the production manager finally demanded everyone’s attention.

“I’ve got it,” he said with real excitement. “I know what our lead measures should be!” He walked to the front of the room and began to explain. “We’re constantly running shifts without full crews and we have way too much machine downtime. Those are the two main things that keep us from producing more water.”

Now, we were getting somewhere.

Everyone in the room agreed with his diagnosis. They still didn’t have usable lead measures—they needed to translate full crews and preventive maintenance into actual measures—but they had captured the idea. Quickly, they identified their first lead measure: Increase percentage of shifts with full crews from 80 percent to 95 percent. The second lead measure was even easier: Increase percentage of compliance to preventive maintenance schedules from 72 percent to 100 percent.

Their strategic bet was that if the plant ensured full crews and a reduction in machine downtime, it would achieve a significant increase in water production. Over the next few months, the teams put a disproportionate amount of effort into those two lead measures, above their day-to-day whirlwind. Not only did their water production increase, it grew at a rate far greater than expected.



This is a good illustration of the process for defining lead measures, but it also helps to make an important point. Our consultant on the project lauded the plant's results, but then asked an important question: "Why weren't you already doing those two things?"

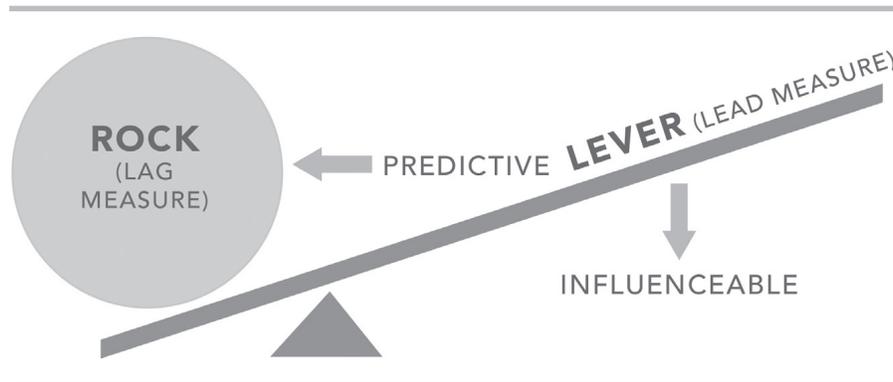
His point was that their lead measures didn't come from Franklin-Covey. The leaders at the plant already knew the importance of running shifts with full crews and compliance to preventive-maintenance standards, but despite knowing it, they weren't doing it. Why?

As with most teams, their problem was not that they didn't *know*, it was a matter of focus—they didn't *do*. There were dozens of things that needed improvement and focus, not just crew staffing and preventive maintenance; and by trying to improve everything, they remained trapped in their whirlwind. They spent every day spreading their energy across so many urgent priorities and trying to move all the dials at once that in the end, nothing moved. As in the illustration we offered earlier, it was like trying to make holes in a piece of paper by applying even pressure on all your fingers.

Obviously, this problem is not unique to the leaders in this plant. If we followed you around for a few days we would likely observe two predominant activities. One, you would spend most of your time battling your whirlwind, and two, a lot of your remaining time would be spent worrying over your lag measures. The problem with these two activities is that they consume enormous energy and produce little, if any, leverage beyond sustaining your whirlwind. And it's leverage that you need most.

The key principle behind lead measures is simply this: leverage. Think of it this way: achieving your wildly important goal is like trying to move a giant rock; but despite all the energy your team exerts, it doesn't move. It's not a question of effort; if it were, you and your team would already have moved it. The problem is that effort alone isn't enough. Lead measures act like a lever, making it possible to move that rock.

Now consider the two primary characteristics of a lever. First, unlike the rock, the lever is something we *can* move: It's influenceable. Second, when the lever moves, the rock moves: It's predictive.



How do you choose the right levers?

To achieve a goal you've never achieved before, you must do things you've never done before. Look around you. Who else has achieved this goal or something like it? What did they do differently? Analyze carefully any barriers you foresee and decide together how to overcome them. Use your imagination. What haven't you thought of that might make all the difference?

Then select the activities you believe will have the greatest impact on achieving the WIG: the 80/20 activities. What 20 percent of what you do has as much or more leverage on the WIG than 80 percent of what you do? In the words of consultant and entrepreneur Richard Koch, in business, "The mass of activity will always be pointless, poorly conceived, badly directed, wastefully executive, and largely beside the point. A small portion of activity will always be terrifically effective. . . . it is probably not what you think it is; it is opaque and buried within a basket of less effective activity."¹³

Finding the right lever among many possibilities is perhaps the toughest and most intriguing challenge for leaders trying to execute a WIG.

A distinguished high-end department store at the prestigious Phipps Plaza Mall near Atlanta was under heavy pressure from new competitors—discounters as well as two major national chain stores that had recently moved into the area. Revenues were down 8 percent from the previous year.

What to do to stop the bleeding?

Adopting 4DX, the store managers announced only one WIG for the year, which was to match revenue numbers from the year before through increasing average transaction rates (the amount purchased in any given transaction).

All eleven departments came up with supporting WIGS but they hadn't yet found lead measures with sufficient leverage to drive achievement of their overall WIG. It just wasn't happening. The pressure to achieve the year-over-year lag measure was so strong, managers were screaming at everyone, "Sell more! Sell more!" All of their energy was poured into raising transaction averages (a lag measure) with no specific idea of what to do differently.

We worked late one night with the manager of the shoe department, which seemed to be doing better than the other departments. We drilled down, looking for the right levers: "Tell us about your people. How do they sell?"

Then he told us about his best salesperson, a woman who sold three times more shoes than the average. We asked, "What does she do differently?"

The manager knew immediately what she did differently. She would get lost in the customer's world, notice what they were wearing, ask about their families, and understand their needs. Then she would bring out six pairs of shoes instead of one pair to show the customer. She would say, "Oh, it's spring, how about this open-toed pair? I noticed your Gucci bag will go really well with those sandals. You like those red shoes? How about these?"

Also, instead of asking customers if they wanted to set up a charge account and getting a refusal, she would simply ring up the sale and say: "And you're getting 10 percent off that purchase by setting up a charge account with us today. All you need to do is sign here."

The lights went on for us. "How many of your people do these things? How many pairs of shoes do your people show in a day?"

"I have no idea. How would our systems monitor that?"

"Well, they can't, but that doesn't mean it can't be measured."

So they set an experimental standard in the shoe department:

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Each associate would do three things consistently: (1) Show at least four pairs of shoes to every customer, (2) Write thank-you notes, and (3) Invite every customer to set up a charge account.

“So, how can I tell if they’re doing these things?” the manager asked.

“You won’t. Your people will track themselves.”

Behind the cashier’s desk they set up a simple spreadsheet with three columns. Each time a salesperson did these three things with a customer, he or she would check off a column.

“How do I know it’s accurate?” the manager asked. “What if they lie?”

We bet he could trust them. Besides, a fraud would surface eventually. Transaction averages were tracked for every employee. When the lead measures started moving the lag measure, they would be able to see the correlation.

The result? The sales team became maniacally focused on the three lead measures, and these levers worked. It was exciting when the lag measure started to move up—it turned out there was a direct correlation between the leads and the achievement of the lag measure. They installed these measures across all the departments in the store and, by year-end, they had not only achieved their WIG of matching the previous year’s revenues, they surpassed it by 2 percent. That was a ten-point improvement in three months.

For the store managers, the doorway of understanding opened.

None of the lead measures were news to them. Suggestive selling is just “Retail 101,” but they didn’t know if their team members were actually doing it. We knew they could measure that behavior. We have learned that the lead measures are usually already there in the business, but no one is tracking them. Management was swimming in data, but not focusing on the data that would really make a *difference*. The key is to isolate and consistently track the right levers.

Finally, instead of hounding the staff to “do better,” managers could manage to the data. They could see if Jane was showing one hundred or three hundred pairs of shoes per day. They could track the number of charge accounts each salesperson set up. They became

teachers, watching people, demonstrating how to do suggestive selling and sharing best practices. Their energy went up, and their results followed.

They will never manage the same way again. Of course, at times it may take some intense effort to identify the lead measures with the most leverage.

An intriguing example comes from the amazing turnaround of the Oakland Athletics, in the 1990s one of the poorest teams in Major League Baseball. The team played in a dilapidated stadium, attendance was low, and signing great players seemed more and more out of reach.

No way could they bid successfully for players against wealthy teams like the New York Yankees, who could dip into a budget five times that of Oakland.

Caught between financial pressure from the owners and the fans' outcry for better, more expensive baseball players, General Manager Sandy Alderson's WIG was to save the team, and to achieve that he had to fill the stadium. But how?

He knew that people come to watch baseball for many reasons: Some want to see star players, some enjoy the atmosphere of the ballpark, and some just want a night out. But people always come to see a winning team. It's winning that matters most.

So, he began to ask himself what really produces wins in baseball. No one had asked this question seriously before. Most people assumed that great players were essential to a winning team. If you had stars, you'd win. But, Alderson thought, suppose there were more to it?

He and his assistant manager Billy Beane brought together the best thinkers they could find on the subject: What produces wins? The answer, of course, is the highest number of runs, but what exactly contributes to runs? What are the lead measures that create a run?

That's how statisticians and computer scientists got into the picture. Their hard research began to serve up factors that had always been there but that no one had ever noticed before. They discovered that the mighty sluggers who hit home runs were often not all that

productive. The most productive players were the ones who could just get on base. If they could get to one base and then another and then another, they could score runs much more reliably than the power hitters everyone valued so much, and who commanded astronomical salaries. As in the old fable, the tortoises turned out to provide much more leverage than the hares.

After Alderson left, Billy Beane became the new manager. He did the unthinkable, going on a binge of recruiting nobodies. The players he hired were some of the most awkward and unvalued prospects, and he paid relatively little for them. Oakland became a laughing-stock. What was Beane thinking?

Then, a sort of magic developed on the field. Unaccountably, Oakland started winning games again. The poorest team in the league—at least financially—won the division title. The next year they did it again. Soon they were locked in battle with the mighty, wealthy, Yankees for the pennant. Although they didn't quite make it, Oakland astonished everyone in baseball by regularly beating teams much more gifted in terms of money and talent. Stirred by victory, the fans returned, and little Oakland with its dingy stadium consistently finished near the top of the standings year after year.

For a decade, the Oakland A's maintained the fifth best record in Major League Baseball while ranking twenty-fourth of the thirty major-league teams in player salaries. Instead of falling to the bottom where they belonged, they rarely stood lower than first or second in their division.

What Billy Beane did was to track the on-base record of players across the league and then recruit from those who were very good at getting on base. These players were usually not flashy, not the big-name athletes, and didn't pull down big money. But they were dependable workhorses who could be relied on to get on base. Getting on base was the best predictor of producing runs. And, in baseball, runs are the name of the game.

The Oakland management team reframed the game by acting on the lead measures that produce wins. Through hard research, sifting through endless statistics to get at the key factors that produced runs,

they discovered high-leverage lead measures no one had noticed before.¹⁴ This exciting turnaround story was eventually chronicled in a popular film, *Moneyball*.

In section 2, we'll give you more guidance on how to arrive at effective lead measures, drawn from the lessons our clients have learned.

Over the years, we've seen thousands of leaders learn that an important key to execution is putting disproportionate energy against the leverage points by focusing on moving lead measures. If you have a big rock to move, you're going to need a lever that is highly predictive and controllable. The bigger the rock, the more leverage you will need.

TRACKING LEAD MEASURE DATA

Younger Brothers Construction is a residential construction company in Arizona that had a big problem: a rising rate of accidents and injuries. Not only did each incident mean that a member of their crew was hurt, it also meant a delay in the completion of a tightly scheduled construction project, increased insurance rates, and potentially, the loss of their safety rating. Reducing safety incidents had become the company's most important focus, so it wasn't difficult for them to arrive at their wildly important goal: to reduce safety incidents from 7 percent to 1 percent by December 31.

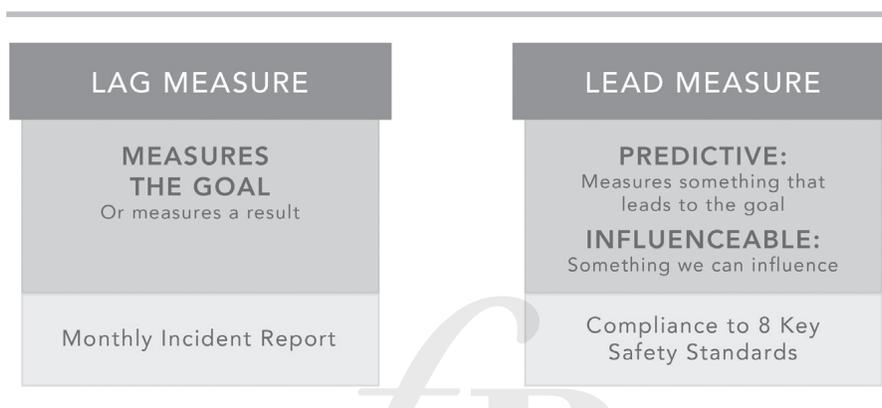
Once the WIG was established, they had to determine the lead measures that were both predictive of fewer accidents and influenceable by the team.

The first idea they considered was to conduct more intensive safety training. It was highly influenceable, as they could simply make everyone go to more training. The leaders ultimately rejected that idea, however, since their people had already undergone significant amounts of training that had allowed them to achieve their current levels of safety. They decided that additional hours of training wouldn't be sufficiently predictive of achieving their new goal.

The leaders at Younger Brothers then looked more carefully at the

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primary causes of accidents plaguing the company and developed a different idea for their lead measure: Compliance to safety standards. They decided to measure compliance via six safety standards: wearing hard hats, gloves, boots, and eyewear, as well as using scaffolds and roof braces to keep workers from sliding off the roof. They were certain that enforcing these six standards at high levels of compliance would be both predictive and influenceable in reducing accidents.



Within one year of focusing on the lead measure of compliance to safety standards Younger Brothers Construction achieved the best safety record in the thirty-year history of the company. But it wasn't easy.

One of the most challenging aspects of their lead measure was simply getting the data. The lag measure data of accidents and injuries came automatically from the company's system each week. The lead measure, compliance to safety standards, had to be physically observed.

This meant that construction foremen had to move among the various crews to check whether the people were wearing their hard hats, gloves, and safety glasses and that scaffolds and roof braces were firmly in place. Moreover, they had to do this despite a never-ending stream of distractions: subcontractor issues, late shipments, customer concerns, and weather delays. In the middle of that whirlwind, check-

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ing for safety compliance might not seem “wildly important” to a construction foreman. However, because reducing safety incidents was the wildly important goal, and because safety compliance was the primary leverage point for achieving it, they made it happen week after week.

The lesson in this story is that lead measure data is almost always more difficult to acquire than lag measure data, but you must pay the price to track your lead measures. We often see teams struggle with this, zeroing in on a high-leverage lead measure only to say, “Wow, getting that data is going to take real work! We’re too busy to do that.” If you’re serious about your WIG, then you must create a way to track your lead measures. Without data, you can’t drive performance on the lead measures; without lead measures, you don’t have leverage.

And when the WIG is truly wildly important, you’ve got to have that leverage.

The WIG for every airline flight is a safe landing. Flying today is actually remarkably safe, but that wasn’t always true. In the 1930s many serious airplane crashes were caused by pilot error. In 1935, Major Pete Hill, a very experienced test pilot with the US Army, crashed one of the biggest airplanes ever built because he forgot to make sure the tail elevators were unlocked before taking off.

As a result, pilots got together and adopted a clear set of lead measures called a preflight checklist.¹⁵ After that, there were far fewer crashes due to pilot error. Today, the preflight checklist is the greatest predictor of arriving safely. On modern commercial aircraft, the checklist is often automated so the plane cannot take off until the pilot has checked off each item.

The preflight checklist is a perfect example of what we mean by a high-leverage activity. Going through the checklist takes a few minutes but can have enormous impact. One hundred percent compliance with the checklist is also an excellent example of a lead measure: It is predictive of a safe landing and influenceable by the pilots.

Once you and your team begin to develop lead measures in Disci-

DISCIPLINE 2: ACT ON THE LEAD MEASURES

pline 2, you'll gain an even greater appreciation for the work you did in narrowing your focus in Discipline 1. Driving the lead measures for a single WIG is a challenging enough objective in the midst of your whirlwind. Leaders who insist on more than two WIGs in Discipline 1 (despite our advice) always change their minds once they begin to understand lead measures in Discipline 2.

LEAD MEASURES AND ENGAGEMENT

Once a team is clear about its lead measures, their view of the goal changes.

Let's take a look at what happened when Beth Wood, a grocery store manager, set out to achieve a very challenging goal of increasing year-over-year sales.

Beth called in Bob, her bakery manager, to get his support in improving their sagging year-over-year sales numbers.

Bob is a good-natured manager and, on a typical day, he would likely have said "Sure, Beth, I'd be glad to help," even if he didn't have a clue what he could do to drive more sales. On this day, however, Bob had reached his limit and wasn't in the mood to just go along.

"You want improved sales?" he said sarcastically "Knock yourself out, Beth."

Startled by Bob's response, Beth came back quickly "Look, Bob, I can't do this alone. You're closer to the customers than I am and you're closer to your employees than I am."

Now, Bob was really frustrated. "What exactly would you like me to do? It's not like I can hit people over the head and drag them into the store. I run the bakery. If you want a bagel, I'm your guy."

If you didn't know Beth and Bob well, you might think that Bob has a chronically bad attitude, or doesn't respect Beth, or worse, is just lazy.

But none of these things are true.

Bob actually likes Beth and would also like to help the store improve sales. But two things are holding him back: one, he doesn't

know how, and two, he doesn't think he can. At this moment, what's really going through Bob's mind is "We're a thirty-year old store that just had a Walmart Supercenter move in down the street. We're also on the wrong side of the intersection and all the traffic has to make a left to get in here, if they can even see our sign. And Beth wants me to improve store sales?"

Bob continues, "If I knew how to improve sales don't you think I'd already be doing it? I'm not holding out on you!"

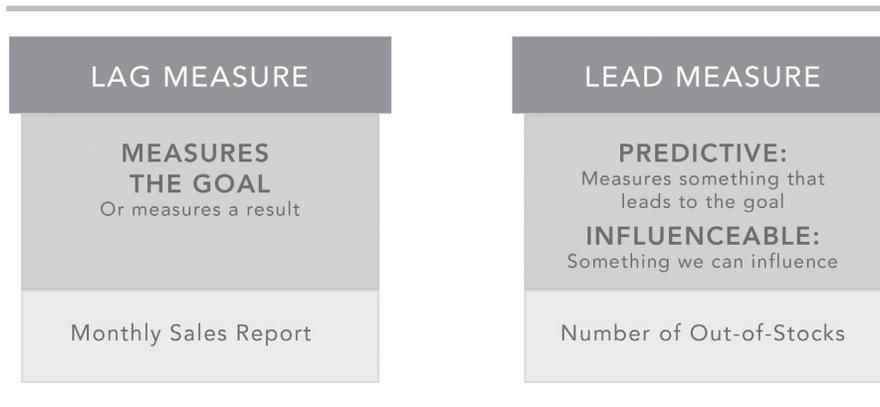
When you see Bob's perspective, you can better understand his response to this frustrating situation. Bob is representative of so many people. They can see the rock all too well. The problem is that they just don't see the lever.

Now, let's replay this same scenario, but this time with Beth using a lead measure to drive her goal. She calls her managers together and poses this question: "Above sustaining our day-to-day operation, what is the one thing your teams could do to improve year-over-year sales the most?" In effect, she is asking them what influenceable outcome or behavior is the most predictive of moving the lag measure of sales, but she's limiting it to a very narrow focus.

They begin to discuss a lot of possibilities, such as raising customer service, improving store conditions, or giving away more free samples. After a lot of back and forth, they finally come to the agreement that the single biggest thing they can do to improve sales in *their* store is to reduce the number of out-of-stock items.

This lead measure of reducing out-of-stocks is highly predictive of better store sales—this is well known in the retail world. Equally important, out-of-stocks is a highly influenceable lead measure. Now, Bob sees what he can do in the bakery to drive sales. Reducing out-of-stocks is something he and his team can really influence. They can perform extra shelf reviews to check for items that are sold out, they can organize their back room so that fast moving products are easier to restock, or they can change the frequency and volume of reordering. In other words, it's a game he and his team can win, and now *he's engaged*.

DISCIPLINE 2: ACT ON THE LEAD MEASURES



When a team defines its lead measures they are making a strategic bet. In a sense, they are saying, “We’re betting that by driving these lead measures we are going to achieve our wildly important goal.” They believe that the lever is going to move the rock, and because of that belief, they engage.

Disciplines 3 and 4 are designed to help the team put energy into moving the lead measures. However, the real impact and beauty of good lead measures in Discipline 2 is that they truly connect your team to the achievement of the WIG. And, ultimately, it’s the front line of an organization that creates the bottom-line result you’re after.

Coming up with the right lead measures is really about helping everyone see themselves as strategic business partners and engaging them in dialogue about what can be done better or differently in order to achieve the WIGs.

A good example is the advertising department of the *Savannah Morning News*, a venerable newspaper in the American South. When we met with them, their WIG was to close a serious revenue gap. They had fallen into the trap of trying to focus on everything at once, including pushing new products, daily inserts specials, and other add-ons, in an attempt to incrementally move the revenue number. Their focus was spread across so many initiatives that they had taken their eye off of their main product. So, they began with Discipline 1, set-

ting a wildly important goal to increase advertising revenue by refocusing on their core product.

Everything changed when they started practicing Discipline 2: Act on the lead measures. Everybody on the team was involved in the dialogue. After thinking through ways to increase advertising dollars, they agreed together on three key actions: to increase their number of contacts with new customers, potential advertisers who had not done business with the newspaper; to reactivate customers who hadn't advertised with the paper for six months or more; and to upsell to their existing clients, finding ways to add value to the message—maybe adding color to an ad, giving it better placement, or increasing the size of an ad.

In practice, the plan broke down into simple lead measures: in the weekly WIG sessions people committed to hit a certain number of new-customer contacts, reactivation calls, and upsell offers. The next week they reported the results. Individual salespeople were not only managing their own business more effectively, but also regularly communicating to each other best practices, refinements to approaches, and ways of overcoming barriers.

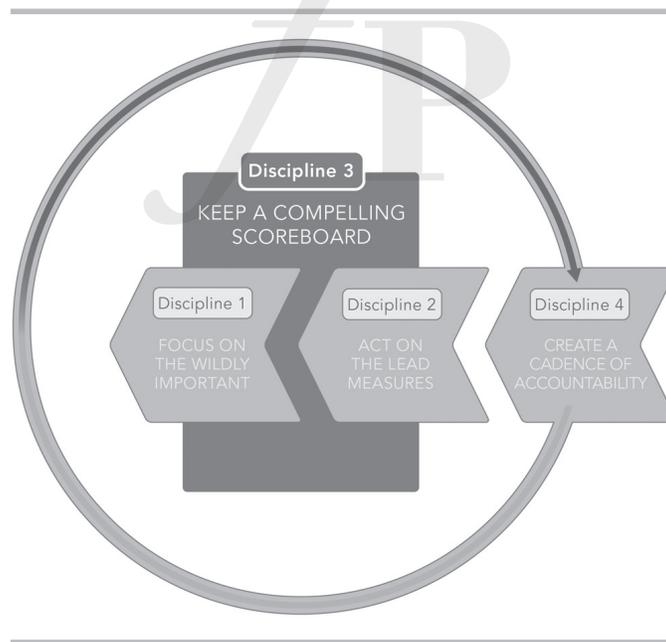
The advertising director said, "I've been in this business for twenty years, and I've spent my entire career basically praying over lag measures and putting out fires." For the first time, she felt able to help her people achieve their goals in tangible ways. The newspaper closed their revenue gap and shot past their goals for the year. Acting consistently on the right lead measures made it all possible. Based on her success, Morris Communications, the parent company of the *Savannah Morning News*, went on to implement 4DX with their forty other newspapers.

We'll talk more about selecting the right lead measures in section 2.

Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

The third discipline is to make sure everyone knows the score at all times, so that they can tell whether or not they are winning.

This is the discipline of engagement.



Remember, people play differently when they are keeping score.
The difference in performance between a team that simply under-

stands their lead and lag measures *as a concept*, and a team that actually knows their score, is remarkable. If the lead and lag measures are not captured on a visual scoreboard and updated regularly, they will disappear into the distraction of the whirlwind. Simply put, people disengage when they don't know the score. When they can see at a glance whether or not they are winning they become profoundly engaged.

In Discipline 3, the strategic bet for your team, their lead and lag measures, are translated into a visible, compelling scoreboard.

Several years ago, we were working with a group of leaders at Northrop Grumman to apply 4DX to the design and building of Coast Guard cutters. Our project began only a few months after Hurricane Katrina had significantly damaged their facility, and as we were introducing Discipline 3, they offered an example that perfectly illustrated the importance of having a compelling scoreboard.

On the previous Friday night, the local high-school team had played an important football game. As expected, the stands were full and there was the usual excitement leading up to the kickoff. But as the game progressed, something was missing. No one was cheering. In fact, no one seemed to be paying attention to the game at all. The only sound from the stands was the dull hum of conversation. What was happening?

The scoreboard had blown down during the hurricane and had not yet been repaired. The fans couldn't see any numbers. "No one could tell you what the score was, what down it was, or even how much time was left. There was a game going on, but it was like no one even knew."

This story really caught our attention. Have you ever wanted to shout in frustration to your team "Don't you get it? There's a game going on here and it really matters!" If you have, it's likely your team is missing the same critical element that affected the fans at the game: a clear and compelling scoreboard.

Great teams know at every moment whether or not they are winning. They *must* know, otherwise, they don't know what they have to do to win the game. A compelling scoreboard tells the team where they are and where they should be, information essential to team problem solving and decision making.

DISCIPLINE 3: KEEP A COMPELLING SCOREBOARD

That's why a great team can't function without a scoreboard that *compels* action. Without it, energy dissipates, intensity lags, and the team goes back to business as usual.

We need to be very clear here. Visually displaying data is not new to you or your team. In fact, you may be thinking that you already have a scoreboard, or even lots of scoreboards, all captured in complex spreadsheets inside your computer. And the data just keeps coming in. Most of this data is in the form of lag measures accompanied by historical trends, forward projections, and detailed financial analysis. The data is important and it serves a purpose for you as the leader; your spreadsheets are what we would call a coach's scoreboard.

But what we're after in Discipline 3 is something quite different. In implementing Discipline 3, you and your team need to build a players' scoreboard, one that's designed solely to engage the players on your team to win.

CONVENTIONAL THINKING	4DX PRINCIPLE
<p><i>Scoreboards are for leaders. They are coach's scoreboards that consist of complex spreadsheets with thousands of numbers. The big picture is in there somewhere, but few (if anyone) can easily see it.</i></p>	<p>The scoreboard is for the whole team. To drive execution you need a players' scoreboard that has a few simple graphs on it indicating: Here's where we need to be and here's where we are right now. In five seconds or less, anyone can determine whether we are winning or losing?</p>

To understand the impact of this kind of scoreboard, imagine that you are at a park where a group of teenagers is playing basketball. You're not close enough to hear them, but you can see them. Can you tell, just by watching, if they are keeping score? You can, and the indicators are obvious.

First, you'll see a level of intensity in their play that you wouldn't see if they weren't keeping score. You'll also see teamwork, better shot

THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

selection, aggressive defense, and celebration each time they make a basket. These are the behaviors of a fully engaged team, and they only play at this level when the game matters—in other words, when it matters enough that they are keeping score.

If your scoreboard includes complicated data that only you, the leader, understand, it represents a leader’s game. But for maximum engagement and performance you need a players’ scoreboard that makes it the team’s game. Jim Stuart (one of the originators of 4DX) said it best: “The fundamental purpose of a players’ scoreboard is to motivate the players to win.”

We began this chapter with a critically important statement: people play differently when they are keeping score. Now, we need to shift the emphasis to be even clearer: People play differently when *they* are keeping score. This creates a very different feeling than when you keep score for them. When team members themselves are keeping score, they truly understand the connection between their performance and reaching their goal, and this changes the level at which they play.

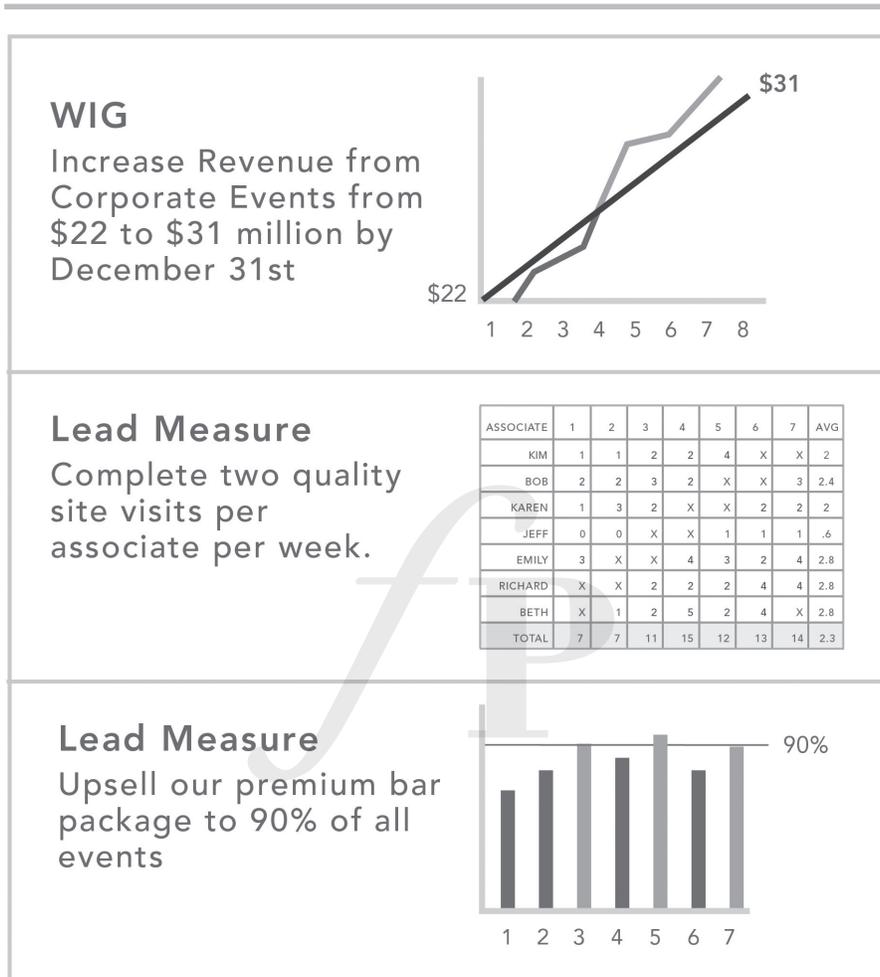
When everyone on the team can see the score, the level of play rises, not only because they can see what’s working and what adjustments are needed, but also because they now want to *win*.

You see here the contrast between a coach’s scoreboard and a player’s scoreboard.

TOTAL REVENUE								GROSS MARGIN								EBITDA							
2/12	Bud	Var	2/8	Var	2007	Var		2/12	Bud	Var	2/8	Var	2007	Var		2/12	Bud	Var	2/8	Var	2007	Var	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	143	(143)	0	0		0	0	0	143	(143)	0	0	
(1)	53	(54)	182	(183)	1	(2)		(0)	35	(35)	0	(0)	1	(2)		(86)	(49)	(37)	(84)	(2)	(114)	28	
0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0		(61)	(65)	4	(73)	12	(11)	(51)	
1,008	1,080	(71)	1,150	(142)	1,146	(137)		699	754	(55)	812	(113)	892	(193)		384	384	1	439	(54)	530	(146)	
		-6.6%		-12.3%		-12.0%		69.3%	69.9%	-7.3%	70.6%	-13.9%	77.9%	-21.6%		38.1%	35.5%	0.2%	38.1%	-12.4%	46.3%	-27.5%	
699	843	(144)	700	(1)	963	(264)		486	594	(108)	498	(12)	730	(245)		242	297	(56)	218	24	392	(151)	
		-17.1%		-0.2%		-27.4%		69.5%	70.4%	-18.2%	71.1%	-2.4%	75.8%	-33.5%		34.6%	35.3%	-18.8%	31.1%	10.8%	40.7%	-38.5%	
592	682	(90)	524	68	613	(21)		422	483	(60)	361	62	459	(36)		260	276	(16)	187	73	270	(10)	
		-13.1%		13.0%		-3.4%		71.3%	70.8%	-12.5%	68.9%	17.1%	74.8%	-7.9%		43.9%	40.5%	-5.7%	35.8%	38.9%	44.0%	-3.5%	
879	937	(58)	840	39	828	51		607	695	(88)	582	25	539	68		354	370	(16)	292	62	235	119	

DISCIPLINE 3: KEEP A COMPELLING SCOREBOARD

A coach's scoreboard is complex and data rich, but it requires careful study to figure out if the team is winning.



In this players' scoreboard, the goal (represented by the black line) is to increase revenue. The gray line is actual performance. At any moment, team members can see if they are winning.

The players' scoreboard is essential to motivating the players to win.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A COMPELLING PLAYERS' SCOREBOARD

There are four questions we always ask when determining if a scoreboard is likely to be compelling to the players:

1. Is it simple? It has to be simple. Think about the scoreboard in a football game. Usually, only six distinct pieces of data are displayed: score, time, quarter, down and distance, and time-outs. Now, think about how many pieces of data the coach is tracking on the sideline: yards per carry, completion percentage, third-down conversions, pass distribution, and even hang time and yardage for punts. The list goes on forever. Coaches need this data to manage the game, but the scoreboard on the field shows only the data needed to play the game.
2. Can I see it easily? It has to be visible to the team. The scoreboard at a football game is huge and the numbers gigantic so everyone can tell at a glance who's winning. If your scoreboard sits on your computer or hangs on the back of your office door, it's out of sight, out of mind for the team. Remember that you are always competing with the whirlwind and it's a tough adversary. Without a visible scoreboard, the WIG and lead measures could be forgotten in a matter of weeks, if not days, in the constant urgency of your day-to-day responsibilities.

Visibility also drives accountability. The results become personally important to the team when the scoreboard is displayed where it can be seen by everyone. We've observed this again and again. We've seen a union shift at a giant juice-bottling plant in Michigan choose to skip their lunch break in order to increase the number of full truckloads they delivered so they could move the scoreboard. Why? So they can move past other shifts on the scoreboard. In another instance, we observed the night shift come to work at midnight and saw

DISCIPLINE 3: KEEP A COMPELLING SCOREBOARD

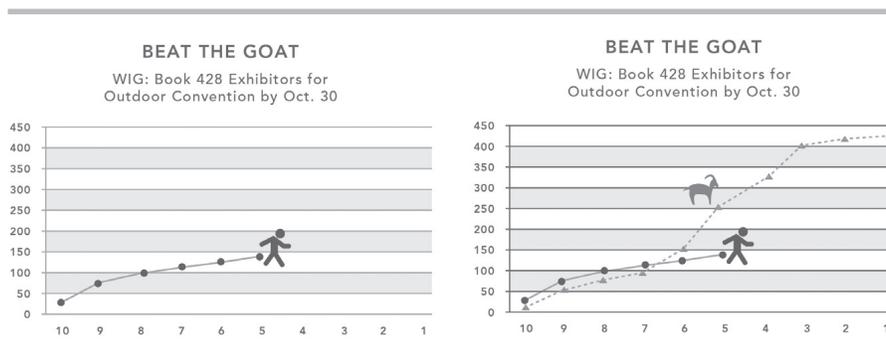
that the first thing they looked at was the scoreboard to see how their team was doing compared to the day shift. If your team is geographically dispersed, the scoreboard should be visible on your desktop computer or mobile phone (more on electronic scoreboards on page xxx).

3. Does it show lead *and* lag measures? It should show both the lead and lag measures. This really helps a scoreboard come to life. The lead measure is what the team can affect. The lag measure is the result they want. The team needs to see both or they will quickly lose interest. When they can see both the lead and lag, they can watch the bet play out. They can see what they are doing (the lead), and what they are getting (the lag). Once the team sees that the lag measure is moving because of the efforts they have made on the leads, it has a dramatic effect on engagement because they know they are having a direct impact on the results.
4. Can I tell at a glance if I'm winning? It has to tell you immediately if you are winning or losing. If the team can't quickly determine if they are winning or losing by looking at the scoreboard then it's not a game, it's just data. Check your next report, graph, scorecard, or scoreboard before you dismiss this as obvious. Glance at the spreadsheets that show the weekly financial data. Can you *instantly* tell if you are winning or losing? Could other people tell? We call it the *five-second rule*. If you can't tell within five seconds whether you're winning or losing you haven't passed this test

This simple illustration comes from one of our clients, an events management company responsible for booking trade shows for outdoor retailers. The WIG was to book a certain number of exhibitors by a certain date.

In the scoreboard on the left you can see the status of the team's progress to date, but you have no idea if they are winning or losing. Winning or losing requires you to know two things: where you are now and where you *should* be now.

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The difference in the scoreboard on the right is the addition of where the team should be, illustrated by the goat. Because so many of their customers were mountain climbers, they used a mountain goat to represent the performance needed each week to achieve their goal. Now you can easily see that they are losing, and several other important aspects of the team's performance are also immediately apparent: You know how long they have been losing (two weeks). You know that achieving the goal is getting harder, not easier. You know that the performance of the team is starting to level off, instead of climbing. And you know that the team is closer to the end of the race than the beginning.

As basic as this may seem, when we ask leaders in our programs to report this sort of data on the spot they will often say, "I think I can get most of that, but I'll need a few minutes to pull it together." Keep in mind that these are capable leaders. Their problem is not the absence of data; their problem is too much of it and little sense of what data is most important.

Imagine if not only you, but every member of your team understood the team's performance this clearly. Would it change the way they engaged in the game? After implementing 4DX in thousands of teams, we can assure you that it will.

Like Disciplines 1 and 2, Discipline 3 is not intuitive for most leaders. You don't naturally create a player's scoreboard. Your instinct will be to create a coach's scoreboard: a complex scoreboard with lots of data, analysis, and projections designed for the coaches, not the

DISCIPLINE 3: KEEP A COMPELLING SCOREBOARD

players. And you're not alone. We seldom find even a single scoreboard in most organizations that meets the four criteria listed here.

In the end, it isn't actually the scoreboard that's com-

pellling. Although teams enjoy creating their own scoreboards, what ultimately drives engagement is the game the scoreboard represents. You'll never hear a sports fan saying, "Did you see that game last night? What an amazing scoreboard!" The scoreboard was absolutely necessary, but it was the game that interested them.

One of the most demoralizing aspects of life in the whirlwind is that you don't feel you can win. If your team is operating exclusively in the whirlwind, they're giving everything they have just to sustain their day to day operation and survive. They're not playing *to win*; they're playing *not to lose*. And the result is a big difference in performance.

But with 4DX, not only do you create a game for your team, you create a *winnable* game. And the secret to that game being winnable is the relationship between the lead and lag measures that plays out on the scoreboard every day.

In essence, you and your team make a bet that you can move the lead measures and that those lead measures will move the lag measure. When it starts to work, even people who have shown little interest become very engaged as the entire team starts to see that they are winning, often for the first time. Keep in mind that their engagement is not because the *organization* is winning, or even that *you* as their leader are winning: it's because *they* are winning.

Some years ago, a global manufacturer asked us to help them achieve a major WIG, which was to help their lowest-performing plant come up to standard. The plant was said to be the oldest, in the



Android - Barcode Scanner
iPhone - Red Laser

Scan and snap the image above to see full-color examples of "Players Scoreboards" or go to www.4dxbook.com.

worst location, and with the worst technology in the company. At the time, the performance standard was eighty-seven daily units, and they were running at seventy-four. Furthermore, in the history of the company, this factory had *never* met the standard.

For us, it required all-day flights and an overnight drive deep into the Canadian rain forest just to get there. Everyone believed that achieving the lag measure—eighty-seven daily units—wasn't hard. And they knew what to do to get there.

The problem was, they didn't much care about getting there.

It wasn't until the scoreboards went up that things changed radically. A shift would come in at midnight, compare their scoreboard with those of the shifts who had been working all day, and get energized to go beyond whatever the previous shift had done. They knew they'd be playing hockey and drinking with the guys from the other shift on the weekends, and they wanted to be the shift with bragging rights about higher scores.

This was a hockey-playing culture: For entertainment in this remote locale, there were two hockey rinks and not much else. 4DX leveraged their natural urge to compete. Within three months, there was a twenty-point improvement: They went from seventy-four to ninety-four daily units, way above the goal and close to the industry standard.

The players' scoreboard is a powerful device for changing human behavior anywhere, even deep in the woods.

In section 2, we'll give you guidance on exactly how to create and maintain a compelling scoreboard.

THE 4DISCIPLINES AND TEAM ENGAGEMENT

We'd like to be able to say that we understood the connection between the implementation of 4DX and team engagement all along, but we didn't. We learned it through experience. As we began to implement 4DX with teams around the world, we saw significant increases in morale and engagement, even though their WIGs weren't about morale and engagement. That outcome might not come as a surprise to

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you, based on how we've described 4DX so far, but at the time, it did to us.

FranklinCovey had built a worldwide reputation for helping to increase the personal effectiveness of individuals and teams, and with it, their morale and engagement. 4DX was designed to occupy the other end of the FranklinCovey offering continuum, with an exclusive focus on business results. However, in our early implementations, the increase in engagement that we observed as teams began to feel they were winning was not a subtle thing. It was palpable. In fact, we would have to have been blind to miss it.

Our implementations usually involved several days of intensive work with leaders and teams, and these teams included their share of naysayers and resisters. To our surprise, we would return two months later and find that these initial resisters, along with everyone else on the team, were excited to show us what they were accomplishing.

Many believe that engagement drives results, and so do we. However, we know now, and have witnessed consistently over the years, that results drive engagement. This is particularly true when the team can see the direct impact their actions have on the results. In our experience, nothing affects morale and engagement more powerfully than when a person feels he or she is winning. In many cases, winning is a more powerful driver of engagement than money, benefits packages, working conditions, whether you have a best friend at work, or even whether you like your boss, all of which are typical measures of engagement. People will work for money and they will quit over money, but many teams are filled with people who are both well paid and miserable in their jobs.

In 1968, author Frederick Herzberg published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* aptly titled: "One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?" In it, he emphasizes the powerful connection between results and engagement: "People are most satisfied with their jobs (and therefore most motivated) when those jobs give them the opportunity to experience achievement."

Forty-three years later in another *Harvard Business Review* article, "The Power of Small Wins," authors Teresa Amabile and Steven

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Kramer emphasize the importance of achievement to team members: “The power of progress is fundamental to human nature, but few managers understand it or know how to leverage progress to boost motivation.”¹⁶

We have learned that scoreboards can be a powerful way to engage employees. A motivating players’ scoreboard not only drives results but uses the visible power of progress to instill the mindset of *winning*.

If you still have doubts about the impact of winning on team engagement, think of a time in your own career when you were the most excited and engaged in what you were doing, a time when you couldn’t wait to get out of bed in the morning, when you were consumed with what you were doing professionally. Now ask yourself this question, “At that time, did I feel like I was winning?” If you are like the vast majority of people, your answer will be “yes.”

4DX enables you to set up a winnable game. Discipline 1 narrows your focus to a wildly important goal and establishes a clear finish line. Discipline 2 creates lead measures that give your team leverage to achieve the goal. This is what makes it a game: The team is making a bet on their lead measures. But, without Discipline 3, without a compelling players’ scoreboard, not only would the game be lost in the whirlwind, no one would care.

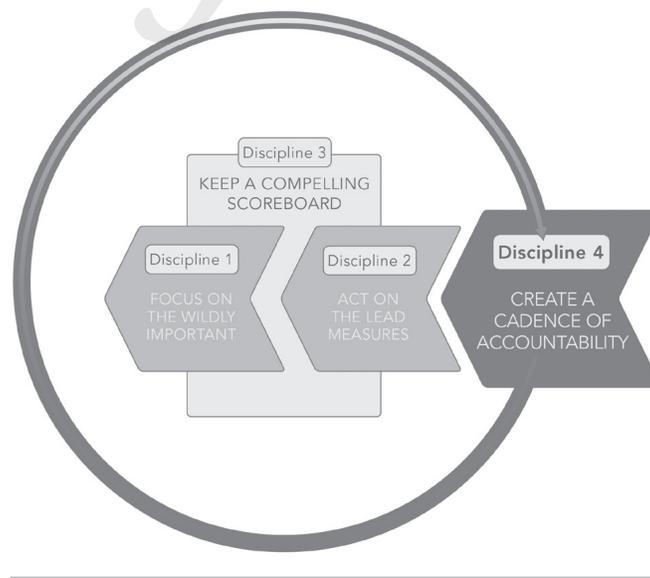
A winning team doesn’t need artificial morale boosting. All the psyching up and rah-rah exercises companies do to raise morale aren’t nearly as effective in engaging people as the satisfaction that comes from executing with excellence a goal that really matters.

Disciplines 1, 2, and 3 are powerful drivers of execution, and yet, they are really only the beginning of the story. The first three Disciplines set up the game, but your team may still not be *in* the game, as you are about to learn.

Discipline 4: Create a Cadence of Accountability

The fourth discipline is to create a cadence of accountability, a frequently recurring cycle of accounting for past performance and planning to move the score forward.

Discipline 4 is where execution actually happens. As we've said, Disciplines 1, 2, and 3 set up the game; but until you apply Discipline 4, your team isn't *in* the game.



THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

This is the discipline that brings the team members all together, and that is why it encompasses the other disciplines.

Many leaders define *execution* simply as the ability to set a goal and achieve it. After years of teaching these principles, we can tell you that this definition is insufficient. But, as discussed above, what's difficult—and rare—is the ability to achieve a critical goal while living *in the midst of a raging whirlwind*. And it is even more difficult when achieving the goal requires changing the behaviors of a lot of people.

Great teams operate with a high level of accountability. Without it, team members go off in all directions with each doing what he/she thinks is most important. Under this approach, the whirlwind soon takes over.

Disciplines 1, 2, and 3 bring focus, clarity, and engagement, which are powerful and necessary elements for your success. But with Discipline 4, you and your team ensure that the goal is achieved, no matter what is happening around you.

In most organizations, accountability means the annual performance review, hardly an engaging experience whether you are giving or receiving the review. It can also mean being called on the carpet for something you failed to accomplish.

On the other hand, in a 4DX organization, *accountability* means making personal commitments to the entire team to move the move the scores forward and then following through in a disciplined way.

CONVENTIONAL THINKING	4DX PRINCIPLE
Accountability on our team is always top down. We meet with the boss periodically and he lets us know how we're doing and what we should focus on next.	Accountability on our team is shared. We make commitments and then we're accountable to our boss, but more important, to each other, for following through.

THE WIG SESSION

In Discipline 4, your team meets each at least weekly in a WIG session. This meeting, which lasts no longer than twenty to thirty minutes, has a set agenda and goes quickly, establishing your weekly rhythm of accountability for driving progress toward the WIG.

This discipline literally makes the difference between successful and failed execution.

In May 1996, noted author Jon Krakauer tried climbing Mt. Everest with a group of paying climbers. As they encountered obstacles such as blizzards, 62 mph winds, and high-altitude sickness, the group began to fall apart. Some of the more headstrong climbers decided to try for the summit themselves and struck out on their own. Team discipline was abandoned. They all had the same goal, but the loss of discipline and sense of accountability for each other in an extremely unforgiving environment turned out to be lethal. The result: eight people died.¹⁷

Five years later, another group set out to climb Mt. Everest; their goal was to help a blind climber, Erik Weihenmayer, reach the summit. The team carefully planned the route, just as Krakauer's group had done. A big difference, however, was that at the end of each day Weihenmayer's group huddled together in what they called the "tent meeting" to talk over what they had accomplished and what they had learned, which would help them to plan and make adjustments for the next day. Faster climbers on the team "cleared the path," fixed ropes, and then worked their way back to meet Erik along the trail. Erik said, "Our team stuck together and took care of each other, which gave me just enough courage to finish."

At one critical point, it took thirteen hours for their blind leader to cross the aluminum extension ladders that spanned the bottomless crevasses of the extremely dangerous Khumbu Icefall. The team knew that on summit day, they would have to get across in two hours. In nightly tent meetings (a form of WIG Session), they shared lessons learned and committed to the next day's strategy. It took days and days of practice and night after night of tent meetings.

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The result? On summit day, they actually passed sighted teams as they worked to get the entire team to the other side of the icefall in record time.

This cadence of accountability was the key to successful execution of the goal. On May 25, 2001, Erik Weihenmayer became the first blind person to stand on the summit of Mt. Everest. His team's other remarkable first: The greatest number of people from one team to reach the top of Everest in a single day, eighteen in all. In the end, Erik and almost everyone on his team reached the highest peak on the planet and returned safely.¹⁸

The focus of the WIG session is simple: to hold each other accountable for taking the actions that will move the lead measures, resulting in the achievement of the WIG despite the whirlwind. Easy to say, but hard to do. To ensure that this focus is achieved every week, two rules of WIG sessions must absolutely be followed.

First, the WIG session should be held on the same day and at the same time every week (sometimes even more often—daily, for instance—but *never* less often than weekly). This consistency is critical. Without it, your team will never be able to establish a sustained rhythm of performance. Missing even a single week causes you to lose valuable momentum, and this loss of momentum impacts your results. This means that the WIG session is sacred—it takes place every week, even if the leader can't attend and has to delegate the role of leading it.

It is truly amazing what you can accomplish by the simple discipline of meeting around a goal on a weekly basis over an extended period of time. There is nothing quite like it. Frankly, we're dumbfounded that this discipline isn't practiced more frequently. We have asked hundreds of thousands of employees in various industries around the globe to respond to the statement: "I meet at least monthly with my manager to discuss my progress on goals." To our surprise, only 34 percent can respond positively to this statement, even when the review is only once each month, let alone weekly—the best practice of high-performing teams. It's no wonder that high accountability is absent in so many organizations.

DISCIPLINE 4: CREATE A CADENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

What is so special about holding a WIG session each week, you may ask? We have found that for most organizational units, the week embodies a perfect slice of “life.” It is a short enough period of time to keep people focused and remain highly relevant, but long enough to allow for commitments made in these meetings to actually get done. In many operating environments, weeks represent a natural rhythm of organizational life. We think in weeks. We talk in weeks. They have beginnings and ends. They are a staple of the human condition and make for a perfect cadence of accountability.

Second, the whirlwind is never allowed into a WIG session. No matter how urgent an issue may seem, discussion in the WIG session is limited solely to actions and results that move the scoreboard. If you need to discuss other things, hold a staff meeting *after* the WIG session, but keep the WIG session separate. This high level of focus makes the WIG session not only fast, but extremely effective at producing the results you want. It also reaffirms the importance of the WIG to every team member. It sends a clear message that, as it relates to achieving the WIG, no success in the whirlwind can compensate for a failure to keep the commitments made in last week’s WIG session. Many of our client organizations do exactly this: They hold a WIG session for twenty to thirty minutes and then hold a staff meeting right after, during which they can discuss whirlwind issues.

Keeping your WIG sessions to twenty to thirty minutes is a standard to strive for. When you first start holding WIG sessions they may take more time. But, ultimately, as you increasingly focus your time and attention on moving the scoreboard and nothing more, your sessions will become increasingly effective and efficient. We also recognize that depending upon the particular function or nature of your team, they may take a bit more time. But even then, any team in any function can learn to conduct fast, efficient sessions centered on the wildly important goal in place of protracted meetings covering everything under the sun. Often, to keep your WIG sessions fast and focused, you may need to schedule other meetings to resolve issues that grow out of the WIG session. For example, you might say, “Bill, you bring up an important problem that has to be resolved this week. Why

don't we set up another meeting this Thursday to do a deep dive on this problem to see if we can solve it," and then continue with your WIG session.

WIG sessions might vary in content, but the agenda is always the same. Here's the three-part agenda for a WIG session along with the kind of language you should be hearing in the session:

1. Account: Report on commitments.

- *"I committed to make a personal call to three customers who gave us lower scores. I did, and here's what I learned . . ."*
- *"I committed to book at least three prospects for a site visit and ended up getting four!"*
- *"I met with our VP, but wasn't able to get the approval we wanted. Here's why . . ."*

2. Review the scoreboard: Learn from successes and failures.

- *"Our lag measure is green, but we've got a challenge with one of our lead measures that just fell to yellow. Here's what happened . . ."*
- *We're trending upward on our lead measures, but our lag measure isn't moving yet. We've agreed as a team to double our efforts this week to get the score moving."*
- *"Although we're tracking toward achieving our WIG, we implemented a great suggestion from a customer this week that improved our lead measure score even further!"*

3. Plan: Clear the path and make new commitments.

- *"I can clear your path on that problem. I know someone who . . ."*
- *"I'll make sure the inventory issue impacting our lead measure is resolved by next week, no matter what I have to do."*
- *"I'll meet with Bob on our numbers and come back next week with at least three ideas for helping us improve."*

DISCIPLINE 4: CREATE A CADENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY



A WIG Session is a short, intense team meeting devoted to these three—and only these three—activities. The purpose of the WIG Session is to account for prior commitments and make commitments to move the WIG scoreboard.



Android - Barcode Scanner
iPhone - Red Laser

Scan and snap the image above to see a short video about WIG Sessions from different organizations or go to www.4dxbook.com.

STAYING FOCUSED IN SPITE OF THE WHIRLWIND

In a WIG session, you and every member of your team are accountable for moving the metrics on the scoreboard. You accomplish this

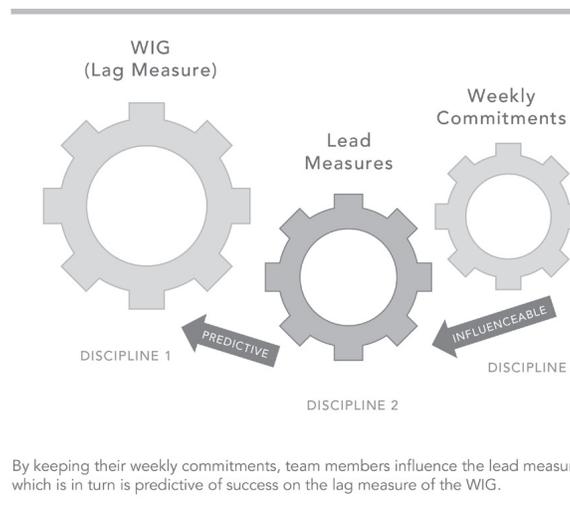
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by committing each week (in the WIG session) to one or two specific actions that will directly affect your lead measures, and then reporting to each other in the next week's WIG session on your results.

To prepare for the meeting, every team member thinks about the same question: "What are the one or two most important things I can do this week to impact the lead measures?"

We need to be very careful here. The team members are not asking themselves, "What is the most important thing I can do this week?" That question is so broad that it will almost always take their focus back to something in their whirlwind. Instead, they are asking a much more specific question: "What can I do this week to impact the lead measures?"

As discussed above, this focus on impacting the lead measures each week is critical because the lead measures are the team's leverage for achieving the WIG. The commitments represent the things that must happen, beyond the day to day, to move the lead measures. This is why so much emphasis is placed in Discipline 2 on ensuring that the lead measures are influenceable: so that the team can actually move them through their performance each week. Simply put, the keeping of weekly commitments drives the lead measures, and the lead measures drive achievement of the WIG.



DISCIPLINE 4: CREATE A CADENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Let's take the example of Susan, a nurse manager whose lead measure is to increase the accuracy and reduce the time it takes to administer pain medication to patients. Susan can see from her scoreboard that two of her teams, seventh floor day shift and eighth floor intensive care, are lagging behind the others. She knows that the seventh floor team has a new supervisor who is still learning the pain-management procedures. She also knows that the eighth floor team is understaffed. So Susan's commitments to move the lead measures for this week might be to review the pain-management procedures with the seventh floor team and to fill the open position on the eighth floor team.

Now, let's take the example of Tom, a member of a sales team whose lead measure is to get out two new proposals each week. Tom knows that his list of prospects is running low, so for this week his commitment might be to acquire names and contact information for ten additional prospects, ensuring he has enough to successfully move two of them to the proposal stage.

In these two examples, both leaders and team members make weekly commitments (more on this on page 000). The nature of the commitments might change every week because the business, along with the performance of the team, is always changing; only the process is constant.

Realize that these weekly commitments are often not urgent or necessarily even new. They often are things the team should naturally be doing naturally, but the reality is that these are the actions the whirlwind devours first. Without the steady rhythm of accountability of Discipline 4, there will always be things the team members know they should do, but never actually do with real consistency.

CREATING A CADENCE

MICARE, which produces the coal that fuels many of Mexico's power plants, is one of the largest private enterprises in Mexico. 4DX permeates everything at MICARE.

Monday morning WIG sessions take place in every department

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of this vast company. The meetings are connected by videophone to remote locations so that everyone will be on the same page at the same time. Every manager's results are visible on the screen for all to see.

Each group (production, delivery, human resources, finance, operations, and so forth) has scoreboards that are posted around the company and kept constantly updated. Everyone in the company—engineers, miners, even maintenance workers—can recite their team WIGs to you. When touring MICARE, we were reminded of this observation by Jack Welch, the legendary leader of GE:

“Goals cannot sound noble but vague. Targets cannot be so blurry they can't be hit. Your direction has to be so vivid that if you randomly woke one of your employees in the middle of the night and asked him, ‘Where are we going?’ he could still answer in a half-asleep stupor.”¹⁹

That is the level of strategic clarity and commitment evident throughout MICARE.

What has the 4DX operating system meant to the achievement of MICARE's WIGS? Over a seven-year period:

- Lost-time accidents dropped from nearly seven hundred per year to fewer than sixty.
- Water consumed in processing coal—a major environmental concern—dropped by two-thirds.
- Annual rehabilitation of mined-out properties rose from six hectares to more than two hundred.
- Suspended particulates in the air around the mines dropped from three hundred forty six units per cubic meter to eighty four.
- Metric tons of coal produced per worker grew from six thousand to ten thousand per year.

In summary, and according to MICARE's CEO, 4DX has produced dramatic hard business results for MICARE and enabled major improvements to safety and the environment as well.

MICARE credits concentrated attention to the cadence of ac-

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countability as the major factor in MICARE's success. The regular WIG session, as simple in concept as it is, keeps bringing the whole organization's focus back to what matters most.

Remember that the WIG session should move at a fast pace. If each person simply addresses the three cadence items described earlier, it doesn't require a lot of talking. As one of our largest clients is fond of saying, "The more they talk, the less they did."

The WIG session also gives the team the chance to process what they've learned about what does and doesn't work. If the lead measures aren't moving the lag, the team brings creative thinking to the table, suggesting new hypotheses to try. If people are running into obstacles keeping their commitments, team members can commit to clear the path for each other. What might be tough for a frontline worker to achieve might take just a stroke of the pen for the team leader. In fact, as the leader you should often ask each team member "What can I do this week to clear the path for you?"

It's also important to note that, unless you are a frontline person, you will likely be in two WIG sessions every week: one led by your boss and one that you lead with your team (more on this on page xxx).

For now, let's apply Discipline 4 to the example of Younger Brothers Construction that we discussed earlier. Remember that the WIG for Younger Brothers was to reduce safety incidents from fifty-seven to twelve by December 31, and their lead measure was compliance to the six safety standards they believed would eliminate the vast majority of accidents.

Imagine that you are a project manager at Younger Brothers responsible for a number of crews. In the WIG session with your boss, you would do three things:

1. **Report on last week's commitments:** "Last week I committed to order new braces for the scaffolding so that conditions for all my crews were up to code (one of the six safety standards) and I completed that."
2. **Review the scoreboard:** "My lag measure for safety incidents is currently averaging five per month, slightly above where we

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should be for this quarter. My lead measure for compliance to safety standards is green at 91 percent, but crews nine, eleven, and thirteen are hurting the score because they aren't consistently wearing their safety glasses."

3. **Make commitments for the coming week:** "This week I will meet with the supervisors of crews nine, eleven, and thirteen, review their safety records, and ensure that they have enough safety glasses for everyone."

Each commitment must meet two standards: First, the commitment must represent a specific deliverable. For example, a commitment to "focus on" or "work on" crews nine, eleven, and thirteen is too vague. Because this type of commitment doesn't make you accountable for a specific result, it usually gets lost in the whirlwind. Second, the commitment must influence the lead measure. If the commitment doesn't directly target the lead measure, it won't advance the team toward achieving the WIG.

As you begin to understand the WIG session, you'll also see more clearly the importance of the two characteristics of lead measures we discussed in Discipline 2. If the lead measures are influenceable, they can be moved by the weekly commitments. If they are predictive, then moving them will lead to achievement of the WIG.

The WIG session is like an ongoing science experiment. Team members bring their best thinking as to how to influence the scoreboard. They commit to try new ideas, test hypotheses, and bring back the results.

For example, at the Minnesota Cystic Fibrosis Center at the University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, staff doctors hold a weekly meeting to review lung function among their vulnerable patients, most of them infants and small children. Cystic fibrosis gradually reduces the victim's ability to breathe, so the WIG for this world-class treatment center is 100 percent lung function for all their patients. They are not satisfied with 80 percent of normal, or even 90 percent, as a lag measure.

In these weekly meetings, the doctors review what they've ob-

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served that week about improving lung function and they make commitments to follow up. For example, because body weight might be a lead measure in lung health, doctors carefully monitor it and give some infants supplemental feedings. They conduct experiments with mist tents and massage vests and other ways to clear lungs. Then they report back to the team on the outcomes.

Each week they learn more and share their learning.

Few people hold themselves as rigorously accountable for a WIG as the Fairview team does, and the results show the value of their cadence of accountability: They haven't lost a patient to cystic fibrosis in many years.²⁰

While the leader of the WIG session is responsible for ensuring the quality of commitments, it's critical that the commitments come from the participants. We cannot emphasize this strongly enough. If you simply tell your team what to do, they will learn little. But when they are able to consistently tell *you* what's needed to achieve the WIG, they will have learned a lot about execution, and so will you.

Having team members generate their own commitments may seem counterintuitive, especially when you can see so clearly what should be done and when your team may even expect or want you to just tell them what to do. However, what you ultimately want is for each member of your team to take personal ownership of the commitments they make. As a leader, you may still coach people who are struggling to make high-impact commitments, but you want to ensure that, in the end, the ideas are theirs, not yours.

THE BLACK AND THE GRAY

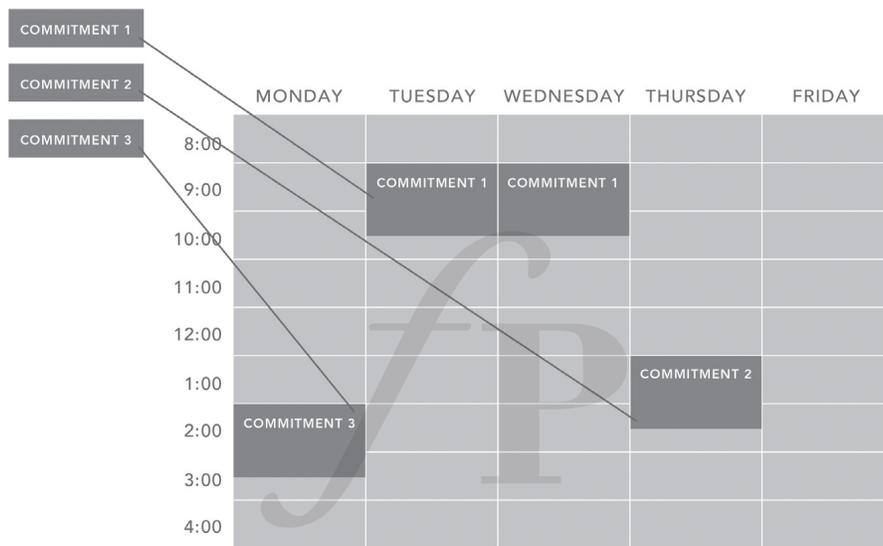
Finally, the WIG session saves your wildly important goals from being engulfed by the whirlwind. Below is the calendar for a typical week. The black blocks represent your WIG session commitments and the gray blocks represent your whirlwind. This simple visual is ideal for showing what the balance of time and energy invested in execution looks like.

When we introduce Discipline 4 in our process, some leaders mis-

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takenly picture a week that's mostly black, meaning that the commitments are the predominant focus for the week. This seldom represents reality. The vast majority of your energy will still be spent managing your day-to-day priorities, as it should be. But the critical value of the 4 Disciplines is ensuring that the black—your investment over and above your day to day—stays consistently focused on your WIG.

Weekly Commitments



The gray blocks represent your day-to-day whirlwind; the black blocks represent your weekly commitments to move the WIG scoreboard. If you actively schedule them into your week, the whirlwind is less likely to draw your focus away from the WIG.

What would happen if you pulled one of those black blocks out of your week? Would it remain empty?

Think about the last time you were relieved to learn that a meeting had been cancelled, freeing an hour in your schedule. How long was it before three other meetings and five urgent requests were all competing for that one open spot? In terms of the diagram, how long would it be before the whirlwind devoured that open time, turning it gray?

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When we ask this question in our sessions, every leader knows the answer: “Immediately!” The gray doesn’t want the black in your week. In other words, the whirlwind will consume every moment of time and every ounce of energy it can. Parkinson’s Law states: “Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion,” and nowhere is this principle of expansion and consumption of time and energy more true than with your whirlwind. Execution on your WIG is all about driving the black into the gray, no matter what it takes.

Now, think of the diagram as representing the combined energy of a week from your entire team, not just from you. In this new context, the black represents the energy of every member of your team as they keep their commitments every week. This is the kind of focused energy that produces results. If you keep the cadence of accountability, week after week, your team unleashes this focused energy against the lead measures that have a direct effect on the WIG.

This weekly discipline also has a real effect on morale. Think about the last time you had an all-gray week, a week of long hours consumed by the endless crises of the whirlwind. The worst part of it was the sickening feeling in the pit of your stomach that, despite killing yourself all week, you didn’t really accomplish anything.

If your all-gray weeks become a regular experience, you feel the life draining out of you as a leader. Even worse, you will see the same feeling reflected in the engagement and the performance of your team.

WIG sessions are the antidote to all-gray weeks. When the discipline of holding WIG sessions is sustained—when you and your team force the black into the gray every week—not only will you make consistent progress toward your goals, you’ll also begin to feel that you, rather than the whirlwind, are in charge.

WIG SESSIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Mark McChesney, the older brother of one of our authors, wanted only one thing growing up: to design cars. His parents still have elementary-school homework assignments with beautifully drawn cars in the margins. Mark worked very hard to achieve his dream and

was eventually hired as a designer for one of the big three automakers in the United States. Almost all of the designers on Mark's team had the same dream, a dream that they are now living by spending every day doing the one thing they wanted to do more than anything in the world: designing cars.

You would think that their level of engagement would be off the charts. However, here is the fascinating part of this story: This design department has the lowest engagement scores of any team within that giant organization. That's right, people who are doing the one thing they always wanted to do have the lowest scores. How can people who have made a career doing what they love have low engagement?

In his book *The Three Signs of a Miserable Job*, Patrick Lencioni describes brilliantly three reasons individuals disengage from work.

1. **Anonymity:** They feel their leaders don't know or care what they are doing.
2. **Irrelevance:** They don't understand how their job makes a difference.
3. **Immeasurement:** They cannot measure or assess for themselves the contribution they are making.²¹

All three of Lencioni's signs are present in the automotive design department. First, the designer's original work is changed so much by the time it actually becomes a product that the originator is often forgotten (anonymity). Second, the product is released years after designers work on it, so they may not be able to see their contribution in the final product (irrelevance). And third, evaluations of performance are extremely subjective (immeasurement).

Lencioni's three signs not only explain what's happening in the design department, as well as in many other jobs, but also describe life in the whirlwind perfectly—what we have called an “all-gray week.” The good news is that Discipline 4, if done right, is the cure for all three.

On a team that keeps the cadence of WIG sessions, the individual members are not anonymous. On the contrary, they are in the spot-

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light at least once a week. They are also not irrelevant, because they can see exactly how their commitments are moving the lead measures that drive a wildly important goal. And they are definitely not suffering from immeasurability: They have a clear and public scoreboard that is updated weekly to reflect their performance.

The full impact of the WIG session won't be felt right away. It often takes three to four weeks before a team establishes an effective rhythm in which they learn to stay focused on the WIG and avoid talking about the whirlwind. But soon the meeting begins to feel more productive; and after a few more weeks, something important starts to happen. The lead measures actually begin to move the lag measure and the team starts to feel that they are *winning*.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Our on-line system used for running WIG sessions, my4dx.com (explained beginning on page xxx) has captured millions of commitments from teams all over the world. More than 75 percent of those commitments have been kept, despite the whirlwind. This real-world data shows that WIG sessions create real accountability and follow-through.

However, it's the particular *kind* of accountability created in a WIG session that we want you to understand.

Often the very word *accountability* has a strong negative connotation. If your boss says "Come see me in an hour; we need to have an accountability session," you can be fairly certain it's not a good thing.

However, the accountability created in a WIG session is very different. It's not organizational, it's *personal*. Instead of accountability to a broad outcome you can't influence, it's accountability to a weekly commitment that you yourself made and that is within your power to keep. And, one-by-one, you report your results not only to the boss, but to each other. The question you ultimately answer in a WIG session is, "Did we do what we committed *to each other* we would do?"

When the answer is "yes," when members of a team see their peers consistently following through on the commitments they make, they

grow in respect for each other. They learn that the people they work with can be trusted to follow through. When this happens, performance improves dramatically.

Take the experience of Nomaco, a leading company in engineered polymer-foam extrusions. In short, they make amazing things out of colored foam, from high-tech insulation to swimming-pool toys.

As one of three Nomaco manufacturing plants, Tarboro in North Carolina was a good plant. They were beating budget on all fronts—costs, profitability, and safety—but they did not yet feel that it was great plant, because although they were improving, they were not producing breakthrough performance.

The plant's organizational structure was traditional, and despite an open and friendly environment, people still depended on the plant manager to supervise, monitor, make all the decisions, and, essentially, ensure everyone in the plant was doing what they were supposed to be doing.

4DX brought the breakthrough they were looking for. In the eighteen months after adopting 4DX, Tarboro Plant:

- Cut more than \$1 million in costs off the production line
- Came in more than 30 percent below budget for the fiscal year
- Experienced no lost-time accidents and only one recordable accident
- Beat projected budget for the following fiscal year in the first quarter

Of 4DX, the plant manager concluded, “It is simply a strong tool to ensure success in any type of initiative an organization chooses to bring on board. Whether it is Six Sigma, lean manufacturing, or self-directed work teams . . . 4DX will get you the results you are desiring to achieve.”

The key to this shift was in the WIG sessions.

At Tarboro, every team held WIG sessions weekly. All employees

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reported on how they were moving the needle, changing the score, and achieving the WIG. Each week, they came up with new ideas to keep the scoreboard green. The WIG sessions kept them focused on achieving the wildly important goals, but more than that, the sessions enabled them to think together, make decisions together, help one another, and celebrate their wins.

As a result, the Tarboro plant created a culture of highly engaged employees who held themselves, *and each other*, accountable for results.

Julian Young, president of Nomaco during the 4DX implementation, summarized the impact of WIG sessions in this way: “The WIG sessions have a lot more energy than your traditional, old-fashioned manufacturing meetings. They have improved productivity substantially at each of our locations and have made accountability incredibly simple.”

Over the years, we’ve observed thousands of WIG sessions like those at the Tarboro plant, and this experience has made one thing clear: The accountability to their peers that is created in the WIG session is an even greater motivator of performance for most individuals than accountability to their boss. In the end, people will work hard to avoid disappointing their boss, but they will do almost anything to avoid disappointing their teammates.

However, to reach this level, you still need to understand one additional point. We’ve said that the first three disciplines set up the game but until you apply Discipline 4, your team isn’t *in* the game. But now we want to say it even more clearly: The level of importance you place on the WIG session will directly determine the results your team produces. Based on your consistency, your focus, and your own modeling of making commitments and following through, you will establish the WIG session as either a high-stakes game or a low-stakes game in the minds of your team.

Think of this point applied to a game played in the preseason versus the playoffs. In preseason, you’d like to win, but lose in the playoffs and your team goes home. Which type of game drives the

highest level of play? Simply put, if the game doesn't really matter, why should your team care? This is why real accountability inspires the team to engage at the highest level of play.

CREATING AN INNOVATIVE CULTURE

Some people don't like the fact that WIG sessions are so structured. Actually, when done right, WIG sessions are also highly creative. Structure and creativity together produce engagement, as eminent brain scientist Dr. Edward Hallowell has discovered. The most motivating situations, he says, are those that are "highly structured *and* full of novelty and stimulation."²²

The cadence of accountability can release the creativity of the team.

When you think of a team that has a culture of discipline and execution, you don't expect to hear that they are also creative and innovative. However, we've regularly seen all of these characteristics in teams that apply 4DX well.

The WIG session encourages experimentation with fresh ideas. It engages everyone in problem-solving and promotes shared learning. It's a forum for innovative insights as to how to move the lead measures, and because so much is at stake, it brings out the best thinking from every team member.

Towne Park is a great example. The largest provider of valet parking services for high-end hotels and hospitals, Towne Park has always been extremely well run. When Gaylord Entertainment (one of Towne Park's largest customers) had great success as an early adopter of the 4DX, the leaders at Towne Park became interested as well.

Towne Park was already measuring virtually every aspect of its business: Did attendants open the door for you and your guests when you arrived? Did they use the proper hotel greeting? Did they offer you a bottle of water? Their execs could tell you all this, as they were literally measuring everything they thought mattered to their customers.

Still, they decided to apply 4DX to the wildly important goal of the company, increasing customer satisfaction, to see if they could

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improve it even more. While developing lead measures in Discipline 2, they realized that one thing they weren't measuring might actually be their point of highest leverage in pleasing the customer: How long it takes the customer to get his or her car back.

So, they chose reducing retrieval time as the most predictive lead measure for further improving customer satisfaction. Although they had always known this was an important aspect of the business, they had never measured it because it isn't an easy measure to get, even for a company that believes in measurement. They knew that collecting retrieval-time data would require them to clock when the customer called for the car and when the valet arrived with the car. The elapsed time between the two points, the *retrieval time*, would then need to be consistently captured for all teams in all locations.

You can imagine how difficult it would be to gather this data in the whirlwind of incoming and outgoing cars, so difficult that some leaders argued that it couldn't be done. However, because they were committed to their WIG of unparalleled customer satisfaction, and because they believed retrieval time was the most predictive and influenceable measure for achieving it, they committed to tracking it. Like all great leadership teams, once the decision was made, they found a way.

Initially, they wondered if retrieval time was really influenceable because of all the external factors that impact it, such as the location of the parking area and the distance to the car. Despite these worries, they were able to reduce retrieval time dramatically.

How? The team figured it out because they were highly engaged in the game. Once the lead measure went up on the scoreboard, the valets began finding new ways to win. For example, they started advising arriving guests to call before checking out so that their car would be waiting for them." Whenever the guest called in advance, the valet knew the retrieval time would be zero.

The valets also began to ask what day the guest planned on checking out. If it was later in the week, they would park the car in the back of the lot. As the day of departure drew closer, they would move the car forward so that retrieval time would be reduced.

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These and a host of other innovations not only reduced the lead measure of retrieval time, but immediately raised the lag measure of customer satisfaction. Towne Parke was winning, but without the team's engagement in the game, these ideas might never have surfaced, let alone been implemented.

However, a Towne Park team in Miami, Florida, faced an obstacle that seemed insurmountable: A four-foot high concrete wall ran down the middle of the parking garage, forcing the valets to drive around it to retrieve every car.

After several months of trying to compensate for the wall, a *literal* breakthrough came during their WIG session. James McNeil, one of the assistant account managers, committed to his team that the wall was coming out. He obtained clearance from the hotel's engineer who confirmed that the wall was not load-bearing, borrowed a concrete saw, and recruited several other supervisors to help. Starting early the following Saturday morning, they cut and hauled out several tons of concrete; by the end of the day, the wall was gone.

If you're a leader, you should be fascinated by this story. If a Towne Park executive had ordered the team to do something as far outside their normal responsibilities as removing a concrete wall, what do you think the team's reaction would have been? At best, resistance, and at worst, mutiny, even from a good team.

But because the lead measure had become a high-stakes game, one the players didn't want to lose, the effect was the opposite. Taking out the wall was their idea; and their desire to win was so strong, you couldn't have kept them from doing it. Necessity really is the mother of invention. Once they made retrieval time a high-stakes game, the creativity and invention followed.

What's critical to understand is that this level of engagement seldom if ever comes from a command-and-control approach—that is, one that relies exclusively on the formal authority of the leader. Authority alone at best yields only compliance from a team.

By contrast, 4DX produces results not from the exercise of authority but from the fundamental desire of each individual team member to feel significant, to do work that matters, and ultimately, to win.

DISCIPLINE 4: CREATE A CADENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

That kind of engagement yields true commitment, the kind of commitment that led a Towne Park team to tear down a wall. And it's only that kind of commitment that produces extraordinary results.

In section 2, we'll give you precise guidance on how to achieve that kind of commitment through the cadence of accountability.

THE POWER OF 4DX

Now that we've examined each of the 4 Disciplines of Execution, we hope you sense their power to transform your culture and your business results. When we introduce leaders to 4DX, they often believe they are already doing most of what we teach. After all, goals, measures, scoreboards, and meetings are familiar topics. But, once 4DX is implemented, these same leaders report in their teams a dramatic paradigm shift that produces predictable results, often for the first time

If you contrast 4DX with the familiar practices of annual planning, you can see how different this paradigm is from the typical mindset about goals.

The annual goal-setting process usually begins with the creation of a master plan for the year, focused on a large number of objectives. Then each objective is broken down into the many projects, milestones, tasks, and subtasks that must be accomplished over the

coming months for the plan to succeed. The deeper the planning process goes, the more complex the plan becomes.

Despite this growing complexity, the leaders may feel symptoms of what we call the "planning high." It's that hopeful feeling they get as they say "This could really work!"



Android - Barcode Scanner
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Scan and snap the image above to short video of what leaders face when driving strategy or go to www.4dxbook.com.

THE 4 DISCIPLINES OF EXECUTION

Finally, they create a set of colorful PowerPoint slides to explain the plan, and then deliver a convincing formal presentation. Sound familiar so far? If so, there's only one step left after the plan is presented: watching it slowly fall into obscurity as the changing needs of the business, none of which were accounted for, make the plan less and less relevant.

Now, in contrast, think back to the experience of Younger Brothers Construction and their WIG to reduce accidents. No matter how detailed or strategically brilliant their annual plan might have been, it could never have foreseen that in week thirty-two, a leader would need to meet with crews nine, eleven, and thirteen to focus on safety glasses. In other words, the very information needed to drive the highest level of results that week would not be in the plan, and it never is.

However, in Discipline 4, the team plans weekly against their lead measures, in essence, creating a just-in-time plan based on commitments that they could not have imagined at the beginning of the month, let alone the beginning of the year.

The constant weekly energy applied against the lead measures creates a unique form of accountability that connects the team directly to the goal, again and again.

If Younger Brothers had attacked their WIG without the lead measure of safety compliance, they would still have been able to make weekly commitments but against a less specific target. Can you imagine each team member making a commitment to reduce accidents this week? It would seem so broad as to be overwhelming to them, like trying to boil the ocean.

Even worse, imagine the perspective of the leaders. Can you hear them saying in frustration, "These are all adults who've been working construction for years. If they don't care about their own safety, what am I supposed to do about it?"

Once people give up on a goal that looks unachievable—no matter how strategic it might be—there is only one place to go: back to the whirlwind. After all, it's what they know and it feels safe. When this happens, your team is now officially playing not to lose instead of

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playing to win and there is a big difference. Simply put, 4DX gets an organization playing to win!

Think of 4DX like the operating system on your computer. You need a powerful operating system to execute whatever programs you choose to install. If the operating system isn't equal to the task, it doesn't matter how beautifully designed the program, it won't work consistently on your computer.

Likewise, without an operating system for executing your goals, no matter how beautifully designed your strategy, it won't work consistently. Even if you achieve results, you won't be able to sustain them, or surpass them, year after year. 4DX ensures the precise and consistent execution of any goal you choose to install in your team or organization and creates a foundation for greater success in the future.

One of the key reasons that 4DX works so powerfully is that it's based on timeless, inviolable principles; and it's proven to work with virtually any organization in any environment. We didn't invent the principles of 4DX; we simply uncovered and codified them. Others have used the same principles to effectively change human behavior in the service of a goal.

In 1961, Jean Nidetch of Queens, New York, was losing patience with dieting. She was uncomfortably overweight and found it difficult to stay on a diet. She failed to achieve her goal every time she tried. So when she decided to try a diet she obtained from the NYC Board of Health, she decided to try a new approach: She invited a few friends who were also fighting their weight to meet each week and check on each other. They set reasonable, bite-sized goals to lose a pound or two per week. They carefully monitored their intake of calories and gauged the amount of exercise they were getting.

Over a period of about two years, they achieved their weight-loss goals, and they did it together.

Jean's weight-loss club continued to add members and, in 1963, incorporated as the Weight Watchers organization. Since then, Weight Watchers has grown into an international network of clubs, with a

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product line of diet drinks, sugar substitutes, and publications. “My little private club has become an industry,” said Jean Nidetch.

No other program has matched their record for helping large numbers of people maintain a healthy weight.

The success of Weight Watchers is due to the same principles that underlie the 4 Disciplines:

- Discipline 1: Careful focus on a clear lag measure: losing a certain amount of weight within a certain timeframe—*from X to Y by when.*
- Discipline 2: Acting on the high-leverage lead measures of calorie intake and output through exercise, measures that the participants can control. These lead measures are expressed in terms of points that are easily tracked.
- Discipline 3: Regular scorekeeping and monitoring of the lead measures and the lag measure. A compelling scoreboard engages people and keeps them on track toward the goal.
- Discipline 4: The cadence of accountability: the weekly meeting with others who have the same goal. They share stories, check the scoreboard (the scale), celebrate successes, and talk about lapses and what to do about them. Many participants say that the weekly weigh-in is the most motivating thing about the program.²³

The principles underlying 4DX are universal and timeless, a conclusion we have confirmed again and again in working with some of the best companies in the world.

Section 2

Installing 4DX with Your Team

As you've learned in section 1, 4DX is an operating system for achieving the goals you must achieve.

In section 2, you'll learn what to expect when you install 4DX with your team and the specific steps for doing so. You'll benefit from the experience of thousands of work teams who've committed themselves to the same exhilarating challenge.

Please keep in mind that 4DX is not a set of guidelines, but a set of disciplines. Installing 4DX will require your finest efforts, but the payoff will be a team that performs consistently and with excellence.

This section is designed to guide you in installing 4DX. Think of it as a field guide with all the information to ensure your success. If you're a senior executive who will lead the efforts of others in implementing 4DX, you'll find it a valuable overview of the journey. If you're a leader who will be implementing 4DX with your own team, you'll find a detailed road map of that journey. You'll appreciate its value once you begin.

In either case, you'll likely refer to this section many times during implementation and again over the years as your experience with 4DX grows.