

November 5, 2018

By Rick Boxx

What Successful Executives Do Differently

Leadership consultant Ron Carucci, appearing in a Harvard Business Review video, claims that 50-60 percent of executives fail in their first executive role. Because of this, Carucci studied successful executives to find what they did differently from those who did not succeed. He discovered four key factors.

The first factor is Breadth. New executives tend to have a narrow view of business. Understanding the whole picture of any organization is critical in having the breadth of knowledge necessary for making wise decisions.

We see a good example of this shortcoming in the Bible. The apostle Peter was someone who had a hard time seeing the big picture. On one occasion, Jesus gave this rebuke to Peter, *"You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's"*(Matthew 16:23).

In their leadership roles, successful executives seek understanding about all aspects of their organizations.

The second factor Carucci found is Context. Successful executives do the work necessary to gain understanding of trends in their culture, industry, and within their organization. Having a grasp on context will enable you to make wiser and more informed choices.

Again, in the Scriptures we find a model for this approach to leadership. *In 1 Chronicles 12:32*, we read about one family that understood the importance of context in decision-making: *"The sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do."*

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When thrust into a new role, successful executives invest time for studying trends and gaining context so they can better serve their organizations.

The third factor is Choice. Every day brings many options from which to choose. For example, executives must decide where they can best invest their time. If you have ever held an executive role, you already know there are many who believe their project is the best use of your time. But true success comes from being able to say "no" to the distractions and "yes" only to opportunities critical to the mission.

As Jesus said in *Matthew 7:14*, "*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*" Successful executives learn to say "no" frequently, so they have time for the more important choices.

The final factor Carucci discovered is Connections. Successful executives know that connecting with others, by building strong relationships and trust, is critical. Establishing the right connections will enable them to leverage those relationships and build trust so that others can help them accomplish their goals. We could cite example after example that could show how working in isolation is not an effective leadership strategy.

We find this principle addressed in *1 John 4:7*, "*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*" Loving others in one's workplace is a powerful way to build relationships and trust. In most instances, this leads to mutual success.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Before reading this "Monday Manna," what reasons would you have suggested to explain why the majority of executives encounter failure in their first executive roles?
2. Which of the four factors Carucci presented seems most critical to you? Explain your answer.
3. How can an executive succeed in gaining a broader view of the organization, its culture and its needs? What are some steps you think would be helpful in that regard?
4. The last factor Carucci cited is Connections - or relationships. Why would you think many executives fail in this area? How would you assess your own effectiveness in terms of connections and relationships?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 19:20, 27:17,23; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Acts 6:3-4; Hebrews 13:17

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