

# The Executive Fundamentals of Work™



*"All of us — no matter who we are or what we do at our jobs each day — can do what we do better if we focus on the Fundamentals."*

— Marc Corsini

## INSIDE

The **Executive Fundamentals of Work™** explained:

- (Shared or Individual) **Vision** Becomes Reality
- Walking the Talk of Your **Values**
- **Communication** and the 10% x 10 Principle
- Facing Up to Your **Next De-Hire**
- Anticipate Your **Next Key Hire** (Replacement or New)
- Conducting the **"Stay Put" Meeting**
- No More **500-Pound Gorilla**
- Tracking and Implementing **Industry Trends**
- Keepin' **"The Main Thing"** the Main Thing
- Becoming a **Dream Catcher**
- **Planning/Reflection** (The One in 10 Rule of Thumb)
- **Time for the Other F's**
- Other (You Add Your Own Element)

Doing What You Do Better means many different things to lots of different people. But at CCG, we've defined 12 specific elements of an effective executive's job. We call these the **Executive Fundamentals of Work™ (E F of W)**. These ideas cover everything from long-range planning to securing and keeping good people. They help executives lead better and communicate with more clarity. They also provide a sense of balance that leads to overall success — in and out of the office.

The **Executive Fundamentals of Work™** are: **Vision** (Shared or Individual), **Values** (Walking the Talk), **Communication** (the 10% x 10 Principle), **Next De-Hire**, **Next Key Hire** (Replacement or New), **"Stay Put" Meeting**, **500-Pound Gorilla**, **Industry Trends** (Implementing), **"The Main Thing," Dream Catcher, Planning/Reflection** (the One in 10 Rule of Thumb) and **Time for the Other F's**. There's an extra element called simply **"Other"** for any executive wanting to add their own E F of W specific to their own situation. Taken together, these various divisions of an executive's job offer a game plan to professional and personal success.



# The Executive Fundamentals of Work™

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In our executive coaching program take these Fundamentals of Work™ and use them as stepping-stones to their own success. We establish goals and to-do's in each of these areas and then, on a monthly basis and with accountability, we track their progress.

We've taken the executive responsibilities and broken it down into manageable pieces. Attention to each area is key to their ultimate and overall success. This is how you Do What You Do Better.



## (Shared or Individual) Vision Becomes Reality

The importance of having a viable **Vision** cannot be overstated.

It's disappointing that "vision" has become a buzzword that is often used but rarely experienced in business or life in general. For a lot of companies, "the vision meeting" is an exercise that top management does once a year, at best. Often it's initiated after the boss has listened to one too many audio books on the iPod. We call that "visioning without the benefit of real vision."

Joel Arthur Barker, the guy who popularized the concept of "paradigm shifts" for corporate America, said:

*"Vision without action is merely a dream;  
Action without vision is a waste of time;  
Vision with action can change the world."*

We've had the rewarding experience of working with clients who not only have a clear vision of where they are going, but also they successfully share that vision with everyone involved in the organization. They put the vision to work. In a situation like this, you know you are part of something special. There is true excitement in the work environment. It is almost magical — and you want to be a part of the company.

Here's what happens when people have a vision and then put it to work: The positive energy breeds more positive energy. People come to work early and often stay late. The leadership doesn't have to motivate people; the people are motivated by the vision itself. The leadership presents a roadmap for how their teams can achieve success, and the teams eagerly follow this plan because they understand where they are going and exactly how to get there.

Visioning is not just a business concept, and it doesn't have to be long in scope or time. Vision can be as simple as what you want to accomplish in a six-week Bible study or during a children's summer swim program. It can be something as uncomplicated as running a 10K race by year's end or something as smart as saving \$100 each month in a child's college fund.

Vision is about what you want for your future. To make it possible, you have to know yourself, you gotta wanna make it happen and you have to have the positive attitude that comes from living a life of abundance. Then you have to be willing to act. One thing follows another when you Do What You Do Better.

### Corsini's Point

Developing a vision for what you want at work and in life is one of the most exciting processes you can undertake. And it can be one of the most difficult exercises you experience because it involves not only what is present today in your life, but also what your life can hold in the future. It's a plan that requires action. To build a great company, you have to have a vision. And it can't be a secret, everyone has to know and understand the vision.



## Walking the Talk of Your Values

Simply put: **Values** are core beliefs. Every company has a code of values. This code might not be printed and posted in the lobby of the office, but it is an integral part of a successful workplace. These values should be modeled and fostered by the leaders of the organization. Whatever is important for the leadership team equates to the values of the organization.

Some companies stand for good, ethical values — others value a win at any cost.

We've heard executives talk about having values that are so basic and clear-cut that their first-grade teachers could have written them on the blackboard. Others strive for values their mother or father would be proud of. We're talking a simple, do-unto-others mindset, and that's an excellent foundation for core beliefs. But values is not just a couple of phrases on a paper. Values are most defined by actions. Your actions articulate your values more than your words. We've seen some clients whose words and actions mirror each other. They are in tandem. And sadly, in other cases, we see no correlation between the words and actions in the organization. Yet on a daily basis, there is no consistency between words and actions.

In our book, **Do What You Do Better With the 7 F's of True Success**, we illustrated this principle with this humorous story:

There was once a self-righteous, boastful Sunday school teacher who was preaching to his class on the importance of exemplary living. With head held high and chest thrust outward, he strutted boldly back and forth across the room, while saying arrogantly, *"Now kids, why do people call me a Christian?"*

There was a momentary silence. Then one of the boys slowly raised his hand. *"Yes?"* boomed the teacher.

The boy responded, *"Probably because they don't know you."*

Do you and your team walk the talk of your company's values and code of conduct?

### Corsini's Point

Values are core beliefs. Does your organization operate with clearly defined values? Are those values documented and carried out in all that you do? *True* success happens when you align your actions with your words. Make sure everyone in the organization understands the company's core values. Then make sure they work each and every day with these values in mind.



## Communication and the 10% x 10 Principle

Whenever we conduct focus groups with employees at a company, one of the most common and important issues we encounter is the lack of **communication** between employees and their executive team and management. A lot of employees feel a disconnect when it comes to where the company is today and the focus/goals for the company's future.

In the book *Mean Business*, Al "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap talks about telling his managers the same thing over and over because people never "get it" the first time. This "Rambo in Pinstripes" writes in his book: "You only remember 10 percent of what you hear. I believe if you hear it 10 times, you are likely to remember 100 percent of it."

While Dunlap was over the top on a lot of leadership principles, he was right on when it comes to communication. As a leader, you have to constantly — and consistently — communicate what's going on at the company. Everyone needs to be on the same page regarding the vision, values and goals of the organization. For this to happen, you have to clearly and concisely and *continuously* communicate with your employees.

### Corsini's Point

Do you communicate the company's vision, values and goals every day and to everyone? Yes, every day and absolutely to everyone. (Don't assume they know.) Remember the "10% x 10 Principle." People remember only 10% of what you say. For them to really get whatever it is that you are trying to communicate, they need to hear or see it at least 10 times. This is one of the reasons we review all 12 **Executive Fundamentals of Work™** each month in our executive coaching program. This review and repetition helps each executive stay focused on the importance of communication as well as the other fundamentals of effective leadership.



## Facing Up to Your Next De-Hire

In David Cottrell's book, *Monday Morning Leadership*, he discusses the importance of “**De-Hiring**” the people who aren't carrying their share of the load. We're not just talking about poor performance. Those employees who are disruptive to the team and those with negative attitudes also should probably be working elsewhere.

As businesspeople, we've all seen the toxic effects of an unmanageable employee. We all know that it only takes a single person to change the work environment in an entire office. Troublesome employees are as common as a cold, and they act like one, too. Everyone they come in contact with is susceptible to their negative influence.

And guess who takes the biggest hit when a disruptive employee is allowed to act like a 3-year-old? Management.

Interestingly, when problems arise employees blame management more often than they do the trouble making employee. Employees expect their leaders to lead. They count on management to hold people accountable for their actions and give clear, specific expectation of what is expected. They expect executives to see to the consequences of any poor behavior. When management fails to step in, the rest of the team suffers a disconnect with the company leadership. And there's bound to be resentment if management tries to hold the hardworking employees accountable to higher standards while ignoring the troublemaker.

A good leader — a *true* leader — holds *all* employees accountable. And if someone is acting out or under performing, an effective leader takes corrective actions. If the problem employee refuses to change — for whatever reason — then the leader focuses on de-hiring that employee. In the end, management doesn't fire people; problem employees fire themselves when they refuse to do the right thing.

### Corsini's Point

Do you have employees who are disruptive or unproductive? If so, are you actively working on an accountability plan to correct the behavior or lack of performance? If the disruptive employees don't show improvement, are you prepared to de-hire them? Remember, the respect your other employees have for you is at risk when you don't act. Be proactive, and they will value you as a leader. Ignore the disruptive behavior, and lose respect of the entire team. Bottom line: As an executive, are you a leader or a loser? (Hard words, certainly — but true.)



## Anticipate Your Next Key Hire (Replacement or New)

In sports and in business, you win with talent. In every one of our strategic-planning and executive-coaching sessions, the topics of finding talent, growing talent and keeping talent always come up.

Executives have to be full-time talent scouts. Now, we're not suggesting you have to actively search for talent 40 to 50 hours a week, but the idea needs to be in the back of your mind all the time. You need to be able to recognize possible new recruits when you meet them. Then, you have to be willing to act.

The disappointing truth is this: As soon as you think you have your ideal team in place, things will change. For whatever reasons, someone will quit, relocate or change careers. There are a whole host of reasons people move on.

That's why we want our executives always thinking about their **Next Key Hire**. Take stock of your team on a regular basis. Know their strengths and weaknesses so you'll know exactly what type of key hire you will need when the time comes.

We also suggest keeping a current (and confidential) list of people you'd consider as a replacement if a key person should leave. (We hear that athletic directors at big universities always keep such lists in case their hotshot, in-demand coach gets hired away.)

Are you already focused on your next key hire? If not, the next time you have to hire a new person, you will spend a lot of time scrambling to find your talent. This is valuable time that could be used in other, much more productive ways if you had been a talent scout all along.

### Corsini's Point

Part of being a successful executive is acting as a permanent talent scout. Always be on the lookout for your next key hire. Constantly look for talent. It's everywhere, but you really have to pay attention in order to see the diamond in the gravel on your path. Searching for talent is simply part of doing what you do better.



## Conducting the ‘Stay Put’ Meeting

Every seasoned leader has experienced the shock of suddenly losing a valued executive, manager or other employee. You know the routine. The person drops by your office and asks, “Do you have a minute?” You answer, “Absolutely,” because you always enjoy spending time with this person, and you value having them on the team.

The employee sits down and then drops the bomb: They are leaving the company to go somewhere else. Often it's *not* about money. As you talk, you learn that they are leaving because they had some misconception about where they stood in the organization. They might feel they are not appreciated. They might have misread the “company tea leaves” and thought the company wasn't supporting their division, their product or their ideas, whatever.

And so you try to let them know you do care. You tell them that you do support them. You do value having them on the team. You insist that their assessment of the situation is not accurate — maybe it's downright wrong.

But the damage is done. This employee is too far along in the thought process to stay. You can tell from their words and body language that they no longer consider themselves as part of the team.

If only you had known what they were thinking!

A monthly “**Stay Put**” Meeting, one of the **Executive Fundamentals of Work™**, keeps you informed so you can keep your key employees happy.

Schedule and conduct regular one-on-one meetings with valued employees, and let them know how much you care and appreciate them. Ask questions to determine their level of satisfaction. If you don't like what you hear, spend some more time with them and develop a plan of action that will help ensure they will stay put.

### **Corsini's Point**

A company is only as good as its talent. Make sure valued employees know they are appreciated and respected. Decide which esteemed employees you want to meet with and affirm so they will absolutely know you are committed to their staying put at the company. Do this often and regularly.





## No More 500-Pound Gorilla

At just about every company, there's an issue that everyone knows about but nobody is willing or able to talk about. Perhaps they are even fearful of discussing it. It's like the proverbial **"500-Pound Gorilla"** in the corner. Everyone in the room can see it, yet nobody acknowledges that it's there.

Examples of a 500-pound gorilla might be the uncertainty regarding a company's succession plan; who's going to take over after the "larger-than-life" founder of the company? Maybe it's a troubled executive who's letting things slip or an employee who underperforms year after year. It might be a competitor who is running circles around your company and taking market share at will.

There are many examples of a big issue or problem that needs attention, time and resources devoted to it. Every company we work with has some type of 500-pound gorilla in their organization. One of the reasons people engage our services is to address these types of situations.

Know this: It's the leadership's responsibility to face the 500-pound gorilla. The first step is to acknowledge that a problem or controversial issue exists. The next thing is to address it and fix it.

### **Corsini's Point**

Companies, like some families, can be dysfunctional. Most have some issue or problem that everyone knows about but nobody talks about. Face your gorilla, and work to make it go away — or at least put it on a diet.



## Tracking and Implementing Industry Trends

If you want to work smarter not harder (and who doesn't?), you need intelligence. We're talking about industry intelligence.

To be competitive in today's ever-changing markets, you need to fully understand business trends as they relate to you and what you do. You need to be up on the latest technology (and how to use it). You have to understand your market, and you should be aware of what other successful companies are doing. How does your competition work? You have to make time to track and then be willing to implement crucial **Industry Trends**.

People in the intelligence business have folks whose sole job is to gather information. While you might not have people devoted to exactly that, you can have your employees multi-task. Those employees who are on the front line of whatever business you run are in the perfect position to gather information that you can put to work for the betterment of your own company.

At least yearly, gather your troops for a session devoted entirely to industry trends. Or consider sending an on-line survey to employees. Ask your employees these questions:

- What do you see as the company's strengths?
- What are our weaknesses?
- What do you think should be done to take our company to the next level?
- What threats or potential problems does our company face?
- What services should we add?
- What should we stop doing?
- What are other companies in our industry doing that we *should* be doing?
- And finally, what trends do you see going on in our industry that we should be thinking about or implementing?

Have your people work with these questions in mind. Then get them together regularly to hear what they have to say. The benefits are twofold: You get a lot of information from people with lots of practical experience, and your team members feel they have ownership in the company's future. It's a win-win situation.

But it's not enough to just know these things. You then have to put them to work for you. Gather your information, weigh your options, then take action.

### Corsini's Point

What are top-performing companies in your industry doing that your company *should* be doing? What can you do this month to start, or continue, modeling that kind of winning behavior? Figure it out. Gather information from multiple sources to get a big picture of your industry. Figure out what will work for you, and then get to work doing what you do better.



## Keepin' 'The Main Thing' the Main Thing

One of the key questions for any executive is this: “*What’s the main thing?*” For a lot of companies, “**The Main Thing**” is obvious. The company’s goals are clearly stated, and everyone is committed to realizing them. At other companies, there simply is no “main thing.”

In 1997, CCG started providing sales coaching to a property and casualty agency in Birmingham. The agency didn’t have an in-house sales manager, and the CEO thought our sales-coaching model would be a good complement to what he and the company president were doing.

After spending 10 minutes with the CEO, it was obvious that new business was their “main thing.” It was all he talked about. It was the only thing he asked his salespeople. Everyone knew that acquiring new business was “the main thing” at this company. Everyone.

Now, customer satisfaction has always been important to the organization. The executives’ focus on new business has never been at the expense of taking care of current clients. The company expects (and demands) that the employees do the right thing for their clients. So the salespeople must multi task. The executives know that focusing on current clients at the expense of adding new clients and opportunities and not focusing on new business is the Achilles’ heel of an agency like theirs.

Ten years later, new business is still “the main thing” here. And the company continues to overachieve. It is growing more successful each and every year. Why? Because everyone in the organization lives and breathes the idea that new business is still “the main thing.” This agency is proof-positive of what can happen when “the main thing” is common knowledge. The company has an annual growth rate of \_\_\_\_\_ in an industry where the average growth rate is \_\_\_\_\_.

### Corsini’s Point

Does your company have a “main thing”? Does everyone know what your “main thing” is? Keeping “the main thing” the main thing is key to your success. But there are lots of distractions — inventory or service problems, email overload, customer complaints, disgruntled employees, etc. Nobody ever said running a business is easy. But it’s easier when everyone knows the company’s “main thing.”



## Becoming a Dream Catcher

As an executive, you cover a lot of ground on any given day. You probably interact with your executive team, other employees, clients, suppliers, etc. Chances are, you also uncover plenty of great ideas that would help you and your company Do What You Do Better. So how do you keep track — and on top of — all the great ideas, important suggestions and dreams you encounter every day? The simplest suggestion is to write stuff down. This documentation should be one of your **Executive Fundamentals of Work™**.

When I think about the power and potential of regularly documenting your thoughts, Native American **Dream Catchers** come to mind. I saw my first dream catchers twenty years ago while visiting relatives in Sedona, Arizona.

Dream catchers are small, wooden hoops filled with a web made of cord. Traditionally, they are hung from the top of a child's cradleboard, and it is said that "they catch and hold everything evil as a spider's web catches and holds everything that comes in contact with it."

As an executive, part of your job is to be a "dream catcher" of sorts. Your people look to you for leadership, and part of being a good leader is knowing which direction to go. There are several ways to capture your dreams and great ideas. We've coached some people to always keep a 3 x 5 index card in their shirt pocket or handbag or on their nightstand. And as they get ideas, they write them down on these handy, little cards.

Other people I know carry a three-ring binder with them. When I was working in the technology industry years ago, one of my first managers shared this strategy with me. Only, he suggested using the binder as a journal to record all my work activities. The idea is that when someone asks you to do something, you write it down. Once a week, you review the items in the binder, and make note of any actions you took and which tasks you completed. Ideas or actions that are "dreams" for doing what you do better should be transcribed to their own space in the binder.

Other suggestions include creating an electronic file and then documenting and storing ideas there. Whatever method you use is up to you. It's just important to have a system in place to make the most of your good ideas and put you closer to achieving your dreams. Being a dream catcher is fundamental to reaching your goals. This is how you Do What You Do Better.

### Corsini's Point

It's important to compile and nurture great ideas and make sure the company implements them. If you're not the big-idea guy, know who is, and encourage their creative thinking. Then be deliberate about getting the organization to put into action the big ideas. Most executives have exposure to so many great ideas in the course of an ordinary business day. Learn to recognize them. Then create — and use — some kind of system for capturing your dreams, ideas, thoughts, etc. Do this daily, and be sure to implement the important ones.



## Planning/Reflection (The One in 10 Rule of Thumb)

We believe the biggest opportunity for enhancing an executive's performance and effectiveness is in the area of **Planning/Reflection**. Most executives spend the majority of their time in meetings; on the phone; and, increasingly, in front of a computer reading and replying to emails. All of this generally is tactical and urgent activity.

Now, we're not saying to ignore the day-to-day business. Of course you have to pay attention to this. But, you can't stay in the "swarm" of the business all of the time.

This division of work calls for a plan that makes time for actual planning and reflection — we call it "**The One in 10 Rule of Thumb**." We encourage an executive to spend one hour in planning and reflection for every 10 hours of regular work. (Notice that we purposely did not say "at work" because many executives spend a lot of their time and talent after business hours on company-related activities. And with today's technology, most people just move their office to wherever they are at the moment.)

To be authentic here, the most effective division of planning and work time amounts to one hour of reflection for every five hours of work. But for most people and for a multitude of reasons, that isn't going to be a reality. One hour in 10 is reasonable if you really want to Do What You Do Better.

### Corsini's Point

Each week, strive to spend at least one hour planning and reflecting on your goals (and how to get there) for every 10 hours of work. This is your quiet time to think seriously about the health of the organization, your vision, the company's values and the overall goals you've set (professional and personal). You'll want to include in this time an assessment on where you are with all of **The 7 F's of True Success**. This is key to a life of balance, to a life of *true* success.



## Time for the Other F's

We tell people all the time that we are business coaches who take a whole-person approach to life. We help our clients do what they do better by encouraging them to live a life of balance. This is a life with firm commitments to all of **The 7 F's of True Success** — the **Fundamentals** of work, **Finances**( ), **Family** (and friends), **Faith**, **Fitness**, **Fun** and the **Fusion** of all this.

This attention to life both in and out of your office is **Fundamental** to your success. To simply concentrate on achieving professional success without any regard at all for the other areas of your life is ultimately unfulfilling, unrewarding and unsustainable.

Our 7 F's model is based on the big picture. This larger view includes not only your work, but also your family and friends and acquaintances, your faith and secular communities and time for yourself.

Our passion as coaches is to help executives set goals and then help them track their progress in the **Fundamental** elements of the executives points. But we'll also pay attention each and every month to other important aspects of their life. You'll have goals and to-do's for all of **The 7 F's of True Success**.

We'll address **Finances** and building your financial legacy. We'll realize and celebrate the importance of **Family** and friends. We'll look at how you can walk the talk of your **Faith** in and out of the office. We'll encourage you to make time for mental and physical **Fitness**; what's the good of achieving success if you're in no shape to enjoy it? We'll emphasize the importance of simply having **Fun**. Together, we'll help you accomplish the **Fusion**, or coming together, of all these elements. And know this: There will be the same kind of accountability associated with these goals outside the office as with the Fundamentals of your work at the office.

As so, as we embark on a year of growth, achievement and enlightenment, we challenge you to focus on realizing professional *and* personal success. One without the other is not *true* success.

### Corsini's Point

One of the **Executive Fundamentals of Work™** is making sure you allocate time for the other F's in your life — **Finances, Family, Faith, Fitness, Fun** and **Fusion** (balance of it all). This is the key to *true*—all encompassing—success. This is how you Do What You Do Better.



## Other (You Add Your Own Element)

We've now explored the 12 specific elements of an effective executive's job. These **Executive Fundamentals of Work™** are your keys to Do What You Do Better. We've identified these job basics through thousands of coaching sessions with highly successful executives just like you. We know this system works because we've seen it work—time and again. When you address each of these fundamentals on a regular basis throughout the year, you'll have a viable game plan to achieve success.

Now we are not naive (or narcissistic) enough to believe that we have all the answers when it comes to leadership and being an effective executive. We will keep doing our research, and with real-world executive coaching we'll continue to refine and perfect our guide to your success.

Notice we said "*our* guide to *your* success." Only *you* know for sure what you want to do with your life in and outside your office. So, we've included a final element called, simply, "**Other.**" Do with it what you wish. **This is your reminder to dream and develop your own specific steps to individual success.** Living and coaching with the "life of abundance" principle in mind, we'll always encourage you to come up with your own great ideas. You can do it, and we can help.

So, whether you add your own "fundamentals" here or just adhere to our 12 proven aspects of an effective executive, just remember to always and every day Do What You Do Better.