

# Wonder How Fortune 500 Managers Boost Productivity?

Inspire people to improve performance and build competitive advantage.

By Rajesh Nagjee

## Vectors and Forces of Sailing

*Vector = a strong influence*

**M**any years ago, I had the good fortune of learning to sail from an Olympic level sailor. He was very rigorous and taught me using very detailed diagrams.

He drew out all the vectors and forces every sailor needs to overcome whilst navigating a sailboat, such as the wind, tide, sail, hull, keel, on the one hand and the crew's capability, morale and level of participation on the other hand.

Navigating a business is much like sailing. To move the company forward, CEOs and top Managers struggle to overcome several vectors and forces that constantly act on the business

## 7 Vectors and Forces of Business

In today's complex business environment, where companies are battered by soaring costs, shrinking margins, & brutal competitive pressures, these seven vectors and forces act simultaneously to toss and turn the business from its set course:

### 1. The fast changing business space:

Managers experience an exponential increase in velocity, complexity, unpredictability and cut-throat competitive forces.

### 2. Customers that want more for less:

Customers all over the world want the highest quality, quickest delivery cycles and lowest costs.

### 3. Fierce competitive pressures:

Managers experience a constant pressure to find new differentiators that are relevant, distinctive and cost-effective.

### 4. Rising standards in quality and processes:

Quality is now a mere entry point - in other words, it is no longer a competitive differentiator.

### 5. High performing employees:

Unless companies succeed in inspiring their loyalty, high attrition rates could nearly capsize the boat!

What can capsize the boat?



## Navigating a Business is much like Sailing.

To move the Company forward, CEOs and Managers struggle to overcome several Vectors and Forces that constantly act on the business.

### 6. Cross-cultural teams:

Global business requires global teams and unless managers learn new leadership skills to integrate cultures - motivation, morale and co-ordinated action will approximate flapping sails that fail to harness the power of the wind.

### 7. Temporary teams:

Teams with Velcro-like relationships, which disband after the task is accomplished, may undermine loyalty, attachment and their sense of belonging.

**The sailor must learn how to harness the energy of the wind to combat all the opposing forces** and create a controllable forward motion: *the art of "balancing the boat"*.

Just as the wind acts as one single resource to overcome the effect of all the other forces, is there **one single resource capable of combating all the vectors and forces of business?**

*"Hidden within the enterprise, lies the one single resource that can provide the ultimate sustainable competitive advantage.*

*That hidden resource is called: **The People.***

*Often overlooked in the era of re-engineering, re-organizing, TOM and other ways to increase success, the human capital, - not physical assets or financial capital - holds the key to create sustainable long-term success and growth."*

- Jay Conger, Professor, London Business School: in his masterpiece: 'Charismatic Leader'

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## A 5 part Model to develop a high performance culture

Inspire people to Boost Productivity and develop Competitive Advantage.

Through our work with several clients, we have researched and developed a five part model that delivers superlative and consistent results. Case examples illustrate each step and provide clearer insights. We encourage you to experiment with this simple yet highly effective model:

**1. PURPOSE: Get everyone on the same page.** Articulate and align on the Purpose. Create and maintain a clear and sharp focus on the desired results.

**Symptoms** when focus on purpose is missing: Poor teamwork; Poor integration; Silo mentality; Turf battles; Fiefdom regime

**Case Example:** A Company had gone through two successive acquisitions, leaving everybody confused, disoriented and insecure. At the same time, the latest acquisition had thrown up a golden opportunity, simply because the new Group was 10 times the size of the previous Group Company and had many new product lines.

We worked with all the employees in a program that helped them to diagnose the root cause of a poor sense of belonging by encouraging and enabling them to shift their collective mindset from that of being victims of messy mergers to being captains of a new glorious future, and from 'silo' mentalities to being strong team players.

The company is well on its way to harnessing the new business opportunities with an empowered and bullish workforce that is committed to demonstrating they are a world-class team capable of producing impressive results.

**Result:** The clear and sharp focus on desired results has established strong teamwork to harness the opportunity and increase sales from \$20 million to \$160 million.

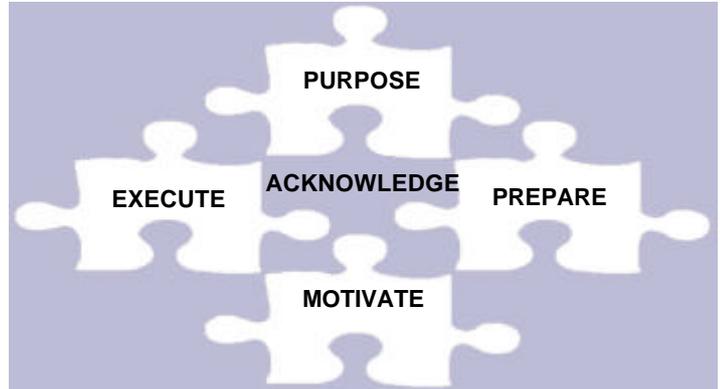
*Find Purpose, the means will follow . . .*  
- Mahatma Gandhi

**2. PREPARE: Prepare for battle.** Equip the operation with tools, talent and technology. Progressively staff the operation with high-quality people, develop effective planning practices, and ensure they have all the tools to get the job done.

**Symptoms** when the Operation is ill-equipped: Low confidence; One man show; Fear and anxiety to act; Exorbitant delays

**Case Example:** A high-end IT solution company had launched an initiative called 'Business Retention' to build repeat sales business from existing customers, in the form of upgrades, additions and development projects.

We discovered that each time the retention team succeeded in establishing a requirement from an



A 5 part Model to develop a high performance culture that inspires people to boost productivity and develop sustainable competitive advantage

existing customer, they had to ask for a formal quotation from the offshore development centre.

The turnaround time averaged three weeks, by which time most leads went cold, putting the team's revenue target in jeopardy.

We worked with the retention team to equip them to act locally, supporting them to develop their ability to create quotations on their own, using experience based thumb rules. Several test cases later, top management gained confidence in the team's ability to turn around quotations and proposals within an acceptable 48 hours.

**Result:** The team developed effective sales closure practices that awakened their go-getting spirit and confidence to surpass their US\$ 0.8 million revenue target.

*Most of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to get their work done.*  
-Peter F. Drucker

*The more you sweat in peace, the less blood you lose in war.*  
- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

**3. MOTIVATE: Create an operational climate that measures performance.** Provide ongoing feedback, motivate people, and remove barriers to performance in an ongoing and systematic fashion.

**Symptoms** when climate for results is missing: Low morale; De-motivation; Defeated; Skeptical & Cynical; Delusions & Ignorance

**Case Example:** A software company, specializing in offering quality outsourcing services to US-based companies, had an interesting problem. Two consecutive business development visits to the US had yielded poor results causing team members to lose heart, become cynical and listless.

We helped them to deeply examine their value offering, to locate glaring weaknesses in their business development strategy, to confront their ineffective selling process, and to completely redesign their approach with upgraded selling skills.

We insisted that they specify, in minute detail, all the measurable and tangible results the sales trip

would yield, and align performance goals to increase their focus, alertness and participation.

Slowly, they regained their natural resilience, and the upbeat mood allowed them to swing out a third time and bring back trial orders worth over US\$ 40,000.

**Result:** They shifted from a regime of 'Trying Our Best' To 'Plan, Act, and Deliver'. They have a chance to win sizable orders on successful completion of these pilot projects.

*We never get what we Expect, but we will always get what we Inspect. Show me how you will measure me, and I will show you how I will behave.*

- Lee Iacocca, Former Chrysler Chairman

**4. ACKNOWLEDGE & APPRECIATE: Nurture relationships with people.** Identify, foster, nurture, and sustain relationships, practice effective communication, and foster cooperation through the practice of trustworthy leadership. **The key is to acknowledge and appreciate people's contribution.**

**Symptoms** when communication and cooperation are poor: Poor working relations; Too many conflicts; Insensitive behaviors; Passing the buck

**Case Example:** A start-up company specializing in mid-market fragrances had run into a serious cash crunch due to a faulty launch strategy.

We discovered that the top team needed to function with a problem solving mentality. They needed to deeply examine the dire situation at hand and learn to communicate in constructive ways. They needed to begin finding solutions without making each other wrong.

We worked with them to develop interpersonal communication skills, learning to acknowledge and appreciate each other's strengths and capacity to add value. Slowly, in this new space of acknowledgment and appreciation, everyone found the courage to acknowledge how they were contributing to the current crisis and declared self-correction initiatives. They began working as a team to create workable action plans and slowly turn around the situation.

The new strategy and action plans involved focusing on only the Latin American market, eliminating the dilution of effort, allowing the team to approach re-sellers at the grass root level, to build sales volume in smaller lot sizes (cases instead of containers)

**Result:** The cordial community-like bonding has enriched and upgraded the culture for high performance. Within three months, the cash flows became positive.

*The distinction between a compliment and acknowledgement is - in the former I give you my opinion; in the latter I share how you make a difference*

- Rajesh Nagjee

**5. EXECUTE: Reduce the gap between what leaders want to achieve and the people's ability to execute.** Develop the discipline of execution that goes beyond mere 'attention to detail' to grow into a powerful discipline of getting things done.

**Symptoms** when execution discipline is missing: Low productivity; Bad attitude; Customer dissatisfaction; Poor attention to detail

**Case Example:** Project Managers in an IT company were constantly told what to do - instead of allowing them to make their own decisions and judgment calls. People kept going to the Controller to get clearance, permission and authorization for every little decision and action - i.e. the Managers were demonstrating very poor delegation.

We worked in a program with all the project managers to enable them to inculcate a sense of ownership and build cooperation within their teams that started to save more than 40% of their time by learning effective delegation.

Within four months, the company was able to rapidly increase the speed of project implementations without increasing project managers

**Result:** The Team has learnt how to execute superbly and get most projects completed on time, resulting in a quarter million dollar cash flow increase, each quarter.

*Execution is the biggest missing link - not simply tactics, but a system of getting things done through questioning, analysis and follow-through.*

- Jack Welch, Legendary CEO, General Electric

## Benefits of this Dynamic Model

Working with clients across diverse industries, we have discovered that this 5 part model which covers - **Purpose, Preparing, Motivating, Acknowledging, and Executing** - helps to tackle most productivity related issues.

**Managers can deeply assess strengths and weaknesses, identify issues blocking growth and develop Action Plans through four benefits:**

### FOCUS

The first benefit is that enormous clarity and focus emerge by bringing out, into the open, all the real weak links and bottlenecks in the system.

### INNOVATION

This clarity and focus inspires everyone to become very creative and innovative to strengthen weak links and break bottlenecks.

### COLLABORATION

Such a collaborative process creates enormous buy-in to implement change initiatives smoothly, without resistance and insecurities.

### BOOST

Slowly, the whole dynamic begins to shift and a boost in morale, productivity and customer loyalty begins to show up.

## The Sad Paradox

The classic 'Knowing-Doing Gap'

"On the one hand, most CEOs when asked, will say that 'People are the most important resource in our company.'

But on the other hand, their companies do virtually nothing to act on and harness this knowledge.

What is the point of having this great wisdom, believe in it and yet do almost nothing to act on it?"

- CEO of a Fortune 500 Company

Most managers already know what effective organizations should do and, if they don't have such knowledge, it is usually easy to find out exactly what they need to know.

What is truly frustrating is to understand why people fail to turn performance knowledge into powerful organizational action.

## How to solve this elusive, enigmatic 'Knowing-Doing Gap'

Can Coaching help to bridge this gap to gain the dynamic model's benefits?

Once, a CEO asked me "Can coaching really make my company achieve success?"

I said "No. Coaching will not make your company achieve success. The only thing that will make your company achieve success is diligent action.

It is like standing on the shore, gazing at the shiny sail boat and wondering: 'what will make me win the sailing race?'

"Coaching won't make you win the race. Nor will thinking or strategizing or planning or discussing. The only thing that will make you win the race is getting into the boat and racing.

Only the action of racing can produce that result. All the rest of it - coaching, planning, and thinking will help you to approach the race in a more elegant, effective and accurate way."

Coaching is about how you play the game. Success is about how you actually played. And as long as we are clear about this minor yet important distinction, we can explore this 5 part model.

It seems quite straight-forward, though this doesn't mean it's an easy trip. You can have a map and know the path but if you never take the trip, you won't get to the destination.

### Take this quick self-test:

- **Purpose:** Does everyone know specifically what top management wants?
- **Preparing:** Do they plan and prepare effectively and ensure they have all the tools?
- **Motivating:** Is the work climate motivating and does it remove performance barriers?
- **Acknowledging:** Do people feel acknowledged, appreciated and turned on?
- **Executing:** Do people demonstrate a strong discipline of execution?

If something is missing or people are feeling stuck, or seem to be driving around in circles, or running out of energy, a Coach will work to get everyone back on the success track.

The trained eyes and ears of a good Coach help everyone see where they are on the journey. The Coach helps to clarify the direction, lay out the route, encourage intentional action, and get over obstacles. A sounding board, mentor and cheerleader, all rolled into one!

A good Coach will help to increase productivity by helping people view themselves as owners of their work and strengthen their sense of belonging. They gain clarity and focus to set their own direction, develop ideas and seize opportunities. They create a space where innovation and creativity begin to thrive by solving the elusive knowing-doing gap.

The boat moves ever so smoothly, when the sails harness the full power of the wind to effortlessly overcome all the vectors and forces.



We help companies to inspire their people to upgrade performance, boost productivity and build sustainable competitive advantage.

Do contact us to explore how we can be of assistance

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**Rajesh Nagjee** of Quantum Consulting has been helping companies, since 1986, to unlock the secrets of building a high performance organization that can handle rapid growth, changing market conditions, and competitive threats. Rajesh holds an MBA from London Business School and has been extensively trained and certified as a business coach and strategy consultant. He brings clients over twenty five years of diversified leadership, business coaching and international consulting experience.