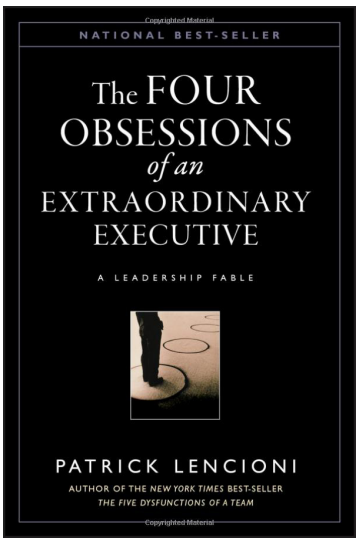
Convene

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

www.convenebooksummary.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick Lencioni

Patrick Lencioni, author of national bestsellers The Five Temptations of a CEO and The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, is also president of the Table Group, a management consulting firm that specializes in organizational and executive development.

The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive

THE NUTSHELL

Most executives spend a considerable amount of time and energy pursuing a competitive advantage. They usually focus on strategy, marketing, or technology, or things like that. However, there is one competitive advantage that is available to every company, yet is largely ignored. This is something called organizational health, and it occupies a lot of the time and attention of extraordinary executives.

A healthy organization is one that has less politics, higher morale and productivity, and lower turnover. Every executive would love his organization to have those qualities; the problem is how to make it happen.

The first step is to recognize that organizational health is simple in theory but difficult in practice. It isn't complicated—it boils down to practicing four basic disciplines on a consistent basis:

Discipline One: Build and Maintain a Cohesive Leadership Team

Building a cohesive leadership team is the most critical of the four disciplines because it enables the other three. It's also the most elusive because it takes a significant interpersonal commitment from an executive team and its leader. The essence of a cohesive leadership team is trust. Trust is revealed by an absence of politics and wasted energy.

Published by Study Leadership, Inc. 1N010 Prairie Path Lane, Winfield, IL 60190
No part of this document may be reproduced without prior written consent.
© 2022 Study Leadership, Inc. All rights reserved

The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive

Discipline Two: Create Organizational Clarity

Most executives profess to understand the importance of creating clarity in their organizations, but often fail to achieve it. This is because they don't look deep enough. Organizational clarity isn't about choosing the right words to describe mission, strategy, or values; it is about agreeing on the underlying concepts that drive them. This kind of clarity provides employees at all levels of an organization with a common vocabulary and set of assumptions about what is important and what is not. An organization that has achieved clarity has a sense of unity around everything it does. It aligns its resources around common values, goals, and strategies, resulting in a powerful synergy that all great companies have.

Discipline Three: Over-Communicate Organizational Clarity

Once clarity is achieved, it must be communicated to employees. This is the simplest of the four disciplines. In organizations that overcommunicate, employees at all levels understand what the organization is about and how they contribute to its success. They may joke, or even complain, about the volume and repetition of information they receive, but they are glad they aren't kept in the dark about what is going on. The three most critical practices of effective communication are repetition, simple messages, and multiple mediums.

Discipline Four: Reinforce Organizational Clarity Through Human Systems

Even a company committed to over-communication can't maintain clarity by communication alone. Clarity must be built into the processes and systems that drive human behavior, so there is practical reinforcement. There are four basic systems in an organization that reinforce clarity:

Hiring Profiles. Healthy organizations look for qualities in job candidates that match the values of the company.

Performance Management. This is the structure around which managers communicate with, and direct the work of, their people. The goal here is to foster good communication and healthy alignment, not just fill out endless forms.

Rewards and Recognition. This system has to do with how organizations reinforce behavior. Rather than "playing favorites," healthy organizations eliminate as much subjectivity as possible from the reward process and use consistent criteria for paying, recognizing, and promoting employees.

Dismissal. Rather than being arbitrary, healthy organizations use their values and other issues related to clarity to guide their decisions about letting people go.

The model described here is a holistic one: each discipline is critical to success. When an executive focuses on them in a disciplined, focused way, without neglecting any, a healthy, effective organization is the result.