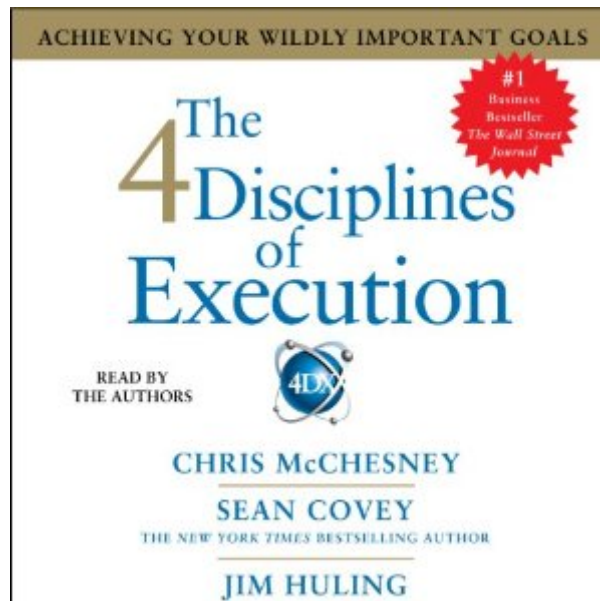


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# The 4 Disciplines Of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals



## Synopsis

An insightful new work from the multimillion-copy best-selling author Sean Covey and the FranklinCovey organization, based on their work with hundreds of thousands of employees and large companies to unveil the essential disciplines proven to help businesses and individuals realize their most important goals. A publishing phenomenon, Sean Covey and the FranklinCovey organization have become one of the most respected brands in the highly competitive world of thought leadership in business. In his latest work, Covey lays out an unprecedented plan for goal-realization that will revolutionize the way we approach our dreams. The 4 Disciplines of Execution provides a simple, proven formula for achieving the goals that every individual or organization needs to reach. From Marriott to the U.S. Navy, Covey and his team have worked with more than 200,000 people in hundreds of organizations to improve performance, identifying and honing four secrets of perfect execution: Focus on the Wildly Important; Act on the Lead Measures; Keep a Compelling Scoreboard; and Create a Cadence of Accountability. By allowing teams to separate those urgent tasks that demand attention merely to keep a company alive - called the "whirlwind" - from new, "wildly important" goals that promise to break new ground, these disciplines empower leaders to accomplish what is by far the most difficult aspect of creating results: executing a strategy that requires a change in behavior. Simply put, this is a work that no business, however small or large, can afford to pass up.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an exceptional book that can be best summarized in one sentence: "Start with the end in

mind." The book addresses how to get a team to focus on ultimate goals and work backwards. As a strategy consultant, I definitely found the book to be a solid read because it takes away much of the daily minutiae that consultants and leaders often get tripped up by (what the authors term the "whirlwind").

**Positives:** Although I already implement many of the methods outlined in the book in my work, I found that the book summarized the methods very succinctly. Of particular importance were the discussions on lead and lag measures (measures we want to ultimately change versus measures we have the power to directly influence), periodic reporting and limiting those meetings to short intervals, encouraging buy-in from employees, and allowing employees to see how their contributions are contributing to the overall goals of the organization.

**Negatives:** My enthusiasm for the 4 disciplines content began to wane over time as the authors rehashed it over, and over, and over again. I found myself asking "didn't I read this point 3 times already?" I began to wonder if the book couldn't have been 1/2 the length. Overall, it wasn't extraordinarily frustrating, but I did find it very redundant. I purchased the Kindle version which is peppered with links to the 4DX paid-membership website. I recognize that FranklinCovey is a business, but as just an ebook reader I found this to be very distracting and self-promotional. I would have favored either the links to be removed or to receive a 1-month complimentary membership so that I could see what the links were referring to.

For whatever reasons, many decision-makers are victims of what Jeff Pfeffer and Bob Sutton characterize as the "Knowing-Doing Gap." That is perhaps what Edison had in mind when expressing what serves as this review's title. Pfeffer and Sutton also have much of value to say about the "Doing-Knowing Gap" (i.e. Aim, Fire, Ready) and to the great credit of the co-authors of this book, the material they provide will enable almost anyone to avoid or escape from either trap.

Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling introduce and then rigorously examine what they characterize as "four disciplines of execution" (4DX): Focus on the "wildly important" rather than on what is urgent (advice Steve Covey offered decades ago), Act on the "lead measures" (i.e. progress of what is done) rather than "lag measures" (i.e. results of what has been done), Keep a "compelling" scoreboard (i.e. one that simply cannot be ignored), and create a "cadence" of accountability (i.e. a cycle and rhythm of frequent accounting in coordination with what I think Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow"). Adopting, indeed embracing these four disciplines requires a total commitment. The challenge to change agents is substantial. As Jim Stuart observes, "To achieve a goal you have never achieved before, [especially a `wildly important goal,'] you must start doing things you have never done before." Most change initiatives either fail or fall far short of original

expectations and, more often than not, the resistance is cultural in nature, the result of what James O'Toole so aptly characterizes as "the ideology of comfort and the tyranny of custom." However, it should be added, many of the wounds that change agents receive are self-inflicted. They over-sell and under-explain why the changes are not only important but imperative. They do little (if anything) to recruit buy-in. Change initiatives are imposed from above (i.e. the C-suite) rather than introduced at the shop floor level where momentum -- and buy-in -- can be increased organically rather than imperially. McChesney, Covey, and Huling introduce 4DX in Section 1, explain how to install it with a team in Section 2, and then explain how to expand installation throughout the given enterprise in Section 3. I commend them on identifying the "what" of achieving "wildly important goals." (Jim Collins would call them BHAGs, or Big Hairy Audacious Goals, but BHAGs tend to be somewhat more general than WIGs.) However, they devote the bulk of their time and energy to explaining "how" to achieve strategic objectives that include these:

- o Assemble a project team and its leader (with full support of C-level executives) and charge them with
- o Selecting the most important goals
- o Formulating metrics for lead and lag measurements
- o Formulating a comprehensive and cohesive "game plan," one that includes benchmarks and deadlines
- o Devising a multi-dimensional communications program
- o Establishing and then sustaining transparency re goals, strategies, metrics, etc.
- o Sharing weekly, monthly, and quarterly updates

Throughout their lively and eloquent narrative, McChesney, Covey, and Huling focus on real people in real-world situations, who are struggling with real questions to answer and real (sometimes daunting) problems to solve. Readers will also appreciate the provision of supplementary resources that include "4DX Frequently Asked Questions," "Bring It Home" observations and recommendations, and a remarkably candid response to "So, Now What?" For some C-level executives, this may well prove to be one of the most valuable business books they will ever read. But I also highly recommend it to those who aspire to reach that level and I have two specific reasons for that recommendation: It will help them to prepare themselves for expanded duties, responsibilities, and (yes) head-snapping challenges; but meanwhile, it will prepare them to add much greater value to the support they provide to the C-level executives in their organization now.

For achieving the goals of a TEAM in business or otherwise this is an excellent book. What I love best about it is that it's not the same old new-age non-concrete smut that's repeated in most self help books. This book focuses primarily on PRACTICAL advice.. real concrete measurable steps. Other books spend 99% of their pages with motivational "You can do it" speech with 1% or even 0% on the HOW to do it. This book flips that around where very little is devoted to the new-age talk and

most of it is devoted to the How aspect. I appreciate that a great deal. Unfortunately I was disappointed to find that virtually the entire book is devoted to How to achieve goals within a team—such as a sales-team for instance or even a sports team. This wouldn't be a big deal to me if the technique could easily be converted to one's personal goals, but it's not that easy because discipline 4 involves being held accountable by others. There is a chapter in the end that talks about implementing the technique in your own personal life and home called "Bringing it Home", but this chapter is only 4 pages long! I didn't find that it delved deeply enough in creating discipline and execution in your own life. The title is deceiving because it says "Achieving YOUR wildly important goals" when in reality it should read "Achieving your TEAM'S wildly important goals". The 4 pages in the 300 page book that deals with your own important goals is not enough to constitute this title.

I am somewhat torn between 2 and 3 stars. It is kind of okay, and initially I was very enthusiastic up to the point when I recognized that there is way too much sales pitch in this book about their methodology. Haven't there been any cases where the method failed completely or at least partially? and what did the authors learn from their failures? No? it's all perfect and works all the time? to me, the arguments are simple, repetitive and as one person mentioned: self-promotional. overall, the book lacks depth.

Don't judge a book by the cover! I was very excited when I saw the book at the book store. But once I got the book and glanced through it, I was very disappointed. It is just like a replica of a training class. And the book itself is confusing. I'm not sure why it is getting so many good reviews. I ended up returning the book.

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