

Azzarello Group Article

Five (extra) things successful executives do really well

The most successful executives rise above the crowd, not only by being better at "the business", but by maximizing their personal effectiveness.

This article is not about being a brilliant strategist or deal maker. It's not about customer focus or execution, or accelerating supply chains. It's also not about optimizing the business model or driving revenues or reducing costs.

You're probably very good at some combination of these things -- as are all of your peers. This is entry stakes for the job. These are the kinds of skills that many executives have in common.

As I've worked with business leaders, I've noticed some "extra" things that the most inspiring ones do really well. These things are a source of their exceptional leadership capabilities.

1. They build and maintain a high level of credibility
2. They have a Personal Leadership Strategy, and use it consistently
3. They are masters at networking
4. They have an ability to focus on, and run a winning game plan
5. They find a way of not getting used up by their job

1. They build and maintain a high level of credibility

In any executive position success is as much about managing your credibility as it is getting your job done well. In fact they go hand in hand.

High credibility builds trust with your team, your peers, your management and your external audiences.

Trust builds power -- And power let's you get things done faster than everyone else.

The bottom line: Executives with high credibility get more done. They are faced with fewer stupid questions, fewer attacks on their budget, and fewer needs to explain what they are doing and why.

DO Better and Look Better

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I often discuss this in the simple terms: Do Better and Look Better.

Always remember you must do both. Your good work will not stand on its own. Even high credibility must be maintained.

Nor does only managing your career and not excelling at your job work. (We all know executives who do this and we wish bad things for them.)

The **magic happens when you deliver exceptional results, AND do the things necessary to convey your accomplishments** in a way that is meaningful to your key audiences.

Manage what you are known for: (the LOOK Better Part)

A big part of building credibility is to **develop and manage your personal brand**, and to manage what you are known for.

It is vitally important to consider all of your stakeholders, understand what they care about, how they perceive you, what they need, and create a specific communication plan to **give them what you want them to know**, in the right form and frequency to get your point across.

Big hint: whatever the form, it's certain to be brief and compelling. Don't be boring! It may be written or may be in person.

The best executives don't leave this to chance. They do it on purpose.

Ideas for action:

- ❖ Articulate your personal brand.
- ❖ Get feedback and clarify what your "best self" looks like --the one you want everyone to see.
- ❖ Commit to a set of specific and consistent behaviors to demonstrate this.
- ❖ Build a stakeholder communication plan. Make a list, commit to a set of regular communications and get it scheduled. Make sure it gives them what they need and reflects your personal brand.

2. They have a Personal Leadership Strategy

Great leaders lead on purpose. When I talk to exceptional leaders they always have a personal strategy for how they lead. They talk about it as much as they talk about their strategy, their business operations, the customers, or the market.

It includes things like:

- ❖ Specific ways of communicating, and getting input.
- ❖ Specific plans and philosophies for how they develop their people
- ❖ They know themselves very well, they can tell you their core values without needing time to think about it.
- ❖ Their teams can tell you what their values are because they communicate and demonstrate them so consistently.
- ❖ They can tell you why what they are doing is important, and why their employees and customers should care personally about it.

Ideas for action:

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- ✦ Take some time to think about and document your core values and develop your personal leadership strategy.
- ✦ Decide how you will communicate it to your team, and more importantly what you will DO differently to demonstrate it.

3. They are masters at networking

Great leaders have great networks.

They build up personal networks of peers inside and outside their company. They develop personal relationships with managers and employees inside and outside their own organization.

The most effective leaders, don't just have a big contact database, **they make an effort to really know people**, and can keep a wide array of people on "stand by" in the event they are needed.

Networks are what allow you to solve the impossible -- there is always someone who can shed light on a problem, as long as you know enough people.

The real masters can deploy a team of people even external to their organization, faster than you can send an email to approve or deny it, because they have invested in building real relationships over time.

Great leaders use mentors and coaches

I've also noticed that the most effective executives are willing to get help. **They do not let their egos stand in the way of getting a better outcome.** They will easily bring in someone smarter or with more experience in a specific area.

They utilize mentors and coaches very well. The outcome is more important than appearing to know everything personally.

Ideas for action:

- ✦ If you're not a natural networker, create some crutches for yourself. Create lists of people you already know and put them into groups for weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly communications. Get it on your schedule and do it.
- ✦ Commit to always meet people who inspire you, tell them so, and offer to help them.
- ✦ Find ways to get to know key people outside your team, and listen to them.

4. They have an ability to focus on, and run a winning game plan.

Watching a great leader at the helm of a growing organization is an inspiring thing.

Great leaders have way of communicating and getting people on board that goes well beyond their personality or their style.

They have an ability to select the winning strategy out of a sea of possibilities. They have the ability to articulate it clearly, but also to communicate the specific game plan that it will take to win. They create focus. **They get the problems out of the way and the right people in the right place.**

They make the plan clear to everyone around them, their team, their peers, their management, their customers and the industry. The quality of the plan and the communication about it inspires people to get on board.

They give everyone a reason to care that is more than a set of objectives and rewards. The combination of a winning game plan and a strong personal brand is more motivating than almost anything -- It becomes a mission.

Ideas for action:

- ✦ Solve the stupid stuff. Deal with internal competition and poor performers; Poll your team to find out what is confusing to them, and clear it up.
- ✦ Make sure you can articulate your strategy in a few key bullet points and communicate it, and the progress against it, over and over again.
- ✦ Always talk about what this means to YOU, and why it is important.

5. They find a way of not getting used up

The most successful executives, while they very engaged and very busy are not the ones that are pissed off and used up.

The higher up you go, the more important who you are as a human is to your success, your effectiveness, and your satisfaction with your work and your life. At some point the best leaders get this into focus and "take themselves to work". This will be the topic of a future article.

Remember, you are the only one that has any motivation whatsoever to make yourself less busy.

Your team, your peers and your management only benefit from your endless output. You need to find a way to "make room" in your job to do the things that it takes in addition to your job, to get ahead, or to enjoy your life more.

Ideas for Action

- ✦ Be relentless about removing time-wasters.
- ✦ Evaluate your delegation strategy on a regular basis.
- ✦ Fly to Tokyo - even if you don't need to go, you'll get time to think, and no one can interrupt you for many hours! (really, schedule time to think, particularly if you are already in Tokyo)

Patty was the youngest person to become a general manager at Hewlett Packard at the age of 33. She ran a \$1B global software business at the age of 35, and she became a CEO for the first time at the age of 38. A few of her roles were the VP and General Manager of HP OpenView, CEO of Euclid Software, and Chief Marketing Officer for Siebel Systems.

Patty is the CEO of Azzarello Group, www.AzzarelloGroup.com a unique leadership development organization focused on helping business leaders actually get done what they want to do, and get a bigger payoff from their hard work. Azzarello Group delivers practical, experience-based tools to business leaders, through products and services including articles, e-books, mentoring programs, executive coaching, public speaking, small business retreats, and business execution workshops.

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