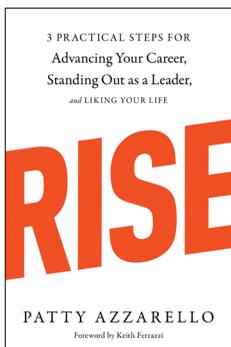


3 PRACTICAL STEPS FOR
Advancing Your Career,
Standing Out as a Leader,
and LIKING YOUR LIFE

RISE

PATTY AZZARELLO

Foreword by Keith Ferrazzi



Read about *Ruthless Priorities*, one of many practical, real-world leadership strategies you will find in *RISE*

The San Francisco BOOK Review:

“Meet Patty Azzarello, a sharply witty businesswoman and mentor who has discovered, and decided to enlighten us with, the secrets to loving your work while maintaining a life worth living.

Rise is packed with key insights that truly rock the foundation of individual and corporate thinking...”

Patty Azzarello's *RISE* is a buzzword-free playbook with startlingly useful strategies for increasing your career value and satisfaction:

DO BETTER: Discover the vital difference between working hard and succeeding. Have more impact. Deal with frustrating obstacles and stupid people.

LOOK BETTER: Be visible, but not annoying. Good work doesn't stand on its own. Build your credibility with the people who can help (or black-list) you.

CONNECT BETTER: Develop your network without being political. Get an insider view of how to get on “The List” of people who get the best opportunities.

Whether you are mid-career, transitioning, graduating, or going back to work after 50, with Patty as your personal mentor, you avoid dead ends, enjoy greater payoff, and suffer less on the way.

Pre-order your copy of *RISE* today
Available May 1, 2012

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Business Leadership Insights



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Introduction

Working vs. Succeeding

I have always been fascinated with really successful people. What actually got them to the top? Was it *being really good at what they do* that set them apart? Or was there more to it?

What struck me was that big success did not just happen to talented, fortunate people unexpectedly. And it didn't happen to the people who tirelessly worked really hard at their jobs.

Highly successful people seemed to get there by breaking through limitations of how their jobs were defined—by conceiving and doing extra things above and around their jobs descriptions.

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The most successful people have some other things in common:

- Yes, they are really good at what they do, but what they are doing seems to suit them personally. They are truly being themselves.
- They stand out as being different from their peers. They are not doing their job *as written*—they are always getting *more, broader-reaching* results than everyone around them.
- They have amazing networks of people they can go to for information and help. In fact, getting help is something they do regularly.
- They command immense respect from others.
- They fail more than normal people. They hear “no” a lot. They screw up. But they get up again. They learn. They keep going.
- They DO stuff. It’s not always dramatic, but there is always a sense of taking action and making steady forward progress.
- Most of them have plenty of money, but that was never the whole point for them. They seem genuinely satisfied with their lives. They have happy families, take vacations, and even enjoy hobbies and community interests.

I also met many rich people who were miserable, and many successful people who were complete jerks, but they didn’t fit my definition of “success,” so I didn’t include them in my model!

Why I wrote this book

1. I want to share. I have had a highly successful career. But I was very fortunate to get a lot of help from smart people who cared about me along the way. Because of that, I was told a lot of important things that no one else was. Without serious, personal mentors, most people don’t ever get to learn about what really matters and what really works. They don’t learn how to avoid the common pitfalls, or get the insights

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

to survive the confusing and rough times.

So I want to give away all the secrets! —all the executive, insider information that is typically only shared with a select few people who get taken under a mentor’s wing.

Stop wasting time!

2. I hate wasting anything! Particularly time, energy, and potential. So I don’t like to see people wasting time, investing their heart and energy, but not getting anywhere—and in fact, burning career capital.

You see, I am maximizer through and through. What I mean by that is that I am driven to find the most direct and effective path to accomplish things, and then do them the best they can be done, whether that is being a CEO or making a tuna sandwich.

As such, I invest enormous amounts of time, thought, and energy to figure out how to do something an easier, faster or better way. I refuse to let my time get burned up on things that don’t make a big difference or have a significant pay off. So I’ve spent a lot of the last 25 years figuring out how to tune my actions and invest my efforts to maximize the payoff for the businesses AND for my career.

I know what works. I got there. I know how you can get there. Through all my learning, mistakes, failures, embarrassments, wins, and advances (and maximizing) along the way—I’ve broken the code. I have defined and developed a concrete, practical, and repeatable approach for building the success you want. I learned how to benefit both your business and your career, and not get killed in the process. And I want to share how you can do it, too.

The best and most important part...

When you start managing your career on purpose, you end up doing a

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

better job! Taking care of your career is not selfish. In order to advance your career, you must add more value to your company. That is the only reliable way to get ahead. It is what your company is waiting for you to do. And it is what I show you how to do in this book.

Get there

It has been a huge lesson for me that break-out success can come from doing relatively simple things. The key is in the *doing*. And the things that have the biggest impact are all very doable; the problem is that they are easy to miss if you don't learn them, and if you don't make a point to do them on purpose.

My repeatable approach for success

It's not that the unspoken rules of success are any big secret; it's just that most executives never bother to talk about them, or share them in a way that is useful and do-able by others. That's where this book and the model I have developed come in.

I want to give you big insights that will shape how you think about your work for the rest of your life, and practical ideas for things you can start doing right now that will make a big difference in your success.

One of the reasons I am so excited about this book is that I have put all the ideas, insights, and necessary actions together in one place and provided the context for how it all works together. Success doesn't come from being good at just one thing. It comes from doing a combination of things on purpose, over time, that all build on each other to create remarkable outcomes. But you have to understand the

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

whole picture to know why each part of it matters.

My Approach for Success has three parts. I am a pretty plainspoken person, so I call them:

DO Better

LOOK Better

CONNECT Better

Big success requires all three, not just in sequence or isolation, but in combination. Missing any one of them is what causes most career stalls or wash-outs. Without taking some care to make progress on all three, you fall behind—you get stuck.

Here is where you can begin to see why hard work alone doesn't cut it. The work is only in the DO Better category. If you burn all your time and energy doing excellent work, you may fail to get recognized (LOOK Better), and fail to build a network of support (CONNECT Better). So your career stalls. You are doing an excellent job of everything that is asked of you, but you still get stuck.

Remember, it's not just about the work.

To add real value to the business you need visibility to understand what is truly valuable to the business, and to build a broad network of support so you can deliver significant results in a big and far-reaching enough way.

DO Better

(work the right way, on the right things, at the right level)

DO Better is about producing exceptional results. DO Better is about working on the right things in the right ways. It's about rising above the work. DO Better is about freeing yourself from your overwhelming, tactical workload, and identifying

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and delivering on the few most critical outcomes, the ones that really count. **DO Better** is about tuning your job, knowing yourself really well, and putting yourself in situations where you can thrive in your work and accomplish exceptional things. It's also about how you lead, build trust, delegate, and make more time and build up your energy. Successful people are not burned out and used up. And they are not the ones who were less busy along the way. They deliver remarkable results and leave room to **DO** even better after that.

LOOK Better

LOOK Better is about standing out. Successful people do their work and produce their results in a way that is meaningful and visible to people that count. They understand which audiences matter most, and they communicate with the right people at the right times, in a compelling way.

LOOK Better is about building personal and professional credibility, and becoming more relevant with your key stakeholders. People with high credibility get more done because they face fewer obstacles. Successful people are widely known for the extra value they contribute to the business, not just doing their jobs really well. They have risen above the work and proven their greater, farther-reaching value to their companies.

CONNECT Better

The most successful people get a lot of help. **CONNECT Better** is about building a broad base of support for yourself, your team, and your work. As you advance, your focus needs

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

to broaden, not deepen.

Successful people are not isolated in their own world. They build the right networks of mentors, partners, and supporters. They know how to get on “The List” of people who get access to the best opportunities.

It’s not about politics; it’s about effectiveness. Successful people build an “extra team” around them, and accomplish big things by working with and through others. The higher you go, the more your value is associated with your network.

It’s not too early to begin or too late to start

There are no prerequisites, hurdles, or qualifications to using the model. Set your sights on adding more value to the business, and start from where you are today.

You have more control than you think

You need to recognize that it is up to you to make things happen in your career, without counting on standard company and management processes. These days, if anything, the standard company and management processes are set against you!

My approach is all about the things *you* can control – how to see them, and how to act on them. You need to do specific things on purpose in all three areas of DO Better, LOOK Better, and CONNECT better over time.

For example, working really hard won’t get you anywhere if no one sees what you are doing or if they think it’s irrelevant. Creating a publicity campaign without the results to back it up will backfire. (We all know those people who are managing their publicity instead of doing their jobs, and we wish bad things for them.)

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You can't build a strong network if you are not credible, and you won't know how to use contributions from your network if you are not focused on doing the most critical few things to move the business forward. It all works together to add value and grow success in your business and career.

The real payoff comes over time—once you feel like you have mastered all three, you set the bar higher, and do them all again. That's where the “Better” comes in.

I learned the hard way

Here's an example of how this works, and what happens if you miss the boat—like I did.

In my late 20's I got my first top management role running a software development organization for a major corporation.

In my first year in that role, I turned around a struggling organization. I built a team that achieved stellar results. We cut the time it took to develop a product in half. We released a higher quality product on time (on the new shorter development calendar). We won the sales force back (they had abandoned us due to lack of confidence). We significantly improved team morale, and restored customer satisfaction.

I thought, “Not bad for a year's work!” It stood out. It was a lot to get done in one year. I felt very proud (and very tired!).

Great work was not enough

Alas, I had nailed only the DO Better Part.

Up until then, I operated with the understanding that if you deliver great results, you get recognition and rewards. The annual review/raise cycle coincided with my one-year anniversary. The company was

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

doing well. I had given generous pay raises to my top performers, and I was excited to have the conversation with my boss about my pay raise—but I got a rude awakening.

When my boss informed me of my raise, I learned that I didn't get one. Zero. He agreed that I had exceeded expectations, and thanked me for what I had accomplished, so I asked him, "What happened?"

Nobody knows you

"Nobody knows you," he replied. "I tried, but nobody knows you."*
"What does that have to do with anything?!!!" <Surprise. Anger. Heavy sigh. Grrrrrr.>

This was indeed a rude awakening. Not only is good work not enough—great work and great results were not enough!

Alas, I had missed LOOK Better entirely. No one outside of my own organization or my boss knew what I had accomplished. That's how I learned that many people in addition to my boss got a say in what happened to me. Oops.

Thus began my journey to learn about all the other stuff you need to do, in addition to exceeding your job description, to get ahead.

I began to focus on the LOOK Better part, building my visibility with the people who counted. I began to seek out and communicate with key executives across the company. I began to understand what they really cared about and tried to find ways to make my work relevant to them. It required a significant effort. So I first had to go back to DO Better, and do *even better* than I was doing before—I still

*My manager in this case was actually pretty awesome, even though this is a sad part of the story. He did three things at this point: (1) He went to bat for me again and got me a small raise right away; (2) He taught me the value of being positive and patient, and seeing the opportunity I had ahead of me instead of getting pissed off and blowing it; and (3) He really helped me build my network so this would not happen again, and taught me the value of doing so.

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

needed to deliver outstanding results, but I needed to do it in a new way so that I could make room to do the extra things I needed to do to LOOK Better.

I began to see results from my LOOK Better effort. I was building credibility and my team was getting recognized for our good work. In fact, our work in reducing product development time and improving quality was so admired that I began to get asked to speak to other organizations to share how we did it. Although that was a big boost to my LOOK Better efforts, it's important to note that this never would have happened if we didn't deliver the outstanding results in the first place—the DO Better part. Doing exceptional work is what gives you something real to create visibility for. They go together.

Over the next couple of years though, I felt my career stall again. What was missing? CONNECT Better. I had not been building my network and my “extended team” —the group of people outside my organization, in other groups and at other levels, who could provide additional support. As great and as visible as my results were, I was not seen as being ready for something bigger because I was not influencing the business outside my own business unit.

Ultimately, I struck gold on CONNECT Better with mentors. In fact, outside my own efforts, mentors had a bigger impact on my success, by far, than anything else. Mentors help you connect at levels and places you would never achieve on your own. Successful people build networks, get help, and have mentors.

The Moral of the Story:

As you advance in a company, success becomes less about the specific

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work you do and more about who you are as a person and a leader. It's about your ability to create broad visibility, credibility, connections, and support outside your organization. The higher you go, the more your results come from enabling people who work for you to deliver great things, *and* working with people around and above you to eliminate obstacles, get ideas, negotiate for resources, secure cooperation, and build momentum on a large scale. It's not about the work you deliver personally.

Where I came from

Growing up, I was a fat kid and a nerd. I was an artist, a singer, an actor, and I was drawn to math and science.

When I started at university, I was registered as a Fine Arts major, but when I showed up to orientation I heard my mother's voice in my head saying (for as far back as I can remember), "You will go to college. You will get a good education and a good job and you will support yourself. Never rely on anyone else to support you. That's your job."

So, fearing I would struggle to earn a good living as an artist, I crossed out "Fine Arts," penciled in "Electronic Engineering," and went to stand in the Electronic Engineering line.

After college, I began my career at Bell Labs in Holmdel, NJ, as an engineer in the robotics research lab. I hated it. I was miserable and thought I had screwed up my life. (More on this and what I did about it later...)

I went on to work in individual roles as a technical sales consultant, a sales rep, a product manager, and a product marketing manager. I did plenty of trade show booth duty. I know what it's like to start in a thankless, entry-level job.

In my late 20's I got my first big multi-level management job

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

running a software development organization of about 150 people. I eventually held executive roles in Marketing and Sales organizations, as well as General Management.

My career really took off when I became Hewlett Packard's youngest general manager at the age of 33. I was running a \$1B software business for HP at 35 and was CEO of a private software company at 38.

I am very lucky to still have the guidance of many mentors and brilliant people who care about me. I could not have achieved any level of success without the support of my parents, sister, and husband. I still enjoy art and I'm an avid cyclist and scuba diver. I donate to charities, and I like expensive shoes. I am no longer fat, but I am still kind of a nerd.

What is here for you in this book:

1. Insights

- All the unspoken rules and secrets I have uncovered along the way
- Things that count most toward building real success, and which common hazards and traps are a waste of time, or can get you blacklisted

2. My Repeatable Approach for Success

- The book is organized into the three sections of my Approach: DO Better, LOOK Better, and CONNECT Better. You will learn how to become "Better" in each of these areas and why it matters so much.
- The model contains key insights that will change the way you view your success and your ability to impact it.
- The model contains practical ideas and useful suggestions you can

do NOW, On Purpose, that will have a dramatic impact on your

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*
success.

3. Resources

- Pointers to important and useful resources I have found most helpful along the way
- My recipe for a tuna sandwich

Who should read this book?

Managers -- don't try advancing in a corporation without reading this book! It will help you get there much faster and with less pain.

If you are already an executive, you will get important ideas for developing your leaders -- and your life will get easier when your whole team reads it.

If you are an individual contributor you'll get lots of practical ideas to increase your effectiveness and preserve your value. You'll also gain valuable insight to what managers worry about which will help you do your job better, and get more recognition.

And anyone in search of a job, a promotion, or a new customer will get strategies to optimize what you deliver and how you are perceived.

Ruthless Priorities

Don't do Everything
Over-achieve where it counts

Too much work!

I spoke to a mid-level manager in a telecommunications company, who was very stressed about the workload being placed on his team. He told me that the executives didn't seem to notice or care that his team was maxed out.

He was very concerned because his team had been working over capacity for some time, and they were getting burned out. He

didn't think even the current level of work was sustainable, but the execs kept piling the work on. He felt terrible about asking his team to take on even more.

To make matters worse, the organization had recently downsized, so he was getting additional work from other teams. They initially told him he could make some hires to fill some key positions, but now they were not allowing the hires.

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

And every time he tried to prioritize and stop doing something, someone got angry. They insisted that he must add it back or they would die, or go over his head to his boss. The worst part about it was that it was mostly his boss who was the one adding the most work and being the most unreasonable.

I have this conversation over and over again from managers in all kinds of companies.

KEY INSIGHT:

*Welcome to being a leader. THIS is your job.
Your job is not to deliver work when everything
lines up to support you.
Your job is to get the most important stuff done,
despite everything that lines up to kill you.*

Your job is to deal with the overload and the lack of personal support, and to negotiate room, keep your boss and stakeholders at bay, and keep your team on board.

This, indeed, is one of the hardest things leaders deal with, and therefore one of the key things that sets the most successful leaders apart.

The most successful leaders are able to fend off the endless demands and get the critical stuff done, no matter who and what is trying to throw them off course.

Don't do everything

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

This is one of the biggest executive “secrets” that is lived out in broad daylight. Once you make it a point to observe this you will notice it everywhere. But it’s not obvious if you are not looking for it.

Simply put, highly successful people don’t do everything. Watch them. They drop the ball on all kinds of things. They disappoint people. Maybe they have disappointed you from time to time.

But if they are successful, the other thing that you will notice is that they have a ruthless focus on the things they care about. It may seem that they are not doing a good job—but maybe that is just on the part that you are looking at. You need to also understand, what else are they doing?

What you are seeing is that they are not doing a *complete* job. And it’s because they have mastered the art of not doing everything. And what they are doing are those few things that will make the biggest impact on the business—and they are doing them very well.

KEY INSIGHT:

The ability to work this way is not a status that is granted to you. These people were not given permission to focus on a few things and drop others. They were not less busy or less constrained than others. They took risks. They worked it out. You need to work it out.

Don’t just accept work—redefine it

The way successful executives get away with not doing everything is that they redefine the work as it comes in, and negotiate a different, smaller, higher value set of work.

There are several examples of this in this chapter.

Here is the really big idea:

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

KEY INSIGHT:

Your job is not just to do what is asked of you. Your job is to deliver the result and to achieve the desired outcome, not to do all tasks as requested. You need to understand that. You need to take charge of what you are willing to work on. You need to re-negotiate. Otherwise you will fall into the trap of trying to do everything.

As a manager, you are expected to catch all the things that come in, analyze them, contain them, and propose a plan that will have the biggest impact on the business. You need to choose from all the work you are getting, and map out the right work to achieve the right desired business outcomes.

KEY INSIGHT:

That is almost never the way the work comes across the table at you.

It's a key part of your job to think through the overwhelming workload and to rework it. Yes, you need to deliver the results, but you don't necessarily need to do it by completing the 10 assignments that come to you as requested. What if combining three of them into one, dropping four, doing three as defined, and adding a new one is the best way to deliver the desired outcome. It's your job to realize that and propose it.

If you just try and do everything that is asked of you, you fail in two key ways:

1. You can't possibly do it all, so you will fail to deliver some things.
2. But more importantly, that's the wrong job anyway. If you don't apply strategic thinking and judgment to tune the workload, your

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

boss doesn't need you. He could just as easily assign all the work directly to your team. Your job is to make sense of it, and prioritize it correctly, and show how a re-defined workload delivers the necessary results. This adds real value, and lets you succeed.

Figure out which few things count most and get them done

Ruthless Priorities are the result of this thinking, of mapping the work to high-value business outcomes. They are those few things that have a bigger impact on the business than anything else. No matter what, those get done. Ruthless Priorities are those few things that you refuse to put at risk.

This doesn't mean that all the other stuff isn't important, too. That's why you have to be Ruthless. Being Ruthless elevates the truly critical stuff above the really important stuff.

So that implies that for everything else you will tolerate some risk. It doesn't mean that you completely drop everything else; it means that you are willing to put everything else at some level of risk to make sure that your Ruthless Priorities are not put at risk at all.

You can consider taking longer to do them, or doing them at a lower level of quality or completeness. It's OK because you are going to do a remarkable job on the things that count more—your Ruthless Priorities.

Your success rides on this

KEY INSIGHT:

Because you are genuinely succeeding on the things that have the biggest impact on this business, you'll be forgiven for the things you don't get done.

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You'll be working hard but it's not about the work. It's about the business impact. You will become known not just for getting things done, but for moving the business forward.

For example, I know a CIO of a retail company who intentionally dropped the ball on many tactical, high priority IT projects, to make sure that the most strategic projects were defined clearly and on track. For almost a year he put all his focus on rolling out a new point of sale system nationwide, that would help the business run new loyalty-based sales promotions. This was going to drive increased revenue to the business. He delayed a large backlog of other user application enhancement requests and infrastructure upgrades, because he realized this new system would have a much bigger impact on the business than all the other things combined.

He understood the business. He took the risk. He said "no" a lot. Although people were annoyed that IT was late on those other things, he was forgiven. He was able to succeed on a key project that opened up a new revenue stream for the business. He created success where it really counted, because he gave himself enough bandwidth to do a great job on the most important thing first.

Do the math

If you try to do 100 things and spread your energy among them, you will never do as good a job at any one thing than someone who is applying 2/3 of their time and energy to just three things. If you try to do everything on your plate to an equal level of quality, you will not give yourself the chance to excel where it matters.

Let's face it. You are not going to get everything on your list done anyway.

So instead of failing to do 30 percent of it, fail to do 40 percent of it on purpose and give your self the ability to score a huge win on something that has a really big impact on the business.

I don't want to imply that this is easy or obvious. The choices you

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

need to make to support Ruthless Priorities are painful, but it's more painful to fail to excel at anything because you try to do everything.

10 Steps to Ruthless Priorities

1. Identify what matters most to the business.
2. Select 1-3 (no more than 5) initiatives or tasks that support it.
3. Focus on what you ARE doing, not what you are NOT doing.
4. Ratify these with your boss.
5. Assign less than 100% of your time.
6. Resist or negotiate away pressures that put them at risk.
7. Over communicate.
8. Socialize the progress.
9. Get them done. Finish things!
10. Recognize and celebrate.

Let's look at each of these in detail.

1. Identify what matters most to the business.

Ruthless Priorities always start with the business objectives. Whatever is happening in your functional area must be considered in the context of what is most important to the business overall. Make sure you know how the business makes money, grows and is being measured.

Get really clear about what is most important to the business right now. Is it revenue growth, profit growth, geographic expansion, operational efficiency, customer care, product quality, competitiveness, or sales channel evolution?

KEY INSIGHT:

You need to get really clear about how all the activity in your team or function truly impacts the business (or

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Standing Out as a Leader *AND Liking Your Life*

doesn't really). You need to connect the dots between your workload and the most important and significant business outcomes.

I remember once when a product team in a business software company was running around to the point of chaos trying to react to competitive pressures in the market. They were being told by the sales force that they were losing deals based on not having the right features in the product. They were trying to respond to every sales situation where the company was competing and losing.

Finally, a program manager on the team stepped back and did a more thorough analysis as to what was happening in these deals. She realized that the product issues were not the primary reason they were losing business. They had a very serious channel conflict issue. Basically, their dealers were promoting the competitor's product much more aggressively, because they made more money.

The company had a bad agreement with a big distributor who was undercutting the rest of their dealers.

With this information about what was really impacting the business, the program manager got the sales organization focused on fixing the channel issue, and got the product team back to developing a much more strategic competition killer. When they stopped trying to respond to everything, they were able to build a highly competitive product. That resulted in a much bigger impact on the business than trying to do everything.

Being really clear about the business impact of your work is the context and the backdrop for adding more value. This is also the specific test to evaluate, choose, and negotiate your Ruthless Priorities.

2. Choose your Ruthless Priorities.

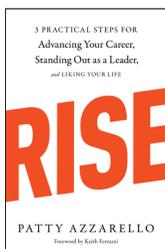
In the beginning, before you go through this exercise, it always seems like everything is really important. Nothing ever offers itself as a

lower priority.

Identifying and sticking to Ruthless Priorities is one of the hardest things you need to do. Not only is no one giving you permission to focus, people are mostly fighting against you—maybe even your boss.

But if you don't focus, you will work very hard but fail to deliver significant business outcomes. So you will fail. This is one of those lonely leadership moments. All leaders face this. The most successful ones get on top of it. They rise above the work.

Learn more about *Ruthless Priorities* and other strategies to Succeed at Work and Like Your Life in *RISE*



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