

## The 4 Disciplines of Execution

*by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and Jim Huling*

### KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Execution of strategic plans often proves to be far more challenging than most leaders expect because our employees often get lost in the “whirlwind” of daily activities which keep us from focusing on our most “Wildly Important Goals”/WIG.
- The best strategy in the world quickly succumbs to a leader’s decision to try to focus simultaneously on too many top priorities; 2-3 “Wildly Important Goals” are all that even highly functioning teams can achieve at the same time.
- The 4 Disciplines of Execution are simple steps to create predictable progress on the most challenging tasks that you are responsible to accomplish.

Throughout my career in military medicine, I have seen an increasing emphasis placed on not only “providing high quality care to our patients” but also on the seemingly endless metrics that inform us whether or not we are actually providing this high level of care. I spend my days trying to improve a myriad of measures (Continuity with PCM, decreased ED Usage, HEDIS, ORYX, Provider Productivity, Enrollment, Patient Satisfaction, and Soldier Readiness). In fact, in the Army’s current model (IRIS) for funding Medical Facilities, 23 of the 44 metrics that shape how much money our hospital will get are directly related to the “Primary Care Service Line” and the care that we give through our PCMH homes. I feel like I am at an arcade playing “Whack a Mole;” we “fix” one metric, but then others go below the target. Over time, we may hear our Hospital Leadership say things like “your progress on achieving Continuity targets has ‘flat-lined’” or “I see incremental progress, but we need to do better.” It’s enough to drive you crazy!

With my struggles to execute all the goals being asked of me, I wanted to find

some wisdom that would help me be more successful, and I think I have found a book that provides us with the tools to more consistently execute the critical tasks assigned to us. The following is a brief summary of the key points from the excellent book The 4 Disciplines of Execution:

### STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

There are two principal things a leader can influence when it comes to producing results: your strategy (or plan) and your ability to execute that strategy. Which area do most leaders struggle with? Almost all leaders will agree that it is execution. But what do leaders study during business classes or in an MBA? Strategy... so, it is no surprise that leaders struggle more with execution.

### THE WHIRLWIND

The real enemy of execution is your day job/the “whirlwind;” it’s the massive amount of energy that’s necessary just to keep your

operation going on a day-to-day basis; and, ironically, it’s also the thing that makes it so hard to execute anything new. The whirlwind robs you of the focus required to move your team forward; it is urgent and it acts on you and everyone working for you every minute of every day. When urgency and importance clash, urgency will win every time. Executing in spite of the whirlwind means overcoming not only its powerful distraction, but also the inertia of “the way it’s always been done.”

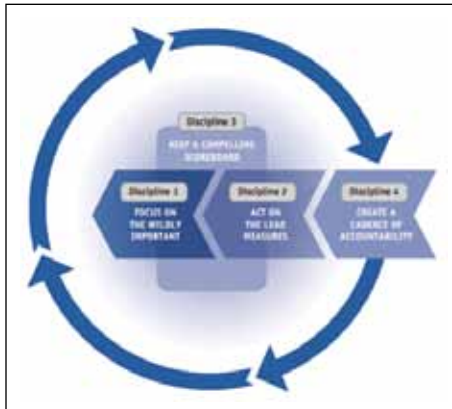
### THE PROBLEM OF EXECUTION

Leaders often focus too much on strategy but not enough on execution. Trying to focus on too many priorities means you are not focusing on any of them. From the authors’ many years of consulting experience, organizations achieve an inverse number of goals compared to the total number of goals that they designate, as shown in the following chart:

*continued on page 26*

Number of Goals	2-3	4-10	11-20
Goals Achieved with Excellence	2-3	1-2	0

## 4DX MODEL



### DISCIPLINE 1: FOCUS ON THE WILDLY IMPORTANT

Focus your finest efforts on the one or two goals that make all the difference, instead of giving mediocre effort to dozens of goals. Many of our goals are important, but only one or two are WILDLY IMPORTANT. Execution starts with focus; without it, the other 3 disciplines won't be able to help you "There will always be more good ideas than there is the capacity to execute." The best ever example of a clear "WIG" is from President John F. Kennedy: "We will put a man on the moon and return him home safely by the end of the decade."

### DISCIPLINE 2: ACT ON LEAD MEASURES

Apply disproportionate energy to the activities that drive your LEAD Mea-

asures. While a LAG measure tells you if you have achieved the goal, the LEAD measure tells you if you are likely to achieve the goal; LEAD measures need to be both predictive and influenceable.



### DISCIPLINE 3: KEEP A COMPELLING SCOREBOARD

Make sure everyone knows the score at all times, so that they can tell whether or not they are winning. The book has numerous excellent examples of scoreboards that keep your team informed of their progress. This Discipline is really about the Discipline of "engagement" of your entire team. Don't allow the distraction of the "whirlwind" to take focus off your WIG!

### DISCIPLINE 4: CREATE A CADENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The "Cadence of Accountability" is a frequently recurring cycle of accounting for past performance and planning

Throughout my career in military medicine, I have seen an increasing emphasis placed on not only "providing high quality care to our patients" but also on the seemingly endless metrics that inform us whether or not we are actually providing this high level of care.

to move the score forward. Optimal frequency is weekly. Duration is short, 30 minutes is ideal. WIG Meeting Elements:

1. Account: Report on commitments that you made in the previous week.
2. Review Scoreboard: Learn from successes and failures. What do our LEAD and LAG measures tell us about the changes we have been making?
3. Plan: Clear the path and make new commitments for the coming week.

My Primary Care Team at Madigan is currently utilizing these Disciplines to improve our "3rd Next Available Acute Appointment" metric, and the principles described in this book have helped us to focus our efforts and make significant progress in a short time. Long term, we plan to keep "PCM Continuity" as our top "Wildly Important Goal," as this metric drives so many of the other metrics that matter to our patients.