

Notebook - The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive: 12 (J-B Lencioni Series)

kindle

Lencioni, Patrick M.

Page xi | Highlight

If everything is important, then nothing is.

Page xii | Highlight

I believe that all successful organizations share two qualities: they are smart, and they are healthy. An organization demonstrates that it is smart by developing intelligent strategies, marketing plans, product features, and financial models that lead to competitive advantage over its rivals. It demonstrates that it is healthy by eliminating politics and confusion, which leads to higher morale, lower turnover, and higher productivity.

Page xii | Highlight

the majority of their time and energy making their organizations smarter, with relatively little effort directed toward making them healthier.

Page xii | Highlight

healthy organizations have a way of making themselves smarter. Even if their ideas are temporarily inferior to those of competitors, they are usually humble and efficient enough to recognize their deficiencies and make changes in their plans before it is too late.

Page xiii | Highlight

critical—no one but the head of an organization can make it healthy.

Page 20 | Highlight

One of the areas that he most adamantly insisted on being involved in, and which had a profound connection to each of the four disciplines, was the hiring of new employees.

Page 20 | Highlight

every other Monday morning he spent two full hours with new hires, welcoming them to the company and orienting them to the Telegraph way of life.

Page 25 | Highlight

humble, hungry, and smart.

Page 28 | Highlight

Jamie missed out on Rich's orientation program, which would prove costly.

Page 35 | Highlight

but I'm afraid it's about your behavior more than anything else. I'm not sure that you've developed real, honest relationships with the rest of my team, and frankly, I don't feel like I know how to connect with you.

Page 35 | Highlight

need you to be more open with the team. I want them to feel like you're not holding anything back. That means you need to be able to admit when you make mistakes, and call it out when they do. I just don't see you doing that."

Page 61 | Highlight

Before we let Jamie do the team-building exercise, let's talk about the cascading communication plan."

Page 97 | Highlight

"Build and maintain a cohesive leadership team."

Page 98 | Highlight

when Rich thought about making his team cohesive, he wanted them to know one another well

Page 98 | Highlight Continued

enough so that they didn't hold anything back.

Page 100 | Highlight

DISCIPLINE ONE: BUILD AND MAINTAIN A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM.

Page 101 | Highlight

DISCIPLINE TWO: CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL CLARITY.

Page 101 | Highlight

eliminating confusion within the company, especially at the executive level.”

Page 102 | Highlight

IDENTITY, VALUES, MISSION, MAJOR GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Page 103 | Highlight

“Identity is about the company's hiring values and its underlying motivation.”

Page 104 | Highlight

He was considered the cultural filter, and virtually the only thing he looked for in a candidate was cultural fit.”

Page 104 | Highlight

during interviews, they asked behavioral questions to see if the candidate could cite examples that demonstrated that he or she fit the values.”

Page 105 | Highlight

Rich would list the major objectives for each quarter on a board, and then he'd ask everyone to

think of every possible thing that had to happen for each goal to be reached. When they had exhausted every activity, they divided them up among staff and began their individual goal-setting process there.”

Page 105 | Highlight

“As a result of the clarity they had around roles and responsibilities, things rarely slipped through the cracks, and people didn’t step on each other’s toes too often.”

Page 109 | Highlight

‘Over-communicate the identity and direction.’”

Page 110 | Highlight

first there’s the orientation of new employees. I was lucky enough to miss out on his spiel, but Rich and a few members of his staff take two hours every other week to tell new employees about the history of the company, the values, the purpose, and everything else.”

Page 112 | Highlight

the minute you make any of this feel like a marketing campaign, it loses its—what was the word he used? It loses its ‘groundedness.’ He would say that ‘it starts to feel like a slogan more than a reality.’”

Page 112 | Highlight

DISCIPLINE THREE: OVER-COMMUNICATE ORGANIZATIONAL CLARITY.

Page 119 | Highlight

DISCIPLINE FOUR: REINFORCE ORGANIZATIONAL CLARITY THROUGH HUMAN SYSTEMS.

Page 120 | Highlight

BE COHESIVE. BE CLEAR. OVER-COMMUNICATE. REINFORCE.

Page 121 | Highlight

man obsessed

Page 121 | Highlight

“Well, Rich would say that this one is about building a structure and a system to preserve Telegraph’s culture. He used to say that ‘culture lives in the way things get done.’”

Page 122 | Highlight

the structure he’s thinking about has to do with human systems and operations—things like interviewing and hiring people, managing their performance, rewarding them, and,” Jamie almost winced before finishing the sentence, “letting them go.”

Page 122 | Highlight

“They put every candidate through at least five interviews. They insist on using a core set of behavioral questions, asked in slightly different ways by different people. And then they make all the interviewers get together in a room and debrief.”

Page 122 | Highlight

“They do this for vice presidents, consultants, even

Page 123 | Highlight

“No, pretty much everyone did their forms on time. It was only one page with three simple

Page 124 | Highlight

“The questions were, ‘What did you accomplish?’ ‘What will you accomplish next?’ ‘How can you improve?’” “That’s it?” “Not quite. The question on the back was, ‘Are you embracing the values?’”

Page 125 | Highlight

“Every manager had to spend ninety minutes in a room with each of his employees, going over the report.”

Page 135 | Highlight

It was his appreciation for simplicity and discipline that made him an extraordinary executive.

Page 135 | Highlight

success is not so much a function of intelligence or natural ability, but rather of commitment to the right disciplines.

Page 135 | Highlight

We can become poor leaders, more like Vince, or even Jamie, if we let ourselves become distracted by overly tactical and political matters.

Page 140 | Highlight

A healthy organization is one that has less politics and confusion, higher morale and productivity, lower unwanted turnover, and lower recruiting costs than an unhealthy one. No leader I know would dispute the power of these qualities, and every one of them would love his or her organization to have them. Unfortunately, most executives struggle with how to go about making this happen.

Page 143 | Highlight

The essence of a cohesive leadership team is trust, which is marked by an absence of politics, unnecessary anxiety, and wasted energy.

Page 143 | Highlight

Although most executives I’ve worked with are aware of the existence of some political behavior within their teams, they almost always underestimate its magnitude and the impact it has on the company and its people. This blindness occurs because what executives believe are small disconnects between themselves and their peers actually look like major rifts to people deeper in

the organization. And when those people deeper in the organization try to resolve the differences among themselves, they often become engaged in bloody and time-consuming battles, with no possibility for resolution. And all of this occurs because leaders higher in the organization failed to work out minor issues, usually out of fear of conflict.

Page 143 | Highlight

When an executive decides not to confront a peer about a potential disagreement, he or she is dooming employees to waste time, money, and emotional energy dealing with unresolvable issues.

Page 144 | Highlight

More than anything else, cohesive teams are efficient. They arrive at decisions more quickly and with greater buy-in than non-cohesive teams do. They also spend less time worrying about whether their peers will commit to a plan and deliver. One of the best ways to recognize a cohesive team is the nature of its meetings. Passionate. Intense. Exhausting. Never boring.

Page 145 | Highlight

Finally, cohesive teams fight. But they fight about issues, not personalities. Most important, when they are done fighting, they have an amazing capacity to move on to the next issue, with no residual feelings.

Page 145 | Highlight

Unfortunately, many executive teams never achieve this. They yearn for easy, peaceful staff meetings as a retreat from their hectic schedules. What they end up getting are tedious and uninspiring show-and-tell sessions where department heads review the details of their responsibilities.

Page 146 | Highlight

What is most important is that team members get comfortable letting their colleagues see them for who they are. No pretension. No positioning.

Page 146 | Highlight

| Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Page 146 | Highlight

| The Wisdom of Teams.

Page 147 | Highlight

| The Wisdom of Teams

Page 147 | Highlight

| Teams at the Top)

Page 147 | Highlight

| The Five Temptations of a CEO.

Page 147 | Highlight

| Personal histories.

Page 147 | Highlight

| People who understand one another's personal philosophies, family histories, educational experiences, hobbies, and interests are far more likely to work well together than those who do not.

Page 148 | Highlight

| Once a team has achieved some level of cohesiveness, its ability to maintain it rests on its willingness to continually address core issues, and its discipline around having regular, frequent, and in-person meetings.

Page 148 | Highlight

it is nevertheless critical that an executive team not give in to the temptation to scale back meetings.

Page 148 | Highlight

my experience indicates that a group's cohesiveness has far more impact on success than its collective level of experience or knowledge.

Page 148 | Highlight

accomplished executives who could not compete with less experienced and relatively unknown teams that were able to create environments of trust and passion.

Page 149 | Highlight

Are meetings compelling? Are the important issues being discussed during meetings?

Page 149 | Highlight

Do team members engage in unguarded debate? Do they honestly confront one another?

Page 149 | Highlight

Do team members apologize if they get out of line? Do they ever get out of line?

Page 150 | Highlight

teams that can genuinely forgive and ask forgiveness develop powerful levels of trust. Do team members understand one another?

Page 150 | Highlight

Do team members avoid gossiping about one another?

Talking about a colleague who is not present is not gossip. Gossip requires the intent to hurt

someone, and it is almost always accompanied by an unwillingness to confront a person directly with the information being discussed.

Page 151 | Highlight

DISCIPLINE TWO: CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL CLARITY

Page 151 | Highlight

But organizational clarity is not merely about choosing the right words to describe a company's mission, strategy, or values; it is about agreeing on the fundamental concepts that drive it. Why is this so important? Because it provides employees at all levels of an organization with a common vocabulary and set of assumptions about what is important and what is not. More important, it allows them to make decisions and resolve problems without constant supervision and advice from managers. Essentially, organizational clarity allows a company to delegate more effectively and empower its employees with a true sense of confidence.

Page 153 | Highlight

Employees in these organizations seem to have amazing levels of autonomy. They know what their boundaries are and when they need guidance from management before taking action. Their ability to make decisions for themselves creates an environment of empowerment, traction, and urgency. If this is so powerful, then why don't all executives create clarity in their organizations? Because many of them overemphasize the value of flexibility.

Page 154 | Highlight

Behaviorally, achieving real clarity in an organization requires an executive team to demonstrate commitment and courage. The teams I have worked with that do this are not necessarily smarter than their competitors, nor are they more experienced within their industries. However, they are definitely less afraid of being wrong.

Page 154 | Highlight

Why does the organization exist, and what difference does it make in the world? What behavioral values are irreplaceable and fundamental? What business are we in, and against whom do we compete? How does our approach differ from that of our competition? What are our goals this

Page 154 | Highlight Continued

month, this quarter, this year, next year, five years from now? Who has to do what for us to achieve our goals this month, this quarter, this year, next year, five years from now?

Page 156 | Highlight

Why Does the Organization Exist, and What Difference Does It Make in the World?

Page 157 | Highlight

What Behavioral Values Are Irreplaceable and Fundamental?

Page 157 | Highlight

want to claim that they are equally committed to quality, innovation, teamwork, ethics, integrity, customer satisfaction, employee development, financial results, and community involvement.

Page 157 | Highlight

fundamental values are not chosen from thin air based on the desires of executives; they are discovered within what already exists in an organization.

Page 158 | Highlight

think about the two or three employees whom they believe best embody what is good about the firm. These would be people whom they would gladly clone again and again,

Page 158 | Highlight

the wrong way to determine an organization's values is to survey the employee population.

Page 159 | Highlight

What Business Are We in, and Against Whom Do We Compete?

Page 159 | Highlight

that word mission often creates confusion.

Page 159 | Highlight

Whatever term it chooses, a company needs to be able to articulate exactly what it does, whom it serves, and against whom it competes.

Page 160 | Highlight

How Does Our Approach Differ from That of Our Competition?

Page 161 | Highlight

The key is taking the time to look at all of the decisions that the company has made, even the obvious ones, and identify those that, when combined, make the company uniquely positioned for success. What Are Our Goals This Month, This Quarter, This Year, Next Year, Five Years from Now?

Page 161 | Highlight

At the highest level, an organization should have one or two basic thematic goals for a given period. These might include survival, efficiency, professionalism, or growth.

Page 162 | Highlight

Beneath a thematic goal there should be major strategic goals that span the organization and support its overall theme.

Page 162 | Highlight

Getting specific about exactly what needs to be achieved, even in the face of uncertainty, is one mark of a healthy organization.

Page 163 | Highlight

strategic goals need to be aligned with an organization's permanent measures of success, which are metrics.

Page 163 | Highlight

revenue, expenses, profit, employee turnover, employee satisfaction, and productivity.

Page 163 | Highlight

Many organizations make the mistake of using metrics in place of thematic and strategic goals.

Page 163 | Highlight

Thematic goals: What is this period's focus? Major strategic goals: What are the key areas which relate to that focus, and exactly what needs to be achieved? Metrics: What are the ongoing measures that allow the organization to keep score?

Page 164 | Highlight

Who Has to Do What for Us to Achieve Our Goals for This Month, This Quarter, This Year, Next Year, Five Years from Now? One of the greatest problems that organizations encounter when it comes to achieving clarity is the inability to translate company goals into concrete responsibilities for members of an executive team.

Page 164 | Highlight

In some cases, roles are unclear because executive teams begin the process of establishing individual responsibilities before organizational goals have been set.

Page 166 | Highlight

Within companies that effectively over-communicate, employees at all levels and in all departments understand what the organization is about and how they contribute to its success. They don't spend time speculating on what executives are really thinking, and they don't look for hidden messages among the information they receive. As a result, there is a strong sense of common purpose and direction, which supersedes any departmental or ideological allegiances they may

have. Employees in healthy organizations may joke, or sometimes even complain, about the volume and repetition of information that they receive. But they'll be glad that they are not being kept in the dark about what is going on.

Page 168 | Highlight

The first step is to embrace the three most critical practices of effective organizational communication: repetition, simple messages, and multiple mediums.

Page 168 | Highlight

Repetition. The issue here has to do with the fear of repetition. Most executives I work with don't like to repeat the same message again and again over time. This is because they are relatively intelligent people who don't want to underestimate the intelligence of their audience. And so they make the dangerous assumption that once a message has been heard, it is both understood and embraced by employees.

Page 168 | Highlight

Some experts say that only after hearing a message six times does a person begin to believe and internalize it.

Page 169 | Highlight

That is not to say that employees are simple people, but rather that they are inundated with information every day. What they need from leaders is clear, uncomplicated messages about where the organization is going and how they can contribute to getting there.

Page 171 | Highlight

After virtually every executive staff meeting that takes place in any organization, there are key decisions that have been made and issues that have been resolved, which need to be communicated. Unfortunately, the executives often leave those meetings with different interpretations of what has been decided and what is to be communicated.

Page 172 | Highlight

The key is to take five minutes at the end of staff meetings and ask the question, “What do we need to communicate to our people?” After a few minutes of discussion, it will become apparent which issues need clarification and which are appropriate to communicate.

Page 172 | Highlight

How Do You Assess Your Organization for Effective Over-Communication? This is pretty simple. Ask employees if they know why the organization exists, what its fundamental values are, what business it is in, whom its competitors are, what its strategy is, what the major goals for the year are, and who is responsible for doing what at the executive level.

Page 173 | Highlight

build a sense of that clarity into the fabric of the organization through processes and systems that drive human behavior.

Page 173 | Highlight

doing this without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

Page 173 | Highlight

An organization that uses human systems properly maintains its identity and sense of direction even during times of change. It ensures that employees will be hired, managed, rewarded, and, yes, even fired for reasons that are consistent with its organizational clarity.

Page 175 | Highlight

Hiring Profiles.

Page 175 | Highlight

They ask behavioral questions of interviewees and probe for evidence that the candidate has the potential to fit within the organization.

Page 175 | Highlight

paying special attention to the assessments of colleagues regarding the candidate's alignment with fundamental values.

Page 175 | Highlight

Contrast this to most organizations where hiring is done in a "Did you like him?" manner. Interviewers make decisions based on their gut-level reactions to candidates, and with relatively little objective criteria about whether the employee matches the organization's culture. Instead, they rely on résumé items and technical skills, which alone are poor indicators of future success. Performance Management.

Page 176 | Highlight

most organizations place the wrong kind of emphasis on performance management, and in the process they lose the true essence of what performance management is about: communication and alignment.

Page 176 | Highlight

Another common problem has to do with the generic nature of many performance management systems.

Page 176 | Highlight

The best performance management systems include only essential information, and allow managers and their employees to focus on the work that must be done to ensure success.

Page 177 | Highlight

Rewards and Recognition.

Page 177 | Highlight

Healthy organizations eliminate as much subjectivity and capriciousness as possible from the reward process by using consistent criteria for paying, recognizing, and promoting employees.
