

A BIAS FOR ACTION

How Effective Managers Harness Their Willpower, Achieve Results, and Stop Wasting Time

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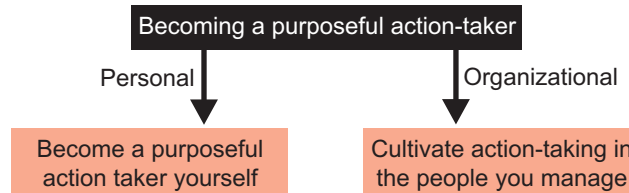
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MAIN IDEA

Great managers and effective business leaders have an inbuilt bias for action. They don't dissipate their time and energy on peripheral issues – like complaining about overwhelming workloads or trying to work despite tight budgets, barriers, setbacks, distractions and unsupportive bosses. Instead, good managers get to work purposefully on the organization's most important work – cutting costs, improving efficiency and encouraging innovative thinking – and get things done. Good managers harness willpower to improve both their individual performance and that of the organizations they manage. In essence, great managers stop trying to do more things and instead focus on getting the right things done.

The process of becoming a purposeful action taker actually has an organizational and a personal dimension:



Great managers succeed not because they are good at motivating others or giving public addresses, but because they can and do harness personal willpower to achieve their personal goals, and then find ways to help others do the same. The effective application of willpower is what differentiates the achievers from the also-rans.

1. The personal dimension of purposeful action-taking Pages 2 - 5

To act purposefully means to take consistent, conscious and energetic actions which work towards achieving a goal. This is not a superficial effort to do busywork but a deliberate attempt to eliminate distractions and produce results. People who achieve this in practice do four things better than others:

1. They possess energy and focus. They make a deliberate attempt to act towards clear goals.
2. They harness their willpower. They aspire to execute disciplined, well-directed actions.
3. They have clear mental pictures of their intentions. Purposeful action-takers make deliberate choices.
4. They overcome the most common traps and snares. They ignite their own dreams first and foremost.

Overall, purposeful action takers lead from the front. They influence others by being a good role model to emulate.

Personal

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Becoming
a
Purposeful
Action
Taker | 1 | Develop your energy and focus |
| | 2 | Build your reserves of willpower |
| | 3 | Align your emotions with your goals |
| | 4 | Overcome the traps of inaction |

2. The organizational dimension of purposeful action-taking Pages 6 - 8

To build an organization that supports and encourages purposeful action-taking, managers and leaders must do three things:

1. Create space for autonomous actions to occur, so people have enough freedom to act.
2. Build processes which support action taking into the culture of the organization itself.
3. Develop a culture which celebrates and encourages purposeful action-taking.

In all, creating an organization that acts purposefully isn't something that can be achieved with quick fixes. Rather, it will require a long journey where the values and benefits of acting purposefully are extolled and then enshrined as worthy of emulation. Embedding a bias for action within an organization is difficult and challenging, but it can and should be done.

Organizational

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Cultivating
Purposeful
Action
Taking in
Others | 1 | Overcome the internal challenges |
| | 2 | Weave action-taking into the culture |
| | 3 | Free your people to act accordingly |

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