

MUST-WIN BATTLES

How to Win Them, Again and Again

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The Web site for this book is at www.mustwinbattles.com.

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MAIN IDEA

Must-win battles (MWBs) are the three to five key battles which your organization must win in the marketplace in order to achieve your revenue and profit targets and other key business objectives. In contrast to the numerous battles which would be nice-to-win, these must-win battles are the key to maintaining and regularly refreshing your organization's competitive advantage.

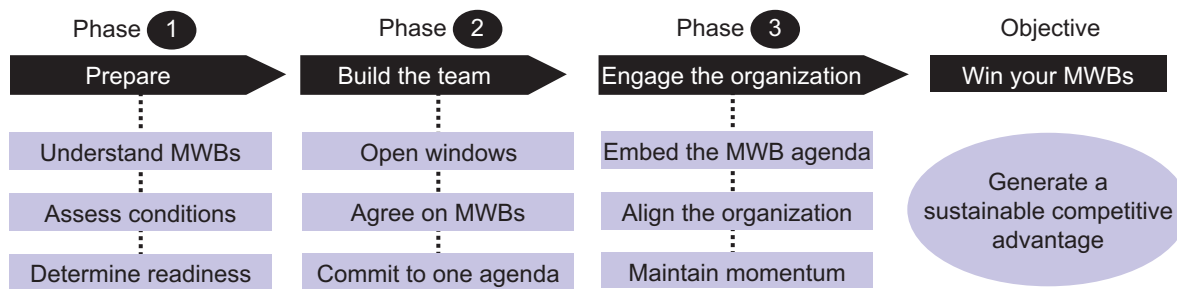
It will usually be difficult for an organization to identify and agree on its list of MWBs. People will have different priorities, even among the members of the senior management team. Furthermore, over a period of time, new corporate battles will emerge and come to the fore as a result of changes in the marketplace. For this reason deciding on and then organizing to win your organization's MWBs will be an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. MWBs always have an intellectual element – selecting the right MWBs and then focusing on them – and an emotional element – creating an effective team and then allowing that team to focus on winning MWBs.

Nothing is more frustrating for an organization than when its management team has a “flavor-of-the-month” approach – where one new management theory is adopted for a short time and then abandoned for the next management theory which comes to the management's attention ad infinitum. Focusing instead on must-win battles will provide continuity and much needed focus, and will avoid the dissipation of energy and resources on management fads.

“Most MWBs focus on market-related activities: developing and introducing new products, reviving a brand, and so on. By definition, these battles are important. But competitors will respond to your moves – doing their best to copy or exceed your efforts. It is very difficult, in short, to create a sustainable competitive advantage. A better market objective in today's world is often to create a renewable competitive advantage. But we believe you can use your MWB journey to create a real sustainable competitive advantage. This is the creation of a management team that truly functions as a team. If you can build your key players into a real team, you will have a competitive advantage that will be very difficult for competitors to match. Your top team, operating as a team, should be able to implement new initiatives more quickly and with more force than competitors. Having a sustainable competitive advantage in the way people work together at the top of your organization should allow you to create a series of renewable competitive advantages in the marketplace.”

– Peter Killing, Thomas Malnigh and Tracey Keys

The Must-Win Battle Journey



Phase 1 – Prepare Pages 2 - 3

Before starting out on the must-win battle journey, you need to prepare your leadership team and your organization. This requires that you lay a good foundation by:

- Developing awareness within your organization of the importance of MWBs.
- Making a realistic assessment of the conditions facing your business at the outset.
- Determining whether your leadership is ready to lead the MWB journey.

Phase 2 – Build the team Pages 4 - 5

Once you understand where you're starting from, you can then start designing a MWB kick-off event which will start the ball rolling. This kick-off event can involve anywhere from 10 to 40 managers and needs to be held offsite where managers are away from the office both mentally and physically. The kick-off event will center on three clusters of activities:

- Building shared understanding of the challenges by opening windows.
- Discussing and deciding on your organization's three to five MWBs.
- Getting everyone to commit to one single agenda and to work together.

Phase 3 – Engage the organization Pages 6 - 8

If you're not careful, within two or three weeks the day-to-day pressures may make it seem like the kick-off event never even occurred. To prevent this, leaders need to get their people committed to doing their part in executing what is required. In practice, this will require that you:

- Embed the new MWB agenda at the very heart of the organization.
- Carefully get the entire organization on board and doing what will support the MWB agenda.
- Actively encourage and support the new behaviors by tracking progress on a regular basis.

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