

Sharpen Your Tools

Scott Reyes, Katie Torres

ABOVE and Beyond

How to make things better when you're too busy

"I wish I had time to do that, but I'm too busy." If you have ever found yourself saying this, you're not alone.

The job of a facility manager often comes with multiple tasks and seemingly endless to-do lists. No matter how much you accomplish, frustration remains when you're dealing with the same problems day after day. Your solutions only seem to be temporary fixes rather than a long-term strategy for accomplishing your goals. You are also too busy because you're spending a great deal of time reacting to the needs of others.

With so much responsibility, the question begs, "How do I align my organization or department toward achieving its goals when everyone is too busy with their day job to possibly get to anything extra?"

Two Types of Work

The reason this question is so difficult to answer is because you have two kinds of work: Work that supports the company, and work that makes things better.

Work that supports the company is all about the tasks you do every day to make sure your company stays running. Work that makes things better includes the projects that will make your company what you want it to be five years down the road.

These two categories of work compete with each other. Work that supports the company is urgent and demands your attention. The work that makes things better ends up on the back burner. Even though you want to make your vision happen, you're too busy working to keep the company or department running to put any more energy into extra goals.

How to Make Things Better

Fortunately, there is a solution. We'll break this down in a minute. But first, you have to know this: In order for this process to be effective, it has to be done with a consistent mindset of making things better.

We often say that nothing happens on its own. Wanting something to happen is different from putting in the work to actually make it happen.

At first, more effort may seem like extra work on top of your already long list of tasks. But after understanding what goes into each step, it becomes clear that this process actually alleviates much of the stress you had before, and ultimately leads to the accomplishment of goals.

Start with a Vision

Accomplishing your biggest goals begins with having a vision. A vision is what you see when you think about what you want at least five years from now.

If you could go to work five years from today and have everything the way you've always dreamed it would be, what would that look like? What kind of atmosphere would the office have? What kind of culture would you like to have for your employees? What kind of decor would fill your building? What services and products would you provide?

Your vision can be literally anything. All you have to do is allow yourself to dream about it, and you'll have your answer.

Know Your 'Why'

A well-known quote by Simon Sinek says, "Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion."

Progress is hard, frustrating and slow. You have to have an answer when you inevitably ask, "Why am I doing this?" What drives you every day to keep going? You need to know your "why" and tell your team often until every single employee is able to repeat it.

Break Down Your Vision

Take your five-year goal, and ask, "If I am going to be there in five years, what does three years from now look like? What does one year from now look like? What does three months from now look like?"

In "No Shortcuts to the Top," Ed Viesturs, the famous high mountain climber, says he never focused on the summit. He only focused on the next 10 steps. No matter what, he could take the next 10 steps.

Whatever your long-term goal is, it needs to be broken down this way into smaller goals to lead up to accomplishing your desired vision.

W.B.M.C.

The SWOT analysis is OK, but there is a better approach. It's called, "Working, Broken, Missing, Confusing." Get your team involved in this process. You are going to cast your one-year vision to the team and then come up with four lists that cover the following:

- **WORKING:** In light of where we want to be in a year, what are we doing now that we need to keep doing?
- **BROKEN:** In light of where we want to be in a year, what's not working the way it should be?
- **MISSING:** What do we need or need to start doing?

- CONFUSING: What do we need to simplify or bring clarity to?

Your team will then make a list of their top five to 10 areas that need to work on for the next quarter. The items with the three highest number of votes are the ones you will focus on for the next quarter. We call these three items ROCKS. (This is a term from the book "4 Disciplines of Execution.") We like this process because it offers more clarity and definition about what needs to be done, creates ownership and allows you, the leader, to see things from the perspective of your team.

Key Results Areas

A key results area (KRA) is your new job description. Every member of your team must have one, including you. A KRA includes six sections:

- The first section is the name of the employee, their title, the effective date, whom they report to and who reports to them.
- The second section tells the story of the role, what they are accountable for, how it plays into the overall vision of the company and its definition of success.
- The third section is for their day-to-day responsibilities. These are lead measures (actions that can be taken) not lag measures (a result of the lead measure taken).
- The fourth section is for their ROCKS. Again, these are lead measures, so they are for actions that need to be taken.
- The fifth section is the company's ROCKS for the quarter. These are lag measures, so they need to be a quantifiable accomplishment. This section is a reminder of what the company or department is working toward.
- Finally, the KRA will also include information on pay. Salary is what is paid to employees for the operational responsibilities, and bonuses are given when team members accomplish ROCKS-related goals.

The reason KRAs are superior to the traditional job description is because they provide a much larger opportunity for your team members to take ownership over problems and make them better. Job descriptions create good rule followers. KRAs create leaders.

More on Lead Versus Lag

Many companies experience frustration when they see all the numbers and stats that detail the progress (or lack thereof) of the company's goals. In the book "The 4 Disciplines of Execution," this data is referred to as lag measures. Lag measures include things like revenue and information about your assets. Lag measures are not something you can change, because they are the measure of things that have already happened.

So, we use what are called "lead measures" to influence the outcome of the lag measure. Lead measures are the things you do to accomplish your goals, such as making 50 phone calls each day to generate the number of sales you would like to see in the lag measure. The ROCKS are your lag measures, and the lead measures are what you will focus on to find solutions to your ROCKS.

Building Your Growth Operating System

Here's how it works. Every quarter, you as the leader need to determine your five-year vision and then break it down using the process from the earlier section of this article. You will then lead your team through the W.B.M.C. exercise, determine your three ROCKS and create your KRAs.

Each week, you will meet with your team members to review progress. The key questions are, "What lead measures did you accomplish in the last week? How did that activity progress us towards our lag measures (ROCKS)? What are you going to do next week as a result?" This weekly meeting will keep you and your team accountable. If you have a small team, five or fewer, perform this meeting as a group. Limit each person to five minutes. This will create a short meeting with increased accountability. No one wants to be the person who did not get the job done.

Each month, you will closely review your progress toward your lag measures and, if necessary, make adjustments to the lead measure activity. Repeat this process on schedule, and watch your productivity increase.

Tracking Your Progress

"The 4 Disciplines of Execution" also outlines the use of scoreboards to track your company's progress.

Scoreboards are a visual representation that shows you which team members have taken action on lead measures to accomplish the vision of your company. In short, scoreboards tell you who is winning.

When you have a scoreboard, you know exactly who is driving the positive results. This creates a bit of healthy competition and motivation for your team to keep excelling in their responsibilities. People play harder when you're keeping score.

Looking Ahead

The dreams for yourself and your company are not beyond reach. While you are currently facing daily work that makes it difficult to achieve your long-term goals, the processes explained here provide a way for you to not only accomplish daily tasks, but also work your way toward evolving the company into the one you've always envisioned. This works by eliminating the unnecessary tasks and wasted energy, and refocusing your efforts toward the actions that will directly affect the outcome you are looking to achieve.

As you narrow your focus to the key areas that will make the most difference, you will experience less stress, more clarity and more progress. This system works. We've seen it work, and we challenge you to make use of it in your own company.

Scott Reyes is the Co-Founder and CEO of Envoy. He is passionate about making things better than he found them because things can always get better. Katie Torres is the Content Creator at Envoy.