

FOREWORD BY **TOM CREAN**, HEAD COACH,
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DAVE ANDERSON

IT'S NOT

ROCKET

SCIENCE



4 SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR
MASTERING THE ART OF EXECUTION

WILEY

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

4
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STRATEGIES

for

*Mastering the Art
of Execution*

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*This book, a wondrous exercise in free speech,
is dedicated to those who are persecuted for
exercising another of life's greatest freedoms:
the freedom to choose and express one's religious beliefs.*

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Foreword

When you read a Dave Anderson work, it is like having a chair set for him in your conference room, boardroom, or locker room. He can take all of the issues facing leaders, companies, and teams today and bring clarity and purpose to them. *It's Not Rocket Science* is like having a manual for how to execute the daily steps we have to take, knowing these steps constantly change. Circumstances may change but our discipline to execute under pressure and produce results cannot. Dave gives real-time, real-life ways to make this happen regardless of the size or scope of what you lead.

Although there are numerous way to describe what you receive from a Dave Anderson book, inspiration, vision, confidence, and go-to strategies all come to mind. In *It's Not Rocket Science* Dave ties it all together into a process that helps us execute relentlessly on a daily basis. Once we get the vision and strategy right, the only way we can convert them into results is by leading our team with an effective execution process.

As a coach, our team's ability to win games comes down to our ability to execute under pressure. The steps to get to that point are strenuous, complex, and ever changing. Coaching basketball is no different from holding other leadership positions in that it is never easy because change is constant. Dave Anderson has taken the potential complexity of how to master the art of execution and presents it in four very clear and detailed steps. Any leader's job comes down to daily execution that moves you toward winning results. And that's exactly what *It's Not Rocket Science* will teach you how to do.

—Tom Crean

Head coach, Indiana University men's basketball team

Preface

In my decades of teaching and practicing sound leadership principles, I have become convinced that the last thing most organizations need is another goal or vision they will miss because one or more of the following conditions exists:

- They can't execute to reach it; the execution process is non-existent, poorly defined, or inconsistent.
- The leaders mean well but aren't competent enough to get the job done.
- The culture isn't strong enough to align with the vision.
- The team isn't capable of executing at the necessary level; members lack the talent, training, process, or guidance to get the job done.

It's Not Rocket Science is divided into parts that will address each of these issues, providing a basic, effective, and actionable blueprint for building a great organization of any size, in any arena:

Part One: Get the Process Right! The chapters in this part provide a step-by-step process, master the art of execution (MAX), for effective execution that most organizations lack. When I teach these principles in my live seminars, I'm often told that a structured execution process is the *something* that leaders intuitively knew was both missing and holding them back from greatness.

This part will also introduce several new terms that apply to the MAX execution process. A glossary of terms in the back of the book serves as a quick reference for the new execution language you'll learn in Part One: the ultimate few goals (TUFs), MAX, MAX acts, personalized success profiles (PSPs), pruning, and more.

Part Two: Get the Leaders Right! Technically this part should be the first of the four strategies presented, because if the leaders aren't right, nothing in an organization works very well for long. However, because the chapters in this part refer to the execution terminology presented in "Get the Process Right!," it was necessary to place this part second so that readers would have a grasp of the execution concepts and terms I use in this part. This part provides real-world strategies for improving your leadership skills (your ability to shape culture, effect change, and positively affect others).

Part Three: Get the Culture Right! This is one of a leader's primary responsibilities. In fact, if the culture doesn't support the goals and the execution process to attain them, failure is all but certain. This part lays out specific and practical steps to evaluate, build, strengthen, and protect your culture. You won't look at culture the same way after reading this part, and you're likely to approach your obligation to shape and strengthen it far differently than you do now.

Part Four: Get the Team Right! Regardless of how talented a leader is, how strong the culture is, or how stellar the execution process may be, he or she can't achieve greatness alone. This part presents highly effective strategies for attracting, evaluating, developing, and retaining great people—strategies for building a stronger and better team.

Rocket Science Rants Interspersed among the chapters are occasional Rocket Science Rants. They are blunt and somewhat politically incorrect pieces that endeavor to shed a no-fluff light on the subject at hand.

Although the book is divided into four intense parts ("Get the Process Right!," "Get the Leaders Right!," "Get the Culture Right!," and "Get the Team Right!"), each of these parts has a number of brief chapters that get to the bottom line fast and provide you actionable and applicable strategies.

My hope is that you will benefit greatly from the commonsense, back-to-basics blueprint *It's Not Rocket Science* provides for building a great organization—an organization where the right things are consistently done well. Whether you are leading a business, nonprofit organization, military unit, or sports team, you will find the four simple steps for mastering the art of execution applicable and effective.

I invite you to send us updates at LearnToLead via social media throughout your journey in this book. Tweet me [@DaveAnderson100](#): Send your favorite quote, a photo of the book or of you and the book, a thought, an idea, et cetera.

Now, although what you're about to read is commonsense, back-to-basics principles for building a great organization, please resist the temptation to race through it; instead, take your time and get much from it. Enjoy the journey!

Introduction

Our world, often said to be changing at a pace that is “faster than ever,” has created an unhealthy peer pressure of sorts that has compelled impulsive business leaders, ungrounded by basic and foundational disciplines, to get caught up in the “move faster” whirlwind. The result for many has been far more motion than progress: successions of doomed-to-fail fads, phases, silver bullets, flavors of the month, and hosts of knee-jerk forays into follow-the-pack fantasies that drain resources, and confuse and demoralize customers, associates, and shareholders. To be fair, it is easy to get caught up in the “change for the sake of change,” and “do it faster and more often” group mind-sets when you consider the near-incomprehensible realities around us:

- Sir Ken Robinson, international advisor on education to governments, observed: “The world is changing faster than ever in our history. Our best hope for the future is to develop a new paradigm of human capacity to meet a new era of human existence” (Robinson 2009).
- “The rate at which companies get bumped off the S&P [Standard and Poor’s] 500 has been accelerating. Back in 1958, a company could expect to stay on the list for 61 years. These days, the average is just 18 years. . . . General Electric, [is] the only company that’s remained on the S&P Index since it started in 1926” (Regalado 2013).
- In *Great by Choice*, authors Jim Collins and Morten T. Hansen (2011) somewhat apologetically examine how 11 of the 60 companies Collins had touted as “great” in two prior works have fallen into “mediocrity or worse,” more evidence that without a

principle-centered business foundation that supports sustainable success, yesterday's peacock can quickly become tomorrow's feather duster (HarperCollins 2011).

- Because of a faster-than-ever business pace, our skill sets have a shorter-than-ever shelf life (Thomas and Brown 2011).
- According to *Forbes*, “The average worker today stays at each of his or her jobs for 4.4 years, but the expected tenure of the workforce's youngest employees is about half that. Ninety-one percent of Millennials (born between 1977–1997) expect to stay in a job for less than three years, according to the Future Workplace ‘Multiple Generations @ Work’ survey of 1,189 employees and 150 managers. That means they would have 15–20 jobs over the course of their working lives,” creating human resources nightmares for companies seeking stability among their human capital, to attain sustainable success (Meister 2012).
- “Access to information and to other people is both unparalleled in modern history. Our ‘connectedness’ is not only to resources, but to people who are helping to manage, organize, disseminate and make sense of those resources as well. This interconnectedness is creating a new sense of peer mentoring enabled by access to multiple levels and degrees of expertise” (Thomas and Brown 2011).
- The rise of entitlement and political correctness within organizations is smothering once-robust cultures. Steve Tobak (2013) of *FOX Business* commented that political correctness:

is collectivism, which destroys individualism. Competition is bad. Everyone's a winner. Everyone has to be included and treated the same. Singling out individuals as special or unique excludes others, so that's out. Lost is individual responsibility and accountability, the drive to compete and win, the motivation to be recognized for achievement and superior performance. . . .

Everything has to be filtered to ensure no one is offended or gets into trouble. That slows down information processing, waters down communication, strips out critical

data, and dilutes meaning. As a result, it undermines genuine understanding and effective decision making.

Now, here's the confusing part. Finger pointing and blaming others is tolerated, even encouraged. Leaders blame their predecessors; parents blame teachers; society blames victims. It's everybody's fault but whoever is really responsible. That's because nobody is accountable. There are no enemies or bad guys. That wouldn't be inclusive.

- Dr. Ian Pearson, a renowned futurologist, shared the following perspectives on the six most influential trends that will redefine business success:

The increasing political and economic dominance of emerging markets will cause global companies to rethink and customize their corporate strategies.

Climate change will remain high on the agenda as companies seek to explore resource efficiency to improve the bottom line and drive competitive advantage.

The financial landscape will look vastly different as increasing regulation and government intervention drive restructuring and new business models.

Governments will play an increasingly prominent role in the private sector as demand for greater regulation and increasing fiscal pressures dominate the agenda.

In its next evolution, technology will be driven by emerging-market innovations and a focus on instant communication anytime, anywhere.

Leaders will need to address the needs and aspirations of an increasingly diverse 21st-century workforce. (EY, n.d.)

- In his book *The Singularity is Near*, Ray Kurzweil noted that:

it took 21 years, from 1972 to 1993, for computation speed to increase [sic] 1,000 fold, but only 10 more years to increase again by the same factor. . . .

Kurzweil predicts that a \$1,000 personal computer will match human brain capability around 2020, and will

be 1,000 times more powerful than the human brain by 2029. At that point, computers will have a conscience of their own and will be able to learn and create by themselves, without human supervision. . . .

Around 2045, a single personal computer will be a billion times more intelligent than every human brains [sic] combined. (Hay 2014)

Whew! How tempting it is amid a world changing at warp speed to abandon solid business fundamentals and seek what's faster, sexier, more exciting, and extraordinary to get ahead in uncommonly complex times, but as *It's Not Rocket Science* will demonstrate, getting caught up in the "change faster just because everything else is" nonsense is completely foolish. The greatest successes in business annals have always been built on a foundation of doing ordinary things extraordinarily well, not extraordinarily complex things—not rocket science.

It's Not Rocket Science is an irreverent and contrarian thumb in the eye to the gurus, consultants, and so-called experts who promote the idea that business must revolutionize or reinvent itself continually to survive. It is a commonsense call for organizations to forgo today's enamoring with fairy-tale business enlightenment and to return to sustainable business success fundamentals that have proved themselves true over the centuries.

It's Not Rocket Science asserts that we have already heard, have been taught, and know full well the answers for sustainable personal and organizational growth; however, we've abandoned them and chased various versions of New Age business palaver because they deceptively appear more contemporary, and less Prussian; more relevant, and less old-school; more fashionable, and less mundane. This book will present a compelling, no-nonsense blueprint for returning business cultures and strategies to a foundation built on rock-solid fundamentals, not shifting sands. Most important, it outlines four simple steps for mastering the art of execution—for converting your loftiest visions and strategies into results:


1. Get the Process Right!
2. Get the Leaders Right!

3. Get the Culture Right!
4. Get the Team Right!

Although the strategies are basic and simple, they require immense work. This book is your guide to getting it done with excellence.

ONE PART

GET THE PROCESS RIGHT!



Sadly, most leaders do not have a step-by-step process for executing (a specific mechanism to help them convert corporate vision and strategy into results). It is that key ingredient—that missing something—that they intuitively know is lacking but are not exactly sure how to articulate or fix.

Strategy one, “Get the Process Right!,” is the glue that will bind the three subsequent strategies for mastering the art of execution (MAX) together. Technically speaking, “Get the Process Right!” should be the strategy that follows the other three: “Get the Leader Right!,” “Get the Culture Right!,” and “Get the Team Right!” However, because I will be referring to the execution terminology related to MAX extensively throughout the book, it is important to present it first so that you have a clear understanding of how it works before moving forward.

As a matter of priority, there is no doubt that without getting the leader, culture, and team right first, any process is likely to devolve into chaos. However, when the right leader, culture, and team are in

place, the stage is then set for an execution process like MAX to lift an organization from good to great or from great to greater.

If a step-by-step, highly effective execution process sounds like what you have been lacking, then you have just found what you've been looking for—dear reader, meet MAX.