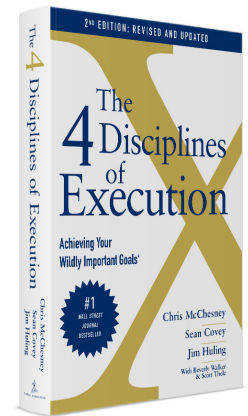


The 4 Disciplines of Execution

Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals, Second Edition:
Revised and Updated

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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Do you remember the last major initiative you watched die in your organization? Did it go down with a loud crash? Or was it slowly and quietly suffocated by other competing priorities? By the time it finally disappeared, it's likely no one even noticed. What happened? The “whirlwind” of urgent activity required to keep things running devoured all the time and energy you needed to invest in executing your strategy for tomorrow!

The 4 Disciplines of Execution, Revised and Updated can change all of that forever. It offers a simple, repeatable, and proven formula for executing your most important strategic priorities in the midst of the whirlwind. The original book sold more than 500,000 copies; in this revised and updated edition, the authors have refined 4DX based on 4,000 implementations, with content targeted to leaders' roles.

When a company or individual adheres to these disciplines, they achieve superb results regardless of the goal. *The 4 Disciplines of Execution, Revised and Updated* is the one book that no leader can afford to miss.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- To recognize a breakthrough strategy.
- The 4 Disciplines of Execution and how to use them to achieve results.
- How a leader of leaders and a leader of frontline teams can apply 4DX.
- To get leaders on board and sustain 4DX results and engagement.

PART I: LEARNING 4DX

The Real Problem With Execution

Whether you call it a strategy, a goal, or simply an effort at improvement, any initiative you as a leader drive in order to significantly move your team or organization forward will fall into one of two categories. The first mainly requires a stroke of the pen; the second is a breakthrough, requiring a change in behavior.

Stroke-of-the-pen initiatives are those you execute just by ordering or authorizing them to be done. Breakthroughs that require a change in behavior are very different. You can't just order them to happen, because executing them requires getting people—often a lot of people—to be highly engaged in a new or different approach to creating results. If it requires people to do something different, you are driving a *breakthrough strategy*, and it's not going to be easy.

The Whirlwind

It's natural for a leader to assume the people are the problem. But this is wrong. Certainly, lack of clarity, commitment, collaboration, and accountability exacerbate the difficulty of strategy execution.

But the real enemy of execution is your day job! This is the whirlwind. It's the massive amount of energy that's necessary just to keep your operation going on a day-to-day basis; and ironically, it's also the thing that makes it so hard to execute anything new. The whirlwind robs you of the focus required to move your team forward.

Executing in spite of the whirlwind means overcoming not only its powerful distraction but also the inertia of “the way it's always been done.”

The 4 Disciplines of Execution are not designed for managing your whirlwind, and they are not designed to manage stroke-of-the-pen initiatives. The 4 Disciplines are the precise methods for accomplishing breakthrough results on your single most critical objective: your Wildly Important Goal.

The 4 Disciplines work because they are based on principles, not practices. Practices are situational, subjective, and always evolving. Principles are timeless and self-evident, and they apply everywhere. They are natural laws, like gravity. Whether you understand them or even agree with them doesn't matter—they still apply.

Discipline 1: Focus on the Wildly Important

The first discipline is to focus your finest effort on the one thing that will make the biggest difference. Execution starts with focus. Without it, the other three disciplines can't help you.

But how you apply Discipline 1 will differ depending on whether you are a leader of a frontline team or a leader of leaders.

Discipline 1 for the Leader of a Frontline Team

Discipline 1 requires that you identify the one objective that will be separated out from your whirlwind and given intense focus. This difference is signified by the name Wildly Important Goal. Your WIG is an outcome so significant that it cannot be accomplished without the finest efforts of your team and by performance that is above their day-to-day level. This is the one objective to which you apply 4DX.

When you've defined your WIG, you will then view the work of your team in two distinct buckets. The first bucket contains everything the team needs to accomplish in the course of their day-to-day work (their whirlwind). This bucket is substantial and will likely require 80 percent of their time and energy.

The second bucket is the Wildly Important Goal—the one specific outcome that represents the most meaningful breakthrough you'd like to achieve. Ideally, the WIG should be given the remaining 20 percent of the team's capacity.

Discipline 1 for Leaders of Leaders

The choice of the WIG at your level is critical. Whatever you choose as the Primary WIG can be like a compass for the teams—each leader of a frontline team can align their Team WIG to the direction you set. There are four primary rules for applying Discipline 1 as a leader of leaders:

Rule 1. No individual focuses on more than one WIG at a time. This rule acts like a governor on an engine. Keep this rule in mind as you consider the remaining three rules. If you violate this one, you will have lost your focus as an organization.

Rule 2. The battles you choose must win the war. It isn't enough that the Team WIGs just support or align with the Primary WIG. The achievement of the Team WIGs must ensure the success of the Primary WIG.

The key principle behind lead measures is simply this: leverage. Achieving your Wildly Important Goal is like trying to move a giant rock.

Rule 3. Leaders of leaders can veto but not dictate.

While senior leaders will undoubtedly determine the Primary WIG, they must allow the leaders of frontline teams to have a significant role in defining the WIG for their own team. Senior leaders can then exercise their right to veto if the WIGs chosen will not achieve the Primary WIG.

Rule 4. All WIGs must have a finish line in the form of From X to Y by When. Every WIG at every level must contain a clearly measurable result as well as the date by which that result must be achieved.

Discipline 2: Act on the Lead Measures

The second discipline is to apply disproportionate energy to the few actions (or behaviors) that will have the greatest impact on achieving the Wildly Important Goal. These are called “lead measures” because they are the measurable drivers that actually lead to WIG achievement.

A lag measure shows you if you’ve achieved the goal. A lead measure tells you if you are likely to achieve the goal—meaning that the team is doing the things that are most critical to goal achievement. While a lag measure is hard for an individual (or a team) to directly affect, a lead measure is chosen to be both *predictive* of impacting the lag measure and within the team’s control—referred to as *influenceable*.

Defining Lead Measures

The key principle behind lead measures is simply this: leverage. Achieving your Wildly Important Goal is like trying to move a giant rock; but despite all the energy the team exerts, it doesn’t move. It’s not a question of effort; if it were, you and the team would already have moved it. Lead measures act like a lever, making it possible to move that rock.

How do you choose the right levers? To achieve a goal you’ve never achieved before, you must do things you’ve never done before. Look around you. Who else has achieved this goal or something like it? What did they do differently? Use your imagination. What haven’t you thought of that might make a real difference?

Then select the activities you believe will have the greatest impact on achieving the WIG: the 80/20 activities. Which 20 percent of what you do has as much or more leverage on the WIG than 80 percent of what you do?

The lead measures with the most impact come from a collaboration between the leader and the frontline team. The impact of the lead measures is greater when the top-down influence of the leader provides guidance and direction, and the bottom-up influence of the team provides clarity on which actions actually produce the greatest results.

And it is clarity on cause (lead measures) and effect (outcome on the WIG) that you are after. When done well, this collaboration creates a synergy that neither the leader nor the team could have created alone.

Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

The third discipline is to make sure everyone knows the score at all times so that they can tell whether or not they are winning. Discipline 3 is based on the principle of engagement.

People play differently when *they* are keeping score. If the lead and lag measures are not captured on a visual scoreboard and updated regularly, they will disappear into the distraction of the whirlwind. People disengage when they don’t know the score. When they can see at a glance whether or not they are winning, they become profoundly engaged.

Ask four questions when determining if a scoreboard is likely to be compelling to the players:

Is it simple? Think about the scoreboard in a sporting event. The scoreboard on the field shows only the data needed to play the game.

Can I see it easily? The results become personally important to the team when the scoreboard is displayed where it can be seen by everyone.

Does it show lead and lag measures? The team needs

to see both, or they will quickly lose interest. When they can see both the lead and lag, they can watch the bet play out.

Can I tell at a glance if I'm winning? If you can't tell within five seconds whether you're winning or losing, you haven't passed this test.

Although physical scoreboards are still an essential tool used by many teams, today the most visible and easily accessible location for a scoreboard is on your tablet or phone. The 4DX app provides the ability to display and update a scoreboard for your team that is constantly available, simple to use, and compelling to display.

Discipline 4: Create a Cadence of Accountability

In this discipline, you create a cadence of accountability—a regular and recurring cycle of accounting for past performance, as well as committing to move the score forward. Discipline 4 is where execution actually happens. Disciplines 1, 2, and 3 set up the game; but until you apply Discipline 4, your team isn't *in* the game.

In Discipline 4, your team meets at least weekly in a WIG Session. This meeting, which lasts no longer than 20 to 30 minutes, has a set agenda and goes quickly, establishing your weekly rhythm of accountability for driving progress toward the WIG.

WIG Sessions might vary in content, but the agenda is always the same. Here's the three-part agenda for a WIG Session, along with the language you should be hearing in the session:

1. Account. Report on last week's commitments.

"I met with our VP but wasn't able to get the approval we wanted. Here's why . . ."

2. Review the scoreboard. Learn from successes and failures. "We're trending upward on our lead measures, but our lag measure isn't moving yet. We've agreed as a team to double our efforts this week to get the score moving."

3. Plan. Clear the path and make new commitments. "I'll meet with Julius on our numbers and come back next week with at least three ideas for helping us improve."

To prepare for the meeting, every team member thinks about the same question: "What are the one or two most important

things I can do this week to impact the lead measures?"

Each commitment must meet two standards. First, the commitment must represent a specific deliverable. Second, the commitment must influence the lead measure. In addition, while the leader of the WIG Session is responsible for ensuring the quality of commitments, the commitments must come from the participants.

Let's take the example of Tomás, a member of a sales team whose lead measure is to send out two new proposals each week. Tomás knows that his list of prospects is running low, so for this week his commitment might be to acquire names and contact information for 10 additional prospects, ensuring he has enough to successfully move two of them to the proposal stage.

The level of importance you place on the WIG Session will directly determine the results your team produces. Based on your consistency, your focus, and your modeling of making commitments and following through, you will establish the WIG Session as either a high-stakes game or a low-stakes game in the minds of your team members.

PART II: APPLYING 4DX AS A LEADER OF LEADERS

Choosing Where to Focus

The most challenging question for the leader of leaders in 4DX: "What should we choose as our Primary WIG for the organization?" Your Primary WIG represents a breakthrough result that will require human engagement and a significant change in behavior.

Leaders rarely make this choice without rigorous debate and collaboration by an entire leadership team, with the most senior leader often in a facilitating role and, if needed, making the final decisions.

Identifying Your Breakthrough Result

The first question to ask is, "If every other area of our operation remained at its current level of performance, in which one area would we most want to achieve significant results?" This question naturally focuses the mind on the result that might represent a breakthrough by holding every other area constant.

Once you have a list of candidate WIGs, you should next discuss each candidate in terms of two categories: impact of failure and at risk of failure (without significant change).

Impact of failure. How mission-critical is the candidate

WIG? While this question might seem straightforward, it can actually require deep thought. Instead of simply focusing on a single short-term objective, evaluating it leads your team to ask the larger questions and to think about the longer-term impact before making a final decision.

Gaining the full commitment of a leadership team is just as critical to your success as choosing the right strategy.

At risk of failure (without significant change). Next, the leadership team should consider how “at risk of failure (without significant change)” is the candidate WIG. Leadership teams are reluctant to discuss the possibility of failure of any sort. It’s much easier to keep the discussion focused on the comfortable subject of importance rather than on the uncomfortable subject of risk.

But the decision to define and undertake a WIG is a decision to spend energy not dedicated to the whirlwind—a limited and extremely valuable currency. Waste that currency, and you will likely have lost time and energy that can never be recovered.

Here are four traps to avoid in the creation of your WIGs:

- Creating too many Primary WIGs.
- Choosing a Primary WIG that is too broad.
- Creating a Primary WIG that is aspirational but not measurable.
- Creating WIGs that are not aligned to the mission and vision of the organization.

Getting Your Leaders on Board

Gaining the full commitment of a leadership team is just as critical to your success as choosing the right strategy. To help you succeed in this important objective, this section presents the mindsets and skillsets that have proven to be most successful. The ideas are presented from the point where the leaders

of leaders have already developed a Primary WIG and their Key Battle WIGs. Now they are ready to engage the leaders of frontline teams who report to them.

In this critical next step, the leaders of leaders have three objectives: finalize the Primary WIG and the Key Battle WIGs; develop the draft Team WIGs for frontline teams; engage the entire leadership team in a committed effort to win.

Three leadership mindsets are essential if you want to create alignment and engagement across an entire leadership team.

Transparency mindset. While full transparency is not always organizationally possible, the mindset of transparency is, and there are few things that develop high trust more rapidly than authentic transparency. Leaders with a transparency mindset share their concerns openly, freely acknowledge that they don’t have all the answers, and actively encourage feedback from others no matter where they reside on the organizational chart.

Understanding mindset. The key to influence is first to be influenced. An understanding mindset means that the leaders of leaders truly seek to understand the concerns and ideas of the leaders of frontline teams before making a final decision on the Primary WIG and the Key Battle WIGs. The more you adopt an understanding mindset, the more you will learn, the more you will lower resistance, and the better the decisions you will make.

Involvement mindset. When final decisions are made on the Primary WIG and the Key Battle WIGs, leaders of frontline teams play an essential role in understanding and, if possible, improving these crucial WIGs. But the final decision belongs to the leaders of leaders. However, when Team WIGs are chosen, leaders of frontline teams make their own decisions, subject only to final validation by the leaders of leaders.

Sustaining 4DX Results and Engagement

The greatest impact of 4DX is not simply the ability to produce breakthrough results; it’s the ability to sustain (and even improve) those results over a significant period of time. This characteristic is rooted in building habits of execution, practices that become so ingrained that teams are no longer conscious of them as a requirement for performance.

Although the Primary WIG will always be the most immediate and most visible target, the greater achievement is

your ability to establish a culture of execution—one where WIGs can be achieved again and again, regardless of fluctuating conditions.

To crystallize this focus, a single indicator measures not only WIG results but also the habits of execution that drive them: the Execution Performance Score, or XPS. There are four components of XPS.

Establishing a cadence. This component indicates how well the team has established a cadence of meeting weekly to focus on the scoreboard.

Fulfilling high-impact commitments. This component indicates how well the team has consistently made commitments and followed through.

Optimizing lead-measures performance. This component indicates how consistently the lead measures are being performed.

Achieving lag-measure (WIG) results. This component indicates how effectively the first three components are enabling your team to achieve its WIG.

The calculation of your XPS consists simply of identifying the score for each component and then adding them together. Since each component has a maximum score of 1, a perfect score would be 4. Your XPS score can then be used to give you insights into your team's performance and the results it is producing.

PART III: APPLYING 4DX AS A LEADER OF A FRONTLINE TEAM

Applying Discipline 1: Focus on the Wildly Important

Superb team performance begins with selecting a single Team WIG. Focusing on a single breakthrough goal is the foundational principle of 4DX. Without it, your team will get lost in the whirlwind. Selecting the right WIG is crucial.

Step 1. Consider the possibilities. Begin by brainstorming possible WIGs. You have three options: Brainstorm with peer leaders, especially if you are all focusing on the same Primary WIG for the organization, brainstorm with your team or with a representative subset of the team, brainstorm alone. Ideally, both the leader and the team participate in defining the WIGs.

Step 2. Rank by impact. When you're satisfied with

your list of candidate Team WIGs, you're ready to identify the one that promises the greatest potential impact on the Primary WIG. Calculating the impact of a Team WIG depends on the nature of the Primary WIG. For example, for an overall WIG that is financial, rank the Team WIG in terms of prospective revenues, profitability, investment performance, cash flow, and/or cost savings.

Step 3. Test top ideas. Once you've identified a few Team WIG candidates, test them against four specific criteria for your team's final choice:

- Is the Team WIG aligned to the overall WIG? Is there an unbroken line of sight between the candidate Team WIG and the Primary WIG?
- Is it measurable? A game without a clearly measurable score will never be a game that matters.
- Who owns the results—our team or some other team? Does the team have at least 80 percent ownership of the result?
- Who owns the game—the leader or the team? The Team WIG should depend primarily on what the team does, not just the leader.

Step 4. Define the WIG. Once you've tested your ideas and selected a final Team WIG, make it as clear and measurable as possible. Define the Team WIG according to the following rules:

- Begin with a verb. Simple verbs focus the mind immediately on action.
- Define the lag measure in terms of "From X to Y by When."
- Keep it simple. Most organizational goals are vague, complex, and pretentious.
- Focus on what, not how. The WIG should focus exclusively on what the team plans to achieve.

Applying Discipline 2: Act on the Lead Measures

Acting on lead measures is the single most difficult aspect of installing 4DX in your team. There are three reasons for this: Lead measures can be counterintuitive. Lead measures are hard to track. Lead measures often look too simple.

Here are the steps for arriving at high-leverage lead measures.

The key to engagement is a visible, continually updated scoreboard that is compelling to the players.

Step 1. Consider the possibilities. Begin by brainstorming possible lead measures. Resist the temptation to choose quickly. Ask, “What could we do that we’ve never done before that might make all the difference to the Team WIG?” For example, a grocery store has this Team WIG: “Increase year-over-year sales by 5 percent.”

Step 2. Rank by impact. When you’re satisfied with your list of candidate lead measures, you’re ready to identify the ideas that promise the greatest potential impact on the Team WIG. The team must press hard on the lead measure to move the lag measure. Too many lead measures, and you dissipate that pressure.

Step 3. Test top ideas. Once you’ve identified a few high-leverage lead-measure ideas, test them against these six criteria:

- Is it predictive? If the idea fails this test, even if it’s a good idea, eliminate it.
- Is it influenceable? Ask if the team has at least 80 percent control over it.
- Is it an ongoing process or a “one-and-done”? The ideal lead measure is a behavior change that becomes habitual and brings continuous improvements to the lag measure.
- Is it a leader’s game or a team game? The behavior of the team must drive the lead measure.
- Can it be measured? If the Team WIG is truly wildly important, you must find ways to measure the new behaviors.
- Is it worth measuring? If it takes more effort than its impact is worth or it has serious unintended consequences, it fails the test of a lead measure.

Step 4: Define the lead measures. Answer these questions as you put the lead measures in final form:

- Are we tracking team or individual performance? Tracking team results allows for differences in individual performance while still enabling the team to achieve the outcome.

- Are we tracking the lead measures daily or weekly? Daily tracking creates the highest level of accountability because it demands the same performance from every associate every day, whereas weekly tracking allows for varying performance each day as long as the overall result for the week is achieved.
- What is the quantitative standard? In other words, “How much/how often/how consistently are we supposed to perform?” You decide based on the urgency and importance of the Team WIG.
- What is the qualitative standard? In other words, “How well are we supposed to perform?”
- Does it start with a verb? Simple verbs focus the mind immediately on action.
- Is it simple? State your lead measure in as few words as possible.

Applying Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

Discipline 3 is the discipline of engagement. The key to engagement is a visible, continually updated scoreboard that is compelling to the players, whether it’s a digital scoreboard in the 4DX app or a physical board constructed by the team.

Step 1. Choose a theme. Choose a theme for your scoreboard that displays clearly and instantly the measures you are tracking. You have several options: trend lines, speedometer, bar chart, and on, personalized.

Step 2. Design the scoreboard. The team should design the scoreboard with these questions in mind:

- Is it simple?
- Can the team see it easily?
- Does it contain both lead and lag measures?
- Can we tell at a glance if we’re winning?

Step 3. Build the scoreboard. Let the team build the scoreboard. The greater their involvement, the better—they

will take more ownership of it if they build it themselves.

Step 4. Keep it updated. The design of the scoreboard should make it easy to update at least weekly. If the scoreboard is hard to update, you'll be tempted to put it off when the whirlwind strikes—and your Wildly Important Goal will disappear in the noise and confusion. The leader should make very clear who is responsible for the scoreboard, when it will be posted, and how often it will be updated.

Applying Discipline 4: Create a Cadence of Accountability

Even though you've designed a game that's clear and effective, without consistent accountability, the team will never give their best efforts to the game.

If you can instill the discipline of accountability in your team, they will beat the whirlwind every week. However, if you're casual about accountability for commitments as well as for results, the whirlwind will overwhelm the Wildly Important Goal.

Here's how Serena handled this important moment in a WIG session when Jeff couldn't keep his commitment.

Step 1. Demonstrate respect. Serena: "Jeff, I want you to know that the event last week was a huge success, and without you, it could have been a disaster." In this crucial first step, Serena shows Jeff that she respects him as a team member, but she also shows the team that she respects the whirlwind.

Step 2. Reinforce accountability. Serena: "Jeff, I also want you to know how important your contribution is

to this team. Without you, we can't reach our goal. This means that when we make a commitment, we have to find a way to fulfill it no matter what happens during the week."

This is a challenging moment for both Jeff and Serena; but because Serena has made it clear that she respects Jeff and the demands of the whirlwind, Jeff should be able to see the importance of doing his best for the team.

Step 3. Encourage performance. Serena: "Jeff, I know you want to help us follow through. Can we count on you to catch up, by fulfilling last week's commitment as well as the one you were planning on making for next week?" Serena gives Jeff the opportunity to report with pride that all commitments have been fulfilled.

Discipline 4 keeps your team in the game every week, as the members connect their personal contributions to the most important priorities of the organization. With this comes not only the awareness that they are winning on a key goal but that they have become a winning team.

Which is the ultimate return on the investment you make in 4DX.

IF YOU LIKED THIS SUMMARY, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE:

- *The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias* by Pamela Fuller, Anne Chow, Mark Murphy
- *The Speed of Trust* by Stephen M.R. Covey



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