

CHRISTOPHER DUNCAN

Foreword by Tom Archer



Unite *the* Tribes



*Ending Turf Wars for
Career and Business Success*

UNITE THE TRIBES



Ending Turf Wars for Career and Business Success

CHRISTOPHER DUNCAN

Apress™

Unite the Tribes: Ending Turf Wars for Career and Business Success

Copyright © 2004 by Christopher Duncan

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and the publisher.

ISBN: 1-59059-240-9

Printed and bound in Canada 12345678910

Trademarked names may appear in this book. Rather than use a trademark symbol with every occurrence of a trademarked name, we use the names only in an editorial fashion and to the benefit of the trademark owner, with no intention of infringement of the trademark.

Editorial Board: Dan Appleman, Craig Berry, Gary Cornell, Tony Davis, Steven Rycroft, Julian Skinner, Martin Streicher, Jim Sumser, Karen Watterson, Gavin Wray, John Zukowski

Assistant Publisher: Grace Wong

Project Manager: Kylie Johnston

Copy Editor: Tom Gillen

Production Manager: Kari Brooks

Production Editor: Kelly Winquist

Proofreader: Thistle Hill Publishing Services, LLC

Compositor: Kinetic Publishing Services, LLC

Indexer: Odessa&Cie

Interior and Cover Designer: Kurt Krames

Manufacturing Manager: Tom Debolski

Distributed to the book trade in the United States by Springer-Verlag New York, Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010 and outside the United States by Springer-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Tiergartenstr. 17, 69112 Heidelberg, Germany.

In the United States: phone 1-800-SPRINGER, email orders@springer-ny.com, or visit <http://www.springer-ny.com>. Outside the United States: fax +49 6221 345229, email orders@springer.de, or visit <http://www.springer.de>.

For information on translations, please contact Apress directly at 2560 Ninth Street, Suite 219, Berkeley, CA 94710. Phone 510-549-5930, fax 510-549-5939, email info@apress.com, or visit <http://www.apress.com>.

The information in this book is distributed on an “as is” basis, without warranty. Although every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this work, neither the author(s) nor Apress shall have any liability to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the information contained in this work.



Contents

Foreword	vii
Acknowledgments	xi
Who Should Read This Book	xiii

The Lay of the Land

The Problem	3
The Empire	11
The People	33
The Solution	51

The Pillars of the Empire

I Vision	69
II Leadership	93
III Organization	115
IV Mobility	137
V Competitiveness	159
VI Persuasion	181
VII Strategy	203
VIII Brilliance	225
IX Morale	249
X Unite!	271

Making It Work

Your Field Manual	297
-------------------	-----

Index	315
-------	-----



Foreword

I first met Christopher Duncan more than ten years ago when I interviewed him for a senior-level position at a large software company. I had already decided before the interviewing process that I would be interested only in someone with a predefined skill set and level of experience. When I saw Christopher's resume, I immediately recognized that, although he didn't possess these prerequisites, there was something that intrigued me enough to at least meet with him for a few minutes. I was so sure that he wouldn't be what I needed that I arranged the time of our meeting to start about half an hour before lunch. Three hours into our interview, my supervisor poked his head in the door and asked if I was going to hire the man or just keep him locked up all day.

This anecdote leads me to the first thing I learned about Christopher: he has a keen ability to convince others of something—even something that they might at first be diametrically opposed to—while at the same time doing it in such a tactful manner that the person thinks it was their idea to begin with. With regards to the interview, I had been rather adamant regarding the prerequisites that the successful candidate must possess. I came out of my meeting with Christopher fully believing that I had stumbled upon a revolutionary hiring concept: that, of course, talent trumps skill and experience! It was so obvious to me now, and I had figured it out on my own.

It wasn't until a few years later that I realized that Christopher's intention all along had been to get me to realize this. Now, he could have come in with both guns blazing, told me how my process was flawed and that any idiot could see that he was right for the company. My response would have been to yell "Next!" and that would have been the end of it. Just two more business people unable to get over their differing views and parting ways as a result. However, his approach was to answer my queries and pose his own questions in a quid pro quo conversation that ultimately resulted in us combining our strengths such that we both benefited.

My point to all this is that people wander in and out of our professional lives with varying levels of success. Sometimes the success seems to go so much against the odds that we chalk it up to luck or call it a fluke. However, at some point when someone seems to continually enjoy success, even the most doubting person has to step back and ask, “Is this person really lucky at being good or really good at being lucky?” After watching Christopher walk into firestorm after firestorm and end up being carried out on the shoulders of the CEOs and CTOs as the savior of product after product—and in one case, even an entire small company—I began to realize that, in his case, it was definitely the latter.

I then began to converse in earnest with Christopher about just what makes one person—or one company—successful as opposed to another. Was there some magic formula to the seeming randomness associated with this thing we call success? What he explained to me, and what you’ll learn throughout this book, shocked me. It shocked me because, just like our initial interview, it seems so obvious once it’s been explained and understood. If you want to see it for yourself, just look around you. Look at the captains of industry, the leaders of Fortune 500 companies, the manager of the team that always seems to hit the deadline and win the accolades of the company. Look at these individuals and what do you see? *Differences!* The first similarity is the obvious dissimilarity between them all. They come from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. They have different political and religious views. They’re of different races and genders. The list goes on. However, look a little deeper than the superficial and you will discover the one common trait that all successful people share. They’re not afraid to break the rules and try the unconventional to succeed. It’s as simple as that.

At one time or another, every one of these successful people had to make a choice: do I go with everyone else on this or do I break from the norm, take a chance, and reap the rewards if my ideas are as successful as I know they will be? Most people take the easy route and, if they get a little lucky, enjoy a moderately successful life. However, by virtue of the fact that you’re holding this book, you’ve already proven that your exterior is not made of wool and people don’t count you when they can’t sleep.

That just leaves one obvious question. If these concepts and techniques are so great, why isn’t everyone using them? To answer that, let’s look at “everyone.” According to the United States Small Business Administration, nine out of ten companies fail during the first five years.

That's four-paws up. Bankrupt. When you start talking about how many of the remaining companies actually thrive and excel in their industry, the numbers are even bleaker. The simple fact is that most companies barely make it from year to year despite what they tell their employees and stockholders. The obvious point is that, when you follow the rules of the masses, how can you expect to rise above the masses?

This is exactly why—seemingly out of nowhere—a previously unknown comes to the forefront of a given industry and makes a name for both himself and his company. Read between the lines of the interviews with these people and you'll find out that they didn't possess any magical skill above the fact that they saw very clearly that coloring within the lines wasn't getting them or their company where they wanted to go. So they changed the rules. They stopped thinking about how their predecessor did things, and they decided to forge new trails. In short, they employed much of what you'll discover in these pages.

I don't want to go into any more detail than that because Christopher is the master at presenting this material in exactly the right order and pace. Besides nobody likes the guy that ruins the movie by telling you the ending. However, I will tell you what Christopher's unparalleled knowledge in the area of business and career management has personally done for me. Before I met Christopher I was the definition of a "moderate success" that I spoke of earlier. Don't get me wrong. I made good money and had a secure job. However, like many of you, I knew deep down that there was something better just around the corner . . . something that would allow me to use many of my ideas that I felt were basically being neglected.

That's when, at Christopher's urging, I personally started using many of the techniques you'll discover throughout this book. Tangible results? In recent years, I've helped build a Web site that sold for over \$3 million, been the team lead on three award-winning software applications and enjoyed success as a best-selling author with ten books to my credit. In picking up this book, you've taken the first step toward your own success stories. Now let's see what you can accomplish. I have a feeling you'll surprise even yourself.

Tom Archer
President
Archer Consulting Group, Inc.
www.ArcherConsultingGroup.com



Acknowledgments

A book seems like a very simple thing when you pick it up. It presents the illusion that the author, and the author alone, is speaking to you. Of course, in reality, the process is quite complex, and it takes the talents of countless people to bring an idea to life. In fact, it's hard to appreciate just how many people until you try to name them all.

That was my original goal, but eventually I came to understand why the credits at the end of a movie go on for such a long time. It takes a *lot* of very cool, very talented folks to make it happen. Some of the jobs are obvious and some aren't, but, without each person contributing their expertise, this book simply wouldn't exist. If I tried to list every one of them individually, I'd doubtless leave someone out, which to me would be a crime. And so, my first and most heartfelt thanks go to all of my friends at Apress, who worked tirelessly, in good spirit, and moved mountains you'll never hear about. You guys rock. Every last one of you.

The picture on the dust jacket was yet another last-minute adventure due to the insanities of my schedule. However, once again, people make all the difference. JuDeane and Chan Garrett, my friends at Chan Garrett Photography, are my favorite photographers. (They're in the Atlanta suburb of Kennesaw if you happen to be in the neighborhood.) Not only did they do their normal excellent work, they always seem to make me feel comfortable and right at home. Thanks, guys. It's always fun working with you.

I also had help with the companion CD in a couple of areas. Although I composed and sequenced a great deal of the background music, on the tracks where you hear a live bass player it's the talented fingers of my old friend Jeff Patnaude. Digital music is a powerful tool, but sometimes there's just no substitute for the real thing. It's nice to have friends who are also great players. The wings and beer are on me next time, man. Thanks for hanging out and making music with me.

The wonderful voice of the announcer that you'll hear throughout the CD belongs to the talented Deirdre Smathers. In addition to being the consummate professional in the recording studio, she's also worked

tirelessly behind the scenes with my company, Show Programming of Atlanta, Inc., for the past couple of years. If you're interested in hiring her for studio work on your own recording projects, you can reach her at Dee@ShowProgramming.com. Most importantly, though, she's been a close friend for many, many years. Thanks, Dee. I'll keep the cappuccino machine warmed up.

Although the last group of people didn't participate directly in the creation of the book or CD, I nonetheless would have accomplished little without their continual friendship, support, and encouragement. We sweat together, laugh together, and sometimes even sing together when our families gather for burgers and fun. They are the cornerstone of my life, urging me on as I work to become a better human being. Once again, there are simply too many of you to name individually. And so I will just say in plain English, both to you and your families, thank you very much. It is my tremendous good fortune to have you as friends.

When they put this book on the shelves in your local bookstore, my name will be on the cover. As you can see, however, I'm just one person among a large and talented group of very cool people. These pages come to you from all of us. I hope you have as much fun reading them as we did in bringing them to you.

Christopher Duncan
November 2003

Who Should Read This Book

If you work for a living, or plan on doing so at some point in the future, this book is full of the things they didn't teach you in school. It doesn't matter if you're a high-level executive of a rich and powerful international corporation or you're the guy who happens to cook the fries when I order a burger. The information and techniques we're going to cover in the following pages speak directly to you both. If that seems a little strange to you, that's exactly the point.

People are used to drawing distinct lines between workers and management. This may look tidy on an organizational chart, but the effect it has both on company profits and on the people who do the work is devastating. Trying to separate business and productivity concepts into the two categories is guaranteed to divide your company's workforce. And that's a really bad idea. Ever hear the phrase *divide and conquer*? Your competition is hoping that you haven't.



WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Whether you're a worker or a manager, stop for just a moment and think like a consumer. Every day, you see the results of these divided and dysfunctional companies. Here are just a few of the countless examples that you probably see every day.

You call customer service in a major corporation and are greeted by unmotivated workers who have neither the training nor the authority to solve your problem. All they can do is pass you around to other departments while you spend enough time on hold to memorize every word in all the bad music they're playing for you.

You get the wrong food, cold at that, along with overwhelming apathy from the people who serve you at your favorite taco joint. Your meal is a mess, and they couldn't be less concerned about it. You complain to the shift supervisor only to discover that they're not that thrilled to be helping you, either. The only person who seems motivated to ensure that your meal is a pleasant experience is you.

You spend hundreds of dollars on software. The installation corrupts your system. After you fight your way through that battle, you find that the program is even less stable than the people who wrote it. You call tech support. They tell you an upgrade is coming out "real soon now." You pay for the upgrade when it arrives, and the cycle repeats itself.

You go to your local retail store, buy a product from a well-known manufacturer, get it home, and find that it doesn't work. You take it back and exchange it for another unit. This one works, but only for a week. Once more, you return it for a new unit. This time, it keeps functioning but little cosmetic pieces break or fall off. You give up and just live with it, all the while wondering if the company you bought it from has ever heard of quality control.

In each of these cases, what are you tempted to do as a consumer? Probably the same thing the rest of us do: you simply quit doing business with that company. Do you at least call the company and tell them why you stopped doing business with it or buying its products? Neither does anybody else. What you probably will do, however, is tell all of your friends, and maybe even a few strangers on the street, what a terrible experience you had with this company. You might even go so far as to suggest that they avoid this company at all cost.



WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

You will likely be familiar with stories such as these, but you may not have made the connection just yet as to how this affects your company, your career, and your personal life. Consider this. All of these scenarios are the result of internal company problems. If, because of these problems, customers silently turn away and start dealing with your

competitors—and I can assure you that they do just that every day without your knowledge—what effect do you think this will have on overall company profits?

Those of you in management will probably be quick to grasp the obvious implications. However, if you're just a regular working-class person, you may not really care whether the company makes a profit or not. Before you become too comfortable, however, you need to think about just exactly what does happen when company income and profits suffer. That's right: people start losing their jobs. Maybe even you. Layoffs, downsizing, rightsizing . . . pick whatever euphemism you're most comfortable with, but, at the end of the day, when a company suffers financial decline, people get fired. Of course, *fired* is an ugly term, which is precisely why I used it. When people lose their jobs, there's nothing pretty about it. And if your company doesn't get its act together, it could very easily happen to *you*. Unfortunately, this is a fate all too frequently suffered by workers and management alike.

Even if you're one of the lucky ones who survive the bloodbath when your company has to start cutting costs, your life won't be that much better. Who do you think gets to pick up the slack and do all the work of the people who just got the axe? That's right: you do. Your workload will double. Your pay won't.

This is not a dark and gloomy book. On the contrary, it's a book that shows you how to prosper when you thought there was no hope. However, it's imperative that you understand, right here and now, that—whether worker or manager—you're all in the same boat. And that boat is often an extremely bureaucratic and ineffective company that is just a couple of boneheaded management decisions and a few careless fry cooks away from dumping you into the cold waters of corporate distress. The sooner you realize that your personal fate is tied inextricably to that of your company, no matter how large the company or how disconnected you may feel from the people at the top, the sooner you have a fighting chance to steer clear of the rocks and keep your ship from going straight to the bottom.

Furthermore, you must understand one very critical, fundamental point: regardless of whether you're wearing a five-thousand dollar suit or a pair of jeans and sneakers, you're all in this together. United you stand. Divided you fall. That's a very old phrase, but, like most such things, it's still around because it's true. Ignore this at your peril.



HOW WILL THIS BOOK HELP YOU?

So, is this a management book that will help the people who are running the company devise more-effective corporate strategies, or is it a book to help workers improve their careers, make more money, and have an increasingly satisfying job?

It's both. It *has* to be.

But how, you may ask, can a book be about giving the workers more and yet enabling the company to increase profits? That's a very valid question, and the answer lies in an equation that would surely make your old algebra teacher twitch: 1 plus 1 is greater than 2.

This is something that the greatest conquerors in world history have always known. You don't build huge and long-lasting empires with only a handful of clever generals. They would spend all their time planning, and nobody would actually get up from the table to *do* anything. You can't do it with a large mass of people, either. They'd spend more time squabbling with each other than they would acquiring new territory. No, the way the great empires have been established throughout human history has been through the efforts of visionary leaders who understood that they could prevail only when united, workers and leaders together.

The old business model has a myth, as old as commerce itself, that divides people into two groups: management and those being managed. These lines separate your people, and a divided people cannot endure forever. In the pages that follow, we're going to erase these lines, as well as the boundaries between all other tribes in your company. That doesn't mean that managers will lose their authority or that workers will declare freedom and anarchy. Both scenarios are impractical and unprofitable for all concerned.

Instead, you'll see that every manager is also a worker, learn how every worker can lead by example, and realize how building alliances and a spirit of unity across all boundaries leads to higher morale, higher profits, and bigger paychecks. Along the way, we'll explore practical, down-to-earth approaches to problem solving and productivity, techniques that make sense to people who have to do real work in the real

world. Instead of mindless platitudes, you'll be shown how to take time-honored principles and apply them to the work that you do on a day-to-day basis. And you won't be given simple answers; you'll be taught to think for yourself and how to arrive at a plan that works when faced with your daily reality of politics, maneuvering, ambition, incompetence, and short-term thinking.

No matter what your position in the company, you will have a clear path to a better career and a better life. That's because rich and powerful empires have the most rewards to share with their people. By the time we're through, your managers will be superior and inspirational leaders, your workers will be motivated to pursue brilliance, and you will all come to realize a simple but crucial truth. Alone, you are weak and vulnerable. Together, you are invincible.

Business is war. You are surrounded each day by countless competitors who want your territory and your resources. And they will take them from you any way that they can. If they succeed, your company will lose its customers. Its bank accounts will go dry, and you will lose your job. You will have no money. You will lose your home. Your children will go hungry. And your competitors will not care.

No matter what your job is specifically, your group is far too small to stand alone. Your only hope for protection from these predators is to unite the tribes within your company and work together as one. To survive, you must rally beneath a single banner. You must become an invincible empire.

Only you can build this empire because its greatest power is its people—their passion, their productive strength, their ingenious creativity, and their fierce devotion both to the cause and to each other. Without the people, from the inspirational leaders to the workers who toil on the front lines, there is no empire. There is no protection from the predators.

No matter which tribe you call home, your loyalty must be to the greater good of this empire. Your members must stand together. No matter what part you play, you work not in isolation, but side by side with others. Strive for excellence, and you will inspire those around you to reach for greater heights themselves. Whether you are a leader or a worker, bring people together, reward their efforts, and give them a reason to care about the cause. Do this, and you will know only victory and prosperity. Do this, and no predator can harm you. For at the end of the day it is you, the people, who are the true strength of the empire.

Unite, and be invincible!



THE PILLARS OF THE EMPIRE



I  Vision

*Employ long-term thinking and build a
long-lasting empire.*

Nobody wants to look for a new job every year because his previous company went out of business. And nobody builds a business with a desire to see it fail. In both cases, people are looking for results and benefits that stand the test of time. One would think that, because of this, everyone would have their eyes on the big picture and be thinking in terms of the long-range plans and vision of their enterprise.

However, as anyone who has held a job for more than a month can attest, this is rarely the case. From the highest executive positions to the everyday production tasks of the average workers, people succumb to short-term thinking. They become focused exclusively on the issues of the day, and in the process are so busy putting out the fire at their feet that they don't realize the company itself is burning down. This becomes apparent only later, when the entire structure collapses and they find themselves once again in search of a job. They were successful in solving today's problems, but they failed to prepare for a secure tomorrow. The latter is a much more costly mistake.

The only way to ensure long-term benefits, security, and prosperity is through long-term thinking. In other words, you must plan, live, and work with vision, and you must integrate the efforts and minute details of each day into this grand scheme. Only thus will you guarantee that the prosperity you enjoy today will still be there for you tomorrow.

Vision is not the exclusive domain of the highly paid business executive. Each person, at every level of the empire, is capable of broader thinking. Indeed, every individual must make vision a high priority and a part of their daily tasks. If you are a leader, it is your duty to see the direction of the company and mold your efforts to support it. You are also charged with conveying this purpose to your people in a way that is realistic and meaningful to them so that they, too, may contribute to the greater good. If you are a worker, to you falls the task of making this vision a reality. In every action you take, you must keep one eye on what you're doing and the other on where it's taking your company. With leaders and workers joined together in a harmonious effort to build a better tomorrow, the results will be many times greater than your individual efforts, and you will all enjoy the fruits of your labors.

Contrary to what some may think, living with purpose and vision is not a difficult task. It merely takes a dedicated decision to make it a priority in your daily life. Once you've done that, it's often as simple as putting one foot after the other.



PICTURE THE END RESULT IN FINE DETAIL.

No matter what your task, regardless of how large or small the goal you wish to achieve, you simply cannot succeed in your efforts unless you know exactly what the finished result should look like. You must have a very firm and detailed understanding of what you're looking to accomplish before you take your first step. If you're an artist, how can you possibly paint a picture of a tree if you don't know exactly what a tree looks like? If you think you already know, let's test that assumption with a handful of pertinent questions.

What does the bark look like? What's the texture? What's the shape of the leaf? Exactly what shade of green? How do the branches grow? Is it rigid, or is it flexible enough to sway in the breeze?

Know what a tree looks like now? Great. What does it look like in the fall? Didn't think about that, did you? How about spring? Does it bear fruit? Does it flower? How does it seed? What about winter and summer? Each season brings a specific set of circumstances. Your tree will react in harmony with this.

Got a tree for all seasons now? Wonderful. But exactly where does it grow? What are the exact specifications of the climate? Have you considered the precise temperature range, acceptable humidity, annual rainfall, and highest winds that it can tolerate?

So now you know all there is to know about a tree, right? Well, not quite. You still don't have the complete picture. How does it interact with its environment? What animals does it attract? Does it have natural predators? Does it rise above the forest and get adequate sunlight, or do others overshadow it? What plants stifle its growth? With what plants does it have a symbiotic relationship?

You may contend that an artist with easel and paintbrush doesn't have to know all of these things to paint a tree, and this is true. However, what if you were involved in preparations for a new orchard? You would not only have to offer a rendition of what that orchard would ultimately look like, you'd better understand all the other issues involved, or you'll have a very dead bunch of trees before long. On the bright side,

you can at least use them for paper, which you'll doubtless need because printing your résumé will quickly become a priority.

The important thing to glean from our exercise with the trees is to realize just how poorly lacking our concept of a tree is without making a concerted effort to fully visualize one. If someone asked you yesterday about trees, you might have replied that you knew all about them. Now, however, with just the briefest of examinations, it's clear that, when you get right down to it, there's still much to learn. That's the point, and it applies consistently, no matter what it is you're interested in accomplishing. You cannot achieve a high-quality result until you have a detailed picture in your mind of just exactly what that result is.

You can apply this lesson of the visualized tree to every single goal you encounter in your company. As more people understand the value of breaking down a vision into fine detail, your efforts will be increasingly more effective, no matter what they are. Because a stronger empire benefits you personally, you should make it a point to share this insight with everyone you work with. Then, together, you will move forward and achieve great things, because you'll all know exactly what it is that you're working toward. There's tremendous power in such understanding.

You can accomplish anything in life if you're truly willing to commit your mind, body, and spirit. The very first step in bringing your vision to life, however, is knowing *exactly* what that vision is. Sure, this is one of those statements that sound overly simplistic until you sit down and truly think about it. Therefore, for each new task, you must consider it well before taking your very first step.



PLAN LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE FOREVER.

Another aspect of short-term thinking is the tendency to make plans that look good for a finite period of time but have known difficulties that will arise after that. One would think that this would be an unacceptable approach, but very often the feeling is that the trouble of

today is sufficient and that tomorrow will take care of itself. In fact, schemes are frequently concocted in the workplace with the personal benefits being the only consideration, and with an implicit underlying attitude that somebody else can deal with the consequent problems. That's not only unethical, it's just plain stupid. Why? The long-term prosperity of the individual depends upon the long-term prosperity of the empire.

You won't have to look very far in your own company to find examples of short-term thinking. In fact, you may have been in meetings during which someone proposed an obviously flawed solution to a problem at hand. If you were brave (or foolish) enough to point out that the quick fix was a long-term disaster just waiting to happen, you were probably confronted with some of the standard defenses for such tactics:

- ⊙ By the time things go sour, it will be another department's problem. (Protect your tribe in the short term at another tribe's expense.)
- ⊙ Perhaps by then a better solution will have arrived (denial and wishful thinking)
- ⊙ We'll worry about that when the time comes (aversion)
- ⊙ There is no problem (the ostrich syndrome)
- ⊙ That's not your responsibility. Sit down and shut up. (They know it's a bad idea and don't want it publicized.)

These are just a few variations on a theme that's all too familiar. The common thread is that people focus, once again, on putting out the fire at their feet and actively avoid considering the long-term effects of their actions. Regardless of the reason for their avoidance of the consequences, there's one fundamental thing that is almost always overlooked. Even though it seems like they're off the hook because the long-term issues are now considered to be someone else's problem, these problems will damage the company in ways large or small. Because the prosperity of the individual ultimately depends upon the prosperity of the empire, they're actually shooting themselves in the foot; it's just a very slow bullet.

The solution to these problems is really quite simple. As is often the case, it comes down to nothing more mysterious than priorities and lines in the sand that you choose not to cross. No matter what you're trying to accomplish or what problem you're looking to solve, pretend that

you're immortal and will be working for your company for the next five centuries. Assume that no matter what goes wrong, it will hurt you personally. Then move forward keeping that perspective in mind, refusing to shrug off the responsibilities that you owe to the future.

In and of itself, this perceptual trick will not solve your problems or make the perfect solution magically appear. However, what it will do is keep you working on the problem until a satisfactory approach is discovered—which is the next best thing to magic. You'd be surprised how often sloppy solutions and ill-conceived plans are put into place for no other reason than people being in too much of a hurry to come up with a better idea.

In general, humanity is full of brilliance and inspiration. To tap into that may take extra time, but it's time well spent. Once you realize that your own future is linked to the future of the empire, you'll no longer be willing to settle for short-term solutions that guarantee long-term disasters. You'll be motivated to reach for a better plan, and, being so driven, you will almost always find one.

Once you've come to this realization, the next step is to make sure that everyone you work with understands it as well. Many people live their lives on automatic pilot and simply don't think of changing their perspective. Therefore, you must show them how the consequences of tomorrow are always of the utmost importance to them personally, and start building alliances with like-minded people.

You'll often meet resistance when you try to hold out for a better solution, being pressured instead for the quick fix. This is why you must educate as many people as you can reach. There is strength in numbers, and, when you have the support of others, you'll be in a much better position to deliver the solid, long-term solution. Better still, with each success, you will be able to gather even more people to your banner, for they will see that you were right and that they have personal and tangible rewards to join with you.

You'll never realize how truly amazing you can be until you decide to claim the consequences of the future as your personal domain. When you own the future, you own the present. As others join you in this thinking, your combined power will make you a strong-enough force to build a better tomorrow through a smarter today, no matter what resistance you encounter.



ANTICIPATE HOW PEOPLE WILL REACT.

No matter how lofty your goals or how well you've mapped out the journey, you're going to depend on—and sometimes fall into conflict with—other people. It's a common scenario for people to devote days, weeks, or months to intricate strategies only to have them fall apart the first time the plan hits a snag. You'll often hear people, in the midst of their troubleshooting, muse that they simply didn't realize that this person or that department was going to react in such a way. Simply put, they didn't understand the personalities and perspectives of all the players involved, and they were consequently unprepared for resistance and adverse reactions. They never saw the trouble coming until it was too late.

Just like when playing a game of chess, you must always think several moves ahead. To do so in a productive manner, you have to be able to predict how others are going to respond. Your assumptions will never be 100% accurate, of course, but, if you make it a part of your normal thought process to consider not only the logistical aspects of any plan but also the human factor, you will be much more effective than anyone else. Your initial plans will be tailored to the individuals you'll be encountering rather than pursuing an impersonal or academic approach based on pages full of numbers, names, and departments.

Additionally, because you've taken the time to understand the nature of the people involved, you'll have contingency plans based on the various ways that you predict they may respond. Anticipating several possible reactions and having a plan for each will practically guarantee that a large portion of your planning efforts will end up in the trash can. That's okay. Don't think of the time you spent on the unused backup plans as time wasted. Instead, consider the fact that, *because* of the overall number of hours you spent in detailed planning, you were prepared and you succeeded. Those extra contingencies that you didn't use are just a cost of doing business successfully.

In any endeavor, people are the wild cards. No matter how brilliantly you strategize, if you fail to take this into account your plans will be

disrupted time and again, leaving you spinning idly in the breeze wondering what just hit you. There's no need for that. Although it's impossible to predict with absolute certainty how any person or group of people will react, with attention and study you'll find that you're quickly able to predict and anticipate the responses of others with growing regularity. As with any other skill, you'll improve with practice. The simple fact that you've made the study of people and their reactions a priority in your planning gives you an incredible tactical advantage for one very simple reason: *most people don't*.

So how do you go about anticipating the way that people will respond to your ideas, proposals, initiatives, and plans? Study, and pay attention! Countless books have been written on human nature. Go to your local bookstore and read! Furthermore, don't limit your studies to human nature alone. Consider the culture in which you live. People are influenced not only by time-honored instincts, but also by local, regional, and national attitudes and norms.

While you're in the bookstore, make sure you also look at some books on human psychology, and specifically emotion. If you haven't discovered this already, it won't take much time in the business world to realize that, no matter how professional we're supposed to be in our endeavors, people still make emotional decisions. Are emotional decisions always the smartest or best? Obviously not. When you're reacting in the heat of the moment instead of acting on a well-conceived plan of action, you're extremely off balance and vulnerable. Nonetheless, a surprisingly large number of people do just this. If you understand the emotional hot buttons of the people you're dealing with, you'll have a much more accurate idea of how they will react to any situation you create. It's another advantage, and a big one at that.

You must also consider whether the reactions you encounter will be in pockets of isolated groups or if an overall snowball effect could create a larger problem than the sum of individual responses. Again, understanding the nature, motivations, and emotions of others will give you ample insight into just what sort of reactions you can expect.

Having prepared for as many contingencies as possible based on your observations of the people you're dealing with, you're in a very strong position to see that your vision not only survives but thrives. Does all this sound a bit manipulative? Good. That's exactly what it is. Business is war. I can assure you, if you don't prepare and control the battlefield to your advantage, someone else will come along and impose

their own vision, and your dreams will suffer accordingly. Know who you're dealing with, how they're going to react, and be prepared for it. In this manner, you can protect your vision and continue to bring positive change to your organization.



KNOW THE CHARACTER OF YOUR LEADERS AND ALLIES.

As an extension of preparing for the reactions of others, you must have a firm grasp on the character and moral makeup of the people you're dealing with. If your fate is at the mercy of your leaders, understanding their character is critical. Are they ethical? Will they reward you for your efforts? Can you trust them? You should ask yourself questions like these on a regular basis, and make sure that you're comfortable with the validity of your conclusions before trying to promote your vision. Regardless of whether you work under a noble leader or the scum of the earth, you can still succeed. Your approach, however, will obviously be very different depending on whom you're dealing with.

In addition to your leaders, what about your allies? Within any organization, you'll find like-minded individuals and groups who will support you in your endeavors. Failing to understand the quality of their character is just as fatal as not understanding your leaders because both have the power to completely disrupt your plans.

It also works the other way. If you're a leader, you must understand the nature of the people who work with you. Can you count on them to follow through? Can you trust them? Will they do the right thing, or will they instead fall apart out of preoccupation with self-interest? If you don't know the morals and ethics of the people you count on to get the job done, your vision may spiral into complete disaster.

You must also look to the future. Will the person who agrees with you today support you further down the road, or will they bolt at the first sign of opposition? Can they be bought by the competition, whether internal or external? Do they have the personal strength and conviction to hold to their course no matter how rough the waters get, or will they simply drift in whichever direction the wind is blowing? Before you can count on them and make any kind of plans based on their participation and support, you must not only know where they are today, but where they will stand on the issues tomorrow.

People also react differently to the euphoria of success and the heart-break of failure. Will the tides of fortune alter their judgment? Do they have oversized egos? Will they become cocky and overconfident when things are going well? Are they likely to become completely pessimistic when something goes wrong? No matter how sound their judgment may be in the calm stages of planning, it could be radically different under fire. You need to consider these things before—not after—you decide to count on them.

Loyalty is another critical consideration. Some people support a vision because they truly believe in it. Their motivations are pure: the simple and admirable desire to effect positive change. Other people are simply opportunistic. If your worldview suits their ambitions today, then they will serve as your staunchest supporters. However, when the tides change and they see better opportunities in another camp, they may abandon you with no warning whatsoever and even turn against you. So how do you protect yourself? Sometimes the best way to see the future is to look into the past.

How did they treat the people they interacted with before they met you, and how are they treating other people even now? Like many clichés, there's a certain amount of truth in the adage that a tiger doesn't change stripes. How someone treats others is quite likely how they'll treat you as well. If you see a wide gap between how they appear to you and how others view them, examine it carefully before trusting them with the care of your vision.



BE COMPLETELY PREPARED BEFORE UNVEILING YOUR IDEAS.

Many people, out of either impatience or the desire for personal attention, have a habit of talking about their plans and ideas to anyone who will listen, long before they're prepared to implement them. Although it may have been proper play when we were children to give "fair warning" in our competitive games, as an adult in the business world it's little more than political suicide. No matter what you're trying to accomplish, chances are good that there will be others within your company who are competing for the resources or control that you want for your own goal. If you give notice of your plans before you're prepared to act on them, you give the competition a chance to prepare for your tactics and beat you to the punch.

Rule number one is very simple: until you're completely prepared and ready to put your plan into action, keep your mouth shut! Discuss your vision on a need-to-know basis only. Other than stroking your own ego, no advantage can be gained by bragging about what you're going to do next week or next month. The disadvantages of premature announcement are numerous and often fatal.

Whether your vision is a large or small one, you must prepare exhaustively. Eventually, a time will come in the process when you need to act before you can move things ahead any further. You may also from time to time wish to release *disinformation* to throw your competitors off track, but this is once again just another form of action that's not to be taken until you're prepared to utilize the benefits that it brings. In the meantime, plan, prepare, and even drill and rehearse when possible, and make sure that you are in every way ready to strike with overwhelming firepower before anyone has even the slightest notion of what you're up to. If you keep things quiet until you're prepared to act, then, by the time any opposition to your plans can mount, you will have already achieved your victory.

If, however, you are greeted with immediate agreement and success when you do unveil your plans, you may feel that you went to all that trouble for nothing. Sometimes this will be true. But who cares? You

prevailed! More often, though, your seemingly effortless success will be due to the fact that you were so thoroughly prepared for every contingency that any who might have opposed your ideas saw the futility of resistance, and therefore offered none. The greatest victory in battle is to win without a fight.

Furthermore, regardless of whether your victory is a lengthy or speedy one, all of the effort you put into preparations leaves you extremely well organized when it comes time to actually implement your plans. Many an endeavor has succeeded in the initial phases, won the support of all critical parties, and then fallen flat on its face due to a lack of adequate structure and organization in implementation. If you fail, it doesn't matter what stage of the game it happens in. You've still failed. As such, each and every bit of work that you put into the overall selling and implementation of your plan is of tremendous value. Get your act together and keep it quiet. Then, when you're ready, spring into action and seize the day.



GIVE PEOPLE A REASON TO CARE ABOUT YOUR VISION.

This is the most common mistake made in every company, worldwide. Leaders come up with great new ideas and expect that, by simply voicing them, people will rally beneath their banner. The very best example I can give in this regard is the common practice of corporations advertising their “mission,” which is usually some vague and meaningless jumble of corporate-speak. So, with all due respect to whoever comes up with these ideas, let me say this as gently as possible. Nobody cares about your mission statement.

Shocking, isn't it? Many executives who were taught in business school that you must have one of these things when you start a company have difficulty grasping why they have absolutely no real value in the day-to-day affairs of their business. Above and beyond the fact that they're usually so vague as to convey no practical information, there's

one critical piece missing, and this piece determines whether a mission statement will motivate anyone. A mission statement never gives people a real, practical, and tangible reason to care about it. It's nothing more than eye candy for the bureaucratically impressionable.

No matter how honest and hardworking they may be, all who work for your company from the president down to the custodians are—you guessed it—people. They come to work each day for one and only one reason: there's something in it for them. Typically, the paycheck is first and foremost on the list, but it's not the only motivating factor. Many people are lucky enough to love what they do for a living. Consequently, other factors that fall under the broad heading of job satisfaction also come into play. Ego ranks high on the list for many. Remember, we're dealing with people here. However, regardless of what the reasons may be, the simple fact is that people are there doing work for you because you've given them a reason to do so. Take away those reasons and they will trample you underfoot as they stampede to the exits.

Of course, the mission statement is just a convenient and obvious example of a useless vision, made so because the people have no reason to care about it. A business, however, is one continual stream of effort, and there will be many times when inspired workers and leaders come up with a new vision, large or small, to improve things. When you're that person, the most important thing you need to consider if you want any support is why people should care about what you're proposing.

Consequently, you need to be prepared to present the personal benefits of your vision to the people you wish to participate, and I do mean *personal* in the most literal way. Every individual will have unique desires, and groups of people will also have common goals and ambitions. You must appeal to individuals in terms of their personal well-being. It falls to you to explain why your vision, when successful, will bring them benefits that they can actually see and will care about. Do this, and you will have their immediate attention. Follow through on your promise of benefits, and you'll also have their most loyal and enthusiastic support.

Does it mean that people are selfish and bad because you have to appeal to their self-interest? No, of course not. We all have self-interest. It's an inescapable part of life. But, the bottom line for you is that you need support for your vision, and this is what it takes to get it. Furthermore, it meets my criteria for a good business deal, because everybody wins.

You get the support you need, and your supporters get benefits. That's not only good from an ethical point of view, but it's the best way to run a long-term business. As long as everybody gets what they want, the wheel keeps turning.

However, a piece is still missing here. It may seem obvious, but, before you can show someone how they can benefit from your inspirational new idea, they have to understand what it actually is. In fact, you should be prepared from the very beginning to spend significant time and effort on this. Don't expect others to see your vision.

If it were obvious, someone would have done it already. You must assume that you will not only have to go to great lengths to explain what your idea actually is and what its implications are, you also need to be ready for all the work involved in winning people over to your way of thinking. Sometimes, the reason nobody has done it before isn't that the idea didn't come up, but rather that whoever came up with the idea didn't take the time to win people over. An idea rarely sells itself. That might have something to do with why companies pay people commissions to go out and actively sell things.

Before you can begin preparations to garner the support of others, it helps to understand whom the pivotal people or groups are so that you can focus your persuasive efforts in the right direction. Not only do you need to know who these people are, you must also understand what's important to them, for the only way to sell your vision is from their point of view, not yours. They don't care about what's in it for you, only what's in it for them. Human nature is a wonderful thing, as there are very few aspects of life that you can count on to be so unfailingly predictable. This is an advantage.

One last thing to consider when giving people a reason to care is the possibility of competing visions. Just because you're inspired and motivated to change the world for the better, don't assume that you're the only one. Others have their own worldview, and, if they're any good at all, they're going to work just as hard as you at winning the hearts and minds of the influential people. The more you understand the details and implications of any competing visions, the better you can prepare your counter strategies. If they promise people the moon, find a way to promise the stars. Just make sure that you *always* deliver on your promises.



PRESENT LONG-TERM BENEFITS IN PRACTICAL TERMS.

Another problem people have with rallying behind a new initiative is that the results may seem too far away to have any real effect on their daily existence. It may be very true that your vision will improve the lives of every single person in your department, or perhaps even in the company itself. However, if people won't see any benefits for two years, it's unlikely that they'll get too excited about your efforts. Even if they do, after a few months with no tangible reward for their endeavors, they'll either lose interest or become disillusioned and negative. Either way, your support will fall away in the midst of your initiative, and you're dead in the water.

You can't blame people for this, nor belittle them for their lack of faith. In any group, there are very few true visionaries. The problem with many of them is that they believe that seeing the possibilities is all they're required to do. It is not. Yes, you must see a better future, but you must also be a great communicator and motivator to bring your dream to life. Part of this is showing the rest of the company just exactly how they will benefit, and some benefits had better be lurking just around the corner if you want to keep their attention. People, by nature, tend to have a short attention span. Ignore this at your peril.

In addition to breaking your plan down to show incremental benefits, you may also find yourself battling another proposal that is much more appealing because it's a short-term solution. As is often the case, a short-term proposal may fail miserably over the long haul, but the majority of people won't realize this in the beginning. Remember, they're not the visionaries. You are. It's up to you to do the math for them. Add up the numbers or tally the appropriate results for both approaches, spanning the entire duration. You must be able to demonstrate, in irrefutable terms, that the short-term solution comes up, well, short over the course of time. You must also show that your plan, although perhaps not as spectacular in the beginning, is unquestionably more beneficial when it's all said and done. If it's not, you should give serious consideration to discarding it

and joining the team with the better plan. Remember, the long-term health of the empire affects you personally.

Additionally, you must be able to map intangibles into tangibles. Just as the mission statement is too vague to be relevant to most people, many visions suffer from the problem of living in the abstract rather than the concrete. Don't expect people to make this leap on their own. You have to map it out for them. That's your part of the deal as a visionary.



INTEGRATE SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS INTO THE LARGER EFFORT.

Even though you have a long-term plan that will bring lasting benefits to your people, at times you simply must put out the fire at your feet. If you don't recognize and acknowledge this fact of life, you'll immediately lose all credibility. You'll also end up with crispy toes. Long-term solutions are all well and good, but many times, if you don't deal with the short-term problem, you won't be around to worry about the long term. So what's a visionary to do?

The first thing to clarify is what *not* to do. If you decide to eliminate the annoying short-term problem with a quick and dirty fix so that you can get back to the mountaintop and contemplate your grand scheme, you're doing no one a service, especially yourself. There's one very important reason for this. Every short-term action has a long-term effect.

The hallmark of quick fixes everywhere is that people don't consider the ramifications of the solution. All they care about, at least for the moment, is that the flames aren't scorching their shiny new shoes. From there, many people quickly fall into the old "tomorrow will take care of itself" way of thinking, which is little more than denial and irresponsibility. Whether it's a hack or a well-planned action, it will always have consequences. The critical difference between the two is that, for the well-planned action, the consequences have been considered and accounted for in the overall scheme of things. In other words, when you

have a short-term problem, come up with a solution that eliminates the current symptoms without deviating from your overall long-term goals. This takes more effort and consideration, but it keeps you on track for your vision while giving you credibility for being a practical, here-and-now problem-solver. That pays big dividends when it comes to credibility and trust.

Alternatively, you may find that someone else has a perfectly good short-term solution to the problem that requires only minor modifications to keep the long-term consequences from being detrimental. By approaching this person, sincerely complimenting them on their ingenuity and giving them credit for being a visionary themselves, you open the door to cooperation. At that point, you'll have a much more receptive ear when you show how, working together and with just a few tweaks, their idea can coexist within the framework of your long-term plan. Make sure they understand that they'll still get the credit for the solution, not you, and that you'll be first in line to tell the world how brilliant they are.

Additionally, you can point out to them that, above and beyond solving short- and long-term problems, you've each gained yet another thing of inestimable value. By joining forces in this endeavor, you have acquired new and potentially powerful allies in each other. Not only have you solved the problem at hand, the two of you and all of your collective supporters are now united, much stronger together than you were individually.



SHOW HOW TO GET THERE FROM HERE.

Just as you'll encounter difficulties when people can't translate your dream into practical benefits that they can understand, you must also show people that there is a clear and logical path that leads to the long-term benefits you espouse. Many people come up with good and noble ideas. However, what separates the true visionary from the hopeless

romantics and impractical dreamers is the ability to translate that dream into action in a sequence of clear and simple steps that everyone can follow. That's what gets things done. It also garners the respect of people higher and more powerful than you in the chain of command, earning you a reputation as a practical, results-oriented leader. And that's horsepower that you can always use.

Nobody will follow you in pursuit of your vision if there isn't a clear, believable path to get there from here. People are afraid of the dark and fearful of the unknown, and they will resist change with all four paws. If you can't show them a way to accomplish your goals that seems organized, well thought out, and at least reasonably safe, they'll clear the room before you get your next sentence out.

To demonstrate the validity of both your quest and the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, show the sequence of events as you see them unfolding. People are always more comfortable with an incremental approach to things, as it's easier to grasp one small step and then the next than it is to get their minds around a huge concept all at once.

In doing so, employ cause and effect so that they can see that no leap of faith is involved. Many people have been burned enough times in the corporate world that they simply have no faith, and it's hard to blame them. You should be able to demonstrate that, after accomplishing one incremental step, it produces tangible results that set the stage for the next step. In this way, once again, a large campaign can be broken down into practical terms that even the least imaginative in the group can be comfortable with.

This incremental approach also allows others to come up with innovative ways to solve the problems that you'll encounter. You get the benefit of the group's creativity, and your group becomes more enthusiastic about your vision because they feel like an important part of the success rather than excess baggage. Once again, you've taken another step toward uniting the people, from which your group and the entire empire will benefit.

Understanding the path toward your vision also allows people to be prepared for the transitions and results. This enables them to carry forward their own plans in harmony with yours, so that neither is derailed and each supports and reinforces the other wherever possible. Joining other groups and their efforts together with yours, closely or loosely, broadens your scope yet again, for you now have several armies working in harmony on the same front. Not only does this bring more power

to bear on the problems at hand, the momentum in and of itself helps the movement to grow. Everybody wants to be part of a winning team. As it becomes more and more obvious that you, your people, and your allies are moving forward to great things, you'll find that, instead of having to beg and plead for support, people will now come to you, individually and in groups, wanting to be a part of the vision. And this, of course, was always part of the vision.



WIN THE WAR, NOT THE BATTLE.

No matter how well you prepare and how brilliantly you execute your plans, you will eventually encounter difficulties. At times, you may even lose a battle. It is extremely important that you always keep your perspective and focus on the vision itself. The moment you get caught up in tunnel vision, losing sight of everything except the task at hand, your dream is in great peril. Sure, it's nice to win every battle, but remember that all that's important is that you bring your vision to life. If you suffered failures along the way but still achieved your overall objective, no one will care. If, however, you become obsessive about winning every single engagement at any cost, then you may well find one day that you've won the current battle but lost the war. At that point, it will have all been for nothing.

Additionally, it's important to maintain momentum. Not only does it keep things moving forward, it's critical to morale. When you get caught up in the marshes and find yourself making no progress at all, people begin to falter and lose hope. Remember, *you're* the visionary, not *them*. The responsibility of maintaining hope and enthusiasm falls on your shoulders, and the easiest way to do that is to keep things rolling so that you see a stream of incremental successes and accomplishments, even if they're small ones sometimes. Don't get bogged down. Stay light on your feet.

If you insist on winning every single argument, you'll also eventually build animosity and resistance that would not have existed if you had

been wise enough to yield lesser points on a strategic basis. By giving in to a smaller, less critical matter, you may indeed lose a minor battle. However, by showing yourself to be reasonable, approachable, flexible, and open to compromise, you'll often gain the respect and cooperation of those who previously opposed you. If you concede a point but gain an ally, did you really lose the battle?

You should also understand the importance of each battle long before you begin the campaign. In your earliest planning stages, you need to assess which objectives are absolutely critical to the success of your vision, which ones heavily influence the outcome, and which are clearly optional. Among other things, performing this triage allows you to manage your resources and plan your strategies accordingly.

Prioritizing your major efforts will also give you a sense of cause and effect. When studying the campaign to achieve your vision, consider the consequences of winning and losing for each battle. There will not only be some obvious implications in terms of the overall war, but also a sequential effect as the outcome of one endeavor invariably influences the next engagement. Knowing what objectives you must accomplish and comprehending the results of each success and failure will also help you make the quick battlefield decisions that will inevitably fall to you when a fight you never expected suddenly shows up on your front doorstep.

Taken individually, none of these steps are mysterious or novel. In fact, if I've done my job properly, they should all seem very, very obvious. What's important is that, when bringing a new vision to life, you consider each and every one of these points and act accordingly. More often than you might care to think, the gifted visionaries of humanity who accomplished great things did so not because of an intellect that far exceeded that of mere mortals, but rather because they had a good idea, took their time, and did their homework. Most importantly, they did the one critical thing that so few people take the time to do. Understanding that the most powerful and dynamic resource at their disposal was people, they gave their utmost attention to every aspect of human nature. They realized that they were dealing not with abstract plans and vague concepts, but rather with real people who had feelings and desires of their own. And they acted accordingly.

A vision begins with a dream, an inspiration rising from the hearts and minds of those who see things not only as they are, but as they could be. They dare to reach for the stars. The inspired visionary, that passionate

soul who can bring those dreams to life, is the one who realizes that nothing can be accomplished until people are joined and dedicated to a common cause. Only together, each standing upon the shoulders of the one who came before, can they truly rise high enough to reach the stars and achieve the impossible.



VISION

Employ long-term thinking and build a long-lasting empire.

- ⊙ Picture the end result in fine detail.
- ⊙ Plan like you're going to live forever.
- ⊙ Anticipate how people will react.
- ⊙ Know the character of your leaders and allies.
- ⊙ Be completely prepared before unveiling your ideas.
- ⊙ Give people a reason to care about your vision.
- ⊙ Present long-term benefits in practical terms.
- ⊙ Integrate short-term solutions into the larger effort.
- ⊙ Show how to get there from here.
- ⊙ Win the war, not the battle.