



# Excel Leader Advisory Letter

ISSUED BY THE EXCEL LEADERSHIP GROUP

April 2009

## Excel's Mission Statement

We help leaders consistently deliver world-class results and achieve higher profits by building a high performance, values-based culture that fully engages the talents of all associates.

## Thought for April

"Failures, repeated failures, are finger posts on the road to achievement. The only time you don't fail is the last time you try something, and it works. One fails forward toward success."

-Charles F. Kettering



We have been discussing the critical connection between effective leadership, an organization's work culture and profitability. As we have emphasized in past issues, the main point to take away is: Effective leaders create high performance cultures which foster higher levels of employee engagement and discretionary effort that in turn produce world-class results and higher profits. Enlightened executives, therefore, would do well to place significant focus and resources on the recruitment, development and retention of their leadership talent in order to enhance profitability and secure a real, sustainable competitive advantage in today's global economy. Thus far, we have discussed six characteristics of extraordinary leaders: high integrity, visioning, communication, change agent or catalyst, resilience and personal power.

This month let's look at another characteristic that sets extraordinary leaders apart from their peers: initiative or bias for action. Leaders who rate highly in this competency tend to take action without the need for prompting by others. In other words, they do not procrastinate or put off important tasks. They readily seize opportunities or create them rather than wait. Do you find yourself procrastinating when it comes to starting important projects or tasks? If you do, here are a few coaching tips that can help you take action more timely and consistently:

1. Complete undesirable tasks first. Tackle that task or project that you dread the most. Rather than delay ... get it out of the way and you will find other tasks on your "To Do" list will flow much easier. In addition, you will gain confidence from completing something that you have previously put off or avoided altogether.
2. Alternate pleasant with unpleasant tasks. Mix in a few tasks or projects that you genuinely enjoy as a reward for completing those items on your list that you tend to postpone.
3. Plan, then Do. Put together your best approach and then get started. Don't over plan. You can always adjust for changing circumstances once you begin. The important point here is: Get started! Nothing is completed until first started.
4. Set time limits and deadlines. It is a good general rule that we all work better to deadlines. In other words, set a time limit for each task on your list. Make your "To Do" list and set limits for the amount of time that you will allocate to each item on your list. One other point here: Stick to your deadlines. You will be amazed at how much more you can get accomplished and how much less valuable time is wasted.
5. Delegate tasks. Identify those tasks or project elements you either absolutely dread or struggle with and delegate them to someone whose unique talents match up better with these

items.

I encourage you to try these steps to improve your initiative and bias for action. Let me know how they work for you. Also, if you have encountered any other “best practices” for increasing your ability to take proactive steps to complete projects on time, please do share them, and I’ll include in a future letter.

Thus far, we have discussed seven critical characteristics of “extraordinary” leaders: high integrity, visioning, communications, change agent or catalyst, resilience, personal power and initiative or bias for action. Next month, we will discuss another critical dimension or characteristic: achievement drive.

As always, I encourage readers to contact me anytime at [mike@excelleadership.net](mailto:mike@excelleadership.net) with your comments and questions. Also, if Excel can be of assistance with any of your leadership challenges, please give us a call. We’ll talk to you again in May. Be well and best regards.

Join our Web-based “community” devoted to open and honest discussions on topics related to leadership challenges and solutions. To join, simply visit [TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net](http://TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net) and click on “Community.”



phone: 309-370-5040

e-mail: [mike@excelleadership.net](mailto:mike@excelleadership.net)

website: [www.excelleadership.net](http://www.excelleadership.net)

*Experience what **coaching** can do for you and others  
on your company's leadership team.*