



Dear Friend,

## Undercover Work

I don't know about you, but I absolutely loved the show, "The Undercover Boss," that ran for several weeks this winter. If you're not familiar with the program, the premise was this: Each week, a corporate executive quit shaving, exchanged his suit for the garb of the line staff in his company, and went out to learn what it was really like in the trenches. During that week, the exec rotated among jobs in the company and was supervised by his staff (unbeknownst to them). Each exec learned how people are really treated, how corporate policies and procedures actually effect operations and individuals, what staff think about customers (and what customers experience), and where there are diamonds in the rough -- dedicated, innovative, hard-working people who are the heart and soul of the business. Then, at the end of the week, the exec returned home, summoned his bewildered field colleagues to headquarters, revealed his true identity, shared with the company not only what he'd learned but some hysterical video clips about his attempts to cut the mustard in various aspects of the business, and put into motion changes based on his experiences.

It was great stuff! And, apparently America thought so too. Preliminary reports are showing that stock prices and public opinion are on the rise for companies that participated in the program. So, obviously, there's a tangible impact on business outcomes when business leaders take a risk, show vulnerability, find out what's really happening, communicate with customers and staff, and make adjustments.

Clearly, not everyone can move about his or her company undercover. (If you think about it, in some respects, the fact that these execs could don minor disguises and not be detected raises a different issue, but I'll save that one for another discussion.) Yet, however it's done, there's incredible value in finding out what your folks are truly thinking and experiencing -- regarding the company, its management, its operations, and its clients.

This month's issue of **EA Insights** relates to uncovering what you may not see in your organization. Now, don't zone out on me if you're not a business leader. Read on. Every staff member plays a vital role in developing or maintaining a healthy organization that will be around for the long term, and everyone is responsible for speaking up in an informed way when the opportunity arises.

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## "Quotes"

*"The problem with most failing businesses is not that their owners don't know enough about finance, marketing, management, and operations -- they don't, but those things are easy enough to learn -- but that they spend their*

Enjoy this month's newsletter. And, for unbiased support to shine a light on your organization, don't hesitate to call on your friends at Executive Advantage!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

## How Effective Is Your Company?

June Melvin Mickens, J.D.  
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How do you measure the effectiveness of your company? If you are only looking at balance sheets or profit and loss statements, you're missing the boat.

Don't misunderstand; those are critically important tools, but they only tell a portion of the story. To measure effectiveness, it's essential to consider mission, the goals developed in furtherance of that mission, and the results of everyone's effort. And, while you must assess all of this from an organization-wide

perspective, it's equally necessary to seek input regarding how staff understand and view the direction you're taking and their roles in making it happen. After all, few executives interact with customers on a daily basis; so, it's imperative to know how staff members are carrying your message to the public -- directly and indirectly.

As we, at Executive Advantage, work with organizational clients, we focus on seven areas that are widely accepted as the keys to a company's effectiveness. In fact, these are the assessment categories used by the National Institute of Standards and Technology for the Malcolm Baldrige Awards -- the annual awards given to businesses, as well as educational, health care, and nonprofit organizations, that demonstrate outstanding achievements in quality and performance. We've found that this solution supplies leaders with hard data about the organization and its ability to accomplish results, and it does so by pinpointing strengths that can be further leveraged and by identifying actual or potential weakness areas in need of attention.

So, as you think about your organization, consider these effectiveness measures:

**Leadership** - What are your staff's impressions regarding senior

*time and energy defending what they think they know. My experience has shown me that the people who are exceptionally good in business aren't so because of what they know but because of their insatiable need to know more."*

~ Michael Gerber

*"Grow antennae, not horns."*

~ Dr. James Rowland Angell

*"We must never forget that the most powerful communication isn't what you say, it's what you do. What counts, in the final analysis, is not what people are told but what they accept. It is this concept of the role of communication in industry that characterizes effective leadership."*

~ Frank E. Fischer

*"Success doesn't come to you...you go to it."*

~ Marva Collins

management's leadership and its involvement in creating and sustaining values, organizational direction, performance expectations, and a customer focus that promotes excellence?

**Strategic Planning** - How does your organization set its strategic direction and put those plans into action?

**Customer and Market Focus** - Do staff members know how your organization determines customer requirements and expectations for your goods or services? Also, how do you strengthen relationships with customers and find out their satisfaction levels?

**Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management** - Is staff familiar with how your organization uses data both to understand your performance and to become aware of areas for improvement?

**Human Resource Focus** - Are staff encouraged to develop and utilize their full potential? Does your organization create and maintain an environment that's conducive to performance excellence, full participation, and personal as well as organizational growth?

**Process Management** - How are key processes designed, managed, and improved within your company?

**Business Results** - How do staff perceive your performance and improvement in key business areas, and are they aware of the ways you communicate results throughout the organization?

The prospect of the answers to some of these questions can be intimidating. I know! However, making the investment periodically in measuring effectiveness, and then taking action in response to what you learn, goes a long way toward improving transparency, productivity, profit, and your likelihood of being a healthy organization...for the long term.

*"An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire, and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success."*

~ Stephen Covey

*"As a rule, he or she who has the most information will have the greatest success in life."*

~ Benjamin Disraeli

## New Coaching Offering!

**Executive Advantage** now has two new coaching plans for professionals. In addition to our year-long advanced coaching engagement, we now offer mini and basic coaching programs to help you improve your professional effectiveness.

**Executive Advantage** supports professional clients to:

- Enhance leadership and communication skills
- Achieve greater job satisfaction
- Improve time management
- Boost work-life balance
- Decrease stress



For information about **Executive Advantage's** solutions for professionals, contact us [online](#) or at **(301) 280-5950**.

## About Executive Advantage

At ***Executive Advantage***, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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