

Good news- Pretty easy to read, and very practical. It uses a relay race as a metaphor and a fictitious (but very realistic and believable) company as an example and does both quite well.

Bad news- It takes a little time getting warmed up and repeats a bit too much, but relay running does require warming up, and repetition is sometimes a good thing!

Good news- It has some pretty solid recommendations with practical lessons for companies, organizations, departments and leaders of today and tomorrow that I have summarized and turned into real tactics! As usual, I hope you can put them to use right away.

Summary:

As in a relay race, if you want your company's strategic vision to reach the finish line and achieve your goals, leaders all down the line must achieve a successful handoff of information, develop people and initiate strategies to make it work.

In *Executing Strategy*, Drs. Daughtry and Casselman use the metaphor of the relay race, its team members, and the importance of the "handoff zone" as each level of management receives, translates, and passes the strategic "baton" to the next; from senior management to middle and from middle to line managers.

Believing that no organization can outgrow its leadership, Drs. Daughtry and Casselman present a process for analyzing a manager's ability to take the handoff, ensure they communicate the corporate vision and develop their people to carry it out.

They suggest ways to coach managers according to their needs to guarantee they will develop into "star receivers" and execute the leaders' vision for building the organization. The authors present simple methods for engaging people at each level to increase their commitment and better translate the company's vision into practical plans that work.

Initially, they define three stages of an organization in an S-curve model:

1. The **entrepreneurial stage**, where the founders are involved in day-to-day activities, there is great customer and product/service focus, emphasis on growth and an informal environment
2. The **systems stage**, where order helps deal with growing complexity, standards are set, roles are defined, lower managers might be starting to feel constrained and senior management find it hard to keep control and
3. The **delegation stage**, where senior managers need to let go and delegate more so that the organization can respond more quickly to local demands, and senior managers can focus on finding opportunities to expand the business while lower managers handle the details with flexibility

They point to the constant challenge of finding the right balance between the benefits of local autonomy and delegation with standardization and centralized direction. So, they say...

- If you understand stages of growth, you will better appreciate the factors that contributed to your organization's growth thus far and, at the same time, make the case for needed change.
- Knowing where you are in these stages can help guide the development of strategy because you will have an understanding of when and how your organization needs to change and
- Using these stages can also help in explaining the need for change and the meaning of change to others.

There are S-curves (or stages of development) for organizations and there are also S-curves for leadership and for individuals. The authors call the latter one "personal". To be most successful, organizations need the right people in the right roles at the right times in their organization's development.

Applications:

- First of all, have a clear vision and S.M.A.R.T. goals for your organization, department, or team.
- Assess where your organization is in its development. And remember that no matter how long your organization has existed, it may be at any of the three stages in this model, due to a variety of causes, recent changes, etc.
- Make sure your strategy fits with the stage you are in, is executable and will also help to achieve your vision.
- Be clear in and careful with your "baton hand offs" so that the actions required at lower levels make sense to those receiving them.
- Check on the process from time to time. This isn't just automatic!
- And the authors also point to six potential problems in the "personal" S-curve that can end up negatively affecting the bottom line, so assess them and take appropriate preventive or contingent action:

1. Awareness: Make sure roles are clear and make sense.

2. Belief: Make the case for change and get commitment.

3. Skills: Teach new skills.

4. Confidence: Build it. Develop it.

5. Fit: Get the right people in the right roles.

6. System: Eliminate barriers. Fix the system.

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Coaching, Mentoring, Personal and Leadership Development and have already put aspects of *Executing Strategy* to use with some of them. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my newly revised web site: www.rsbc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.