

## LEARNING AND INNOVATION



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Introduction:

### Connecting People and Strategies to Results through Operations

Part 3 of Tempe, AZ 3 part series

by Charlie Meyer, City Manager and Gretchen Maynard, OD Administrator, Tempe, AZ

In their September article: "The Strategy Process" Tempe City Manager Charlie Meyer and Gretchen Maynard, Tempe Organizational Development Administrator, described Tempe's "Strategy Process" as the second element in developing and sustaining high performance. Tempe's leadership philosophy on strategy is crafted to support their organization's highest purpose and strategic initiatives by doing the right things from a strategic perspective and doing things right from a tactical, day-to-day perspective. This article serves to close the loop on their three-pronged, citywide Leadership Development Program as Charlie and Gretchen explain how "Operations" connect people and strategy to results.

#### "The Operations Process"

Charlie Meyer, City Manager:

The Operations Process closes the loop on Tempe's Leadership Development Initiative. To wrap up this three-part series, we'd like to provide a brief re-cap of the first two of these highly inter-related processes:

#### **PART 1: The People Process**

My vision of this leadership development initiative is to formulate all the pieces we need to create and maintain outstanding value -- and the first piece starts with the people. Tempe has had incredibly capable employees for a long period of time. But we haven't always provided those employees with a system that allows them to reach their maximum effectiveness. For me, there is nothing sadder than to see an employee put into the wrong role and not be able to reach their full potential. By contrast, there's nothing more rewarding than seeing an employee develop when placed in a role that fits them -- all of a sudden they take off and begin to blossom. The People Process focuses on developing leadership at all levels, in building an environment where workers' highest talents are fully utilized toward fulfilling the organization's top priorities.

#### **PART 2: The Strategy Process**

The second piece is creating strategic focus. In part, being strategic means engaging in those “blue-sky” discussions of what’s possible. Another part is getting input from our city council, our community and employees so we can focus on what is really important. It also means deciding what we aren’t going to do, not just what we are going to do. Consistent engagement in this process allows us to align our top priority goals to our vision and purpose of providing outstanding service for our community.

### **PART 3: The Operations Process**

The People and Strategy processes are important, but if we don’t put a system in place to deliver results it simply becomes an exercise and nothing of real importance is accomplished. The Operations Process is all about executing an operating plan that links strategy and people to results. So the third piece of this initiative is to put a system in place that allows us to execute on a regular basis, with potential involvement from every single employee in setting strategies, setting goals and then measuring those activities that are actually accomplishing what we set out to do. That’s really the key to delivering on our promise of creating outstanding value.

#### Gretchen Maynard, OD Administrator:

The 4 Disciplines of Execution™ (4D’s) is the execution part of Tempe’s Operating Process. We are utilizing the 4D’s as a tool in developing teams that can craft measurable goals, act on lead measures that predict and influence achievement of goals, track and measure their own performance and create individual and team accountability.

The principles of execution are not new. Many top performing organizations world-wide have been utilizing these behavior-based principles for well over 50 years. My philosophy is to not “re-create the wheel” when possible, so part of my responsibility as an OD professional is to research best practices. I was pleased to discover that the 4D process lays out the key behaviors of execution into four simple, straightforward principles. Through several years of implementation in Tempe, we have learned that teams practicing the 4D’s with discipline consistently deliver on the organization’s most important goals.

In a nutshell, the 4 Disciplines of Execution™ teaches teams to:

- 1) Focus on the Wildly Important – those few critical goals (outside of our day jobs) that make all the difference by closing significant performance gaps or addressing opportunities. “Few” means acting on no more than three critical goals at one time.
- 2) Act on Lead Measures – spend 20% of your time executing on key activities that predict and influence achievement of the goal. Lead measures incorporate the 80/20 principle: 80% of your results come from 20% of your activities.
- 3) Keep a Compelling Scoreboard – scoreboards are important because we play differently when we keep score. A compelling scoreboard is motivating and simple so teams can see (within 5 seconds) whether they are winning or losing. They are also easily updateable, complete, and accessible to all team members.
- 4) Create a Cadence of Accountability – a reoccurring cycle of planning and accounting for results. This process creates sustainable results. Disciplined execution of WIGs (wildly important goals) requires a cadence – a rhythm of planning, follow through, and reporting.

**Critical Mass:**

It is important for organizations to understand that the 4 Disciplines of Execution is one, very successful tool that can be used to build high performance. If you already have consistently high performing teams, they are most likely utilizing these principles intuitively. In other words, one size does not necessarily fit all. Some key elements to organizational success are for leaders to:

- Be strategic in selecting key teams that will create the greatest impact on the whole organization.
- Select teams that have the greatest need to improve their performance.
- Choose those teams that will have the greatest influence on other teams within your organization – generally the teams that directly impact organizational high priority goals (the wildly important). As more teams begin executing successfully, other team members automatically begin adopting these key leadership behaviors – we call this gaining “critical mass” which positively changes organizational culture.

Charlie Meyer, City Manager

**Continuous Improvement:**

Creating a culture of high performance requires the development of an integrated, organization-wide system of People, Strategy and Operations. It also requires developing a culture of continuous improvement. This Leadership Development Program will continue to evolve as our city evolves – nothing about it is static. Continuous improvement also means developing leaders who are flexible, adaptable and embrace life-long learning as a measure of leadership success.

The opportunity to build a strong organization, develop leadership ability in all staff members, and help make a great community are some of the most rewarding parts of being a city manager. It's been a pleasure sharing Tempe's leadership development initiative with the Alliance for Innovation audience. If you'd like more information on Tempe's Leadership Development Initiative (LDP) you can go to our website: <http://www.tempe.gov/indexs.aspx?page=395>.