

You Can't Manage Results

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At the beginning of the annual planning season, when business leaders and executives are objectively evaluating last year's performance and setting the path forward to accomplish more in the year ahead. Often new annual objectives are established, however, there is one timeless truth that never changes ... **You Can't Manage Results**

I often encounter executives who experience that sinking feeling that it's too late to make an impact on results because the "game is over." We stress that the best way to achieve results is to focus on leading indicators not lagging indicators, such as "results." Because when you look at lagging indicators, you are looking at what has already happened. When you look at leading indicators, you are evaluating high payoff activities that will drive results. So, don't just focus on the final lagging indicators (e.g. revenue goals, market share, staff retention, etc.), **instead drive results by focusing on leading indicators.**

Leading business indicators, which are often tied to employees and team's activities and execution, can take many forms according to specific industries and roles. However, they must share the common attribute of being measurable. Once these indicators are established, managers can reinforce them, such as:

- Build individual and team action plans and set goals
- Evaluate action plans and goals regularly
- Coaching sessions for individual team members
- Change course to new tactics if original plan is off target
- Hold team members accountable for leading indicators
- Praise success and celebrate reaching goals

Managing leading indicators not only helps drive final results it also prevents executives experiencing regret that another year is in the books and their organization fell short of their objectives. By focusing on defining, communicating, and managing leading indicators, through high pay-off activities, annual goals are often more attainable.