

The Effective Business Executive, by Laura A. Belsten, Ph.D.

Having worked with thousands of business executives over his 60+ year career, Peter Drucker, now in his 90s and considered the "Grandfather" of business management, has identified five key characteristics of effective business executives. Drucker defines a business executive as any manager, knowledge worker, or individual professional in an organization who, by virtue of their position or knowledge, makes decisions and contributions having a significant impact on the organization's ability to perform and obtain results.

Most people reading this are business owners or executives. Whether you are the chief executive of your own business or newer to business, you need to be effective. This simple assessment (based on Drucker's five key characteristics) will give you a sense of your own effectiveness as a business executive. For each of the following five dimensions, rate yourself from 1 to 10, with 1 being "never" and 10 being "always."

- ___ 1. I know where my time goes and I work systematically at managing the time under my control.
- ___ 2. I focus on what I can contribute that will significantly affect the performance and results of my organization; I am ever-mindful of the "big picture," the overarching goals, and my efforts are geared to results rather than to work tasks and narrowly-focused efforts.
- ___ 3. I know my strengths and build on them; I also know the strengths of others in my organization and leverage them. I know I cannot build on weakness and I do not waste time on things I cannot do.
- ___ 4. I set priorities and stay with them; I concentrate on the few major areas where superior performance will produce outstanding results; I do the first things first, and the second things not at all. (I know that the alternative is to get nothing done.)
- ___ 5. I make sound, timely, decisions. I know that effective decisions are always a judgment based on dissenting opinions and perspectives in the moment, and I know that quick decisions are wrong at times; however, I don't delay decisions. My decisions are rational, timely, and based on sound, objective criteria.

According to Peter Drucker, a thinker and scholar who stands heads and shoulders above the rest, these are the five elements of effectiveness for business executives. If you scored 40 or above, congratulations, you are an effective business executive. If you scored lower than 40, take heart. People aren't born effective. It is a skill that is learned through experience, reflection, and practice. Reflect on and practice these five skills, and you will improve your effectiveness in business.

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