Front Line Leaders

Having the right front line leadership prevents entropy from occurring in a work area, which leads to long-term sustainment. Executive leaders can unknowingly set up front line leaders for failure, and often find themselves surprised at the results. Five things Executive Leaders do to set up front line leaders for failure are:

- Promoting non-leaders into leadership roles
- Placing the wrong personality/fit in a leadership role
- Not providing enough development for the role
- Not defining clear responsibilities for the role
- Allowing the span of support to be too large

Promoting Non-Leaders into Leadership Roles

Process

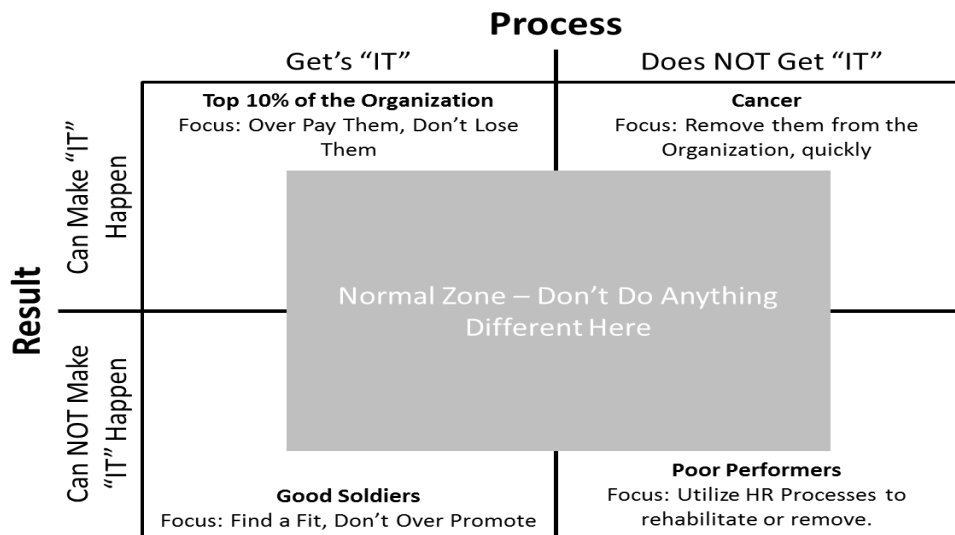|	Get's "IT"	Does NOT Get "IT"
Can Make "IT" Happen	**Top 10% of the Organization** Focus: Over Pay Them, Don't Lose Them	**Cancer** Focus: Remove them from the Organization, quickly
	Normal Zone – Don't Do Anything Different Here	
Can NOT Make "IT" Happen	**Good Soldiers** Focus: Find a Fit, Don't Over Promote	**Poor Performers** Focus: Utilize HR Processes to rehabilitate or remove.

Result

Figure 1: Welch's Quadrants

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, articulates a concept in his book, *Straight from the Gut*, that can be modeled with four quadrants (See Figure Above). This concept shows a contrast between those who "Can Get It Done" through others, those who "Can't Get it Done" through others, those who "Do Get It," and those who "Don't Get It." "It" in this case refers to your company's vision, principles, philosophies, and strategic plan.

"If the flock is headed in the wrong direction, replace the Shepherd; not the flock."

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According to Welch, the group that Can Get It Done and Do Get It are the strong leaders. They are the top 10% of the organization and, as such, should be overpaid. If they leave to find better pay elsewhere, their loss is on us. If necessary, they should be paid beyond what the pay structure allows with the understanding that their ROI makes it so they are not technically overpaid. They are the go-getters that are invaluable to the organization. As such, they are the ones an organization must keep at all costs.

If the organization loses these leaders, HR, incentives, and leadership practices need to be reviewed. At this point, one needs to consider whether or not performance is being appropriately incentivized, as well as whether or not he or she is continually dealing with poor performers. Keep in mind that the number one reason people leave organizations is due to the direct supervisor's failure to hold people accountable (according to US Department of Labor statistics).

The Group that Can't Get It Done and Do Get It are our soldiers. In the words of Jim Collins, author of "Good to Great," these people need to be on the bus but need to move to a more appropriate seat. This group of people is made up of excellent performers that are not suited for leadership roles. Often, they don't even desire to be leaders, but accept the position due to better pay or a perceived better position. We have often seen great engineers promoted to management without the leadership skills or drive to be a leader. They are excellent individual performers but fail to accomplish greatness through others. In those cases, a valuable engineer is lost and a poor manager is gained. In many cases, this person is removed from the organization altogether instead of just their position, resulting in the loss of a good engineer.

The Group that Can't Get It Done and Don't Get It are the poorest performers. HR processes are designed to deal with these people. Either their performance improves or they are removed from the organization. If left unaddressed – a common theme in many companies – the highest performers leave the organization due to a lack of accountability placed on these poor performers.

The final Group is the group that Can Get It Done, but do so in a directionally incorrect manner. This is a company's worst nightmare. This group has shown results but don't embrace the company's vision, principles, philosophies, or strategy. They get things done in a directionally incorrect manner, often leaving a wake of destruction behind them. They often manage up well, but show a very different side when managing down. These people can do a lot of harm to an organization in this way. This group is considered to be cancerous and must be removed from the organization immediately. The longer the delay, the more damage these people can do to the culture of the organization, which will delay a successful quest toward becoming World-Class. Keep in mind that failure to deal with this group is poor stewardship on the top leader's part.

While these quadrants are more applicable to executive level leadership, they provide some implications for all levels of leadership.

The Wrong Personality

Tools like Predictive Index (PI)/DISC/Myers Briggs are used to determine a person's temperament or personality type. Different types of personalities perform better at different positions. While there are no bad personality profiles, they do show areas in which a person may want to focus improvement based on the individual's current or targeted position. We highly recommend the use of the tools to ensure one has the right personality fit for the front line leader positions. For example, someone with a personality suited for behind the scenes work and who are purpose-focused may have a hard time being out front and people focused.

Lack of Leadership Development

Training and development are key aspects for any position; however, they are most important at the point of value creation, which is where the front line leaders spend most of their time. While some companies relegate this to the HR function, we believe that the leader should train their team. HR can provide the structure and materials, but by having the leader conduct the training, it shows the team members that the leader is all-in on what is being trained. There must be a mixture of technical and behavioral training to enable the front line leaders to be successful in their role.

## Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Please click the link below to see complete lists of what we believe are the responsibilities of a typical team leader and supervisor in a lean environment.

[Team Leader & Supervisor Responsibilities]

Span of Support

The key to allowing the front line leaders to accomplish their responsibilities is to ensure that they have the proper span of support. By "span of support," we mean the number of direct reports over which the supervisor/team leader has authority. The graph below is very telling.
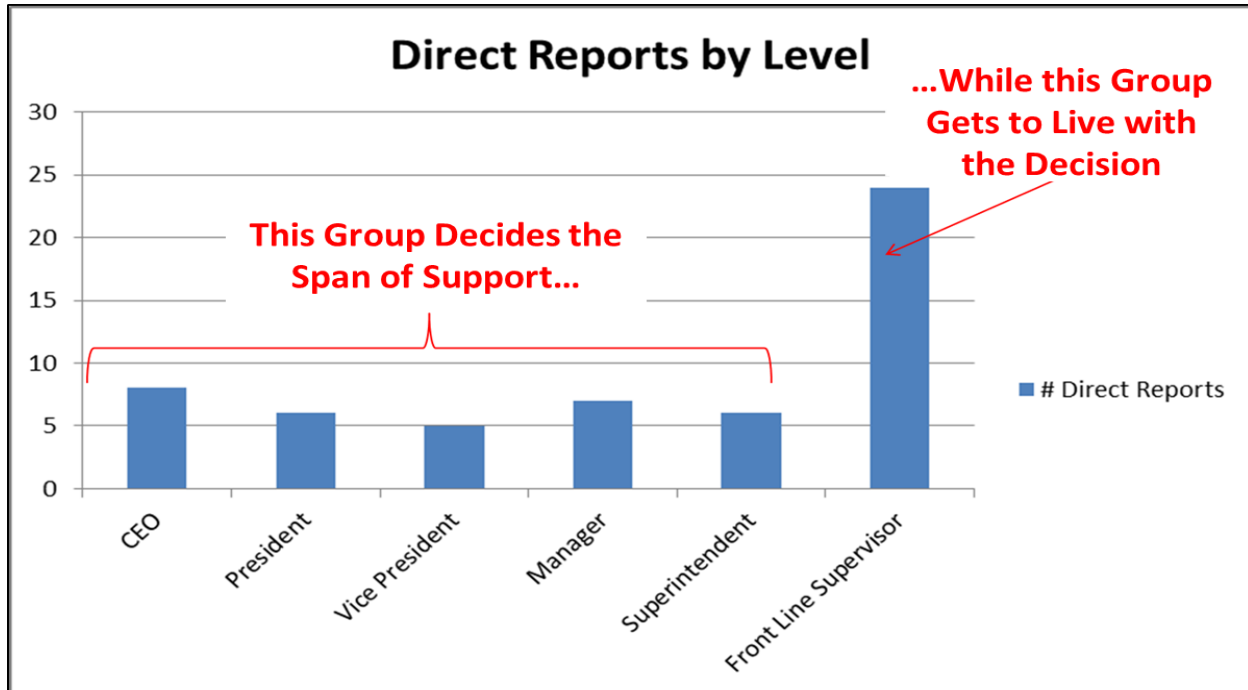
The chart above is an actual assessment of the span of control within a large US company. If our goal is to have our front line leaders support problem solving, drive training, and develop employees to the next level, we must give them the proper span of support to do so. There are many numbers out there for the correct number of direct reports, but we believe between 5 – 8 is a good target for the proper span of support. With a span of support larger than 5 – 8, the frontline leader simply cannot effectively execute their job responsibilities.

Do you have non-leaders in leadership positions? Does your company have the right personalities in the Front Line Leadership roles? If so, are you developing them to become better leaders? Have you given them the right span of support, so they can be leaders; not just administrators? We offer team, practitioner, leader and executive assessments along with coaching. We also offer a 200% ROI guarantee on implementation work. For a no-obligation introduction meeting, please contact Paul Eakle at paul.eakle@driveinc.com or 865-323-3491.