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Author of Management Challenges for the 21st Century

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Author's Note

I am delighted that my book, *The Effective Executive*, is being included in the HarperBusiness Essentials series. Since its first publication, in 1966, it has found a large and continuing readership throughout the world with translations into more than two dozen languages. It is required reading in a large number of worldwide enterprises—big ones and small ones—both for people promoted to their first executive position and for people promoted to higher executive jobs. For the need to learn to be an effective executive still remains. An effective executive is not “talent,” let alone “genius.” The effective executive follows *practices* that can be learned and must be learned. It is increasingly difficult to be effective as an executive in *all* organizations of our diverse society and not in businesses alone. It is equally necessary for the fulfillment of the individual and for the performance of the organization.

The Effective Executive is both a concise blueprint for effectiveness as an executive within an organization and a practical guide to *managing oneself* for performance and achievement, whether within an organization or on one's own. It is equally the best introduction for the nonmanager—whether student or layman—to management and organizations.

This book grew out of twenty years of consulting with business executives. But it was first developed as a program for the senior executives of the Eisenhower administration. It has long been required reading in scores of major business organizations and also for any executive, no matter how senior or experienced, who is given a new assignment. It is equally required reading in several of the world's largest universities for anyone promoted to an administrative assign-

ment, e.g., department chairman or dean. The same is true in hospitals. The book has proven itself particularly useful for the million or more people who, in the last thirty years, have started their own community foundations and nonprofits in the United States. For every developed society has become a *society of organizations*. And every organization, whatever its specific function, depends for its performance (and indeed its survival) on the *effectiveness of its executives*.

Peter F. Drucker
April 2002

The Effective Executive

**PETER F.
DRUCKER**



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Preface

Management books usually deal with managing other people. The subject of this book is managing oneself for effectiveness. That one can truly manage other people is by no means adequately proven. But one can always manage oneself. Indeed, executives who do not manage themselves for effectiveness cannot possibly expect to manage their associates and subordinates. Management is largely by example. Executives who do not know how to make themselves effective in their own job and work set the wrong example.

To be reasonably effective it is not enough for the individual to be intelligent, to work hard or to be knowledgeable. Effectiveness is something separate, something different. But to be effective also does not require special gifts, special aptitude, or special training. Effectiveness as an executive demands *doing* certain—and fairly simple—things. It consists of a small number of practices, the practices that are presented and discussed in this book. But these practices are not “inborn.” In forty-five years of work as a consultant with a large number of executives in a wide variety of organizations—large and small; businesses, government agencies, labor unions, hospitals, universities, community services; American, European, Latin American and Japanese—I have not come across a single “natural”: an executive who was born effective. All the effective ones have had to learn to be effective. And all of them then had to practice effectiveness until it became habit. But all the ones who worked on making themselves effective executives succeeded in doing so. Effectiveness can be learned—and it also *has* to be learned.

Effectiveness is what executives are being paid for, whether they work as managers who are responsible for the performance of others as

well as their own, or as individual professional contributors responsible for their own performance only. Without effectiveness there is no “performance,” no matter how much intelligence and knowledge goes into the work, no matter how many hours it takes. Yet it is perhaps not too surprising that we have so far paid little attention to the effective executive. Organizations—whether business enterprises, large government agencies, labor unions, large hospitals or large universities—are, after all, brand new. A century ago almost no one had even much contact with such organizations beyond an occasional trip to the local post office to mail a letter. And effectiveness as an executive means effectiveness in and through an organization. Until recently there was little reason for anyone to pay much attention to the effective executive or to worry about the low effectiveness of so many of them. Now, however, most people—especially those with even a fair amount of schooling—can expect to spend all their working lives in an organization of some kind. Society has become a society of organizations in all developed countries. Now the effectiveness of the individual depends increasingly on his or her ability to be effective in an organization, to be effective as an executive. And the effectiveness of a modern society and its ability to perform—perhaps even its ability to survive—depend increasingly on the effectiveness of the people who work as executives in the organizations. The effective executive is fast becoming a key resource for society, and effectiveness as an executive a prime requirement for individual accomplishment and achievement—for young people at the beginning of their working lives fully as much as for people in mid-career.

Claremont, California
New Year's Day, 1985

Peter F. Druker

1: Effectiveness Can Be Learned

To be effective is the job of the executive. “To effect” and “to execute” are, after all, near-synonyms. Whether he works in a business or in a hospital, in a government agency or in a labor union, in a university or in the army, the executive is, first of all, expected to *get the right things done*. And this is simply that he is expected to be effective.

Yet men of high effectiveness are conspicuous by their absence in executive jobs. High intelligence is common enough among executives. Imagination is far from rare. The level of knowledge tends to be high. But there seems to be little correlation between a man’s effectiveness and his intelligence, his imagination or his knowledge. Brilliant men are often strikingly ineffectual; they fail to realize that the brilliant insight is not by itself achievement. They never have learned that insights become effectiveness only through hard systematic work. Conversely, in every organization there are some highly effective plodders. While others rush around in the frenzy and busyness which very bright people so often confuse with “creativity,” the plodder puts one foot in front of the other and gets there first, like the tortoise in the old fable.

Intelligence, imagination, and knowledge are essential resources, but only effectiveness converts them into results. By themselves, they only set limits to what can be attained.