

DAVE RAMOS

DEVELOP  
ONE  
TEAM

HOW TO DEVELOP A  
*HIGH-PERFORMANCE* EXECUTIVE TEAM

# THANK YOU

Thanks for downloading this special preview edition!

*I hope you enjoy reading **Develop One Team** as much  
as I enjoyed writing it.*

I look forward to your feedback.



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CEO: Thanks, everyone. Great meeting today. Just to recap, we had a good debate about the new pricing strategy and then we decided to go for it. I look forward to working together to make this happen.

MOMENTS LATER AT THE WATER COOLER ...

GM#1: Well, that was interesting!

CMO: Yeah, I can't believe that decision. I think it is a big mistake.

CFO: The numbers don't lie. This is a dumb decision.

GM#2: I tried to express my concerns but got "whack-a-moled." I got tired of being the punching bag and just gave up.

CHRO: Yeah, once I saw the beating you were taking, I decided to keep my mouth shut.

CIO: Our meetings are one-way diatribes, not two-way discussions.

CFO: I think the board needs to know about this. I'm playing golf with the chairman tomorrow and will give him a heads-up.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2008, I started a company to help leaders build high-performance organizations.

***But you can't build a high-performance organization without a high-performance Executive Team.***

In our engagements, the performance of the Executive Team was often an issue. In some cases, it was *the* issue.

And the most profoundly negative experiences in my life were—by far—the direct result of bad executive leadership.

So, for the past decade we have been searching for a methodology that would transform a group of executives into a high-performance team. We couldn't find one, so we started developing our own.

This led us to the “Develop One Team” idea. I started writing this book in 2011 but got stuck.

Then, in 2019, I published a book called ***Drive One Direction – How to Unleash the Accelerating Power of Alignment.***

One of our key insights was, “A misaligned Executive Team will never create an aligned company.” That is why there is a chapter in the book called One Team.

In 2021, I started writing ***Develop One Team*** again ... but got stuck again!

Then, in 2023, I spent the entire year studying the life of Christ. (It was a transformational experience.)

One of the things I studied was how He developed His team.

One day, I had an epiphany. The steps that Jesus used were aligned with our thinking about Executive Teams.

We codified the ***Develop One Team*** methodology into seven steps called, “The Seven Drivers.” They provide a structured and disciplined way for you to analyze and develop your Executive Team.

Our goal is to develop high-performance Executive Teams that win ... not nice, happy teams that sing Kumbaya but lose. (The words are in the Appendix.)

This book will challenge your Executive Team to take a long, hard look in the mirror.

It will challenge you to have the difficult conversations you have been avoiding.

And it will equip you to take specific actions that will transform your team.

Our core message? “Leadership is a team sport™.”

Godspeed.

## SOME DISCLAIMERS

This is my fifth business book. Some of this material is excerpted from those works.

I use “they” as a singular pronoun because it is cleaner than always writing “he or she.” It also allows me to anonymize the gender of the executive in the story.

I use “Executive Team” to refer to the C-Suite. Generally, this is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and their direct reports.

I use “CEO” as a generic title for the most senior executive in the organization. They can hold many different titles, including, President, Executive Director, Senior Pastor, Head Coach, and more.

I always capitalize Executive Team to reinforce the role that they play in the company. (The Motley Fool says that “the single most important factor in a company’s success is the team that’s leading the company.”)

I use “Executive Team” vs. “leadership team” because in our model, leading is just one of five key roles of an executive. The five executive roles are: leader, follower, teammate, manager, and coach.

Every chapter starts with a little vignette. Every vignette is based on an actual conversation that we have had with clients. However, they have been anonymized to protect both the innocent—and the guilty—parties.

The vignettes use shorthand for the executive's title. CHRO is the Chief Human Resources Officer. CRO is the Chief Revenue Officer. If you come across a title you don't know, just use your imagination.

Some stories have a proper name. To avoid offending people, I always use "Dave." And if you are looking for a fun read, check out *Too Many Daves*, by Dr. Seuss.

Many Executive Teams use profanity as part of their "normal" communication pattern. To keep my book "G-Rated," I do not use profanity in these vignettes. Instead, I use "!@#\$\$%^&\*" as my code for curse words. If you are so inclined, feel free to insert the curse words that your team uses in the dialog to make them more realistic.

I have a unique writing style that I learned from the advertising copywriters I worked with in my Nortel Networks days.

Short, punchy sentences. Often without verbs.

It drives the grammarians and Microsoft Word crazy, but it works for me.

Finally, for years, I have used em dashes and ellipses in my writing. Some people—especially critics—say that em dashes are a sign that the material was written by AI, but trust me ... this is how I write!

# PART ONE – THE EXECUTIVE TEAM



# INTRODUCTION - A UNIQUE "TEAM"

- CEO: We should be like a rowing team. Perfectly aligned.
- CFO: Alignment is critical. But every person on a rowing team has an identical build and skill set. Every member of the team does exactly the same thing. That's not us!
- CEO: Maybe we should be like a football team.
- CFO: Football teams spend six days practicing together every week. In the game, they run one play and then regroup. That's not us either! We are much more fluid, like a soccer team. You know, the "other football!"
- CEO: How about an orchestra? Playing together in perfect harmony.
- CFO: Yes, every musician is playing the same sheet of music. But orchestras are static. They can't change the music in the middle of the song. We operate in a highly dynamic industry.
- CEO: Ok, I give up. What kind of team are we?

Books about teamwork often use metaphors from other kinds of teams, such as sports or the military, and try to apply them to the Executive Team.

*But those metaphors do not reflect the unique dynamics of Executive Teams.*

Executive Teams are totally different from any other kind of team.

Here's why:

**The leader of the Executive Team is the CEO.**

The role of the CEO is unique on many levels.

First, the CEO is the link between the board, the Executive Team, and the entire company.

Second, the CEO is also the link between the company and its many stakeholders.

Third, the CEO is (generally) the most visible and highest impact member of the company.

**The CEO's strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies have a huge impact on the organization.**

The CEO's impact on the organization is 100 times that of any other employee.

This impact is magnified both on the positive and the negative. The CEO's behavior, performance, and philosophy have an enormous impact.

**The members of the Executive Team are the senior leaders in their function.**

Senior executives are highly accomplished, highly opinionated, and often highly competitive. Some have big egos. Some think they are always right.

**The members of the Executive Team are competing for the CEO's job.**

This internal competition means that executives tend to operate as a “team of rivals.”

**The Executive Team is uniquely cross-functional.**

Unlike most teams (such as a marketing team where everyone on the team has similar skills) the Executive Team is uniquely cross-functional. The CFO is typically the only finance person on the team, the CMO is the only marketing person on the team.

**The corporate structure creates divisions.**

As companies grow, they create divisions. There is only one problem: divisions—by definition—divide.

**Most Executive Teams are a hybrid of General Managers and functional executives.**

Often, there is a power struggle between these two types of executives.

**The Executive Team meeting is a unique experience.**

In virtually every meeting that executives attend, they are the highest-ranking person in the room. This

changes in the Executive Team meeting where they are outranked by the CEO. Thus, executives must “pivot” and become followers and team players.

**The executive compensation plan can create divisions.**

In many companies, every executive has a unique compensation plan. Often, these plans are highly leveraged towards individual—not team—performance.

**Many Executive Teams have high turnover.**

The average tenure for a CEO is 80 months. The average tenure for CFOs is 60 months. For CMOs, it is just 40 months. Every time a new executive is added, the team must reset and realign.

**Many Executive Teams have relational dysfunctions that have existed for a long time.**

Confronting dysfunctional relationships between executives is very challenging. As a result, many companies “sweep the dysfunctions under the rug.”

**Most Executive Teams don’t spend much time together.**

Most Executive Teams are geographically dispersed. Obviously, the larger the company is, the more geographically dispersed the Executive Team will be. Often, their only time together is in Ops meetings.

**Executive Teams have a unique responsibility to set the example.**

The Executive Team is rightfully held to the highest standards. They must personify the company's core values, model the expected behaviors, and adhere to the code of ethics. Executives who don't do these things can create significant dysfunction.

**Executive Teams must make resource allocation decisions.**

The Executive Team must allocate corporate resources (human and financial) as part of the annual budgeting process. The budget can feel like a zero-sum game with winners and losers.

**Allocating corporate overhead expenses to the divisional P&L's creates tension.**

The methodology for determining corporate overhead allocation often is a source of significant tension.

**The toughest decisions get escalated to the Executive Team.**

The Executive Team must make the tough decisions that managers "lower" in the company escalate to them.

**The Executive Team is under the most pressure for results.**

This is especially true for public companies, and Private Equity and Venture Capital backed companies,

where investors can put extreme pressure on the Executive Team to deliver results.

**Boards and investors can negatively influence the people decisions.**

When results are “below expectations,” boards will often terminate the people who are not performing and get new people. In our experience, Private Equity firms don’t try to change people; they just change people.

**Most companies don’t do anything to develop their Executive Team.**

Most companies “hire and hope.” They hire executives and hope that productive and positive team dynamics will emerge. It’s not enough to just have the right people in the right seats ... you must intentionally work to transform the group into a team. This does not just happen.

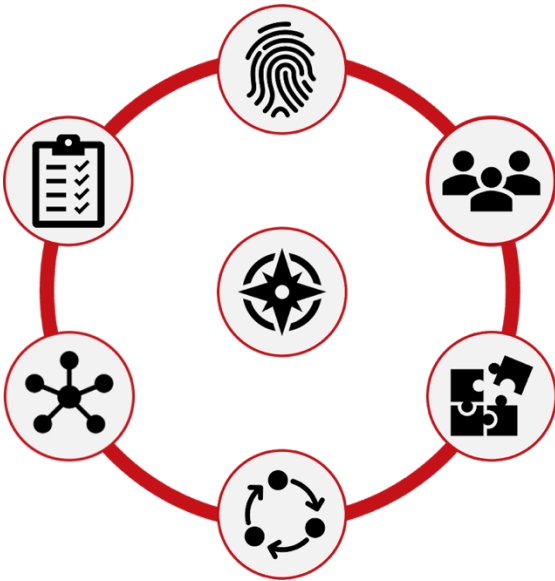
During our research, we asked companies what they did to develop their Executive Team.

*The number one answer was “Ummm ... nothing.”*

In summary, Executive Teams face dozens of unique challenges. Companies must overcome them to transform a group of executives into One (high-performance) Team.

The Seven Drivers will show you the way.

# PART TWO – THE SEVEN DRIVERS



# INTRODUCTION

Chairman: I've reviewed your strategic plan. It is pretty good, but there is a big piece missing!

CEO: Wow. We worked really hard on the plan. What's missing?

Chairman: There is nothing about the Executive Team.

CEO: What do you mean?

Chairman: Your plan has product roadmaps, marketing roadmaps, technology roadmaps, but does not have a roadmap for the development of your Executive Team. What new roles will you need? What new skills do you need to develop? You can't execute your strategic plan without the right executives!

Every company has a strategic plan.

***But most are missing something.***

In Part One, we reviewed two dozen reasons why Executive Teams are totally different than any other kind of team.

In addition, we believe that the Executive Team is the single most important factor in a company's success.

One of John Maxwell's 22 Immutable Laws of Leadership is, "The Law of the Lid." This means that a company's performance is capped by the performance of the Executive Team.

Thus, the only way to improve a company's performance is to improve the performance of the Executive Team that is running it.

Finally, we shared that most companies don't do anything to develop their Executive Team.

That is why we created the ***Develop One Team*** methodology. It provides a structured seven-step process to transform a good Executive Team into a high-performance one.

It also provides a simple—yet comprehensive—way for you to fill the gap in your strategic plan.

# THE RIGHT RESULTS

- CEO: We should focus on building a company for the long-term.
- Chairman: Wrong! You need to position this company for an exit within 18 months.
- CEO: Our people are on a mission. We are building something great here.
- Chairman: Perhaps your people are on the wrong mission! Our investors want a return. They have a very short time horizon.
- CEO: I can't attract the talent we need without an inspiring purpose that goes beyond short-term profits for greedy investors. Our people are passionate about the planet earth ... not private equity!
- Chairman: Without your investors, this company would not exist. You need to get your priorities straight.

This book is about developing a high-performance Executive Team. But what does that mean?

***A high-performance Executive Team delivers The Right Results in The Right Way.***

So, before we start developing The Right Executive Team, we must clarify exactly what results they are expected to deliver.

A church's Executive Team has a very different set of objectives than a construction company's Executive Team.

Try completing this sentence: "We need an Executive Team who can \_\_\_\_\_." Obviously, there are many ways you can fill in the blank. For example:

- Scale the business
- Turn the business around
- Take the company public
- Lead the company out of Chapter 11
- Start a new business from scratch
- Sell the business

In most cases, the current board and current Chief Executive will decide this. Paradoxically, they may decide on a purpose that results in some of the current Executive Team no longer being "the right people."

Clarifying the results your Executive Team is expected to deliver is an essential prerequisite to The Seven Drivers process.

## THE SEVEN DRIVERS

CEO: Now that the board has clarified our expected results, we need to develop an Executive Team who can deliver them.

CHRO: Yes! We cannot succeed without a high-performance Executive Team.

CEO: Building teams is not really what I do best. I'm a technology entrepreneur and am kind of a loner.

CHRO: Perhaps, but remember our motto, "People aren't well rounded ... teams are."

CEO: We need a methodology that our entire team will buy into.

CHRO: I recommend The Seven Drivers from the *Develop One Team* book.

CEO: Wow, our Chairman just gave me a copy. I've been working my way through it.

CHRO: It must be a sign!

Every company needs a high-performance Executive Team.

*The Seven Drivers will show you the way.*

The Seven Drivers is the right way to transform a group of executives into One (high-performance) Team.

1. **The Right Person.** You must have the right person leading the team.
2. **The Right People.** You need the right people, but you must first decide what “right” means.
3. **The Right Design.** You must put the right people in the right roles.
4. **The Right System.** You must create synergy that leverages the entire Executive Team.
5. **The Right Dynamics.** Your Executive Team’s behaviors must create positive team dynamics.
6. **The Right Disciplines.** You must intentionally build teamwork and unity.
7. **The Right Direction.** Your Executive Team must collaborate to develop a clear vision, a winning strategy, and the plan to execute the strategy.

Over the next seven chapters, we will explore The Seven Drivers, one at a time.

Then, in Part Three – The Roadmap, we will help you develop the strategic plan for your Executive Team.

Our goal is to develop The Right Team that delivers The Right Results in the Right Way.

# SUMMARY



# DEVELOP ONE TEAM - THE RIGHT TEAM

- CEO: I am very excited about how our Executive Team has evolved.
- CHRO: Yes, we have added several new people who have brought a lot to the team.
- CFO: I think each of us has grown as individuals, but more than that, we have come together as a team.
- CIO: It has been a journey. There were some tough conversations.
- GM#1: I had to learn to control my !@#\$\$%^&\* temper! As you can tell, I'm still working on that!
- CMO: And I had to work on being a better team player.
- GM#2: I think our offsite meeting was a turning point. Investing an entire day to work on The Seven Drivers was trajectory altering.
- CFO: I think it was the wine!

We start our engagements with a simple question.

***What is the best team you have ever been on?***

We get lots of answers.

My high school soccer team. My unit in the military. My improv jazz band.

But no one has ever answered, “*This Executive Team is the best team I have ever been on!*”

We began this book by making the case that Executive Teams are totally different than any other kind of team.

That is why we developed a totally different methodology.

Then, we talked about the importance of having a clear objective. We challenged you to complete this sentence: “We need an Executive Team who can \_\_\_\_\_.”

A startup Executive Team is very different from a Fortune 500 one. A scaleup Executive Team is very different from a turnaround team.

The Right Team is radically different from the wrong one.

# DEVELOP ONE TEAM – THE RIGHT RESULTS

Chairman: Good evening. It is time to bring the board meeting to order.

CEO: Thank you. As you know, over the past year we have been working to develop our Executive Team, refine our strategy, and reenergize our company. I am excited to update you on our progress.

First, our new Executive Team is fully aligned. We have added some fantastic new talent, and we are truly working as “One Team!”

Second, our new “Innovation is Job One” strategy is working. We have strategic alignment across all three divisions.

And finally, our company is firing on all cylinders. Revenue is up 25%, exceeding our growth targets. EBITDA is up, again exceeding our targets. Customer satisfaction is up. Our employee engagement is up, and we won a Best Places to Work award.

Developing The Right Team is important.

***But The Right Executive Team must deliver The Right Results.***

This process started by setting clear performance objectives for the company. Many of the companies we worked with did NOT have them.

Obviously, you can't hold an Executive Team accountable for objectives that have not been clearly established and communicated.

In addition, each executive must be crystal clear what their objectives are and how they fit in with the other members of the team.

Then, each executive must deliver the results they are responsible for ... and the Executive Team must work together to deliver the corporate results.

Sometimes, Executive Teams will make some of their numbers. For example, they may make their revenue target but miss the profit target.

Sometimes, one division has a great year which offsets the "miss" of another division.

But the bottom line is the executives work as One Team to deliver The Right Results.

## DEVELOP ONE TEAM – THE RIGHT WAY

Chairman: You did a great job on the earnings call!

CEO: Thanks. It is always easier when you have good numbers to report!

CFO: We had more than good numbers to report. We had a great story to tell.

CHRO: The call actually gave me goosebumps. I was so proud of everyone.

Chairman: Everyone has really come together. Our “Leadership is a team sport” mantra was on full display.

CEO: Yes, it was a team effort. I think it is time to celebrate!

CFO: Great. I’ll pick the wine!

Chairman: Uh oh. I guess that means that I will be picking up the check!

Many Executive Teams deliver results.

*The Right Executive Team delivers them in The Right Way.*

The business world is littered with companies that succeeded in the short-term but failed in the long-term.

They delivered the numbers but decimated the culture.

They drove the stock price up but drove the people out.

As we mentioned in the opening introduction, in our engagements, the performance of the Executive Team was often an issue. In some cases, it was *the* issue.

We developed the **Develop One Team** methodology to solve this problem.

First, we want to **Develop** one team ... your Executive Team.

Then, we want to develop them into **One Team**.

It is the combination of these two ideas that has delivered transformational results for our clients.

We wish you Godspeed on your journey.