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MOVE

How Decisive Leaders Execute Strategy Despite Obstacles, Setbacks, & Stalls

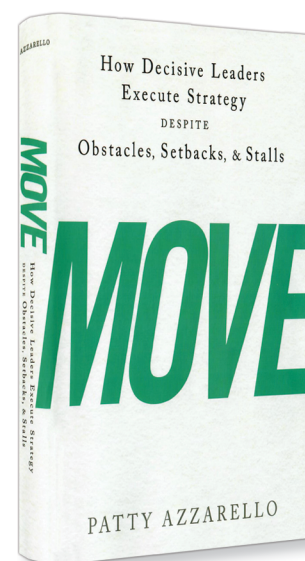
THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Too many new initiatives lose drive and direction before they finish. At the beginning, when a team first commits to implementing a new strategy, there is a great energy and enthusiasm — driven by the allure of the end goal. But then comes the long, dangerous part in “The Middle,” where everything needs to get done, obstacles inevitably spring up, and people feel a strong temptation to revert to the old ways. *MOVE* explains how to keep your team focused, motivated and resilient enough to push through the unavoidable, chronic challenges that derail most change initiatives.

Some of the most recognizable brands in the world use the *MOVE* methodology to ensure their change strategies don't stall. Business transformation expert Patty Azzarello explains the four components of a prosperous business transformation and exactly what it takes to keep everyone moving the new strategy forward. The *MOVE* Model will help you make sure that everyone stays engaged, maintains momentum, and that your initiatives succeed.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The key elements in an execution plan that guarantee accountability and momentum.
- Empowering tools for transforming the team you have into the team you need.
- A powerful new way to think about leading and communicating to genuinely engage people throughout the implementation.
- Using communication to produce results and build trust.



by Patty Azzarello

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: MOVE

by Patty Azzarello

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Introduction

At the heart of every execution problem is the fact that there are not enough people doing what the business needs to move forward. As leaders, we need to figure out how to keep our strategic change alive and moving forward without constant management intervention. How do we make the whole organization not only own the change, but have the ability and the motivation to keep it going?

The MOVE model defines the four steps for how you get and keep your whole organization moving forward and not asking, “Are we still doing this?” It is the useful shorthand for the four key elements of a successful business transformation: M is for the Middle; O is for Organization; V is for Valor; and E is for Everyone. ●

M = The Middle: Where Transformations Either Happen or Get Stuck

The Middle is where the transformation will happen — or not. One of the undeniable realities of the Middle is that it’s the long part — and the simple, human fact is that it’s really hard for anyone, not to mention a whole organization, to stay focused and motivated on doing new and difficult things for a long time. The *beginning* is really clear and strong, with lots of investment, excitement and great intentions. And the *end* is really well defined. But the problem most strategies face is that there is no real plan for the Middle — which is where everything needs to happen!

A big reason for the stalls that too often occur in the Middle is that many organizations mistake listing end goals as a strategy. You become excited about the wonderful achievement at the end, but there is nothing in the definition of that end goal that tells you specifically what to do, which way to go about it, what problems you need to solve, or what you need to fix, change, stop or invent to get there — these are all things that need to happen in the Middle. These are all things that describe what you will do.

Your job in making the strategy come true does not stop after you announce it. One of the hardest things to do is to get an organization to stop doing what it is currently doing and start doing the different thing that it needs to be doing.

As a leader, you need to get involved enough in defining outcomes and measures and holding people accountable to specific things to make sure that the strategy is taking hold and is moving forward through the Middle.

Leaders struggle with two things when it comes to managing execution:

- 1. They feel like it’s low-level work.** They act as though it’s not worth their brilliant, strategic time to focus on what people are actually doing. They view execution as a low-level job for other, less important, less strategic people to deal with.
- 2. It’s hard and boring.** Measuring, tracking and communicating something that has already been defined is not nearly as exciting as pursuing a big, strategic deal or creating something new.

What strong, personal leadership looks like at the beginning of the Middle is keeping yourself educated



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on the business drivers that are causing the need for this change in the first place. This knowledge will give you the insight and power to lead your own piece of this transformation and to never be caught off guard by changes you didn't anticipate.

Concrete Outcomes

A company can be really clear about what it wants to accomplish yet struggle to articulate the specific tasks that will make those goals come true. A strategy must describe what you will do, including how you will measure and resource it. Strategy must clarify specific actions. An end goal, no matter how inspiring it is, is not enough to mobilize an organization. By insisting that your strategy describes what you will *do*, you will, by definition, be making it clear what things need to happen in the Middle.

It's vitally important as a leader to recognize when your team is falling into the pattern of accepting smart-sounding ideas and inputs instead of measurable forward progress. Situation conversations are the easiest conversations to have because there is no risk. You are simply stating facts. The fact of the matter is that there is no forward progress because you are simply describing what is happening.

The way to break through this type of stall is to train your team members to catch themselves having a situation discussion and then say, "Let's stop talking about the *situation*, and let's try to define an *outcome* that we want to achieve."

By focusing on describing what it would look like if it were working, you are able to define outcomes that are concrete enough to suggest the specific necessary actions. When you get concrete in your language about outcomes, the action plan just falls out in a very clear way.

Once you get a group of people talking about concrete desired outcomes instead of situations or vague high-level goals, a few wonderful and remarkable things happen.

- **More information comes out.**
- **The action plan builds itself.**
- **People can figure out how to contribute.**

Getting your team to define concrete outcomes unlocks a lot more of the power of your team.

Timing and Momentum

When people focus only on the long-term end goal, the first step in their long-term journey is a delay. It's important to create a framing of the initiative in a way that avoids this early sense of complacency. The next tool to keep everyone on track through the Middle is timing.

Once you have defined concrete outcomes that will enable your long-term goal, you need to get your team to define smaller, midterm checkpoints and deliverables that are necessary at *specific mid-points all the way through the Middle, to achieve your desired outcomes.*

By placing these clear, midterm checkpoints on a timeline, you will create the lightposts that the organization needs in order to see where they are going through the long Middle — and to keep going. These become not only your midterm checkpoints but also your enablers of urgency — if you place them on a timeline so they occur at an aggressive pace, you will be creating the urgency you desire.

Control Points

The right measures are so important. But just like there are end goals masquerading as good strategy, there are often bad measures standing in for truly meaningful ones. Good measures predict actual desired outcomes and enable you to move the business forward. Bad measures measure only activities or steps in the process, not outcomes.

Control points, by definition, are a more broadly defined outcome than a detail or process step. One of the reasons why we have so many bad measures is that details and process steps are so much easier to measure. If you've got a good control point defined, ask yourself what the genuine measure of success would be. If it turns out to be a description of how something is working, that's OK. Go with it.

Resource Reality

Another harsh reality during the Middle is that resources will never self-optimize to support a new initiative, strategy or transformation. You need to make sure that you have specifically resourced the activities necessary to achieve the outcomes you have put on your timeline. If you want to know what your strategy actually is, just look at your budget. Your budget describes what you will be doing specifically throughout the Middle.

Don't Sign Up for the Impossible

The most pivotal decisions you can make in the business are based on this: What are your revenue and expense targets? When companies try to support an artificially high, unsupported expense target, they can't do anything well. Cut the expenses to a level that the actual revenue plan will support. ●

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O = Organization: Are You Leading the Team You Have or the Team You Need

There is no more important thing you can do as a business leader than to build the right team. With the right team, you can take on any challenge, and more of your energy is focused on actually moving forward. Below are some questions you can ask yourself to see if your team has the fundamental ingredients to be successful:

- 1. Are all your team members facing forward?** They may be facing sideways (confused about where you are going) or backwards (in disagreement with where you are going).
- 2. Is everyone on your team truly in alignment about what the course is and what their role is?** If people's roles aren't clear, or if you have competing, conflicting or duplicate efforts within your organization, the team can't move forward.
- 3. Is each person capable and up to the task required of their role?** When there is a team member who cannot pull their share of the weight, the manager and other team members are forced to compensate.
- 4. Are they all motivated to go where they need to go?** Do all the members of your team personally care about where you need to go? Are they engaged? Are they invested?

Are all of your managers good managers? Many organizations settle for having people in managerial roles, who quite simply are not good managers. It will serve you well to make sure that you select, support, train and set expectations about what is required of a good manager in your organization. You need your managers to be engaging, motivating, supportive and facilitating the right work, not preventing it.

Organize for Outcomes

Often, leaders make the mistake of thinking about organizational changes in terms of moving the existing people around. A better approach when you are at these crossroads and need to make a change is to first focus on the business outcome, and then decide what the ideal organization would be to achieve that business outcome. Your job as a leader is to develop and, if necessary, change the people to build a highly capable team that can do what the business needs in the future.

Start with a blank sheet of paper and focus on the business outcome. Here is a suggested process used for developing an ideal, blank-sheet org chart:

- 1. Start with the desired outcome for the business.** Really understand and articulate the specific work, strategic problem solving, concrete outcomes and control points that your team needs to drive.
- 2. Next, draw your ideal blank-sheet org chart.** Draw a picture of what the ideal team would be. Think through what the specific roles (roles, not people) on your new team would need to be to drive the key business outcomes — not just now but in the future.
- 3. Now, clearly define each specific new role.** Really work to articulate the new stuff that is different. This is the key. Once you define the new org and the new roles, you have just created a clear and actionable picture of your goal.
- 4. Get input.** The added benefit here is that if you bring some team members into the design of the new organization, they will be much more ready to support the new structure moving forward.

The People

The best way to find stars and other high-caliber, talented people that you need on your team is to never stop looking for them. Don't wait for a position to open up. Keep your eyes open for them and build relationships with them. Then recruit whenever you get the chance.

Hire for creative problem solving. You need smart people who can solve problems and figure out what to do without you needing to do all the important thinking for them. It's important to look for creative problem-solving skills in your interview process, so that you can find those people who you can send off to fix, solve, create or improve things on their own.

Hire a star. For stardom, you need to prioritize potential over experience. When assessing if you see a star, here are some of the important clues to look for:

- Fast or weird advancement. Stars have a track record of advancing and doing things that were bigger than their jobs and doing more than their peers. Stars don't stay in the same role for years and years.
- Ambition. Stars are motivated to achieve great things for you. Enjoy it while you can, and then support them to move up and onward.
- Really smart. Stars are motivated by learning and have a track record of learning on the job (fast) and advancing beyond peers.

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The right team will get you there. Expect that leading change and getting an organization to stick to it through the long Middle will be exhausting — because it is. If you can get even just one or two truly remarkable people on your team, your chance of success (not to mention your own health and sanity) over the long term will rise exponentially.

Building Capacity

The vast majority of people in corporations think that high performance equals doing their jobs well. Many do not realize that high performance is found outside the boundaries of one's job description. High performers realize that they have to break through the limits of their job descriptions and do things over and above it to meet evolving business needs and to develop themselves.

A critical factor in both building capability and ensuring your transformation keeps moving forward is how you do performance management. Effective performance management is as important to stimulate the development and positive performance of your team and the individuals, as it is to deal with poor performers.

Performance management can and should be about tuning performance so that your organization is clear about what behaviors are expected and rewarded and which ones are not tolerated. Lack of clarity about performance expectations related to the transformation create opportunities every day to ignore the important new work that needs to get done during the Middle.

Unstructured Conversation

The most valuable moments in leadership come from the informal conversations where people let their guard down and say what they really think. Unstructured conversation has an enormous ability to unlock higher productivity, not to mention to greatly reduce execution risk.

People need unstructured conversation in order to establish their own ways of believing in the strategy. They need to get their own opinions, thoughts, and beliefs in line before they will be ready to move.

Without unstructured conversation, you risk the team not truly engaging on a personal level, and you also risk ongoing misunderstandings, disagreements and sabotage.

Stop Having Status Meetings

Status meetings are almost a form of anti-communication. They do not foster a healthy sharing of knowledge, ideas and risks. There are three key problems that status/review meetings cause:

1. You don't gain necessary insights about risks and opportunities.

2. You keep people from doing real work and waste a lot of time.
3. You fail to discuss the things that would give you insights about risks and opportunities because you spend all your time and energy reviewing project details.

There are two things that you need to rework once you decide to stop having status meetings: You need an alternative, effective plan to track status, and you need to decide what else to do at your staff meetings if you are not reviewing status.

Virtual and Remote Teams

Many companies provide work-from-home options. Employees love it. But many managers struggle with it. Individuals can be more productive working at home, but teams can't. So, your goals for your work-at-home policies should be to create a way of working that optimizes individual productivity by letting people work at home sometimes and optimizes team productivity by having people together in the office sometimes.

If you want your work-from-home policy to work, get very clear about your desired outcome for both individuals and teams. Establish clear desired outcomes, schedules and priorities both for the individuals and the team.

Getting People to Actually Care

When you are thinking about what it will take to get and keep people moving, it's important to remember that money is not the strongest motivator — meaning is. If you don't create meaning for people on an individual level, they will not have any personal motivation to move your strategy forward, which is more powerful than money. If you want your team to be motivated, it starts with you as a leader showing your own excitement and commitment.

Employee motivation is not a task you can accomplish with a problem; it is an outcome of making genuine connections with people. If you make an effort to share with people how their work fits into the bigger picture, their work will take on a bigger meaning and they will be more motivated and more effective. ●

V = Valor: Facing the Hardest Stuff with Courage and Persistence

If you are a leader, you will be attacked and challenged sometimes. The bigger the job, the harder it gets because as you move higher, there is less clarity of expectations, less

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support from your direct manager, less feedback and higher stakes. You need valor to progress through the long Middle.

Think of valor this way: Once you embrace the fact that your job equals your job description plus all the crap that gets in the way of delivering on your job description ... you will feel (and be) in a lot more control.

Mission Impossible

Four things will help you feel less crazy and stressed:

- 1. It's OK to be scared.** Everyone has moments in their careers when they feel like a fraud or an imposter. It's not just you. If you feel scared, it's because you are challenging yourself and progressing, not because you are not good enough.
- 2. Do what is true for you.** People can see authenticity — and it is a powerful thing. You are always your most powerful when you are being authentic.
- 3. Use mentors and experts.** Mentors are so necessary, not only to ask for help you need it, but also to point out your blind spots. Asking for help from experts even when you don't feel like you need it can make the difference between simply getting something done and creating huge success.
- 4. The parallel universe exercise.** Next time you feel thoroughly discouraged and stuck, ask yourself, *In a parallel universe, that is exactly the same as this, but has a better version of me: What would that better version of me do?*

Too Busy to Scale

It might sound a little counter intuitive, but the companies that scale are the ones that do fewer things. It works because they can do those few things really well. By comparison, the companies who get stuck often get stuck because they keep trying to do too many things. You can't do too many things well. This is another area that requires extreme valor because it's really hard to say no to opportunities and give up potential or actual revenue streams in order to focus on becoming great at the few things you choose to win at.

There are three problems related to doing too many things that will keep you in chaos and stall your forward progress:

Problem #1: Addicted to busy. New initiatives require new work. If people are just too busy and distracted to get traction on the new thing, it doesn't get done simply because there is no time to do it.

Problem #2: Doing too many things. Valor is very much about having the guts to make the choice of doing

fewer things. You need to make choices and tradeoffs. You need to decide where you are going to place your bets and then need to stop doing some other stuff.

Problem #3: Being too reactive. When there is a customer emergency, everyone drops everything and it's all hands on deck until the customer is satisfied. Strategic work stalls. Without an intentional change to choose strategic over reactive, this situation will never resolve itself.

Detail

The idea that your value as a leader is only highly regarded if you understand a deep level of detail is a false one. To insist that all of your managers must also stay versed in all the details kills organizational effectiveness, is hugely expensive and introduces more risk than it averts. Reviewing detail at every level wastes a huge amount of time (everyone's time) — time that is then not spent on moving the business forward.

A useful rule of thumb is that you should never move details up in the organization: Insights move up. Details stay down.

Create systems and processes that feed you the insights and information about how the work is going that make you feel completely comfortable, without your needing to review all the details personally. Your system should have triggers that measure and report progress, and communicate problems and risks along the way.

Clarity and Conflict

As a leader, one of your biggest responsibilities is to remove uncertainty. You need to make the big decisions. Uncertainty is a huge, hidden expense and a generator of stress and low productivity in your team. When people are confused, there's the obvious expense of work not getting done — as uncertainty causes people to wait for decisions instead of working.

Unresolved strategic issues don't just stay in the boardroom until you finally get them answered. Every unanswered strategic question leaves legions of people in your organization deciding for themselves as they go along. Everyone is less productive and busier than they would be with clear direction. The problem is the inconsistent outcomes that are created by everyone taking their best guesses while waiting for the strategy from above. Be right or wrong, but never unclear.

Creating real clarity about resources is where the biggest source of conflict starts. Here are some ideas for how to create clarity and work through necessary conflict with your team:

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- **Clarify the desired outcome.** Define what, specifically, is expected.
- **Don't give people the chance to passively agree.** Ensure the level of discussion produces a plan with concrete tasks, owners, measures and communications about it.

Decision Stall

With any amount of data, making a decision is hard — because a decision is a commitment to do something specific. There are two surprising reasons why you might have trouble deciding. In addition to the fear of making a bad choice or of the risk that comes with a choice, one of two other, very interesting things often happens:

1. The leader does not want to force it through:

The study is seen as an opportunity to get the participation and buy-in of the team, so the leader is not seen as dictating the decision top-down.

- #### 2. The team thinks the leader requires more information:
- The study is seen as an opportunity for the team to satisfy the leader that their recommendation is valid because the choices have been fully studied and justified.

Study only gives you theoretical knowledge. Putting something out in the world gives you real knowledge. A decision always feels more risky than further study or conversation, but decision and action will always yield valuable results.

If you fail, fail quickly. Recognize it was a bad idea and move on. Learn, then try something else if necessary. The most successful companies are the ones that can fund their mistakes.

Another decision-blocking behavior is too much emphasis on consensus. Consensus breaks down when the discussion never moves past the input and discussion phase. It breaks down because leaders wait for everyone to agree before moving forward. Command breaks down when you make a clear, fast decision and just give orders without letting anyone speak their minds and share their opinions and knowledge.

If you have time to get input, you are always better off to have the discussion, encourage the debate — and then make a decision.

Tracking and Consequences

If you need to make strategic progress, you can't let any deadline come and go and leave the failure totally unacknowledged and unexamined. Not addressing a miss

sends all the wrong messages and sets a very low standard of execution.

Without measures and consequences, anything else you do for motivation becomes hollow and pointless. The work has to matter. If failing to get it done on time doesn't matter, by definition, the work doesn't matter.

Many managers get uncomfortable with enforcing consequences because they don't know what the appropriate "punishment" should be. You don't need to fire the person, but you do need to confront the poor behavior. Acknowledge it. Have the conversation. You can be kind to people and tough on results. ●

E = Everyone: You Can Lead a Transformation from the Top, but You Can't Do a Transformation from the Top

Transformation cannot happen as a top-down process created and driven by executive effort alone. You need active involvement from everyone.

You should never assume that just because you have told everyone your strategy, they were listening carefully and they internalized it — that they know what they need to do personally to act on it and how to optimize it with regard to their current work, and that they will actively do the right things to implement their piece of it. The right measure is never about how clearly you think you have communicated. The only right measure is about how much your audience has internalized. You have communicated successfully when the people in your organization are talking about it amongst themselves.

For your transformation to work, the change must be a part of the social fabric of the whole organization in a very real way — and that happens through conversation. Conversation that creates action happens when you enable the people whom you need to implement the transformation to start talking about the transformation amongst themselves in an ongoing manner.

The best way to make people feel safe and to motivate them to move forward is to make sure they see that all their peers are also doing it. This will happen only if peers are talking about it.

Decorate the Change

The most effective organizations take forward progress a step further and intentionally create rituals, artifacts and even modifications to their physical workspaces to make

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the change highly visible throughout the whole Middle. This is referred to as “decorating the change.”

It’s important to think about how you will decorate your change. After you communicate your strategy, you then need to create a conversation (the conversation is a primary decoration in itself) and then find other ways to decorate your change so that people can notice it in their environment and want to join in.

Top-Down Communications

Top-down communication is not enough on its own, but it’s very important as a leader to show up consistently and make your presences and your personal commitment to the transformation felt. Your communications make your own personal engagement tangible and visible throughout the long Middle — it’s another one of the things that decorate the change.

Make it a point to share the context. What made you choose to change something or do something in the first place? Take the time to explain it. You need to communicate the big picture and sell the business reasons why your strategy is important and why the new things must be done. Make it vividly clear that the new way is vastly better than the current way — and why.

Your consistent, repetitive communications along with rich conversations among the people doing the work will ensure that confidence in you as the leader remains high, and that progress does not stall.

Listen on Purpose

As a leader, you can use the critical insight you gain from talking to individuals about what’s really happening to improve the business and to keep things on track throughout the Middle. You will be surprised how useful the information is and how much more effective of a leader you will become once you know this information.

Another reason to always be listening on purpose is to make sure that you are putting yourself in the stream of the very best ideas. Highly successful people are always ready to learn from anyone. They seek out good ideas everywhere, all the time.

Sharing Information

Keeping momentum through the Middle requires a constant sharing of information across your organization, so people can feel safe that what they are doing makes sense in the context of what everyone else is doing.

People tend to forget to communicate with people outside their own groups. Make a list of all the people and

groups you should be sharing information with, and all of the people and groups you should be seeking information from. By first making these lists, you are reminded that there are others who exist out there in the organization who would benefit from knowing what you know.

The benefit of shared knowledge in a business is incredibly valuable, and the risk of not having it is incredibly high and very costly. But, communication in the form of sharing knowledge is so often viewed by managers and employers as an extra, nonvital thing. It’s outside the job description, and therefore optional. Why not make sharing information part of everyone’s performance objectives?

Power and Trust

If you acknowledge that you have a big responsibility — because you are in a powerful role — but you share power and respect with others, you will build a loyal and powerful team that supports you. And this is so critical in transformation!

“Shared power” leaders win people over by building an environment of trust and respect. To truly motivate your organization and build loyalty and trust, it’s important to treat people like people. A key factor in treating people like people is to invest in learning what they truly care about, both at work and outside of work. When you start treating a person like a whole person instead of a cog in a work machine, you build the foundation for a huge amount of trust. And that trust drives motivation and momentum.

The reality is that when people feel trusted, and they trust you, they will work harder and faster, be more innovative, get more done, and treat customers better. They will trust you when they are in the Middle and can’t yet see the light at the end of the tunnel. They will keep going. They will MOVE. ●

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