

CEO Tip of the Month: An Appeal on All CEOs: How to Focus on Output, not Input

by Guido Quelle

"Results, results, results!" –The message sent out at management conferences is clear: We need the right results– and we need them fast!

Does this sound familiar to you? Have you as a CEO tried in vain to persuade your team that results are more important than the processes that produce them? Have you found, all too often, that your requests fall on deaf ears? Then you're in good company, because once again what's important here is not the knowledge itself, but how you implement that knowledge.

1. Shaping the organization

When you next have the chance, ask your employees what they are responsible for. Asking the question: "What are your responsibilities here?" often produces surprising dialogues. Many employees will start by telling you what they do all day and all year, but they have problems getting to the crux of their actual responsibilities. It's worth discussing because it will either make the employee aware of responsibilities that he or she hasn't questioned in the past, or it will become apparent that their duties were not made clear enough in the first place and that further dialogues are needed.

2. Management meetings

"What have you achieved since our last meeting?" –if posed correctly, this question shifts the focus onto results and so saves time since, in hindsight, the process that led to the result is usually irrelevant. The only exception: If changes in behavior are needed, every promising activity in this area should be appreciated.

3. Job interviews

Does an applicant go into lengthy accounts of their past activities or concentrate on past achievements? Is the focus on processes or results? This is a way of drastically cutting short some job interviews and avoiding others.

4. "Calculate backwards"

If you currently have an initiative running in your company to look at improving your operations and processes, make sure that each process is always looked at from the end first, before the team starts considering what steps are necessary for the process. This is one of the most effective tools we use in our consultancy projects for creating growth-oriented corporate processes: What is the desired result of the process? What is needed to start the process? What's the quickest way to achieve this result? Think that's obvious? Think again!

In the midst of all this "result orientation," remember one thing: Results mean action. Once a goal has been set, what's important is undertaking the right actions in order to best reach that goal. In this respect, the right actions are key.

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