



Create an **action-oriented** mentality within work teams

Stakes

Managers face two challenges when attempting to execute a strategic vision. The first is inertia, as organizations tend to become attached to old habits and rest on their laurels. At the other extreme, people pressured to produce quick results may end up taking initiatives in a disorganized fashion. Either scenario rarely produces the desired outcome. So how can you motivate employees to take concrete initiatives without undue haste?

Assess the degree to which your teams are action-oriented

WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT ISN'T
• Determination to act here and now e.g., Does each meeting end with a list of action items? Does management frequently reorganize the agenda to accommodate changing priorities?	• Frenzied action e.g., Are agendas overloaded? Do employees run from meeting to meeting?
• Driven by a desire to win e.g., Do people feel motivated by the challenge? Is there a buzz of enthusiasm in the hallways?	• Driven by fear e.g., Do you see a lot of people burning out? How high is the general stress level in the organization?
• Externally focused e.g., Are meetings used to discuss how the market is evolving, what the competition is doing, etc.?	• Internally focused e.g., Do employees spend a lot of time preparing internally-focused presentations?
• Everyone's concern e.g., To address key topics, are ad hoc groups formed by tapping into various internal resources, including senior management?	• Top management's concern e.g., Does management entrust critical matters to consultants, and involve internal resources only when it comes time to execute?
• A lasting aptitude e.g., Is the pace of work regular and interspersed with periodic formal and informal status updates?	• A periodic crack of the whip e.g., Does the pace of work alternate between "all hands on deck" and "back to normal?"

Tactics to reinforce an action-oriented culture

Ensure that everyone sees the need for action. e.g., One firm programs every PC to display a start-up page showing the company's performance relative to the competition. Another company regularly circulates videos of customers explaining their expectations and complaints.	Provide the facts to spur people into action, without creating panic. e.g., Don't hesitate to evoke failures, with an emphasis on the lessons that can be learned from them. Don't withhold bad news, but encourage people to explore the opportunities that they may reveal.	Play on people's emotions to convey a sense of urgency. e.g., In your presentations, show key numbers, tell stories, share personal anecdotes and recount the experiences of others. Also, be careful to choose the right moment. For example, voicing concerns privately to your subordinates may have much less impact than voicing them in front of the CEO.
Don't let priorities accumulate. e.g., Perform regular updates. Have priorities changed in the past six months? Are some less important today?	Set the example to demonstrate the importance of focused action. e.g., Conclude every meeting with your own plan of action for the coming weeks before asking others for their agendas.	Ensure that skeptics and analytical types don't bog things down. e.g., Pair up skeptics with go-getters to balance their respective effect on the team.