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Mastering the Management Buckets

20 Critical Competencies for Leading Your Business or Nonprofit

John Pearson

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Pearson, a life-long student and practitioner of management, is president of John Pearson Associates, Inc., a management consulting company. He has served as CEO for three different associations. This book skims the top of a sea of management material categorized as cause, community and corporation. The material in the first two "buckets" is worth the price. If the book has a flaw, it covers too much territory. Most chapters could be expanded into a small book if covered thoroughly.

Pearson suggests using the book in several ways, one being to designate 20 working days to study, practice, and review each bucket (chapter). Each chapter ends with a practical To-Do List.

Cause includes results, customers, strategy, "Drucker," books, and program. *Community* includes people, culture, team, "Hoopla!," donors, volunteers, & crisis. *Corporation* includes board, budget, delegation, operations, systems, printing & meetings.

Core Competency 1. The Results Bucket

Principles: Manage for results. Focus on outside results. Use standards of performance. Measure your results. Abandon what doesn't produce. (25)

The Five Most Important Questions Every Organization Must Ask (quoting Peter Drucker): (27)

1. What is our mission?
2. Who is our customer?
3. What does our customer value?
4. What are our results?
5. What is our plan?

"Rarely will external forces--your Cause--push you to invest time. It takes sheer discipline every single day to focus on outside results." "Results are obtained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems." (29, quoting Drucker)

"Create clear goals and a rigorous accountability system with celebration mileposts." (31)

Virtually every team member must write 5 to 10 annual standards of performance. (32) Select the leading indicators of results and track them monthly. (34) You

don't have to quantify results, but you must rigorously assemble and track the evidence of your progress. (35)

You must make hard choices about abandoning programs and products. Be intentional. (36)

Core Competency 2. The Customer Bucket

You can't be all things to all people. Who is your primary customer? Serve many but identify and focus on just one. "Your primary customer is the person whose life is changed through your work." (41, quoting Drucker) "You must align your marketing, staffing and budget priorities with your primary customer." (42) [Who is this 'customer' for mission organizations? dlm]

You must also satisfy your supporting customers, who may include volunteers, vendors, donors, parents, and others. (43) But you must prioritize and focus. (44)

Your customers change. Values change. Ages change. Generations change. Neighborhoods change. "Think about your long-term customers (donors, recipients, guests, members, and so on) at the front of the parade. What do they know that your newest customers at the back of the parade don't know? And what about the marchers in tomorrow's parade who have never heard of you? Do you know what they are thinking about? How are they changing?" (48)

"Research what your customer values. (54) "Ask people what their real needs are, then shut up, and listen, listen, listen." (55) Brainstorm ways to talk to your customers - on-line surveys, exit interviews, phone blitz, satisfaction surveys, workplace surveys, etc. (55)

Core Competency 3. The Strategy Bucket

Craft a strategic vision statement. Memorize your mission statement. Plan strategically. And summarize your plan on a poster chart rather than putting it on the shelf in a binder.

"Strategic planning is worthless--unless there is first a strategic vision." (49, quoting John Naisbitt)

"A mission statement is a bit like an epitaph on a tombstone: 'Here lies ABC Organization and this is what we want to be remembered for.'" (60) A mission statement describes the primary reason you exist, the primary result you want to achieve. It leaves the 'how' to the strategic plan. (60)

The poster with your strategic plan includes for each goal, the Need being served, the Objectives (sub-goals), the Methods (programs, products, services) and Evaluation. (64)

Core Competency 4. The Drucker Bucket

Drucker was so full of management insights that he is a category all by himself. Read or re-read one Drucker book each year.

Core Competency 5. The Book Bucket

Avoid management-by-bestseller-syndrome, but mentor your team with niche books and create your top-100 books list. Not every great idea applies to your situation. What are your best principles for getting the most out of a book?

Core Competency 6. The Program Bucket

Give your customer choices, making it easier to say yes. Pearson provides 10 questions to check on program capacity and sustainability (p. 94). Count the cost (Luke 14:28-30) (95)

Primary programs are your life blood. Secondary programs you drop when time or money decline. Feed your primary programs and make them stronger. (97)
Research and understand your audience. (99) Be ruthless in rejecting programs that do not align with your mission statement. (101) "Don't be the eighth lemonade stand in a row of nine." (102) "Don't over-engineer: Your audience won't pay extra for something they cannot appreciate." (102) "Step back and envision how God could maximize your programs, products and services...." (105)

Core Competency 7. The People Bucket

Everyone has a preferred social style composed of two dimensions: assertiveness (ask vs. tell) and responsiveness (emote vs. control). This results in four styles: driving, expressive, analytical, and amiable. Yours is a summary of what you say and do when interacting with others. (112) Work on versatility so you can communicate well with those who prefer other styles. (116)

Core Competency 8. The Culture Bucket

Preach and live your values. Focus on three or four. No one will remember ten. Resolve conflicts quickly. No matter how unpleasant, there is no other way to authentic relationships (129, quoting Hybels)

Core Competency 9. The Team Bucket

"Your work will never be done--so go home!" "Work hard when you're working, but don't dabble at work when you're not working." (137) Focus on your strengths rather than your weaknesses. Laminate your top five strengths (Find them using *StrengthsFinder 2.0* by Tom Rath) and build on them. (139) When given an assignment, check it against your strengths. Negotiate toward your strengths. (140)

Core Competency 10. The Hoopla! Bucket

Celebrate. Be spontaneous. Have fun.

Core Competency 11. The Donor Bucket

"Where there is no vision, the people perish. Where there is no plan, the vision perishes." (163 quoting Olan Hendrix) A list of stewardship resources is given on pp. 163-165

Core Competency 12. The Volunteer Bucket

Treat volunteers with equal passion and intentionality. Understand and affirm them. Visualize life from their side of the desk. Put them in areas of their strengths. Give them organizational support. Calculate the real costs of managing volunteers to decide what tasks require paid staff.

Core Competency 13. The Crisis Bucket

"Effective leaders and managers plan for their next crises because they are inevitable." "Preparation reduces consternation. Make a plan." (183) Some procedures and protections are common to all crises. (184) Prepare your response before the media arrives. Who speaks for the organization? Don't trust

your instincts. (186) Appoint a crisis facilitator and hold a risk-management planning session. (188)

Core Competency 14. The Board Bucket [very good section dlm]

"The first step in organizational sustainability is to inspire board members to be highly committed and generous partners in ministry." (191) The four stages of building a board: cultivation, recruitment, orientation and engagement. (191)

Six key practices for recruiting exceptional board members:

- "Recruit for passion, not position.
- Pray before prospecting.
- Date before proposing.
- Inspire your prospect to give generously.
- Propose marriage.
- Continue dating!
- Leave a legacy." (191)

"Passionate, highly committed board members who follow their money with their heart become incredible zealots for your mission." (196) "The best boards keep their noses in the business and their fingers out!" (196, quoting Jim Brown) "The most effective nonprofit boards meet quarterly for 8 to 12 hours." (197)

Core Competency 15. The Budget Bucket

"Budget for an annual surplus and growing reserve." (201) "You'll never have enough cash to do what you want, so you must discipline yourself to create an annual surplus." (204) "Don't let non-financial people off the hook." "Review reports early and often." (210)

Core Competency 16. The Delegation Bucket

"No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it." (213, quoting Peter Drucker). Organize so that average people can lead.

"Procrastination is the greatest enemy of delegation. When you fail to plan far enough in advance, you'll delegate less because you're unprepared..." (215) Read the humorous little book, *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey* by Ken Blanchard, et al.

The primary rule for delegation is to post an assignment chart with priority, person, task, deadline, and a place to note whether it was done. Update it weekly. (217) Push decision making to the lowest practical level, trusting the individual to make decisions.

Make a STOP or Don't Do list. Keep a list of things you will stop doing. This is "selective neglect." (224)

Core Competency 17. The Operations Bucket

Core Competency 18. The Systems Bucket

Create a system to track your daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual repeating tasks. (240)

Core Competency 19. The Printing Bucket

The president of Pioneer Clubs persuaded the receptionist at her church to save for her all the mail she would have thrown away. As she sorted through the

bulging boxes, she was amazed to see the high-quality, four-color, innovative brochures and announcements clearly addressed to various departments. How did the receptionist decide to throw this stuff away without passing it on? And what does this mean for the terrific mailers your organization is doing?

"Bad, overly complex writing stinks up websites, newsletters, emails, memos, reports, donor letters and signage." Get help! (248) Burn the fuzz off your thinking.

Not everyone likes to read. Some prefer telephone messages, video, or meetings. "When you communicate only from your preferred style, you miscommunicate to 75 percent of your audience!" (252)

Core Competency 20. The Meetings Bucket

"Weekly one-on-one staff meetings with each of your direct reports can be powerful antidotes to miscommunication. When four eyes are looking at the same schedules, the same calendars, the same concerns and the same targets, excellent communication emerges week after week after week!" (257)

Prepare for every meeting. "Create a welcoming environment for every meeting. The meeting begins when the first person arrives." (259) Meetings should be welcoming, organized, and warm. Evaluate each meeting with a few questions under each of these three areas. (262)

Page 265 has several ideas for things to do when the meeting gets boring.

Note from John Pearson

David Mays regularly reviews books, especially for the global missions community. Visit his website at www.DavidMays.org to subscribe to his free book review emails.

He reviewed *Mastering the Management Buckets* on August 11, 2009. For more information, visit www.ManagementBuckets.com.