



## Move Beyond the Status Quo

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All successful leaders want to achieve success for their companies. They want to grow profits and revenues year-to-year, beat the competition, and truly be proactive rather than reactive in the marketplace. And they want to do it now.

But how do you break through to a new level? Tom Northrup, author of the new book *Five Hidden Mistakes CEOs Make*, believes that to realize their visions of the future, successful leaders must strategically transform how their companies operate at all levels, from leadership ability and people productivity to planning processes and even the underlying culture. “Attitude is everything,” says Northrup, a former CEO of three successful businesses. “Right now, your company gets the results — good or bad — that it was designed to get. If your vision of the future differs from your current situation, if you want to get better results, then you must change the way you do things. If you don’t, how can you expect results that are any different from what you’ve already achieved?”

According to Northrup, you will achieve greater success when you look for ways to accomplish your goals rather than make excuses. Here are some of the highest-payoff areas he sees as necessary for CEOs to focus on:

**Develop strategically, with purpose.** Build an outstanding company that is proactive and able to identify, develop, and realize opportunities regularly, year after year. Do that by implementing “strategic development,” which requires both a clear definition of a desired future and effective operations. Break your operations down into people productivity and leadership culture. Realize that over time the sum of strategy, productivity, and leadership will result in an outstanding company.

**Focus on your core competencies first.** Understand the key success factors that drive your marketplace, and develop those into core competencies in your company. That requires developing a comprehensive strategy and then executing it. Pay attention to the details, and document the processes you use well.

**Get in control and stay in control.** Is the company running you or are you in control? Do you have a strategy and operational initiatives that your management team fully supports? Do you hold yourself and your team accountable to meet the milestones you have set? Evaluate operational performance using metrics that matter.

**Target opportunities intentionally instead of reacting to problems.** What do you think about when driving home at the end of a long day — problems or opportunities? The difference between these two approaches is the difference between a weak organization not meeting its performance objectives and an outstanding organization that is a profitable, growing market leader.

**Embrace change.** Real change is self-motivated. It’s not that we don’t like change. What we don’t like is to be changed. Make the acceptance of change part of your corporate culture. Involve your employees in discovering the need for change and involve them in the plans for change, so they don’t become resistant. People who participate in setting the direction of change and in developing initiatives to achieve change become intellectually and emotionally committed.