

How to Win the Super Bowl (A Game Plan for Businesses)

By Michael L. Heisser

Living in Denver, Colorado, without being a professional sports fan borders on swimming in the ocean without getting wet. Athletic news dominates the media year-round. In the fall we hear about the Broncos every day. The country could go to war and the local headlines and lead news stories would update us on final Broncos scores before the revelation of the nature of any international conflict. I like football as much as the next guy does, as long as the next guy is not the Barrel Man, but I would rather play than watch.

A couple of years ago when the Broncos won the Super Bowl, it occurred to me businesses and football teams share many similarities. The secret to success in football is simple: winning teams just do “it” better more often than their competition...the same is true for business.

So what’s the “it?”

How often have you heard a football player or coach express in the revealing post-game interview, “Penalties killed us,” “We beat ourselves,” “We just didn’t perform.” The best game plan crumbles, the seasoned veteran misses a block, passes land on empty turf. The problem seldom revolves around deficient individual technical skills, rather a lack of execution of existing processes (the “it”).

Every process consists of three parts: input, production/service, and output. In a business, very few processes stand alone, rather each process supports another. The foundational process categorizing your business is called the “core process.” The company managing its processes better than its competition wins (leads the industry). Sound simple? Then why is the failure rate for businesses so high?

Many contributions determine a business’s success, but only four pertain to a process point of view: either the process, the execution of the process, the interface of the process with other processes, or various combinations of the previous intend a favorable outcome. The best process in the world, however, hampers you if no one follows it. Likewise, if you do the wrong activity you will get the wrong results. In addition, if you start with inaccurate input, you will finish with inaccurate output. All of the above assure frustration and loss of profits, while paralyzing growth.

The Super Bowl Game Plan

So what do Super Bowl Companies do better than their competition? They:

- Define and document processes in detail and follow them religiously, especially when the busy season hits. Short cuts are the long way around.
- Develop a method to measure the performance of the process and feedback results to employees. People like to know what works as well as areas for improvement.
- Update processes regularly, begin with the end in mind.
- Develop a team philosophy – **T**ogether **E**verybody **A**ccomplishes **M**ore. Everyone in the organization needs to understand what happens up and down stream from him or her – especially down stream.
- Train, praise, and encourage employees.

- Communicate, communicate, communicate – communication means you understand it how I meant it.
- Get focused and stay focused – Set goals and attain them. Develop meaningful action plans to accomplish objectives.
- Take time to do it right the first time – avoid the 1-10 rule. The 1-10 rule basically states to correct an incorrect output requires ten times the time, money, energy, and effort. Remember: your input is someone's output and vice versa.

Simple processes could possibly prove the most difficult to manage and difficult processes might offer the greatest governing challenge. Whether simple or difficult, divide the process into its three parts: input, production/service, and output, and apply the Super Bowl Game Plan.

Your next management meeting could generate the following conversation: "Everything just clicked," "Everybody gave 110%," "All we did was work our plan,"... "We're going to Disney Land!"

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