

WIN EVERY DAY

**PROVEN PRACTICES FOR
EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS**



MARK MILLER

International bestselling author of *Win the Heart*
and *Chess Not Checkers*

More Praise for *Win Every Day*

“So many leaders are visionaries, and often what visionaries struggle with is execution. The problem, of course, is that greatness doesn’t hinge on vision nearly as much as it hinges on execution. Mark’s decades of real-world experience at the highest levels of leadership have come together in a powerful book that you can both read in a single sitting and implement for years to come. Read this book, run the play, and execute at the same level as the world’s best organizations.”

—**Carey Nieuwhof, bestselling author and host of *The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast***

Experienced business leaders and entrepreneurs know that planning is overrated. Execution is what is the key to excellence. In *Win Every Day*, Mark Miller offers a clear path to execution that will lead to organizational excellence. Many business books I read are based on armchair observations from the authors. Mark Miller did the hard work of learning the keys to successful execution from data gathered from thousands of employees in dozens of businesses.”

—**Dr. Jeff Cornwall, Jack C. Massey Chair in Entrepreneurship and Professor of Entrepreneurship, Belmont University**

“An important lesson our church has learned over the years is that big vision and proper planning amount to little more than words on paper if we don’t excel at execution. *Win Every Day* has provided a clear pathway to follow as we seek to accomplish our mission and see our vision realized. Every organization and team should integrate the wisdom in this book into their culture.”

—**Shane Duffey, Lead Pastor, NewSpring Church**

“Many leaders dream of building a great company, but few are able to deliver. Mark Miller distills forty years of experience and hard-won wisdom into simple, clear principles and then uses story to help you see them in practice. In *Win Every Day*, Mark will empower you to excel in executing the vision for your organization and for yourself.”

—**Jo Saxton, leadership coach and author of *Ready to Rise***

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WIN
EVERY DAY

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The High Performance Series

Chess Not Checkers

Leaders Made Here

Talent Magnet

Win the Heart

Other Books

The Heart of Leadership

The Secret of Teams

Coauthored with Ken Blanchard

Great Leaders Grow

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The Heart of Leadership Field Guide

Leaders Made Here Field Guide

The Secret Field Guide

The Secret of Teams Field Guide

Talent Magnet Field Guide

Win Every Day Field Guide

Win the Heart Field Guide

THE HIGH PERFORMANCE SERIES

WIN EVERY DAY

PROVEN PRACTICES FOR
EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS



MARK MILLER



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Win Every Day

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*Mom, thanks for showing me what a life
filled with faith, hope, and love looks like.
Your example of a life well-lived has always
inspired me and everyone who knows you!*

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Introduction

Organizations around the world are facing a challenging reality: the new global standard—for those who thrive—has become flawless products, services, and experiences, delivered with no friction, 24/7/365. Never before have customers demanded so much. But for leaders who can build high performance organizations, the demands of the modern world fit right into their game plan. And for those who struggle to execute, the challenge will ultimately prove unsurmountable and the consequences dire.

For the last several years, we have been attempting to answer this one simple question: what specific behaviors enable and sustain elite levels of execution? I'm excited to share what we have learned.

The ideas you are about to explore are born of almost a decade of research, conversation, debate, and real-world cases involving hundreds of thousands of employees. We've studied scores of organizations—some household names and others quiet exemplars of what is possible: Apple, Cirque du

Soleil, Navy SEALs, Starbucks, Danaher, Clemson football, Southwest Airlines, Mayo Clinic, Zappos, and many, many more.

Our findings were clear—high performance organizations all do four things: (1) Bet on Leadership, (2) Act as One, (3) Win the Heart, and (4) Excel at Execution. These four moves *together* create remarkable organizations.

Win Every Day is the fifth installment in the High Performance Series and will focus on the fourth of these defining characteristics, the hallmark of all high performance organizations, *execution*.

For many, the ideas on the following pages will be transformational! There's just one catch. If you miss any one of the four moves, not only will execution forever be a challenge, but you'll forfeit your place among the world's great organizations. Today's execution challenges often find their energy and source in the first three moves—each represents a critical step on the journey to Excel at Execution.

One final introductory thought: this book, although simple and succinct in its final form, required a tremendous amount of work. I know that sometimes when you see a business fable, you may think a guy like me just sat down one afternoon and knocked it out—"It's just a short story." In this case, and with my other books, nothing could be further from the truth. When you finish the book, or right now, please take a moment and read the acknowledgments. We

worked with scores of businesses with thousands of employees to discover, validate, and refine the truths you are about to encounter. I am forever grateful for the entire team—you will be too.

I trust this book will serve you and your organization well. It could be the last critical piece you've been searching for to release the untapped potential in your people, create real competitive advantage, and ensure your leadership legacy.

Win Every Day!

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Nightmare

How did this happen?" Blake snapped. No one wanted to respond. Then Kim Diaz, the chief marketing officer, looked at the others and said, "Well, Blake, we blew it—multiple times." She went on to explain a tragedy of errors and poor decisions involving a previously loyal customer. "The order was taken incorrectly, the shipment was late, the product was defective, and our response was incomprehensible. The result: a viral video complaint viewed by one million people."

"A million people and counting! In just twenty-four hours! What are we going to do?" Blake fumed.

"We've issued an apology to the customer and posted it on all the social platforms; we've also released the customer service representative," Kim offered.

"And what else can we do?" Blake asked.

"We don't know what else to do at the moment," Charles Jones, the head of Human Resources, said.

"This is a nightmare!" Blake said as he left the room.



Blake's next meeting was with Ashley Westman, the new head of Production. When he originally planned the meeting with her, he knew nothing about the firestorm they would be in today. However, he hoped she might have some fresh ideas regarding the way forward.

Still distracted by the morning's events, Blake attempted to be fully present as he greeted Ashley. "Good morning. Before we begin, I need to be sure you are up to speed on what's going on this morning."

"I think I know," she said sheepishly.

"You do?"

"Yes, sir, my phone is blowing up. All my friends know I just started working here a few months ago and they're sending me the link."

"Well, I guess the timing of our meeting is perfect." Blake attempted a smile.

"I suppose so."

"What have you discovered since our first meeting?" Blake asked.

"Well . . . I know the media attention we're receiving this morning is unprecedented, but the problem is not an outlier."

"What do you mean?"

She handed Blake a single sheet of paper reflecting the organization's recent performance.

"We are better than this," Blake said, staring at the page.

"Well, sir," Ashley responded hesitantly, "actually, the trends indicate we are not. Our execution has been slipping for several years. However, it does appear we've leveled off."

"This doesn't look healthy to me. Why do you think the numbers are flat?" Blake asked.

Ashley had not been on the job long, but she knew exactly what the chart depicted. Not wanting to be shot as the messenger, she began cautiously and spoke matter-of-factly.

"The process is in control."

"And . . ." Blake waited.

"The results we are generating are perfectly aligned with the systems, structure, and practices we have in place." She continued, "And if we make no significant changes, I can confidently predict similar outcomes in the near future."

"What if we want to get better?" Blake asked.

"We'll have to change something," Ashley said with a slight smile.

"And what should we change?"

"I'm not sure yet. But first, you and our senior leaders have a decision to make," Ashley insisted.

"What's that?"

"Are we good enough?" Ashley asked.

"What does that mean?"

"Every organization decides how great they want to be."

Every organization decides how great they want to be.

"Of course, we want to be great!" Blake said instinctively.

"Does this data look great to you?"

Blake was struck by the simplicity and directness of the question. Even without the current social media frenzy, he knew the answer was a resounding no.

"Let's talk about what great looks like," Blake said.

"First, you have to decide whom you are competing against," Ashley suggested.

"That feels like a strange place to begin, but I'll bite. We know our top five competitors globally."

"Who will our top competitors be in five years?"

"I don't know," Blake confessed.

"Okay, how good are the ones you know about today?"

"The data is a little hard to come by—some companies are privately held—but third-party estimates clearly put us ahead of them on most key metrics—sales, profitability, even quality."

"But how *good* are they?"

Blake had never thought about the question in those terms. "I guess they are mediocre," he said.

"And how good are we?"

"Better than them!" A feeling of pride engulfed Blake.

"So, it sounds like we're good—no additional action required. Right?"

Blake didn't respond.

"I have another question. What happens when a current competitor, or a start-up, outpaces us? What if they decide to up their game, and their level of execution leaves us behind? What if today's social media incident becomes a recurring event?"

"I'll admit, I'm new here, but this is what I'm hearing: you say you don't like our current level of performance, but you've allowed it to continue for several years. You also acknowledge we are better than our known competition. So, I come back to my question: why change? Change is hard and costly. You need to decide. Are we good enough?"

The question struck a deep chord in Blake's soul. He knew the company was probably good enough to stay in business but not good enough for him to look in the mirror and say, "I gave my best."

Ashley waited for his response. "Sir?"

"I know the answer: we are not good enough. But the reason we have to address this has nothing to do with our competition or today's incident."

"I don't understand," Ashley admitted.