



Executive Warfare

10 Rules of Engagement for Winning Your War for Success

By David F. D'Alessandro with Michele Owens, McGraw-Hill, 2008

It's not enough anymore to be smart, hard-working, and able to show results – because nowadays everybody is smart, hard-working, and able to show results.

What really sets you apart are the relationships you build with people of influence. These people can include your peers, your employees, your organization's directors, reporters, vendors, and regulators – as well as the people directly above you in the organizational hierarchy.

In senior management, you no longer answer to just one boss. There is now a hazy matrix of hundreds of bosses both inside and outside the office, any one of whom can stop you cold or give you a tremendous push forward. "Executive Warfare" offers concrete advice for handling all of them, including:

● **YOUR PEERS:** They can be either the most valuable allies or the most dangerous enemies.

● **THE CEO:** Her office is often where the real fairy dust is kept. Make sure you have a good relationship with her.

● **THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** They won't judge you fairly if all they see of you are your PowerPoint presentations.

● **YOUR DIRECT REPORTS:** These people are your vital organs, so treat them accordingly. And if you find a "blood clot" among them, excise that person before he kills you.

● **YOUR RIVALS:** It's not always wise to shoot at them, but if you do, do not shoot to wound.

About David and Michele:



David F. D'Alessandro is a business advisor and speaker and the author of two previous national bestsellers, "Brand Warfare" and "Career Warfare". He was

chairman and CEO of John Hancock Financial Services from 2000-2005 and has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS Evening News, The Today Show, Bloomberg Forum, and CNBC's Squawk Box. He graduated from Syracuse University (B.S.) and holds honorary doctorate degrees from Syracuse, Bentley College, and Newbury College.



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of Massachusetts and a staff speechwriter for Governor Mario Cuomo of New York. Her articles have appeared in O, The Oprah Magazine, Organic Gardening, and Elle, and she is a co-creator of GardenRant.com.

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Why You Need This Book

This book will tell you how to lead all your many bosses to the inevitable conclusion that you and you alone have what it takes to run the show.

In his bestsellers "Brand Warfare" and "Career Warfare", author David D'Alessandro offered sharp advice for building a brand and building a career. Now "Executive Warfare" is the advanced class for the truly ambitious. It will teach you what it takes to rise to the top – and to do the even harder thing, which is to survive there.

Attitude, Risk, and Luck: They Are the Most Influential Bosses

To rise, you may have to broaden your horizons, and you may have to look for an employer who will allow you to broaden them. You'll also need three things to make the most of the chances you are given: the right attitude, a willingness to take calculated risks, and dumb luck.

ATTITUDE: The Boss Within

It's incredibly important to get your own head in the game if you intend to rise. If

you are bossed around by your own greed, arrogance, or childish lack of discipline, you will give people reason to doubt you, and you will undermine yourself.

RISK: Slice It, Dice It, and If It Looks Good, Eat It for Breakfast

One of the most significant attitude adjustments you will have to make as you move into higher management is your attitude toward risks. Higher management is all about handling risks intelligently and in a calculated fashion.

LUCK: Smarter Than Reaching for the Brass Ring Is Letting It Slap You in the Nose

There is no such thing in this world as a pure meritocracy. Nobody gets to the top without being lucky. Luck happens to the most deserving of people and some of the most undeserving.

Not even the most powerful or ambitious person can force lightning to strike. But you can maneuver yourself into a position where it's more likely you strike. Figure out how to stand tall in an open field as soon as you can.

About the Book:



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Bosses: You Need a License to Cut Hair, but Not to Manage and Control Thousands of People

The first rule of your relationship with your boss is to understand that it's a business transaction. Most of the time, they are merely the major obstacle standing between you and the prize.

Love them or hate them, what you really



want is to get beyond them.

If you are willing to give the boss the truth, you're probably going to engage in some spirited debate with your boss as part of the decision-making process. This leads to the second thing you need to do to be a valuable instrument: Understand that once the decision is made, even if you don't agree with it and have argued against it, you must drop your opposition and execute it to the best of your abilities.

It also is helpful to understand something beyond the immediate goal. Be eager to always want to know what your boss' next move is going to be.

The fourth thing you have to do is to assure the boss that you are both loyal and discreet. No matter how incompetent or unpleasant he may be, never tell stories about your boss. Never make the boss feel betrayed – unless, of course, you are ready to grab the boss' job.

Peers: Understand That They Are Your Most Valuable Allies... or Your Most Dangerous Enemies

CULTIVATING THE "CONSIGLIERI" (ALSO KNOWN AS SUCKING UP)

You can identify the "consiglieri" by their unfettered access to the boss. These are the people able to walk into the office of the executive director or president or CEO on a moment's notice and just glide past the assistant, with or without an appointment.

Cultivating the "consiglieri" is not just a smart defensive move. They can also be

extraordinarily helpful as you struggle to get things done. Use your peers and they can have a lot of influence on your success. It's also good for them because it allows them to demonstrate to the boss how ahead of they curve they are. The key thing to understand is that such a relationship only works if you are willing to be generous with the credit for your great idea.

CAREFULLY REMOVE ALL TATTOOS

To fight against ugly rumors, you first have to know what's being said about you.

First, be smart. Place some of your trust in people who will tell you when your face is dirty, as well as when it's clean.

Second, do not give your enemies any excuses. Do not have that second drink at an office function. Be discreet.

Third, think about what you're best at. Anticipate cross-cut attacks that will make you seem sanctimonious or false.

Fourth, accept that sometimes you just have to take the hit simply because you believe what you're doing is right.

Fifth, if the rumor is a lie, calmly make the facts known. If there is a crumb of truth in it, though, be humble enough to admit it and see if you can't improve yourself.

Rivals: Defeat Them with a Siege, Not a Coup

Your rivals aren't under every rock, but they are behind an awful lot of desks.



ALLOW YOUR RIVAL TO BE SHORT-SIGHTED. A lot of short-term rivals wind up being short-term by doing dumb things. These contests are not coups, generally. They are sieges. So time is on your side. Relax and behave like a leader.

PATIENTLY PROVE THAT YOU ARE BETTER. One of the smartest ways to get the better of your rivals is not to engage them and certainly not to attack them directly, but just to look good by contrast.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE POINTED QUESTION. The truth is, with compliments and questions, what you are really doing is giving your rivals a performance appraisal in public. You are subtly demonstrating how terrific you would be as their boss – and hopefully, planting this idea in the minds of the decision makers.

IF YOU CAN'T RESIST A SHOW OF AGGRESSION, MAKE SURE IT'S LETHAL. Sometimes, however, your rivals will irk you or threaten you enough that you simply cannot resist shooting at them. If you must shoot, do not shoot to wound. Finish the person off as a rival.

HANDLING A SNAKE IN YOUR OWN NEST. Just walk in one morning and get rid of him. People like this are too impatient to wait for their turn, and it is tough enough trying to watch your back against attacks from outside enemies.

IF YOU ARE THE SNAKE IN THE NEST, STRIKE QUICKLY. Act quickly, before your boss's paranoia has a chance to flower, because dawdling is dangerous.

Your boss has more access than you do to the CEO and the board. She could easily plant so much kindling wood under you, it would make Joan of Arc look like a marshmallow roast.

IF YOU LOSE TO YOUR RIVAL, EITHER LEARN TO LIKE EATING CROW, OR GO. If you do stay on as a loser, you generally either have to find another place to go within the organization that offers you another chance to rise, or wait out your rival's tenure – five years, seven years, ten years – for a second shot at the job you wanted.

WITH FORMER RIVAL, IT'S KISS OR KILL. If you win the race, you either embrace your rivals or kill them. There's nothing in between, because nothing is more dangerous than allowing the defeated to remain rivals.

That's the thing about real rivals. The best of them are as impressive as you are. Don't forget it when you're running against them, and don't forget it when you win.

The Team You Assemble: You Risk Your Reputation with Every Hire and Fire

The truth is that when you are the boss, it's really hard to hire people unlike yourself, either in personality or in expertise. Why? Because they can make you ill at ease. Do it anyway if you think they are right for the job. But you will reach a point where you will need all of them, so go out of your way to fairly judge people who are unlike you. Otherwise, your performance will suffer.



Hire for candor. Look instead for seasoned, confident people, courageous people who will take the personal hit of telling you the truth rather than feeding you pleasant lies.

Develop a reputation as somebody who not only can build a strong team but also can bring in people who can build strong teams. You will make personnel mistakes. The trick is not making too many and not failing to resolve the problem promptly when you know somebody has to go.

How you handle the actual firing is extraordinarily important. By definition, it should be a closed-door session. Make sure that you have a witness in the room, preferably an attorney who has been fully briefed in advance.

It's important that your employees see that you are not heartless. They will work twice as hard for you. And on a little bit of mercy, your shareholders will probably reap considerable returns.

The People You Have to Motivate: You Are a Fool if You Think They Love You

You can get people to work very, very hard because they are proud of your organization or because they want your organization's prestigious name on their resume. But relying on a blind salute to the logo to motivate people will get you just about as far as relying on their love for you.

You build loyalty by helping each member of your team, individually, get where they want to go.

Sometimes what people need most is

respect for the fact that they have personal lives. They are far more effective if they feel respected that way. You are winning people's loyalty in action. You are not intruding on their lives; you are making a deal that recognizes that they do have lives separate from the office.

Treat the people who work for you with respect and start building that loyalty today.

Outsiders with Influence: Be Wary, Be Right, and Be Prepared to Prove It

When a client's unhappy, it's a bit like the running of the bulls – and you're wearing white with a red scarf wrapped around your waist. You may well get skewered. So here's how to keep the bringers of gold happy as a senior person who is not meeting with them every day.

1. You have to layer your clients and donors and concentrate on the important ones.

Make sure your people understand that if there is any hint of a problem, you're to know about it. And if there is a serious problem, be prepared to get on a plane in order to soothe the savage beast.

2. Be accessible at the drop of a hat.

If the client really counts, make sure that she has your home phone number, not just your cell phone. Say to that client, "If there's a problem, call me any time."

3. Serve as a "consiglieri" to them.

They may be spending \$5million or \$20 million or \$50 million with your organization. Part of the transaction is that they get your time and advice in return.



4. Help them solve problems, not just in their businesses and careers, but also in their lives. Treat them as human beings, and use your influence to help them.

5. Never lie to them. If your company has screwed something up, tell them you screwed it up.

Everywhere you go, there is a chance that you will run into somebody who has some influence with the powers that be in your organization. You have to be aware that six degrees of separation is often three or four too many when it comes to organizational life. Random strangers to you are not always strangers to the people who hold your career in their hands. So it is smart to conduct yourself, in public at least, as if there is always somebody in the audience who matters.

Position: Get into Place, Whether You Are a Hunter, Skinner, or Diner

Don't expect people to come around and hold out a Halloween basket for you so that you can pick whatever revenue-generating job you want. Put yourself into position. Make it known that you want a revenue-gathering job. Don't just raise your hand when a job comes up, when people are already thinking of other candidates. Raise your hand in advance.

Then dive right in. If it turns out that you have no appetite for the hunt, you can always come back to the staff job later.

Even with a rich favor bank behind you, you may find that when you're pulled off one

organizational breast, there isn't necessarily another one to latch onto incessantly. There simply are not that many mid- to high-six-figure kinds of jobs out there.

First, make sure that you are as financially independent as you can possibly be.

Second, work out a plan in case you lose your job.

Make sure, as you develop your skills as a general manager, that you also develop some particular marketable skill. Build a reputation as an expert in some area. Write articles. Give speeches.

If you're good, at least one of those organizations will eventually decide that they are paying you too much as a consultant and offer you a big job with them. It happens all the time, and that is a very pleasant position to find yourself in.

Culture: Before You Sign on, Make Sure it's a Culture, Not a Cult

Whether the "culture" of your organization is a real way of behaving and thinking that brings out the best in people or nothing more than organized hypocrisy, you must pay attention to a few things when you move into senior management.

First, you must know the unwritten rules of your organization's culture so that you don't break them unwittingly.

Second, you must consider whether or not the culture is one that will reward your efforts.



Third, you have to make sure that the culture doesn't wind up warping you in ways that will damage your career.

Fourth, to be a leader, you have to try to influence the culture in positive ways.

Keep your eyes open to the culture in which you are working, and make sure that it won't reject you unjustly. Be sure also that the culture of your organization allows for forward motion – that it will give you the opportunities you deserve. If not, make a deft exit as soon as you can.

You will never convince all these different audiences to trust you if you don't have a very strong sense of yourself and a good idea of what integrity is. But you also have to listen to all these bosses, think about them, and try to understand their agendas.

In today's world, you have to be alert to win.

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The New Bosses: It's Not the Same Old Twentieth-Century Game

The new world is more analytical, more numbers-focused, more aggressive, more skeptical, and more unforgiving than ever before. You have to be effective in this world to make it to the top – but the real stand-out candidates will be the amateur psychologists, the humanists, and the humorists.

If you want to rise, you have to demonstrate leadership to many different audiences. These include the people above and below you in the organizational hierarchy, the people who are competing with you for the next job and those resentful because they cannot compete for it, the outsiders and insiders and shareholders and donors and disinterested observers only looking for a juicy story to alleviate the tedium.

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