

Audio-Tech Business Book Summaries



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Executive Warfare

10 Rules of Engagement for Winning Your War for Success

by David F. D'Alessandro with Michele Owens

A summary of the original text.

If you are an ambitious person, you are never satisfied with your current level of success. No matter how high you climb the ladder, you want to reach the next level.

If you are currently in middle management, you want to break out of the pack and rise to the top. But the truth is that once you reach a certain level, the odds are against rising higher, and there are more and more people standing in your way.

Middle managers get ahead by being smart, working hard, and showing results. But at the top of an organization, that's suddenly not enough, because everyone is smart, hard-working, and able to show results.

The single greatest reason why otherwise talented people get stuck in mid-career is

because they believe that the same rules that applied for the first part of their career still apply. They don't. You now have to master a much subtler set of rules.

These 10 rules of executive warfare are:

1. Much of your success is a matter of attitude, risk, and luck.
2. You don't get to choose your boss, and you don't have to like your boss, but you have to honor and respect your boss.
3. Your peers are your most valuable allies, or your most dangerous enemies.
4. Your rivals for the next job may well be anybody who has ever caught the attention of the big bosses and the board.

5. You risk your reputation with every person you hire and fire.
6. You are a fool if you think the people who work for you love you.
7. Be wary of outsiders with influence, such as clients and donors.
8. In the modern organizational caste system, you are either a hunter, a skinner, or a diner.
9. Avoid creating a culture of fear and instead create a culture of openness where everyone gives you their best efforts and best ideas.
10. Realize that you have to deliver high returns.

You must learn these new rules because the game changes fundamentally as you rise toward the executive suite. Instead of having just one boss to please, you now have a complex, hazy matrix of hundreds of bosses. And you cannot rise without impressing a good number of them.

These bosses include not just your direct boss, but also the people above him to whom you now have become visible, including the CEO and the board of directors. Your other new bosses include every single person who has any influence over any of these higher-ups.

Chances are good that the higher-ups are listening to your peers. They are also listening to the people in human resources, the general counsel's office, and the accounts payable department that processes your expenses. They may be listening to some of your underlings, too, who are probably more prominent than any underlings you've ever had to supervise before.

These bosses are definitely listening to the outsiders you'd expect, such as clients, regulators, and the press. But they're also listening to the ones you don't expect, such as the spouses of the people you work with and the guy at the gym who notices your temper tantrums when you lose a racquetball game.

So now, in addition to getting your job done and done well, you have to manage an incredibly tricky network of relationships, in private and in public, in a way that announces your ability to lead. The experiences that have brought you to this point can in no way have prepared you for the subtle, tortuous challenges you will now face.

D'Alessandro learned this lesson on his third day in a new executive position. He'd just come to John Hancock as the first vice president in the company's 122-year history ever hired from outside the ranks. He didn't understand that as he was picking out furniture for his office, several of his peers down the hall were thinking very hard about how to block him, use him, or destroy him.

When he met one of his new employees, who was from Thailand, he told her that he had just returned from a trip to her native country. Trying his best to be friendly, he said, "Bangkok is a beautiful and fascinating city. Incredibly industrious, wonderful food, intriguing history... I took a tour along the river, which I really loved, except for the polluted river itself. You must be proud to be from a country with such a unique culture."

The employee — let's call her Mali — smiled and D'Alessandro assumed he'd won her over. He was wrong. His new boss soon informed him, "Mali says she can't work for you because you have no empathy for her ethnic origins. She thinks you said she comes from a dirty country,

and we don't want this to escalate up to the president. So I'm taking her department away from you."

D'Alessandro was dumbfounded. He hadn't even had his company physical yet, and he'd already lost a whole department. What had happened was this: Somebody else at the company wanted Mali's department, and he resented a newcomer taking it over. So when Mali told him that her new boss had called a polluted river "polluted," he saw an opportunity to stir up doubts about D'Alessandro in his boss's mind — and seized upon it.

That same week, an executive vice president told D'Alessandro, "The senior officers are taking bets about how long you're going to last. They're giving ten-to-one odds that you don't last six months, and so far, no one's bet for you."

All of those executives lost their bets, because D'Alessandro not only survived for six months, he went on to run the company. But that harsh experience taught him what it means to move into higher management. Good intentions do not count. Every foolish word out of your mouth is now subject to scrutiny by the people both above and below you. There is so much power, prestige, and money at stake that the competition will be ruthless. And bosses at this level will not put up with anything or anybody who risks embarrassing them.

Above all, the experience taught him the lessons that he developed into the 10 rules.



RULE #1: MUCH OF YOUR SUCCESS IS A MATTER OF ATTITUDE, RISK, AND LUCK

Many people become trapped in the wrong place with the wrong job, and they never change because they're unwilling to take the risk. In order to rise to the top, you will need three things to make the most of the chances you are given:

1. The right attitude
2. A willingness to take calculated risks
3. Dumb luck

Having *the right attitude* means getting your head in the game. If you are arrogant or undisciplined, you will give people reason to doubt you.

There are a handful of things you need to do to appear to be higher management material.

First, *you need to know how to present well*. This sounds simple, but remember that meetings are a stage you will be judged upon, so make sure you know how to express yourself in the right way. Take classes or lessons at your own expense if you need help.

Second, *study*. By learning as much as you can about your organization as a whole, you can demonstrate that you belong in a broader role. For example, learn about the major initiatives in other parts of the company so that you can be prepared when they are brought up in a meeting.

Third, *get used to scrutiny*. You are being judged in everything you do. Beware of the small

things that can tip the balance for or against you. For example, D'Alessandro once walked into a general store in a small Vermont town. Next to the cash register, he noticed a Xerox of a check that one of his employees had bounced.

Every time D'Alessandro saw the employee after that, or glanced at his name on a list of possible promotions, he thought, "How responsible can he be?" If you can't even control your personal finances, your chances of being promoted to senior management go out the window.

Keep your personal life private. Personal things that you reveal could come back to haunt you if you're not careful. Very few people get promoted after telling their bosses they had a heart attack, or after admitting to being an alcoholic, or after getting involved in a messy office romance. The decision makers simply don't want to take a chance on someone who might die in a couple of years, or on someone who might embarrass them by making headlines for the wrong reasons.

Another adjustment you will have to make in order to move into senior management is your attitude toward **risk**. As the game changes in higher management, you'll be held accountable for handling risks intelligently and in a calculated manner. Thousands of jobs may depend on the risks and decisions you make, not to mention the future course of your career.

The one risk that you must never be wrong about throughout your career is enterprise risk. Although it may not happen often, there are times when the decisions you make can actually jeopardize your entire organization.

This is why you must learn to take risks in a calculated way. Even risks that seem small can be career makers or breakers. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is not understanding the risks you face, either because you are extremely risk-averse or you have no risk filter.

Playing it safe and not taking risks can be a risky career move in itself. It's the equivalent of not taking a stand, and this sets a dangerous tone for the people underneath you.

Successful organizations tend to foster environments where ideas are free flowing. However, there must also be proper mechanisms in place to analyze the validity of these ideas. Surround yourself with people who will give you good answers when you question the risk factor.

Finally, no one reaches the top without a little **luck**. It happens to some of the most deserving people, but also to some of the most undeserving people. Good luck means having the right skills at the right time.

If you find yourself being passed over for a promotion you should have gotten, you may have to create some of your own luck. Do whatever you can to contribute in new ways. This may mean getting exposure to different disciplines or accepting a task force assignment that crosses divisions. Do anything you can to prove yourself and demonstrate your ability to run a bigger show.



RULE #2: YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIKE YOUR BOSS, BUT YOU HAVE TO RESPECT YOUR BOSS

In senior management, you'll quickly learn that there is a hazy matrix of bosses, both inside

and outside the organization, who can push your career forward or delay it substantially. However, your direct relationship with the one person who is recognized as your immediate "boss" can be a tricky and strange one.

At this level in your career, you have a certain amount of power. Although you may spend most of the day running departments and overseeing hundreds or thousands of employees, you still have to listen to orders when it comes to your own boss. This is why you have to become an expert at switching roles.

Early on, when you are inexperienced and generally working for people who are older than you, your relationship with your boss may resemble that of a student to teacher or parent to child. However, you should now consider yourself an orphan. You can no longer hide behind a boss's protection because of your own level of visibility. The president, the CEO, and the board are all judging you on your own merits.

If you really want to rise beyond the middle management mentality, you need to recognize that your boss is an obstacle standing between you and your next career move. The real question you need to ask is how you can move beyond your boss.

No matter what level you're at, all bosses are interested in one thing — having you make them look better. This is why it's healthy to develop a dose of cynicism toward this person. Consider the fact that you want something in return for making your boss look good. You want your boss to help you rise.

Think about what it will take to be an effective instrument for your boss. What can you do to make sure that your boss will help you with your next career move? Take the following four steps:

- First, always give your boss the truth, even when it's unpleasant, so he can make sound business decisions.
- Second, once your boss makes a decision, even if you don't agree with it, you must accept it and execute it to the best of your abilities. Until you are at the top, you have to carry out the directives of those above you.
- Third, you must help your boss move the ball. You need to understand what your boss's goal is. It may even be helpful to understand the next move beyond the immediate goal. Simply ask, "If we do these things successfully, where are you trying to go next?"
- Fourth, assure your boss that you are loyal and discreet. No matter how incompetent or unpleasant he may be, never tell stories about him. No matter what your personal feelings are, never make your boss feel betrayed.

Remember, your goal is to become the most trusted person in your boss's stable. The reason is to gain tremendous exposure to the most powerful people in your organization. You want to build your own network and broaden yourself while remaining loyal to your boss.

The downside is that the boss will become dependent on you. So it's your job to make a pact with your boss: "I'll help you reach your own goals, but you have to do something for me, which is to push me along."

If you fail to have a conversation like this with your boss, it's your own fault if you get trapped in middle management. It's a good bet your boss doesn't spend much time thinking about advancing your career. Don't assume that he will know or care where you want to go unless you tell him.

Visibility is also a key to moving up in your organization. If your boss is using your work to gain accolades, you simply cannot let this continue. Tell him you want to present your own work. Gain access to the right meetings and offer your knowledge when specific issues are on the table. Knowing your stuff will get you invited back and diminish the amount of control your boss has over you.



RULE #3: YOUR PEERS ARE YOUR MOST VALUABLE ALLIES, OR YOUR MOST DANGEROUS ENEMIES

Not all of your peers will be vying against you for the next big promotion, but they are going to work very hard to make sure the outcome of the contest is favorable for them.

Top executives may see those people who are not in line for big promotions as neutral judges of what's best for the organization because they seem to have no ulterior motives. These people often become *consiglieri*, or the real advisors behind the throne.

Consiglieri can usually be identified by their unfettered access to the boss. These are people who can gain an audience with the president or CEO at a moment's notice. You need to be aware who the consiglieri are so that you can befriend them and gain a reputation as someone who can be trusted in the organization.

The consiglieri can also be helpful as you struggle to get things done. They may be the key to breaking the ice for you before you propose a new fund-raising idea or a new acquisition. Float your ideas by some of the consiglieri. If the boss has heard your idea first from someone trustworthy, you are more likely to get a positive reception. Use your peers this way and they can have a lot of influence on your success. However, be generous with the credit when it comes your way.

On the other hand, when things go wrong, never ask your peers to pass on bad news for you. Make sure that the boss hears anything negative straight from your lips. There is no other way to build trust.

In your organization's power struggle, one of the most dangerous situations for your advancement is finding yourself in the middle of your boss's battle for control with his or her peers. The consequences can be deadly for your career.

Don't confuse your boss's enemies with your own. Making adversaries of your peers out of loyalty to your boss is a dead end. Cooperate with your counterparts in other divisions whenever possible. Don't fuel the rumor mill when it comes your way. If the power structure begins to change, you want to make sure the people who rise remember that you were neutral.

Despite your best efforts, there will be some enemies among your peers. Some people will actively work against you to keep your career from moving forward. They may be backing one of your rivals, which will be easy to spot. However, there may also be people who just don't

want you to succeed.

You may have to defend yourself against rumors that call your performance and personal qualities into question. The cleverest among your enemies will create a picture of you as a risky choice for advancement.

Learn to expect and anticipate these types of attacks. To fight back, you must first know exactly what's being said about you. Be smart and place your trust in those who will tell you the truth, the good and the bad.

Second, never give your enemies excuses. Don't give them anything to fuel the fire. Be discreet and keep your private life exactly that. Reveal as little as possible about your personal life.

Third, identify what you're best at and anticipate these strengths being turned into limitations. For example, if you're a creative thinker, be prepared to hear rumors that you're too unpredictable. Hire a well-rounded team with strengths that are different from yours to support you.

Fourth, if the rumors are unfounded, make the facts known. If there's even a shred of truth to them, be humble, admit fault, and turn them into something you can improve upon.

Overall, don't overreact to campaigns against you. Recognize that they will gather steam over time and you must defuse them over time.

So how do you deal with the enemies themselves? Try flushing them out with a tactic such as disinformation. Narrow down your likely sources, give each one a different piece of false information, and then determine which piece of information surfaces. Once you know the source, discredit him so that further rumors simply splash back.



RULE #4: YOUR RIVALS FOR THE NEXT JOB MAY BE ANYBODY

If you are a contender for a top executive seat, you will be in the spotlight. People will constantly size you up to see how you behave against your rivals. They want to see how you handle yourself in difficult situations.

It's not always possible to predict a power shift, but you need to be ready should one occur. Stay a step ahead of your rivals by impressing important people along the way, rather than trying to force a quick result when an opening appears. Allow your rivals to be short-sighted.

One of the smartest ways to get ahead of your rivals is to consistently look good in comparison to them. To do this, you'll need to be aware of your rivals' weaknesses. Show everyone with an eye on you that you do not possess those same weaknesses. Keep your bosses informed and allow them to make comparisons themselves.

Every now and then, you may want to actively alert your boss to a rival's shortcomings. In this case, use your allies to help you gather information and demonstrate your superior knowledge of a rival's business. When you are both attending a management meeting, ask a sharp, pertinent question. This question should demonstrate the breadth of your organizational

knowledge and the degree to which you have the business's best interests at heart.

However, don't use this tactic often. You'll also want to show that you can compliment a rival who does well.

Compliments and questions can be types of public performance appraisals. Your ability to use both subtly demonstrates how terrific you would be as your rival's boss. Hopefully, this plants an idea in the minds of those top decision makers.

There may also come a time when your rivals will annoy or threaten you enough that you simply cannot resist fighting back. In this scenario, don't shoot to wound. Make sure you finish the person off as a rival.

What if you find a snake in your own nest, a rival attacking you from inside your own camp? Don't be surprised if someone who works for you is vying for your seat or the seat above you. Get rid of him quickly because attacks from your own people cannot be tolerated.

If you decide to be the snake and take your boss's job, act quickly because dawdling can be dangerous. If you have done a good job impressing the people above your boss, and everyone senses that your boss is just gliding along, make your move.

If you make your move and lose to a rival, you have two choices: You can eat crow or go. Working for a rival is very hard on the ego. If you're not prepared to report to a former rival, you should be prepared to go.

If you're really meant to run something, go do it. It may be less a prestigious or smaller organization, but you will be much happier, and it will be better for your career in the long run.

Now, if you come out on top after you make your big move, you have the choice of either embracing your rivals or killing them off. Be careful because there's nothing more dangerous than allowing the defeated to remain rivals. If you want to take out a rival, it's safest to do just that. Do it quickly and respectfully, without humiliating the person because you are still being watched.



RULE #5: YOU RISK YOUR REPUTATION WITH EVERY PERSON YOU HIRE AND FIRE

As you rise, so does your need for good people to work for you. You need to achieve your goals and you need good people to say positive things about you and spread the word about your abilities as a leader.

In middle management, it's easy to disguise mistakes in hiring, firing, and promoting. However, in the upper levels, this is no longer possible. The people who report to you are also relatively high up in the organization. So you may be allowed a certain number of mistakes at first, but not for long. Eventually, people will start to look at *you* as the mistake.

Every personnel choice you make in upper management is a serious risk. Bringing someone in from outside your organization is even riskier. You may encounter an automatic resentment of an outsider simply because he took the position away from someone on the inside. People

will always view the person you hired with suspicion.

This is why you need to be very deliberate in how you assemble your team. Don't avoid hiring from outside the organization; just make sure you've done your homework on all your hires. Finding talent can be difficult at this level, and finding talent that can fit into your organization can be even harder.

If you are interviewing an outsider for a position out of your area of expertise, you should also have experts interview the candidate. Choose carefully because if you later decide your hire isn't right, getting rid of people at this level is no longer a small matter. Making bad choices can affect your power. You may start getting "help" with personnel decisions and being second-guessed. The last thing you want is a team of people forced on you.

Even good hires can negatively affect you if they don't present well to your president, CEO, or board of directors. Remember that your hires represent your judgment. You don't want your judgment coming into question at this stage of the game.

Like it or not, you are going to be judged on the quality of your team. Don't assume that you will be given any passes because somebody is forced upon you. This is why you must insist on picking your own team.

Be careful not to hire an army of clones who think and act just like you. Pick people who are right for the job and who will support you in different ways. Choosing people who mirror your own attributes will broadcast your weaknesses.

Hiring for candor can be beneficial. If you hire only yes-men, the people above you will think less of you. Yes-men will allow you to go down in flames without as much as a warning.

Over time, you will make personnel mistakes. The key is to not make too many without resolving the problem promptly when you become aware of it. Firing is an art and a science. It's a science because it needs to be done by the book, according to all policies and legalities. It's an art because you need to do it without causing a scene.

If you come across a performance issue, admit your mistakes and act calmly. Make sure you've warned the employee that the failure to accomplish a list of things could result in disciplinary action. You may know full well that he cannot meet these conditions, but you need to cover your bases and protect the organization legally.

In an actual firing, make sure it's done in private with a witness in the room, preferably an attorney who has been fully briefed in advance. This gives you the comfort of someone to corroborate your story should a lawsuit be brought against you.



RULE #6: YOU ARE A FOOL IF YOU THINK THE PEOPLE WHO WORK FOR YOU LOVE YOU

Managing at such high levels is a test of your humanity, discipline, and ability to handle highly complex relationships. The good news is that your direct reports will generally be as ambitious as you are. Ambitious people tend to be easy to motivate because they want to get ahead. The bad news is that a lot of them will know more than you do in their particular fields of expertise.

As you rise, you will begin to manage areas of your organization that are completely foreign to you. The experts in these fields may resent you as a manager because they really don't understand the areas that you are an expert in, and they feel that their fields are much more important.

So don't insult the experts. Get outside help by hiring a consultant you trust who can help you understand whether or not you're doing the right things. Listen very carefully to your people and defer to their expertise when possible. Probe the fundamentals when you question them to get an overall understanding of the big picture.

Managing areas that you know little about will be one of the greatest challenges you face as you rise. Remember these three points:

1. Simplify the issues.
2. Stay out of the details.
3. Make sure the experts know that you are holding them accountable for the outcome.

The challenge of managing many different departments also involves balancing them and giving each discipline the right amount of respect. You can make enemies if you're too quick to brush off any one group. Make sure you're making decisions that create a strong, balanced team. Be careful not to consistently make decisions in favor of one discipline. Creating this diverse but loyal team is a way of showing your superiors that you are capable of putting your own discipline aside in favor of the broader outlook you need to have in upper management.

Truth is one of the most important and powerful management tools. Employees who cover up problems rather than bringing them to you can cause severe damage to your career. Make people feel comfortable about coming to you with bad news. Some of your most valuable employees will be those who are willing to rain on your parade when it's necessary.

Encourage employees to come to you privately with bad news to avoid any public shaming. Ask them to bring problems to your attention even when there is no immediate solution. You need to be aware of what is happening at all times.

If you expect this kind of candor and honesty from your employees, be prepared to give the same respect in return. Create an environment where your direct reports look forward to meeting with you about positive and negative issues.

There may be times, however, when you are not getting the truth no matter what you do. There can be two explanations for this: Either people do not have the resources they need, or you have a "blood clot." A blood clot refers to someone who is trying to prevent your initiatives from succeeding by undermining you, rebelling against a decision, or cutting you out of the decision making altogether.

Blood clots can be dangerous and hard to find at this level. They must be removed because they will rob you of your own ability to succeed by painting a false picture of you.

At this level in your organization, it is impossible to make yourself accessible to everyone. But you also can't afford to be a person in a bubble who is too removed to grasp what is happening

around you. You'll have to set up barriers in order to manage your accessibility.

The most important barriers you need to create between yourself and the people you manage are social and emotional. Remind yourself that the relationship you have with your employees falls far short of friendship. The people who work for you are not going to love you; they may not even like you. It's a part of human nature to resent being told what to do, especially in higher management. This is why it's incredibly important to motivate the talented people you manage.

It doesn't pay to get caught up in the personal affairs of the people who work for you. Create a balance where you're aware of the broad strokes of your employees' lives, but cognizant that the one thing that really motivates them is giving them what they want and need.

Loyalty is about gratitude. You build loyalty among your employees by helping them get where they want to go. Some of your employees will want you to simply recognize that they have personal lives. If an employee comes upon hard times, use your power to help him so that when you need it, the favor can be returned. Treat people with respect and you'll build loyalty that will benefit you tremendously.



RULE #7: BE WARY OF OUTSIDERS WITH INFLUENCE, SUCH AS CLIENTS AND DONORS

Managing individuals you see on a daily basis is difficult. Managing outside influences such as directors, clients, donors, and vendors is much more difficult.

At some point in your career, you'll most likely be sitting in a revenue-generating role where you oversee people who handle clients and donors. Clients and donors can be unpredictable. They bring in money, but don't have to adhere to any rules. They can be dangerous to you because of the amount of access they have to the organization and your bosses. So how can you keep them happy without meeting with them every day?

Prioritize your clients and donors and concentrate on the important ones. Determine how you're going to prioritize. Is importance based on the size of the check they send, by how long they've been supporting the organization, or the level of their relationship with the people above you? If all of the above apply, you need to make sure your team is paying them full attention.

If the client or donor really counts, make yourself accessible at all times. If a problem occurs and you're prepared to take care of it immediately, even on a weekend, this will increase your value.

You can also act as consiglieri to clients and donors, supplying your time and advice as a benefit. If you give them good advice, they'll come to trust you in business and in life. Treat them as human beings and use your influence to help once in a while. All of this will win you a reputation as a problem solver.

Be wary, however, of granting all of your clients' wishes because some of them may be detrimental to your organization. Don't lose sight of your overall goals.

Vendors can be another dangerous outside influence. Vendors can be rumor-mongers with

the ability to influence the course of your career. Control these relationships carefully by spreading around your business whenever possible. Dividing up these responsibilities among specialists makes sound business sense. This offers them a reason to work for you, not against you.

Outside directors and board members tend to hear things and talk among themselves. They have very little evidence because they are so far removed from the business, but they will make immediate judgments about you. If you remain unknown to your board members, you run the risk of allowing a negative campaign about you to gain credence.

You need to engineer relationships with these board members so that they can learn more about you and your capabilities. Find a way to interact with them on committees and in meetings. This will allow you to control your own fate as much as you possibly can when it comes to influential outsiders.



RULE #8: IN THE MODERN ORGANIZATIONAL CASTE SYSTEM, YOU ARE EITHER A HUNTER, A SKINNER, OR A DINER

As your career progresses, you'll soon realize two things: The first is that you never know what is going to happen in an organization, and the second is that when an upheaval occurs, luck favors those who have already begun to maneuver themselves into the positions they want.

There are three types of people in an organization:

1. Hunters
2. Skinners
3. Diners

Hunters go out with their spears and bring home meat for the tribe. These individuals are great fund-raisers and salespeople. They know that money drives the organization.

Skinners take the meat to prepare it, dole it out, store it, and trade it. These people tend to be in financial positions. They know how to increase wealth and manage expenses.

Diners partake in the hunters' meat because they serve other vital functions for the tribe. These individuals tend to be in areas like public relations and human resources.

It's possible to rise to the top of your organization as a skinner or a diner. However, it may be unlikely. If you play the role of a skinner or a diner, the best advice is to go out and hunt something. Find a revenue-gathering opportunity and prove that you can not only bring home the meat, but you can manage the entire hunt with sophistication. Demonstrate that you have good judgment, as well as strength.

However, do not underestimate the passive-aggressive power of the skinners and diners in your organization. Always be aware of the effect that those around you can have on your career. Things can change overnight and you want to have a strong network in place to support you at all times.

Also, you should always have an exit strategy. Get to know people outside of your organization. They can be very valuable if you find yourself shaken loose after an organizational upheaval.



RULE #9: CREATE A CULTURE OF OPENNESS

There are a few things you need to know about your company's culture as you move into senior management:

- First, you need to know the unwritten rules of your organization's culture so that you don't break them without even realizing it.
- Second, you must know whether the culture is one that will reward your efforts.
- Third, you need to make sure that the culture does not warp you in ways that will damage your career in the future.
- Fourth, you need to know how you can influence the culture in positive ways.

Understanding your organization's cultural taboos is imperative. If a conflict arises between you and the culture, the culture will usually win. Be careful to avoid taboos in the way you treat your employees and even in how you behave during meetings.

Also, keep your eyes open to the culture around you and make sure you're not being unjustly rejected. Be sure that the culture allows for forward motion and will allot you the opportunities you deserve.

Be careful of becoming too immersed in a culture that has devolved into a "cult of personality." Such cults can be damaging to your career even if you do nothing wrong.

As you rise, you will begin to influence your own organizational culture. The best results will come from a culture that fosters openness and where people give you their best efforts and ideas. A culture based on fear is easy to create, but will not get the results you desire.

Instead, strive to make your company a great place to be *at* and a great place to be *from*. A great place to be *at* emphasizes the free exchange of ideas and the importance of recognizing people's contributions to the organization. A great place to be *from* recognizes that no organization is able to hang onto its good people forever. A company with a positive, open culture can establish a reputation as an impressive organization to be associated with to future employers.



RULE #10: YOU HAVE TO DELIVER HIGH RETURNS

As an executive, you have to satisfy several new bosses, including the media, regulators, analysts, and shareholders.

To survive at the top of a corporation, you have to be extremely careful not to draw the wrong

kind of attention to yourself. Business scandals have become a form of entertainment on TV and the Internet. The press is always looking for a good story. You should talk to journalists regularly to keep communication open, if for no other reason than you might need them to help you down the road.

Practice mock interviews and have your staff write up Q&As for you. Give short answers that cannot be taken out of context. Anticipate follow-up questions so that you are never caught off guard. Avoid press conferences if possible, unless you have to deal with a really bad story or you want to make an important announcement.

Another new boss you'll have to deal with comes in the form of regulators. Develop relationships with them before you have to handle something troublesome. Have your people research the top regulators and get to know them yourself. If they also know you, you're far less likely to become a political target. If a problem does develop that could draw the attention of regulators, get out there and fix it. Work with them to solve problems whenever possible. This will hopefully afford you the benefit of the doubt in the event of gray areas.

Securities analysts also have tremendous power that you need to recognize and handle. First, acknowledge their power and make sure you have great investor relations people on board who are respected by those analysts. Always be prepared to make your case to the analysts. Know the facts and don't hide your mistakes.

To succeed in this new environment, you have to go the extra mile to appear to be a responsible executive who will not get your directors into trouble. If a problem does arise, you want to make sure you're not the sacrificial lamb. Be careful not to overpromise, not to carry dead weight in your operation, and not to go near anything that might embarrass your directors.

Listen to the demands of your investors. You have two choices: Develop an exit strategy, or make sure you're capable of delivering the returns on those demands. At this stage, you cannot afford to be complacent. You have to deliver results.

Always be wary of the power of technology. Anything captured electronically can spread like a wildfire and affect your career for a long time to come. Remember, people will use whatever they can to embarrass you, sue you, or prosecute you because of your level of visibility.

Take all these new bosses into account and understand their agendas. You'll never be able to convince them all to trust you, but you can make sure they understand that you have a strong sense of self and a high level of integrity. Listen to all those around you, think hard, and understand where they're coming from and what they want from you. You have to stay alert to come out on top.



Rising in the senior ranks of your organization can be difficult. Surviving at the top can be even harder.

In this summary, we've given you the tools you need to become a "person of presence." Becoming this person means offering something substantial, not just self-importance. It means being true to yourself and the things you believe in. It also means developing perspective, which is not possible if your entire life revolves around your job.

It's not enough to be smart, hard-working, and able to show results. You have to know that what really sets you apart from your competition are the relationships you develop with the people who can influence your career for better or worse.

By following the 10 rules in this summary, you will lead all of your many bosses to the inevitable conclusion that you, and you alone, have what it takes to run the show.

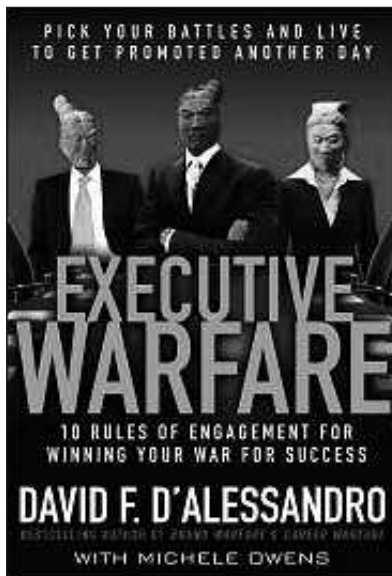


ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David F. D'Alessandro, former chairman and CEO of John Hancock Financial Services, is the bestselling author of two previous books, *Brand Warfare* and *Career Warfare*. He is also a guest columnist for the *Boston Globe* and a frequent guest commentator and guest host for *CNBC* on business and social issues. He serves as an advisor to both corporations and universities on business and branding strategies, and is a sought-after guest speaker on these topics, as well as topics related to professional and career development.



Michele Owens coauthored two previous bestsellers with David D'Alessandro, *Career Warfare* and *Brand Warfare*, which was named one of the best business books of 2001 by *Library Journal*. She was chief speechwriter for Governor William F. Weld of Massachusetts and a staff speechwriter for Governor Mario Cuomo of New York.



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