



## Achieve Faster, Better Results

By Jeff Zakaryan

In the movie *The Aviator* Howard Hughes was constantly challenging his engineers to find a way to eliminate raised rivets because of the drag they created for the high performance aircraft he was building.

“The rivets,” he said, “slow us down. I want this skin to be perfectly smooth so we can increase our speed.”

Because of the similarities to high performance companies, Hughes’ challenge provides a clear message we should all embrace.

In today’s hyper-competitive business world, the speed with which we get things done is critical. But doing it faster without doing it better isn’t enough. If we are not constantly hunting down and eliminating every “raised rivet” in our organizations we are flying in the teeth of an unnecessary headwind.

Recently I completed my eighth year as an executive coach and thought it was a good time to step back and reflect on some of the lessons I’ve learned.

An interesting theme emerged: most executives are feeling increasing and relentless pressure to pick up the pace and punch up results. A typical response is to work harder and longer and drive everyone to do the same. Many of the gains in speed are often compromised by mistakes, misunderstandings and conflicts because work processes and relationships weren’t designed for the warp speed demanded now.

From a list of many, I zeroed in on three raised rivets that must be smoothed out if executives and their businesses are going to reach the speed and performance they need to stay ahead of the pack:

### 1. LACK OF ALIGNMENT

To compete and win everyone needs to be on the same page. If you want to make better decisions faster, all hands need to understand and commit to the ultimate goals and strategies of the business. Speed really increases when everybody and everything is driving in the same direction.

### 2. LACK OF CLARITY

Absolute clarity of roles, responsibilities and expectations can literally turbo charge effectiveness. If there is any confusion on your team as to who is accountable for what, the odds of getting where you want when you want are greatly diminished.

### 3. LACK OF FOCUS

If everyone is on the same page, knows who does what, and is absolutely clear on priorities, you are poised to break the sound barrier. The last step is to focus on only those things that drive performance to the next level as fast and effectively as possible. Your challenge is to get focused and stay focused without distraction.

Howard Hughes didn’t really care about rivets. He cared passionately about setting world records. The rivets were simply keeping him from doing it.

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