August 2006, What Makes an Effective Executive

When Peter Drucker passed away in November 2005, the Washington Post described him as "the world's most influential business guru." Drucker and his philosophy of management influenced Winston Churchill, Bill Gates, Jack Welch, and thousands of managers and leaders who put his wisdom into practice.

Much of his focus was on the job of the executive - what it takes to be effective. To Drucker, this meant to get the right things done. To be effective you must first manage yourself, he advised.

In a *Harvard Business Review* article titled *What Makes an Effective Executive* that first appeared two years ago, Drucker distilled the lessons of his career into eight simple practices for managers. The article was recognized for excellence in management thinking with the 46th Annual McKinsey Award in 2004, which acknowledges the most significant *Harvard Business Review* article in a given year that is most likely to have a major influence on executives.

"An effective executive does not need to be a leader in the sense that the term is now most commonly used," he stated in the article . "Great managers may be charismatic or dull, generous or tightfisted, visionary or numbers oriented. But every effective executive follows eight simple practices."

- They ask, "What needs to be done?"
- They ask, "What is right for the enterprise?"
- They develop action plans.
- They take responsibility for decisions
- They take responsibility for communicating.
- They focus on opportunities rather than problems.
- They run productive meetings.
- They think and say "we" rather than "I".

"The first two practices give them the knowledge they need. The next four help them convert this knowledge into effective action. The last two ensure that the whole organization feels responsible and accountable."

Drucker's suggested practices are simply stated, but powerful drivers when put into action. As his many followers can attest to, effective management first starts with being a good listener. From there, it"s developing the game plan and then leading and motivating the team through the implementation.