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When executives seek help – either internally or externally – it's usually about something that "keeps them awake at night." Well, if they decided to make a list of the reasons they "don't sleep," it would be a long one because, generally speaking, execs understand that the performance of their company is dependent on hundreds of interactive internal and external factors that could contribute to their insomnia.

They also understand that every time they decide to eliminate the source of their "sleeplessness," they are either developing a market advantage, improving an advantage that has weakened over time, or removing a source of poor performance which they believe will mitigate the cause. They know that the big things this "mitigation" initiates is something the organization must break down into the little things that all play together to produce the performance required by *all* stakeholders.

I focus my business on identifying new ways to improve and innovate a company's execution abilities and value propositions - two essential business model elements that make strategies work. Once identified, I collaborate with the business' leaders to make sure the resulting initiatives can be confidently implemented.

This work, plus my experience and research, has introduced me to some of the numerous reasons that can cause executives to lose sleep. I grouped, what seems to me, to be the most important of these reasons into nine positive, high level strategic initiatives that are the basis for well rested executives.

Companies of "well rested" executives...

...keep customers. They excel at developing a profound understanding of their customers' business models - strategies, execution needs, value propositions and markets. This knowledge leads executives to know how their company's potential execution failures could affect their customers' success. And, just as important, executives will know how their customer's potential execution failures could affect their success.

They keep customers because they know the "mass market" is evolving into an "individual's market," so they work to create experiences that fit their "individual" customer's expectations to the fullest extent possible. They know "one size *doesn't* fit all" is more true today than ever before.

Companies that keep customers know what their customers need before the competition because they are better and faster at finding those needs and implementing solutions.

...don't risk comparing product and service propositions to what their competitors offer; they compare them to the results their customers need. Companies that keep customers don't risk their future on "following" the competition; they risk it by working with customers to identify the opportunities that solve problems – which has the potential of luring competitors to follow them.

Furthermore, companies that keep customers excel at discovering the "problems" customers may encounter (those either the company or a customer may introduce) before they become "fires," thereby reducing the customer's risk of losing business - thereby reducing the risk they will lose business.

...know their customers' competitors (those who *constrain* their customers' success also constrain the company's) and work to provide the unique value customers need to win market share.

Companies of well rested executives know that their growth is directly related to their customers' growth. Therefore, they know which competitors constrain their growth the most, theirs or their customers'.

...consider "innovation" a skill they can't survive without. Therefore, they have innovative people, partners and customers so they know where their "new ideas" for competitive advantage come from. Also, companies of well rested executives do not limit the "quest for innovation" to products and related services but also include business models, extraordinary services, and operations.

Along these lines, well rested executives don't ignore what their companies don't do well *and need to* by constantly assessing their performance capabilities, looking for sources of improvement and innovation.

...embrace and initiate change knowing it's the catalyst for creating competitive advantage. They have the processes to effectively recognize whether it's cyclical or structural and when (better yet, before) it happens. Companies of well rested executives help their customers lead, create and manage change as well.

...have the right tools that support their ability to execute their company wide strategies effectively. Companies of well rested executives know their tools will be effective because they "fit" them to the company's strategies, skills, and processes and not the other way around.

...are effective at keeping their "knowledge resources from walking out the door." Companies of well rested executives minimize the "de-motivators" – e.g. poorly managed reward systems, unnecessary politics, and poor communication - that cause key company personnel to look elsewhere.

In a related matter, these executives are effective at making sure that all essential knowledge is at the right place at the right time using mechanisms like resource sharing across business units and functions and by routinely "capturing" essential knowledge through, e.g., mentoring programs.

...know their products and services produce the results their customers expect to experience, and need to, for their success. Companies of well rested executives work hard to align their customers' needs, expectations and experiences with company products, related services, and extraordinary services by building into their value propositions the characteristics each customer (or segment) values most.

...deliver their projects/products on time. Companies of well rested executives develop *realistic* product development and project time estimates that fit their own and their customers' business objectives.

Also, these companies have the time to do everything they need to do to make strategies succeed because they keep the scope of the strategy manageable and then manage the scope.

Keeping customers, talking to customers, knowing their customers' market pressures, developing the right skills, developing processes that support change, keeping efficiency at an optimum, "capturing" their knowledge, building customer experiences, and keeping time commitments all go to creating well rested executives. It's hard work but well worth it.

Not just for the executive, but for the company and its customers.

But, more importantly, for the company's employees! Because, can you think of anything worse than a cranky executive?