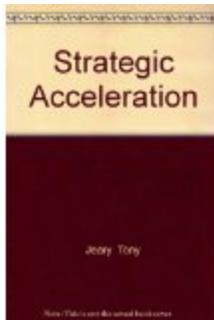


Book Review
“Strategic Acceleration: Succeed at the Speed of Life”
by Tony Jeary

Publisher:	Vanguard Press
Date of Publication:	March 2010 (Kindle Edition)
Number of pages:	304 Pages
Book Club rating:	4
Reviewed by:	John P. Dyer

Plot Summary: (approximately 350-500 words)



Tony Jeary’s book is a self-help text that gives explicit guidance to successfully define a vision, plan activities that pursue the vision, and execute against those detailed plans.

The book is structured in three phases that need to be followed to ensure success: clarity, focus, and execution.

Clarity is about the “what” in life. Mr. Jeary talks at length about a process for achieving that clear vision. He argues that a lack of clarity causes us to charge after “felt needs” which are often not valid. We must learn the truth of what we need and what we should pursue. This takes some hard work, but the payback is clarity of vision.

Focus is about developing single-mindedness in pursuing visions. Things that do not support the pursuit are distractions. He states that one powerful way of focusing is to carefully consider how your current situation does (or does not) support your future vision. He offers a process for making this single-mindedness central to day-to-day activities that are intended to achieve the vision. Focus has three tiers. Tier 1 is attention to Strategy. Tier 2 is attention to Objectives. Tier 3 is attention to Actions. Execution steps through plan activities that achieve visions. One must cultivate a mind set for execution which recognizes time must be reserved for those activities that support the plan and vision. This may seem obvious, but these reservations need to be done in an almost maniacal way. Those things that do not lead to the goal must be set aside. Mr. Jeary breaks down execution into three additional legs:

Persuasion, Production, and Presence. Here is focusing on key skills that an individual or organization must master to smoothly execute the steps of any plan.

The book is based on others' works – most notably the late Zig Ziglar. But where Mr. Ziglar's focus was largely on sales, Mr. Jeary's work is oriented toward general business. Throughout the work, Mr. Jeary references a set of included resources that guides the reader through the processes to be followed. These resources take the form of questionnaires and other tools.

Book Club Meeting Discussion: (approximately 250 words)

The group really looked at this book from the perspective of project managers. Each attendee brought a slightly different perspective. Some viewed the work as rather obvious for any project manager. Others felt that experience in execution was a rehash of what they had learned years ago. But everyone agreed that clarity and focus were valuable sections of the book.

PMs are generally asked to execute on the visions and objectives of others. We are generally *not* asked to draw up the project charter that directs the entire organization toward a desired outcome. From that perspective the book offered an insight into the formulation of a vision, goals, and objectives that we might not otherwise have gotten.

We shared our experiences of very successful projects. They tended to be those where one charismatic senior leader had a clear vision that was shared with everyone on the team. The vision was constantly in front of the team and made planning and executing much easier than it might otherwise have been.

We also agreed that projects that meander and fail are often caused by a total lack of vision. The objectives for the project are not supporting a clear future and end up being unclear themselves.

We were split on the value of the book; however there was a consensus that it did serve a good purpose in clearly defining an approach to improving project and participant skills.

Personal Comments: (approximately 200 words)

I have read a great number of these kinds of books in the past. They all provide some valuable insights into the acquisition of key skills and behaviors needed to achieve large scale success. What set Mr. Jeary's book apart, was his effort to lay out a series of questionnaires and "homework" that form a *method* for realizing objectives.

I think that my projects benefit from attention to clarity and focus with the existence of an upfront charter. I know that I will be looking for a better vision from my project owners in the future. It has been my experience, that projects with poor vision are more likely to fail (and by a high percentage) than those that have clear goals and objectives. I will insist on project charters from now on.