



# The Breakthrough Imperative

*Mark Gottfredson, Steve Schaubert*

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Every general manager today—all the way up to the CEO—is expected by his or her stakeholders to achieve new breakthroughs in performance—and fast. Those who don't make visible progress toward that goal within the first year or two will likely find themselves looking for another job. It is precisely because of this growing breakthrough imperative that managers today, whether in corporations or nonprofits, need to get off to a fast start. They don't have time for mistakes or for going back and redoing what they should have done right in the first place.

But, despite the intensity of these pressures, despite the high expectations and short time frames, a number of CEOs and general managers turn in truly exceptional results. How do they meet and exceed the breakthrough imperative? To answer this question, consultants and former managers Mark Gottfredson and Steve Schaubert interviewed more than forty CEOs from both industry and the nonprofit sector, conducted an intensive study of what successful managers do right—and what some do wrong—and drew on their own combined fifty-plus years of experience at Bain & Company, where their insights have consistently been found in the pages of the *Harvard Business Review*. Together they came up with the four straightforward principles—deceptively simple yet remarkably powerful—that everyone must follow to succeed at achieving breakthrough results:

1. Costs and prices always decline
2. Competitive position determines options
3. Customers and profit pools don't stand still
4. Simplicity gets results

Although seemingly simplistic, mastering these four laws means mastering the basics of great management—a foundation on which to build the rest of one's management strategy. Whether you're managing a small work group or a multinational corporation, a single division or an entire nonprofit, *The Breakthrough Imperative* presents these core laws of business to help you determine where you are, just how far you can go, and how to get there with stellar results.

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