

tant tasks (like managing the most important client relationships) to yourself. You probably were able to check every team member's work, and were able to bring it all together to get the results you wanted. You were still in control. Now you run a large business or function, and you cannot possibly manage it all yourself. You have to delegate control. So what should you focus on personally? If you don't think about this question very carefully before sitting in the big chair, you will set yourself up for failure.

Before you know it, all kinds of things will start appearing on your desk. The production folks will want help with product improvement, while sales and marketing will want to get you involved with an important client. At the same time, the legal department will want your attention on an important regulatory issue, and Human Resources will want you to approve a new compensation plan. How will you prioritize? Before long, you will be overwhelmed. Thanks to technology, you are already overloaded with information. The rate at which e-mails, phone calls, and other modes of communication are reaching you, you are already working 24/7.

All these successful careers that derail upon reaching an enterprise leadership position do not derail for want of hard work. If anything, during the period just before derailment, those people probably worked harder than ever. But at this stage it is not about how hard or how long you work, it is about what you work on and what you delegate. What should you do to maximize your contribution to the overall success of your business?

---

## BRAINS—BONES—NERVES

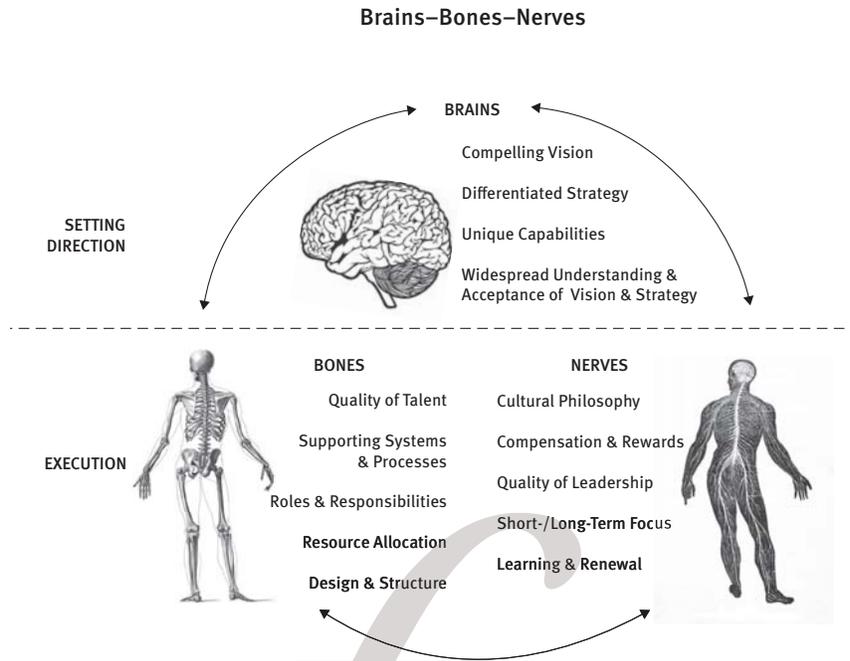
Your full-time job now should be to create conditions in which your people can do their work successfully. You need to put in place a few important frameworks within which a large number of people can

operate in a way that maximizes their energy. How can you do that? By controlling and shaping the three most important levers of sustainable business growth—the *brains*, the *bones*, and the *nerves*.

- The *brains* of a business is its vision and strategy, and here the enterprise leader must shape and set direction.
- The *bones* are the organizational architecture, and here the enterprise leader must design the organization in order to execute the strategy.
- The *nerves* refer to the culture and climate of the organization, and here the enterprise leader must foster a culture of long-lasting excellence.

Just as the human body needs all three systems—the brain, bones, and nerves—functioning in perfect harmony to maximize longevity and performance, a business needs its strategy, architecture, and culture to work in harmony in order to maximize results. As an enterprise leader, you should focus on these three as your most important focus areas; everything else must be delegated.

As I describe the three pillars of sustainable growth to executives in my seminars and training programs, every now and then someone raises their hand and asks, “So what’s so new about focusing on vision and strategy, organization design, and culture? As senior leaders, don’t we already know that this is where we need to start?” Agreed, there is nothing new about focusing on the three pillars. However, the key is in *staying focused* on them. A common mistake bosses make is to think that setting direction, designing the organization, and defining the culture are only periodic activities. They assume that setting direction (vision and strategy) is something you do once every year or once every few years. They believe organizational design is also an activity that happens only at the start of a business or at the time of a major shift in business conditions. Similarly, they think once cultural values have been defined, they are done with the “soft” issue of culture.



Nothing could be further from the truth. A major difference between bosses and leaders is that unlike bosses, leaders know that to drive long-term growth, they need to manage the brains, bones, and nerves of their business all year long, every year. They understand that this is their full-time job. It is not just where you start as leaders, it is where you *stay* as leaders.

## ALIBABA.COM: OPENING UP A WHOLE NEW UNIVERSE

According to Martha Avery and Liu Shiyong, authors of *Alibaba*, Jack Ma of Alibaba.com was able to make the transition into enterprise leadership successfully, but not without making almost disastrous mis-