

# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

---

Now I Own a Rock, What Do I Do with It?

Jim Alampi

## **Implementation Aide: Now I Own a Rock, What Do I Do With It?**

### **Background on Rocks**

Any vision is worthless without a way to execute it. Successful execution requires both a plan and a process to assure that there is clear understanding of the objective, as well as agreement on how to get there. Many executives understand how to establish goals, but the way to actually create a method to successfully achieve execution, often eludes them.

Alignment must begin with the executive team agreeing on the few priorities (3 to 5 maximum) for the quarter, and which one is #1 for the company. These objectives, or Rocks as we call them, should be the most impactful things that the company must accomplish in the next 90 days. The key is to begin the alignment around short-term goals at the executive level, and then cascade them down to every employee. This fosters understanding of the critical objectives, but more importantly, how each employee can contribute to those goals.

Rocks are set through a process that (1) reviews the goals for the full year, and identifies what needs to be done in the current quarter to achieve them, and (2) any other “hot issues” that have arisen since the last quarterly meeting. Typically, an executive team will identify many hot issues, from which 3 to 5 will be selected as the most impactful in the next 90 days. This prioritization process is one of the Rockefeller Habits and a core element of The CEO Advantage™ methodology.

Each Rock is defined with several specific deliverables, to assure that the executive team is aligned around what, specifically, must be accomplished by the end of the quarter. Finally, each Rock is assigned an “owner”. This owner is accountable to the executive team, to ensure that the Rock is accomplished. Ownership doesn’t require doing all the work; it means they are *accountable* to their teammates to make sure it gets done. Ownership should be agreed to, and assigned, based on matching skill sets up to needs, i.e. making sure the person with the greatest possibility of getting the Rock accomplished, owns it.

## **Rock Ownership Process**

As a member of the executive team, a Rock owner has the responsibility to develop a plan to achieve the Rock, and then execute the plan. This process typically breaks down into several steps:

**Planning** - the day after a quarterly meeting, Rock owners should immediately begin to develop their plan. This means quickly doing several things:

- Identifying who can, and should be, involved and requesting their assistance
- Establishing a completion date (usually the end of the quarter, but could be sooner)
- Working backward to establish key milestone dates during the quarter for progress checks and course correction, if required
- Establishing meeting dates for the people working on the Rock
- Establishing dates for executive team updates, typically at the weekly or monthly meetings, and getting the Rock on the agenda for those meetings, ahead of time

**Execution** – it is important to get started quickly to give yourself as much time as possible to accomplish the Rock.

- The first, organizational meeting should occur within 5 working days following the quarterly meeting. This is a typical project planning meeting with the group of people you have selected.
  - There should be a review of the Rock, its importance to the company, why the executive team selected it, the specific deliverables and any constraints or assumptions.
  - The team should brainstorm approaches (*not* solutions yet), additional resources needed, if any, other constraints and set dates for meetings and milestones.
  - Someone should be appointed group leader (not necessarily the Rock owner).
- The Rock owner *has* to be involved with the group to lend support, provide resources and perspective, and remove obstacles. Since the Rock owner is accountable to the executive team, they must stay involved to assure the Rock is accomplished.

- The Rock owner must be prepared to seek assistance from other executives and personally report on progress, obstacles and resource issues at executive team meetings. They must also recommend course corrections, changes to the deliverables (infrequent) based on discovered information and (rarely) suggest that the Rock be abandoned with the agreement of the executive team. It is better to get such agreement during the quarter rather than reach the end, and fail to accomplish a Rock.
- At executive team meetings, it may be appropriate to provide graphs and other documents to demonstrate progress. Typically, any information should be provided in advance of the meeting to allow other executives to read and reflect on it ahead of time, rather than waste time at the meeting doing so. Meeting time should be used for discussion, debate and collective intelligence on the Rock.
- Rock owners must hold group members accountable for delivery of specific materials, on time, during the quarter to achieve the project plan. One person can crater achievement of a Rock by their failure to deliver.
- Rock owners should be prepared, at the next Quarterly meeting, to review the accomplishment, any performance problems with group members, lessons learned from the effort, what they would do differently if starting over, and a suggested achievement score on how complete the Rock is.

Identifying Rocks on a quarterly basis and working them through to completion is one of the most fundamental process steps in The CEO Advantage™. It is also the only way to ensure 'no surprises' and that annual objectives are, in fact, accomplished. As some sage once said, the only effective way to eat an elephant is in small pieces, and Rocks are those small pieces.

###

Alampi & Associates, LLC  
47622 Brittany Court  
Novi, MI 48374  
248.349.6045  
248.869.6016 fax  
248.342.7207 cell  
[www.alampi.com](http://www.alampi.com)  
[jim@theceoadvantage.com](mailto:jim@theceoadvantage.com)

