



So you have a strategic plan...
Now what?

Incorporating the Essential Elements of Strategy Within Your Organization



Create

Keeping strategy creation
practical, focused and agile



Empower

Empowering people through
engagement and communications



Execute

Manage execution with
ownership and accountability

*This guide
covers*



So You Have a Strategic Plan... Now What?

A strategic plan only works if implemented. Seems obvious but according to a Fortune magazine, nine out of ten organizations fail to implement their strategic plan. Don't become a statistic.

Implementation is the phase that turns a strategic plan into action. Implementing the strategic plan is as important as – or even more important than – the strategy itself. A successful strategic plan, however, starts before any pen hits paper or slide meets screen. It starts in the office in the weeks leading up to the event.

Fortune magazine says...

9 out of 10 businesses fail to implement their strategic plan

- 60% build a strategy that doesn't fit the budget.
- 75% don't link employee incentives to strategy
- 86% of managers spend less than one hour per month discussing strategy with staff
- 95% of employees don't understand the organization's strategy.

Good preparation leads to good execution

Preparation

If handled properly from the start, a company will never hear themselves say, "Now what?" Create a positive environment for the strategic planning process. Staff should be energetic going in knowing that the outcome will have a direct effect on their position. Employee buy-in begins before any goals are agreed upon. Forget to set the tone and the day will be seen as a distraction from busy workloads. It needs to be known that planning a strategy is not an off-site, team building exercise.

Communicate the strategic plan's purpose. A strategic plan is not intended to tell a company they are doing everything right. Change should be anticipated. If nothing changes, then a business just spent a lot of money for no reason. A strategic plan is an investment in the company's future. The results generated from a strategic plan are the return on investment.

Governance

Once the foundation for a strategic plan has been prepared, staff will be ready to implement on the other end. The important thing to remember is the strategic plan is just that...a plan. It does not drive itself. A strategic plan provides a business with a road map for implementation. It's the plan which directs the management process of the organization. And like a map, a business should plot its progress regularly against the strategic plan in order to make sure they are on course and meeting targets.

*“Without **execution**, vision is just another word for **hallucination**.”*

Five Keys to Implementation

1 Culture Preparing the corporate culture is first priority. Create an environment that promotes inclusivity. Connect employees to the organization's mission and their role in the strategic planning process. Include employees in the goals and actions of the plan from the beginning. If employees are encouraged to take ownership of their role, they will have buy-in and be more accountable. If people don't have a stake and responsibility in the plan, it'll be business as usual for all but a frustrated few. Develop an incentive program from the beginning to sustain the plan. Outline both positive consequences for achieving the strategy as well as negative consequences for not.

2 People Inventory personnel and make sure the right people are on board and in the right positions. Identify a strategic manager who will monitor the implementation process and keep the plan on track. Adjust their job description if necessary so they are empowered to execute their role effectively. In other words, don't bog down already busy employees without assessing their duties or compensating accordingly. The strategic plan will most likely require new skill sets. Invest in training and possible new hires to give employees the tools to succeed.

- Everyone knows what they are accountable for.
- Accountability = ability + empowered + resource
- Strategic management process has an owner.



3 Resources A strategic plan can come with the best of intentions but if sufficient funds, adequate staff and time to implement are not available, the plan will die before it leaves the board room. Assess true costs associated with the implementation and don't underestimate or be conservative in your estimates. True costs can include a realistic time commitment from staff, a clear identification of expenses associated with a tactic or unexpected cost overruns by a vendor.

4 Structure Have a clear management structure with understood lines of authority so that communication flows efficiently. Strategic structure is built on communication starting at the top with strong leadership. The strategic manager will act as a liaison between upper management and staff measuring deliverables and rewarding performance. Regular strategy meetings hold the structure in place and assesses the plan's effectiveness. Monthly, or quarterly, reviews help employees conceptualize the plan's implementation keeping morale high for the project. More importantly, frequent review keeps the strategy dynamic. Unforeseen changes will emerge which will require the plan to be adjusted. Otherwise, plans can become static if shelved for only annual reviews.

5 Systems Where would we be without our systems? Both management and technology systems help track the progress of the plan and make it easier to adapt to changes. As part of the system, build milestones into the plan to help achieve goals within a specific time frame. An online scorecard is a great tool used to measure performance. It lives in real time and is constantly updated for staff to follow. It keeps staff accountable because the strategic plan is a living document they can relate to and measure up to.

- Reporting/management of the plan and goals in a consistent format across the organization.
- It's clear how goals align with the overall strategy



Get Your Game On!

It's fun to brainstorm and map out ideas during a strategic planning process creating a business' blue sky for tomorrow. Implementation on the other hand can seem daunting and overwhelming. But the implementation process can be made to be as energetic and inspiring as the strategic planning process. It is the muscle that makes the plan work. Preparation on the front end breeds a climate of communication bringing companies from strategy all the way through the implementation process.

- Completed plan cascaded to the individual level (possibly).
- Scheduled monthly/quarterly reviews.
- Update/adapt the plan at the review session.

Strategy execution is the management process!

From the start, understand the difference between the strategic and implementation phases...the strategic plan addresses the what and why of activities. The implementation addresses the who, where, when and how. Both the plan and the implementation are critical to success. Success is measured in the competitive edge a company can gain if the implementation is done effectively. Visualize the strategic plan as the map that will drive the management process through the implementation phase. To help guide you through this process we've created "The Game of Strategy Implementation" available on the next page to help map out your path to success.

Implementation Pitfalls



Here are the most common reasons strategic management fails:

- ❌ **Annual strategy:** Strategy is discussed only at yearly weekend retreats.
- ❌ **Lack of communication:** The plan and progress against the plan doesn't get communicated to employees often enough.
- ❌ **Lack of empowerment:** Although accountability may provide strong motivation for improving performance, employees must also have the authority, responsibility, and tools necessary to impact relevant measures. Otherwise, they may resist involvement and ownership.
- ❌ **Lack of ownership:** The most common reason a plan fails is lack of ownership. If people don't have a stake and responsibility in the plan, it's business as usual for all but a frustrated few.
- ❌ **No accountability:** Accountability and high visibility help drive change, which means that each measure, objective, data source, and initiative must have an owner.
- ❌ **A meaningless plan:** The vision, mission and values statements are viewed as fluff, not supported by actions, or don't have staff buy-in.
- ❌ **No progress report:** No method is in place to track progress, and the plan only measures what's easy, not what's important. No one feels any forward momentum.
- ❌ **Not considering implementation:** Implementation isn't discussed in the strategic planning process. The planning document is seen as an end in itself.
- ❌ **Out of the ordinary:** The plan is treated as something separate and removed from the management process.
- ❌ **An overwhelming plan:** The goals and actions generated in the strategic planning session are too numerous because the team failed to make tough choices to eliminate non-critical actions. Employees don't know where to begin.

Avoiding pitfalls is easier when they're clearly identified. Now that you know what they are, you're more likely to jump right over them.

Let's start havin' fun!

Start Here

Annual planning session

Evaluate Results

Quarterly strategy review meeting

Everyone update progress for Q4

Adjust as needed

Evaluate Results

Quarterly strategy review meeting

Everyone update progress for Q3

Get everyone on board

Rollout strategy to staff

Appoint strategy manager

Approve budget

Set quarterly business review dates for year

Training on process

Create Incentives

Everyone update progress for Q1

Quarterly strategy review meeting

Evaluate Results

Adjust goals as needed

Everyone update progress for Q2

Quarterly strategy review meeting

Evaluate Results

Adjust as needed

- Staff
- Strategy Director
- CEO
- Everyone



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