

Strategic Execution

Part Three of a Three-Part Strategy Series

by Jon Craighead

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.” Japanese proverb

In the earlier years of business, the standard operational approaches were modeled on a reliable and stable operational structure of that era: the machine. This modeling persisted until the 1950s when expanded thinking was needed beyond the routine mechanical model to a more technically sophisticated process. Business guru Peter Drucker proposed new approaches to organizational thinking. He began by introducing new terminologies such as a continuous change approach vs. market stability, as well as the concept of the knowledge worker in addition to the traditional workforce. In the 1990's additional business conditions necessitated the introduction of distinctions such as knowledge management and market dynamics, which recognized the impact of market volatility and the need to react. Expanded international commerce required flexibility for a dynamic marketing approach. These expanding demands necessitated even more highly technical platforms and the need for long-term strategic execution.

Each year many strategic executions fail because of poor implementation. Installing an organization strategy properly is of the uppermost importance because it determines the success or failure of the process. The basic objectives and intent of the strategy must be clearly understood. These following elements are calculated to insure the clarity and fulfillment of long-term operational objectives. The requisite components for a viable and successful strategic implementation are:

- **Vision:** the power of imagination on which realities are born
- **Mission:** an articulation of how to accomplish the vision
- **Purpose:** a statement of why and our reason for being
- **Strategy:** the plan to win in a competitive market environment and accomplish a stated vision
- **Tactics:** the specific actions to be taken to implement the strategic objectives.

Each of these components is an invaluable dimension of the strategic execution process.

Failed strategies are not always the result of incapable leadership but are equally the result of absentee leadership. Often the most expert leaders are settled in their offices, away from the action, and leaving the daily operational management to less senior and experienced

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managers. It's not uncommon for senior leaders to believe their primary function is more in planning and less in implementation. Unfortunately, because of their absence from the action, they may have a false impression that things are better than they are. In such situations, the senior executive may be called in to rectify the problem and circumvent potential failure, which could have been avoided had they been involved in an oversight process. To avoid these emergencies, senior leadership must regularly participate in prescheduled oversight meetings. These reviews are an opportunity to measure progress against precisely agreed-upon advancements.

To insure its success once the strategy is in place and before the work has begun a strategy oversight team is established to meet on a regularly scheduled basis throughout the life of the project. These formal meetings consist of senior leaders, area managers, and general specialists. The purpose of the meetings is to assure the strategic processes are on track as planned. The strategic objectives consist of, but are not limited to:

1. Systematic reviewing of the process to ensure objectives and compliances are in alignment and productivity is meeting scheduled benchmarks.
2. An accurate assessment and affirmation that current results are measured against and reflecting an established timeline and expected measurements.
3. Work protocols are reviewed for accuracy and adjusted as needed.
4. A complete record of the meeting is recorded for reference.
5. Scheduling of the next meeting or interim meeting if necessary.

These skills that experienced senior executives provide are invaluable resources for those of less leadership training and experiences. This combination of corporate oversight blended together with experienced guidance provides an operational focus which affords a higher probability of success and workforce development.

In summary, the practice of strategic execution is the accomplishment of designed and declared objectives and goals. Oversight is the watchful and responsible care system designed to assure the successful fulfillment of the proposed strategy. These processes are equally relevant for international conglomerates or a one-person company; as applicable in performing lifesaving surgery as in shoveling snow. This process isn't easy; it can be intense, disappointing, and is often arduous work. However, it's important to remember: a free lunch is only found in mousetraps.