

Strategy Implementation

The Ultimate Accomplishment for Success

by Jon Craighead

This is the third article in a series studying the different roles of strategy in today's business environment. Strategy is the linchpin in the system that drives the activities needed for organizational success.

The best thought or idea remains just that until it's implemented. Failing to fulfill strategic objectives in a business environment is the key contributing factor to the 90% failure rate of strategy planning, a consistent statistical fact for many years. Implementation, defined in Webster as *putting into effect, or fulfillment*, may be the most challenging aspect of the strategy process. This is so mainly because it requires management to operate outside of the familiar – the way we've always done it.

It is critical that the participants of the strategy implementation team put aside their personal agendas and focus on the organization's success in delivering on its promises. An organization that repeatedly fails to accomplish its objectives loses the ethical high ground and over time becomes reluctant to take bold stands. To be continuously competent in the achievement of goals necessitates the freedom to challenge the ordinary. It requires a willingness to go beyond often-problematic historical records that have been relied upon, to using more timely and creative data that are pertinent for a demanding and ever-changing marketplace.

In our practice we address this dilemma by establishing a Strategic Oversight Committee, a team of senior, at-stake participants who are responsible for critical parts of the operation. The team, which may at times include interested partners from outside the organization such as vendors and customers, meets on a regular basis to review progress and to make sure the work is in line with and fulfilling the strategic intent. Of vital importance is the premise that the committee operates in a mutual partnership based on trust, transparency, and authenticity.

In order to assure the success of the operation, the charter of the Strategic Oversight Committee is founded on specific functional principles. These include the following:

- Creating a Breakthrough Environment that provides for freedom, safety, and the opportunity to fail, knowing that you'll have the support you'll need to recover and explore new avenues and ultimately succeed. The objective of this environment ultimately is to enable people to be at cause and completely responsible for their actions.

- Ensuring operational integrity, defined as whole and complete with no missing parts. This provides a structure that honors and emboldens character, stimulates sound commitments, and brings quality and purpose to work. It is not about right or wrong; it's about workability.
- Honoring one's word and being count-on-able. It is imperative that people have the experience that your word is bankable. It's about being answerable for one's actions and bringing integrity to a responsible domain.
- Promotion of mastery – the discipline of getting things done and achieving the intended outcome you declared, on time.
- Instilling teamwork at an accelerated level of reliability – as in a military operation or highly effective families where each member has the others' success as a primary commitment.

The power of strategy surpasses the error of hubris and the lure of profits. It is a process of getting things done, a series of committed actions that engage logic, thought, questioning, and analysis to achieve designated outcomes. To some this will seem difficult to achieve; however, in my experience working with organizations, this is the kind of environment that people crave. Throughout the business world one can find many instances where people have given up the notion that such an environment is possible. They've resigned themselves to believe it's a dream that will never come true. But once the dream is restored, people leap to the opportunity.

A core tenet we hold is that the workplace is the keystone to the quality of life. Most people spend more time at work than in any other part of their lives. This applies to our spouses, children, parents, and friends – what goes on at work effects us at home and in our community. So it's in our overall best interest that we bring workability and efficacy into the workplace. By generating these efforts in the workplace we promote not just organizational success but personal success as well.

My next article will address the importance of shared values in the design and implementation of successful strategy.