

Strategy and Execution: It Requires Performance Measurement and Accountability

Do you have the tracking mechanisms in place to assure that your business strategy is not only getting implemented, but is actually generating the results you anticipated? Many organizations spend quality time to develop strategies that never get tracked or monitored to ensure that targets are hit. Planning isn't the problem; implementation is. And when it comes right down to it, as the old saw goes, "when all is said and done, more is said than done." But it doesn't have to be this way. Managers have options available to them to assure that commitments are kept and desired results occur.

During the planning process, have you identified what the results should look like after implementation? What does your vision look like? If, as one trade association's vision states, prospects will want to search out the organization for membership in it, then one should be able to determine how many unsolicited membership applications have been received. That's something that's measurable.

If you indicate that you want to grow your organization profitably, what quantifiable, measurable targets have you set for your future bottom line? If you have been struggling with employee turnover, what measurable change in turnover rates have you chosen as a target? You get the drift: without measurable targets, how will your people know if what they're doing is working? Make sure that your vision and strategy are clear as to desired outcomes.

And it should go without saying that each initiative needs to be assigned with single point responsibility and due dates for actions to be taken. Single point responsibility is absolutely required—if everyone's in charge, then no one is really in charge. Of course, most efforts will require teamwork, but the buck still has to stop at one person in charge. Clear due dates are also necessary to make sure that the sequence of actions occurs in a way to optimize the desired outcomes.

But single point action assignments only deal with the inputs or the efforts taken to implement the strategy. They still don't measure the outputs, or desired results. Even with flawless execution, (a rare commodity), the results you expected may not occur. We work in a dynamic business environment. Conditions change. Your competitors will change their strategy when they see your strategy affecting them. Unexpected events occur. That's why you need to monitor outcomes—the measurable targets.

And that's why you need a formal, ongoing method to generate leadership dialogue and assess the relative success of your implementation activities. This requires you to actively measure and monitor results through a performance measurement system. It requires you to create an agenda item for your monthly meetings that addresses implementation progress. This review of implementation status should be conducted near the front, or first part, of the agenda, while everyone is still fresh and there is ample time for discussion. Only by elevating the implementation process to this level of follow up will you hit your targets. It takes conscious, active work by people held accountable to senior leadership for this to happen. As the old song lyrics go, "wishing and hoping and thinking and praying," won't make it happen. Action, with monitoring and accountability will, though.