



Making Strategy Stick

It is up to senior leaders to ensure that it happens

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An enterprise cannot flourish without a clear, compelling strategy. It is strategy that drives resource allocation, market penetration and any number of other activities that define success for a company. So, if strategy is so important, why is it not consistently reflected in operations? The answer is simple. Without purposeful, consistent leadership attention, strategy will not stick. This article provides practical techniques for making strategy stick.

■ **Make it relevant** — If your strategy is based on who you were in the 1990s, you had better wake up so that you can catch up and keep up. Invest the time and energy analyzing your strategic plan and the activities that it dictates. If your plan is a moldy oldie that no one remembers, it is time to begin the strategic planning process in earnest. Work to devise a relevant, succinct plan that will enable your company to reach its peak potential.

■ **Build accountability at all levels** — Even the most senior staff must be held accountable for managing resources in a manner consistent with the organization's strategic intent. Be certain that formal evaluation and performance management processes are well-aligned with your strategy. Measure key components of performance as they relate to your mission, vision and values — all of which are directly linked to strategy. Ensure that rewards and sanctions are used to reinforce the tenets of your strategy.

■ **Talk about it to anyone and everyone** — Strategy that is only articulated in the annual report is not strategy at all. Senior leaders are responsible for talking about strategy and its relationship to every aspect of operations. Break it down to people in language that they can understand. Link strategy to each individual's job. That means helping a service tech understand how handling every aspect of customer care impacts revenue, reputation and the bottom-line success of the company. That also means that you will find ways to integrate a discussion of strategy into every meeting, no matter how mundane the topic.

■ **Use measurement to close the strategy to performance**



gap — There is often a gap between well-articulated strategy and actual performance. This occurs and persists because key elements of strategy determined in the planning process are not combined with clear methods for monitoring. Avoid this trap by making sure that your strategic plan has many measurable elements. Measure and then communicate the results of those measurements to key stakeholders. Use the results of your measurement to recalibrate both the plan and all relevant activities.

■ **Use education to build ability at all levels** — Provide adequate, ongoing education and training so that employees at all levels can fulfill their obligations to making strategy come to life. Make sure that all

employees have the opportunity to be lifelong learners by offering customized training that enables them to develop mastery in their areas. When you have knowledgeable team members, they are more apt to not only understand strategy and how it guides the enterprise, but to also work harder to make it real in their departments.

■ **Stay the course** — Employees lose faith and interest in enterprises that have daily shifts in strategy. Certainly the vicissitudes of today's market make it necessary to be flexible, but strategy cannot bow to the whims and wishes of every executive. Instead, create compelling strategy that can weather the storms and bring the company through.

Rather than tackling all of the techniques at once, select two and master them. Once you have developed mastery, you can move on to the next techniques.

Strategy can stick and it can have meaning. It is up to senior leaders to make sure that happens. These tips will help you integrate strategy into every aspect of your company's work. ■

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