

### Why Strategic Plans Fail

Successful organizations develop a clear picture of where they need to be. They diligently follow that path as a road map to the right markets, products and services. Sometimes, though, organizations fail to close the gap between planning and execution. Here are some reasons why:

- 1. Lack of executive alignment.** Senior teams are often made up of strong, successful people. When they don't fully agree with what needs to be done, some key strategies and tactics can simply lay on the table, or fall off it entirely. Working to a strategic consensus is a must.
- 2. Failure to enlist the larger organization.** Executives who do put hard work into developing a strategy usually become convinced it's the right one. A missing link, though, can be getting the entire enterprise both briefed and committed to that course. That takes time, energy, and patience with those managers and employees who weren't part of the original deliberation.
- 3. Poor hand-offs.** Execution details typically have to be delegated to other management levels. When those hand-offs are done poorly, or layered on top of other pressing duties, direct reports may not understand what to do, or what's most critical.
- 4. Minimal execution planning.** Like any other complex initiative, implementing strategy requires the right attention to defining goals, time lines, accountabilities and measures. Those organizations that fail to flesh out these critical details may lose sight of what is happening, and what still needs to happen.
- 5. Little progress tracking or communication.** Once the fanfare of rolling out a new strategy dies, it can be easy for executives who understand it well to neglect pressing their teams for updates. That can cause lower levels to take their eyes off the ball, and leaves a gap in keeping the organization energized.
- 6. Scarce implementation talent or resources.** A sound strategic plan may rest on a weak foundation of talent or time and budget to execute it. A critical step in putting a strategy into action is evaluating whether the right talent is in place to drive it, and if there is enough slack in ongoing demands to allow that to happen. Any gaps must be closed.
- 7. Difficult with shifting direction.** Strong organizations develop employees with well-accepted ways of working and thinking about what they do. It may be necessary to break the mold of outdated practices and ideas to succeed. That means identifying what parts of the culture need to change, who is involved, and how best to gain their attention and action.

Sound strategic planning is a critical, demanding leadership task. Translating the result into significant results requires applying different, complementary skills with the same energy.

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