Plan Execution – 8 Strategies for Moving Your Strategic Plan from Paper to Practice

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Strategic plans often fail due to a lack of focus on implementation. All too often, great plans are placed in binders and gather dust on bookshelves, only to be looked at a year later when the time for strategic planning comes around again. Having a method in place to ensure there is execution and follow-through on your strategic plan, and that the people involved are held accountable for their actions, is one of the most critical elements in strategic planning.

In our strategic planning process, The Drivers Model, we describe how to develop a complete monitoring and accountability plan. At its most basic level, the plan should include four components:

- clear assignment
- structured monitoring
- desirable rewards
- undesirable consequences

Once you know the main components of the monitoring and accountability plan, you’re ready to identify and implement strategies. Here are 8 strategies we have used to help organizations take their strategic plans from paper to practice:

1) Assign objectives and strategies to departments and have those departments include these elements in their plans and budgets.

2) Establish SPAN charts which indicate levels of involvement in the strategic priorities by indicating who “supervises, participates, approves, or must be notified” for each.

3) Review the status of strategies monthly based on percent complete and likelihood of meeting the scheduled timeframe.

4) Review the status of objectives quarterly based on progress to date and likelihood of achieving the target in the timeframe.

5) Implement a monthly dashboard of indicators for monitoring progress.

6) Establish an annual award fund shared only by those teams that complete their targeted strategies. If eight teams are successful, those team members share in the fund. If only one team is successful, that team gets the entire fund.

7) Tie a portion of executive compensation to the achievement of all of the strategic objectives. This increases accountability to the team results not just an executive’s particular area.

8) Implement the “accountability dice” as potential consequences for teams falling behind. Appropriate consequences vary widely from organization-to-organization. As examples, some have been relatively trivial (e.g., clean-up the break room for a week), some have been time-focus (e.g., assist another team for 2-hours), and some have been monetary (e.g., pay $20 to the party pool).

You can learn more about strategic planning techniques at http://www.leadstrat.com/facilitation-strategic-planning.html