

Excellence in execution

THE PRESSURES OF the global financial crises have had an interesting impact on the implementation of business strategy. Leaders today are under tremendous pressure to deliver on their strategy promises to shareholders. In the past when a company failed to deliver their strategy they have adopted a new strategy or lowered the expectations to the shareholders. And they did fail, more often than not.

Our 11 years in research across governments, multinational and indigenous companies in four continents, revealed that companies fail to

implement their strategy nine out of ten times. This is a horrific failure rate and the recession has brought it to the forefront.

Business leaders need the skills and abilities to not only craft the right strategy but also to implement it successfully. In the past they have habitually underestimated the whole implementation challenge, for example once they crafted the strategy they sat back and delegated the implementation.

It is much tougher and more complicated than they expect and a good strategy is not worth the paper it's written on if it can't be implemented successfully.

There is a simple implementation rule of thumb, which is 1x strategy, 2x implementation. Whatever effort, investment and time you have put into crafting the strategy, at least double it for the implementation. But this is only the start.

The current market situation is also becoming more challenging. Leaders must now implement strategy more frequently than ever before, as strategies are becoming shorter and shorter.

Twenty years ago strategies were crafted for five or even ten years. Today in many industries

they are for two or three years. This means that we must become better at executing them.

To be excellent in execution, leaders must recognise that implementation is a business differentiator and it requires taking the right actions in the right areas. When they return to their businesses after crafting the strategy they are left mostly on their own to figure out what to do. In crafting strategy there are many frameworks, models and consultants to support its development that implementation does not have.



Robin Speculand

When we were reviewing our research, we started to notice a pattern among the one in ten companies who excel in execution. We noticed that they did eight things well and simultaneously.

Executing strategy is just as tough as crafting the right strategy. When leaders recognise this they will naturally start to pay more attention to implementation.

Strategy is about making the right choices. Implementation is about taking the right actions.

Robin Speculand, the founder and chief executive of Bridges Business Consultancy, a global pioneer in the field of strategy implementation.

Email: bridges@bridgesconsultancy.com

www.bridgesconsultancy.com/index.html

The eight areas that leaders must address to be excellent in execution are:

People

Are you supporting the staff members who are supporting the strategy implementation?

Business case

Do your staff members know why it is urgent to adopt the new strategy?

Communication

Is everyone constantly communicated to about what's working, what's not and what's going to happen next?

Measurement

Are your measures tracking the old strategy or the new strategy?

Culture

Is the implementation aligned to your culture?

Process

Do staff members have an opportunity to change the daily processes to meet the requirements of the new strategy?

Reinforce

Are the behaviours and actions required to implement the new strategy encouraged and reinforced?

Review

Do you discuss the strategy implementation more or less than operational challenges?