



4 Steps to Successful Execution of a Strategy

Every year millions of entrepreneurs come up with great ideas. And every year they spend countless hours creating and re-creating detailed business and strategic plans. Often most of this effort goes to waste as entrepreneurs fail to follow through on their own well thought-out plans.

“A lot of organizations put great strategies together but they don’t follow through,” said Bahaa Moukadam, founder and head coach at SeeMetrics Partners, during a recent interview on my radio show Money Talk. “Eighty-percent of them fail at the execution part of the strategy.”

Indeed, Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, in their book *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, said the key to proper execution lies in three core areas: people, strategy and operations. “The people process is more important than either the strategy or operations processes,” they wrote. “After all, it’s the people of an organization who make judgments about how markets are changing, create strategies based on those judgments, and translate the strategies into operational realities.”

Execution done right is a disciplined process, a logical set of connected activities by an organization to make a strategy work.

"Without a careful, planned approach to execution, strategic goals cannot be attained," wrote Lawrence G. Hrebiniak, in *Making Strategy Work: Leading Effective Execution and Change*. "Developing such a logical approach, however, represents a formidable challenge to management."

Many entrepreneurs allow themselves to become swept up in putting out fires instead of executing their plans. Moukadam pointed out that most entrepreneurs fail at execution due to a lack of "a framework or methodology in place that is repeatable." These executives need to connect their strategy to the individual goals of each employee. Here's his simple four-step process to help entrepreneurs execute their strategies:

1. Set clear priorities.

Entrepreneurs might fail in carrying out their strategy if they set too many priorities. Establish only one priority at a time along with supporting initiatives. For example, a priority might be penetrating a new territory. Supporting initiatives could be leasing an office, hiring staff and initiating a marketing plan.

Having too many priorities is like trying to keep too many balls in the air. Then it's problematic if only one gets focused on. Chances are good that eventually all the balls fall to the ground.

2. Collect and analyze data.

Entrepreneurs often specify measurable goals in their strategic plans. But once the planning process is a wrap, the document might be set on a shelf and not revisited for quite a long time.

A key to ensuring execution is staying on top of results. Entrepreneurs should develop key performance indicators (or KPIs) that can be measured and monitored on an ongoing basis. They need to procure operating data related to these indicators and evaluate results on schedule (daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly).

The executives should evaluate what's working and continue these processes and enhance them to boost performance. With failing results, they should determine what processes don't work and make immediate adjustments to prevent further deterioration.

3. Keep a rhythm to meetings.

Without continuous communication, employees can lose touch with an entrepreneur's goals and objectives. Over time employees, and even the entrepreneur, can veer off course. This leads to poor results, which can have a disastrous effect on an organization.

To ensure that the entire organization keeps in sync with the entrepreneur's vision and strategic

plan, the staff should gather periodically for different types of update meetings.

Daily huddles should take place within operational groups at the start of the day and last no more than 15 minutes. Such daily meetings aim to ensure that everyone is on the same page and aware of important recent developments such as performance updates, price changes, new products or media reports.

The daily huddle can provide rapid-fire updates specifically tailored to the group. The entrepreneur can oversee the daily huddles at small companies. In larger organizations, line managers should take responsibility.

Moukadam recommends that each meeting conclude with a review of what was decided, who's responsible for delivering what and when it's due or a "WWW summary." This summary should be created at the meeting and delivered immediately by email or other means to ensure that salient points are kept top of mind.

4. Evaluate the strategy.

The entrepreneur should also meet with the executive team and key management personnel on a monthly or quarterly basis to evaluate the progress with the strategic plan. These strategic meetings should be more in-depth and designed to determine if changes are required.

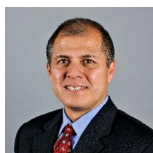
The periodic strategic meetings should discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (or SWOT). They can help executives determine if the strategy's soundness in light of changes within the organization, industry and economy. The meetings should aim to exploit strengths and opportunities while mitigating weaknesses and threats.

Entrepreneurs can also wield another important tool: a one-page strategic plan. All the essential elements of the strategic plan are boiled down into one page -- and give to all employees. A benefit of this information sharing is that employees will feel like they are contributing to the organization's overall success and will feel excited, motivated and engaged.

Business owners must be careful, however, that the one-page strategic plan doesn't disclose company secrets and other intellectual property. Do a careful review of the one-page strategic plan prior to its release.

About the Author

Jesse Torres



Jesse Torres of manhattan beach, calif., hosts the money talk radio program on kcaa and is co-creator of entrepreneur-focused youtube channel two men in your business. He has held leadership and executive management posts at financial institutions. The independent community bankers of america named him a top community banker influencer on social media. The author of several books, torres is a frequent speaker at financial and leadership conferences.

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