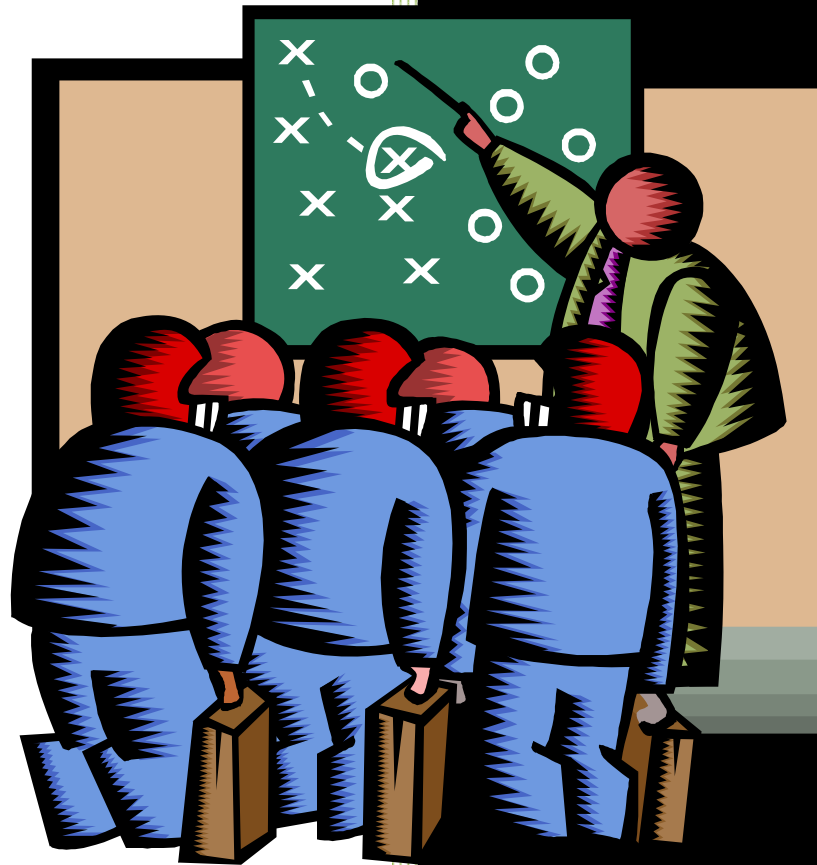




Executing Your Strategic Plan



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What users of the 60 Minute Strategic Plan say...

"We found it straight-forward, easy to understand, not intimidating, and it makes good sense. We have used the '60 Minute' process for three years now at our strategic retreats."

"Down-to-earth planning process. This is a winner."

"I wasn't prepared to be impressed...sounded gimmicky. I freely admit I was wrong. I was impressed."

"I found it useful in a full range of situations, from relatively small to company-wide projects."

"This process has 'legs.' I found it easy to explain. This has a good chance of becoming standard procedure in my company."

"Should be a required tool for all CEOs."

"Old pros or novices, everybody benefits from this process."

"An indelible impression—best one-page condensation of a strategic plan I have ever seen."

"A very practical, step-by-step strategic planning process that cuts through a lot of the fog and confusion that sometimes invades well-intentioned planning processes."

"Forced me to be specific; clarified my thinking. User friendly, easy to follow, enjoyable."

"This is the first time in 20 years my team and I have implemented a plan with so little effort."

WHY STRATEGIC PLANS DON'T GET IMPLEMENTED

It is our sad duty to be the first to inform you that if your strategic plan is typical, it is DOA (dead on arrival). Ugly, but true. Why? Because 80 percent of strategic plans never get implemented.

So, if your plan is to live and become an influential part of your future, then you must be fully aware of the forces of evil it will face and how to ensure its survival. You have better things to do with your time than make plans that have little or no chance of survival.

Strategic plans do not get implemented for three really good reasons:

- Tactics trump strategy
- Tyranny of the urgent
- Just not getting it done

Tactics trump strategy

Daily emergencies are time fused. If you don't deal with a tactical problem today, such as a ringing telephone, then something bad could happen today. If you don't deal with strategic activities today, nothing is likely to happen today because they deal with future events. However, if a strategic activity takes 18 months to bear fruit, then it takes 18 months no matter when you get started. Strategic activities will back up under tactical pressure...and back up and back up...and finally grow whiskers and die of old age, entombed on an upper shelf with very few mourners.

Tyranny of the urgent

Crisis du jour. The fire in the dumpster demands priority over any strategic activity. You must drop everything and deal with it. Every day, all hell breaks loose in the form of unplanned events that grab you by the throat and get your undivided attention.

Just not getting it done

Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton, authors of *The Knowing-Doing Gap* (Harvard Business School Press, 2000), say that even when managers know the right thing to do, in too many cases the right thing doesn't happen. Knowledge is not enough when it comes to getting things done. Why? Pick a reason, any reason:

- **Inaction:** Getting it perfect on paper, endless pass-the-buck meetings, and continual requests for more statistics, reports, studies, and evaluations often stymie and/or replace action.
- **Indecision:** Indecision is frequently driven by a CYA attitude, which is driven by insecurity in one form or another. Recall the story of the CEO who demanded his underlings take risks, but who admitted he didn't tolerate failure.
- **Competition:** As the proverb says, a house divided cannot stand. When your people compete against each other, the outcome is often more losers than winners.

We hope we have sufficiently forewarned you to the troubles you may face implementing your strategic plan. Now let's move on and get 'er done.

STRATEGIES FOR YOUR STRATEGY

Implementation is where the proverbial rubber meets the road. This is where you invest and apply a percentage of your finite assets, time, and knowledge for future and strategic payoff. So here are some ideas to ensure that the plan—your dream, your vision—morphs into a robust, global positioning system that guides the organization to achieve the desired outcome.

From Player to Coach

Every strategic project needs a leader who is devoted to seeing the strategy's implementation through to the bitter end. We don't believe this role can be delegated to a subordinate. In fact, if the leader of the strategic issue does not have enough authority in the organization, it could mean trouble as higher ups wittingly or unwittingly override strategic priorities with other duties. A committed leader engenders respect and will hold people on the task force accountable.

Consider leaving the field of play, where your contribution as a star performer is limited to personal output. Hang up your cleats and go to the bench as a coach, where your leverage is multiplied many times over by the team's output. Same game, very different roles, and potentially very different results.

Assign Strategic Champions

Assign a strategic champion for each strategy chosen in step 10, Strategies. Name one person per strategy. The champions can and should delegate tasks but, ultimately, the buck stops with the champion. Preferably that champion will not be you, the leader of the whole project

(see previous paragraph); otherwise, who is going to hold you accountable?

Some business owners have successfully experimented with bright, young, junior managers as champions. They have more untapped energy and this is very exciting, high-profile stuff to them. Senior managers tend to consider themselves overloaded and this is just another pack on the donkey's back.

Conduct Monthly Status Meetings

Every month hold a brief meeting with the strategic champions to review each project's status and to determine the need for adjustment. These meetings are symbolic as well; you must keep the profile high on a strategic project or it will disappear and get swallowed up in the swamp of everyday emergencies.

Be Due-Date Tenacious

Never give up on a due date, even when good excuses are offered as to why the due date is going to be missed, typically due to the press of business. Instead, extend the due date for 30 more days. And even when a strategic champion misses several dates, simply keep the pressure on by extending the due dates. In time, the champion is going to become embarrassed and get it done...somehow. At some point, the employee will say to him or herself, "I can't put this off again. I've got to get it done. I am going to lose a bit of sleep, but I've got to get it done."

The delegated champion will also be terrifically impressed that you followed up because management tends to abandon rather than delegate. So, you just need to be tenacious. And since there isn't a time crunch, due dates can be flexible. If, however, time becomes a factor, then you'll need to move the time frame from flexible to inflexible...as in do it or else.

Apply pucker factors

Employees, in general, are short-term oriented (end of work day, end of pay period, end of month). Sadly, this is shown to be true in the way many save (or not) in the United States. Ninety percent of U.S. citizens, by age 65, are not economically independent and over 40 percent have no money in the bank. Most live paycheck to paycheck. The dilemma here is that strategic outcomes are often long-term oriented (months or even years to fruition). So, by and large, your co-workers are usually underwhelmed when you promise them rewards in years to come.

We remind you of this now because, during the execution stage, reality is essential. Given employee short-term-view reality, it's up to you to motivate them, keep their interest high, and offset the ever-present pressure to revert to fire fighting. Thus, the pucker factor.

A pucker factor is a hard-to-ignore consequence or reward for successful project completion. Break down the strategic project into steps and build incentive (a pucker factor) into each step. Calculate the financial benefits of solving the strategic issue and assign a portion of it for incentives to be awarded as each step of the plan is accomplished. Marry the short and long term. Reward employees on the spot when they complete a step, to keep the project fresh and the employees stimulated.

Dave Baker, the CEO of the precision-cutting tool company, set a strategic vision of reducing custom-tool order shipments from over 100 days to just five days. He then added a pucker factor. He said to his management team, "If you can pull this off, I'll give each of you a year's wages as bonus." That bought them into the plan. They were electrified. They were plugged in. As they turned to go, Dave said, "Hold it, I haven't finished. You must accomplish this in 18 months. At 18 months, if you deliver the goal, I'll give you 50 percent of the bonus. If you hold deliveries to five days or less for the next month, I'll give you the next 25 percent. If you hold deliveries to five days or less for the next month I'll give you the last 25 percent. I don't want a one-time thing."

Dave then walked onto the factory floor and said to all of his employees, "Your management team has come up with a goal. That is, every custom order will be delivered complete in five days." The employees said, "No way!" (Actually, they put another word between "no" and "way.") "We are working three shifts, six days a week. We can't do any better."

Dave said, "Well that's a bummer. I'm sorry to hear that. I was going to give you three days' pay as a bonus, if you guys got it down to 35 days. Six days' pay if you got down to 30 days. For 25 days, I'd make it nine and so on. If you got it to five days, I was going to give you a month's wages as bonus." The response? This was like waving red meat in front of a tiger. Move out of the way. With two weeks to go in the 18 months, they accomplished four-day delivery.

For a not-so-serious pucker factor, our friend Sara told us the story of Joe, an acquaintance of hers who is a senior manager at a software company. When Joe showed up to a party newly bald, Sara asked him what happened to his head. He said, "Well, I've set these ridiculous goals for my department, and I was so sure we wouldn't make them, I bet my head on it." Apparently, his team was motivated because they had all set their screensavers to show a bald person.

A couple of months later, Sara saw Joe again. "I see your hair is growing in," she said. "Yes, but look at this," Joe said as he held his foot up. He wasn't wearing a sock. "What's going on?" Sara asked. Joe said with a grin, "Well, I'm betting an article of clothing each month that they don't make their goals. At this rate, I'm going to be going to the Christmas party in my BVDs."

The following table shows a few incentives with varying price tags that you can use as rewards. Pucker factor rewards are limited only by the imagination.

Week off with pay	\$200 grocery gift certificate
Star named after employee	Prepaid \$50 telephone card
\$500 savings bond	One month of video rentals
Child's birthday party	Cooking lessons
Day at a spa	Year's supply of fast-food dinners
Round-trip airfare for two	Year's worth of shoe shines
Dinner for two	Personal trainer
Year's supply of coffee beans	Thank you letter from CEO

OUR TWO BEST PIECES OF ADVICE

First, it has been said that you should build your company as if you're going to franchise it (i.e., idiot-proof it with systems). This strategic planning process is simple enough that we recommend you drive it throughout your organization as a system of planning and problem solving. As you grow, you will bring on employees with far lower risk tolerance than you, so you need to teach them the principle of thinking, planning, and acting to prevent the deadly virus Analysis Paralysis from infecting your organization. We urge you to teach your people how to use the *60 Minute Strategic Plan* process to analyze any business issue quickly and to create strategies and targeted measurable action.

Second, if you don't get both feet into it, your plan will disappear. Sir Winston Churchill, in his famous nine word commencement speech to an Oxford graduating class, said, "Never give in, never give in, never give in." So, our admonition to you is to insist and persist that strategic activities get done. Hang in there and be a stubborn visionary. Follow up, stick to it, never say die, stand firm, carry on, keep at it...you get the idea.

One of the easiest ways to track your plan execution is to use the 60 Minute Strategic Plan web-based application. To take a tour and learn more, go to www.60msp.com.

Best of luck with your plans.