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WHY STRATEGY PLANS FAIL AND HOW TO AVOID THEM?

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT THE TEARS

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80 % of plans do not get implemented because of many reasons. Here I enumerate the top obstacles to effective implementation. Businesses, nonprofits, governments, associations of any size, and other public-facing organizations cannot risk running their enterprises without building stronger and robust strategies to ensure present and future success.

•Management needs to ‘own’ the plan
A lot of organizations invest in planning but forget that the strategy is implementation. Management needs to own the plan, create contingencies when there is a significant shift in the external environment making plans unworkable, and instill performance measurement at all points of the implementation. Management should consult the stakeholders concerned but the end of the day; it rests on management that knows the business from inside-out and is not afraid to take responsibility for its success or failures.

•Confused planning with strategy
When management started planning, they confuse it with strategy. Planning is done at the lower end of the organization while setting strategy is primarily a management function. It cannot be delegated to staff or mere customers dictating how the company should be run. A decisive, informed, and well-represented management team should undertake their most prominent function- which is to set the general strategic direction of the company. This function is what creates the impetus for the company in the next 3-5 years aligning all resources, assets, culture, and processes to meet the goals, and forsaking other fruitless pursuits.

•Inertia, Atrophy, and Fall-back on Past Performance
Organizations who are undergoing maturity or who are the in the peak of their organizational or product success would have the mentality that they

are invincible and unassailable. When in fact, past performance does not lead to future success. The market volatility and disruptive nature of businesses and mega-brands call for adaptability and nimbleness that can prevent massive investments on futile and unproductive projects. Inertia is what prevents innovation from happening. When there is ego or greed or plain stupid management that does not listen to customers, clients, or stakeholders, it is on its way to its demise. Take the case of Sears.

When companies become too comfortable with their success or good fortunes and don't have the predilection to move to the next level or raise the bar notch higher, the writing on the wall will be there pretty soon. If they are not afflicted enough to move to plan and manage risks, competitors that have faster sprint and stronger kick will rush in and eat their market share. Competition is not just the next vendor like your business. It is also the changing trends, mores, norms, and behaviors of society that may have a profound impact on your business and operations specifically. Being eaten alive by the big bad wolf which is THE ENVIRONMENT is the not case of control but about awareness and knowledge.

4. Too focused on planning and not on implementation
Inordinate amounts of monies, energies, team effort, and concentration were devoted to planning and consultations and reviews, but the real work to be done does not even have a budget or people assigned to carry out proper implementation, monitoring, and performance6cd measurement. This happens more than regular. The initial sizzle and excitement about the plans get dissolve as time passes by and newer issues and challenges preoccupy the organization leaving the real tasks of implementation to lower-level staffers.

5. Lack of proper controls and measurements
A lot of strategy plans fall by the wayside because there are no systems set to monitor, control, and measure performance in a regular fashion. A high-level executive should establish clear guidelines concerning how the implementation will be reported, checked, controlled for slippage, delays, and inaccuracies, and measured for effectiveness and efficiencies.

There is also a need to have a regular check-in rhythm with all critical team members to provide corrective actions to lagging and ineffective performance and set up standards of excellence. Regular meeting rhythms will increase the confidence of implementers to report early signs of detours from original plans and account for new realities in the environment where plans need to be tweaked here and there. This is a major part of the commitment of management to see the plans through and make it work.

I hope these give you a sense of the critical misses around strategies and how these can be avoided by creating contingencies and systems in place to prevent the typical implementation and planning errors that most organizations make.

Critical strategic thinking does not end when the plans are written out and publicly acclaimed. The real test of strategic thinking is when management takes the plans and makes it work in an environment where it is easy to abandon the plans that have become obsolete as a result of changes in the operating environment.

Avoiding the plans obsolescence is critical, and this shows how the management can be more intentional, strategically focused, and adaptive through the implementation and its successful wrap-up.