

## **Essentials for Successfully Implementing Your Strategic Plan – Part Two**

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In part one, we discussed the first four steps in implementing a strategic plan. We now conclude the article with steps five through eight.

**The fifth step in successfully implementing your strategic plan is to keep the plan extremely visible in all levels of the organization.** This is part of the communication plan. It is also part of the implementation piece: What does this look like? If the company has a strategic initiative for people development, what does that look like? Is it necessary to put together a team to define what that looks like?

Every corporate communication vehicle – newsletters, department updates, etc – should be tracking the progress of the strategic teams to know and report where we are in this process. Progress reports should be regular and comprehensive. Expectations also must be clearly and consistently communicated. Is the strategic goal to achieve the stated results over a five year period, or is the goal to be achieved within one year? It is critically important that everyone within the organization knows exactly what the goals are and what progress is being made toward achievement of the goals.

Teams also need to know what is being done by other teams. Very often an individual or a team will go away to start working on some kind of strategic initiative, but they do not let other teams or individuals know what is happening. In this situation, some of the impact of the strategic plan is being lost because people do not get to see it in action. Just as it is important to have the greatest possible employee involvement in the planning and writing process, it is critical to ensure the greatest possible employee involvement in implementing every part of the plan.

The implementation process is a critical time for people to become involved. If you are familiar with the Change Agents, Inc. change model, you know that setting the strategic goal is the first step in making change. The second step is involvement. So, once again, if it is your company's strategic plan, you need to involve people in its implementation. If you try to do it yourself, you will fail. The same is true of personal strategic plans. If you try to do it all yourself, you will likely fail. It is hard to keep the momentum going.

**The sixth step in successful strategic plan implementation is to win buy-in.** As you communicate the details and the intention of the plan and get people involved, you are actually trying to get people sufficiently involved that they understand where you are going, what you are trying to accomplish, and how you plan to reach the stated goals. It is important to have buy-in from the people you need to help you achieve your goals. The need for buy-in is equally important in

implementing a personal strategic plan and in implementing a corporate strategic plan. Whether you need the support of your family or of every employee of the company, the key to success is buy-in.

Buy-in is the recognition that your plan makes sense, your strategies make sense, and that I have an important role to play in your success. Buy-in is the recognition, “This is the way we probably should be moving, and this is probably what will help us to get where we really want to go as a company or as a family.”

**The seventh step in successfully implementing your plan is to facilitate ownership and accountability for implementation of the strategic plan.** As soon as people begin to buy in, they start looking for ways to become involved. They will look for pieces of the strategic plan they can own. This is an important key to success in plan implementation.

One caution is important: there should be one primary owner for each strategic initiative who will follow through, keep it alive and keep things going. Enlisting and engaging others is part of their leadership role as the primary owner of the initiative. Having more than one person accountable, however, usually means you will have no one accountable for reaching that goal.

Now, if you are working with your personal strategic plan and it is in your family that buy-in is important, do not underestimate the value of buy-in from every member of the family affected by the plan. If, for example, the plan is that the kids will do the laundry when you are going to school, you must have buy-in from the kids. Everyone needs to see “What’s in it for me?” Everyone needs to understand “What’s in it for us to all work toward the strategic goal?”

It is only when you win buy-in and ownership that people begin to understand the value of the plan and why they are being asked to participate in achieving it. Buy-in allows the person to say, “Yes, this makes sense to me and I see my role in the big picture.” It is then easier to achieve the strategic initiative goal. Perhaps the goal is to discover more efficient ways of doing something. My role might be to be more innovative. The specific actions resulting from buy-in and ownership depend on the nature of the specific strategic goal.

As I begin to own my piece of the goal, it is no longer just the company’s plan; it is no longer just mom’s or dad’s plan. Now it is my plan and this is my piece of it. The more specific and concise you can be about your piece of it, the faster you will begin implementing it.

**The eighth step in successful implementation of your strategic plan is to create energy around the goal.** In an organization, that energy can become infectious because everybody, again, is looking towards the same goal.

Now, the very basic definition of a team is a group of people who have common goals and are interdependent. In other words, they must depend on one another to meet those goals. The final objective is to have your whole organization focused towards the same goals; to have that group of people who all have a common goal, which is to achieve the strategic goals and the strategic plan. In order to succeed, they must depend upon one another to achieve the goals.

Creating an overall team situation can generate tremendous energy, and that energy creates momentum in the organization. As long as you keep the focus on the specific strategic goals, and do not become distracted by too many other things, people will begin to buy in, they will start to own their piece of the pie, and that will create energy. This energy will create the momentum you need to reach either your company goals or your personal goals.

It sounds simple, and it is. It is not easy because there are many things to do and there are many things to be as a leader to live out what is in your strategic plan and to clearly communicate it throughout the organization. But this is what leaders do.

Leaders have a vision. They build a small group of people who share that vision. They have the ability to articulate that vision and to build buy-in from others. Then they implement the vision and the small group of people they have gathered can move mountains and many many, many things happen in an organization.

Here's to your success in implementing your strategic plans!