

The Major Problem With Strategic Planning

The major problem with strategic planning is the failure to implement. The answer is not to abandon strategic planning. Rather we should look at changing the process we use to develop our strategic plans.

When we think of strategic planning we often focus on mission statements, objectives and strategies to leverage existing resources to move the organization in a desired direction.

While this is an accepted definition for strategic planning, it has still left many organizations with nice looking strategic planning binders sitting on shelves collecting dust. In other words, these organizations made the investment and realized no return.

But what if we thought about strategic planning in a different way?

What if we thought about strategic planning as a process to develop:

- A shared understanding of our current situation.
- A shared vision for our future.
- A shared action plan to take us from our current situation to our vision.
- A shared commitment to our vision and action plan.

This definition of strategic planning is useful because of its focus on the concept of using process to develop a shared commitment. This is important because the inability to effectively implement is often due to the lack of shared commitment.

Many organizations have action plans that outline how the strategic plan will be implemented by defining roles, responsibilities, tasks and timelines. Yet many organizations continue to have trouble implementing their strategy. The issue is not with the strategic plan or action plan, but with the lack of commitment to those plans.

The lesson is to ensure that the process used to develop your strategic plan not only develops a sound strategy but also builds a shared commitment to it. It is the building of commitment during the process of developing your strategy that is key to successfully implementing it.

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