

# Strategy Implementation Framework

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*“Vision without execution is hallucination”*

– Thomas A. Edison

It is no longer sufficient for companies just to have the right strategy. A solid strategy must accompany a successful implementation for organizations to prosper. The process of executing a strategy minimally contains the following elements:

- Alignment of key company initiatives with the strategy
- Having the “right” people on these key initiatives
- Organizational transparency and a culture of honesty
- Leadership’s keen focus on strategy and sincere management of change

How do you detect that company leadership is on track for delivering on a promised vision? What are some signs that would signify a successful implementation plan? To answer these questions, we need to examine each of the key elements above as well as leadership conduct.

## ***Project Alignment***

In almost all cases, the leadership should be able to support key initiatives alignment with strategy and vision. It is the subtlety of this issue that should be put under a microscope and specifically, the alignment of projects to the *intent* of the vision or strategy. For example, let’s assume a business intends to expand into a certain market quickly through acquisition yet at the same time you see a major IT upgrade project underway. The justification for this project could be that as a larger company you will need expanded IT systems functionalities. But, how do you know that a key acquisition will not bring with it a superior IT system that you could leverage? Therefore, timing may be the misaligned issue in this case. Consider the sustainability of the projects from both the strain on the organization and diverging their attention to non-essential and tactical issues. Leaders should maintain organization’s focus on the vision and strategy.

## ***“Right” People on Key Initiatives***

This is relatively easy to detect and is a critical step to ensure successful implementation of key strategic initiatives. However, many organizations either assign their high performers to troubled projects or select the wrong fit to the strategic initiatives. Ironically enough not all high performers are the “right” fit for these projects. It all depends on how they achieved their performance ratings. Perhaps it was in operational excellence or it was due to salvaging a sinking business. Neither one of those indicators by themselves would guarantee the individual’s ability to implement a strategic initiatives successfully. In fact, many CEOs are selected due to their excellent operational experiences only to fail in the role of CEO. Getting to know these individuals for their abilities and fit with the strategic initiatives is a must.

## ***Culture of Honesty***

The signs for this organizational characteristic should be evident in a variety of forms; from interactions at the company meetings to informal gatherings. However, leaders and board members should look for following factors:

- Is there a presence of Groupthink?
- Has the leadership assigned the “Devil’s Advocate” to challenge decisions?
- Is there diversity of thought and culture amongst the leadership ranks?
- Do folks avoid confrontational issues and challenges?

Answering these questions frankly would help with detection of a culture poised to achieve excellence in proper execution of strategies.

## ***Focus on Strategy***

One of the key leadership traits to look for is a keen focus on strategy and perseverance in aligning the organization to reach the ultimate goals. There is no magic pill and it takes long-term and every day hard work to reach a vision. Ask if the CEO has developed informal councils within the troops to understand what’s going on in the trenches. Is the leadership in the company acting as the coach (i.e., of a professional athlete)? Does leadership communicate openly? Do employees understand the vision and where the company is headed? It takes time to develop consistency across organization. Leaders should be building up the organizational resiliency and pay attention to the details.

***Motivation comes from performance and success comes from motivated people.***

Finally, does the company celebrate the milestones while staying committed to the ultimate strategy?