

Strategic Alignment Part 5

By Drive, Inc.

RECAP

Over the past few months, we have shared our series on Developing Strategy for the Organization. If you would like a full recap of the first four parts of this series, please [click here](#). A brief recap follows:

Part 1: We defined strategy: How we respond to outside factors that are currently impacting our business or could impact our business in the future. Our ability to respond depends on our reliability, flexibility, and speed.

Part 2: We focused on the importance of alignment to the strategy. The proper process ensures the entire organization is working on the right things. We use a simple one-page document to manage efforts, and we create meaningful metrics with accountability for reaching targets.

Part 3: We shared some tools that can be used to gain alignment within the organization. Those tools included SWOT Analysis, Voice of the Customer, and Market-In.

Part 4: We discussed addressing the gaps discovered in Part Three with specific countermeasures. We gave examples of mechanisms used to address the gaps, such as Project A3's, Rapid Improvement Events, Functional Excellence A3's, and Just-Do-Its.

CATCH BALL

Now that we have identified countermeasures to our gaps and assigned the resources, we need to deploy those countermeasures throughout the organization. With mature organizations, we do this at the gap phase, and solicit countermeasure proposals from the process level teams, conducting a roll-up of impact, and determining if the countermeasures will fully close the gaps and/or meet the business's need. This process is called "Catch Ball." This up/down communication may occur several times before the plan is finalized.



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GLASS WALL

Once all the plans are created, we create a “Glass Wall.” Glass Wall signifies our efforts to make the business transparent. The glass wall is where we will keep score. Some people call this a Mission Control Board, Tier 4 board or a Strategic Improvement Board. The glass wall is a place in the organization in which all of the metrics are displayed along with the initiatives (Projects, RIE’s, FE’s, and JDI’s) aimed at closing the gaps. An example of a simple glass wall is shown below.



CONTROLLING DIRECTION

At this point, we have set clear direction for the organization, and everyone should know how we keep score. We must now have a group that is focused on controlling direction. This is much different than simply reviewing the business performance which can sometimes be solely focused on being good today. This is a focus on our intent to be better tomorrow. By controlling direction, we understand there may be some adjustments needed throughout the year. Some projects may not get the intended results, so adjustments will need to be made to the plan. We refer to this group as the Enterprise Steering Committee. Some also call this the Operational Excellence Steering Committee or simply the Senior Leadership Team. This team is comprised of high-ranking people within the business who have the power to remove barriers and add resources as needed. The members of this team will also serve as sponsors (coaches and mentors) to the teams implementing the improvements. The role of the sponsor is to provide resources (time to work on initiatives, people, funding, etc.) and remove barriers. We also highly recommend an outside observer to check on the progress of the Strategic Plan execution. This prevents directionally-incorrect thinking and allows for



course corrections along the way. There is a formal process for conducting these reviews, which we call Check/Reflect/Adjust (CRA). We will cover more on CRA's in our next newsletter series focused on the execution of the strategy.

If your organization has a beautiful strategic plan collecting dust on a shelf, communicates the same plan every year with little or no progress, or has improvement projects working in twenty different directions, then Strategy Management can help! If your business can't seem to make progress on strategic objectives because "real work" gets in the way, has a plan but never checks progress or holds people accountable, or has long review meetings that seem to accomplish nothing, then Strategy Management is your solution! For a no-obligation introduction meeting, please contact Paul Eakle at paul.eakle@driveinc.com or 865-323-3491. Stay tuned for next month's newsletter series in which we will discuss the execution of the newly developed strategic plan.

