

EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TEAMS

This tool describes how to use strategy teams to plan and implement specific strategies for your organization. Through the effective use of strategy teams, leadership can engage those who will be affected by a strategy in planning and implementation. This helps assure the success of the strategy and helps build higher performing organizations.

What does it mean to “implement” a strategic plan?

A strategic plan is implemented by carrying out the strategies in the plan. Strategies are discrete projects or initiatives an organization identifies as the best means to achieve the plan's goals and objectives.

What are the key ingredients to using strategy teams to effectively implement a strategic plan?

Keys to Effective Structure

Executive oversight—the executive management team must champion the effort and provide clear direction on the desired outcomes of each strategy. Effective executive oversight can include assigning an executive sponsor to each strategy team, periodically reporting status of strategy implementation to the executive team, and assigning a member of the executive team to manage the overall implementation process.

Strategy teams—a strategy team is the “project team” that plans and implements the strategy. The team facilitates the process, sometimes developing products themselves, and other times involving the help of others. The team should be representative of the end users of the new products and/or processes. Ideally, the size of the team would not exceed eight people and can be as small as three.

Strategy lead—the strategy lead is the team's point person who convenes team meetings, solicits updates from team members, documents the status of the project, and reports to executive management about the project.

Keys to Effective Process

Determine phasing of strategy implementation—the executive management team should decide whether all of the strategies in the strategic plan can effectively be implemented at once, or whether it is prudent to implement the strategies in phases based on urgency and workload.

Establish strategy teams—the executive team should establish a strategy team for each strategy that will be implemented in the first wave of implementation. This team includes an executive sponsor, a strategy lead, and strategy team members.

Develop action plans—projects need project plans, or action plans, that delineate the scope of the strategy, the key action steps required to get it done, the team member

responsible for completing a given action step, and related deadlines. Executive management should review and approve an action plan before it is deployed.

Eliminate overlap and coordinate efforts—the executive management team, individual executive sponsors, and strategy leads should review all action plans to identify and eliminate overlap in strategy scope and ensure coordination across teams where needed.

Hold team meetings—strategy teams should communicate and meet regularly to review the status of completing action steps and to resolve any obstacles that have surfaced.

Report status and issues to executive management—the strategy lead should report regularly to executive management about the status of milestones, deadlines, and the project budget. The strategy lead should also elevate project issues and risks to executive management for guidance and resolution.

Keep staff apprised of status and success—executive management should communicate to staff the launch of strategic plan implementation and broadly recognize teams' successes along the way, in the form of acknowledging the completion of major milestones and strategies.