How to Turn Strategy into Successful Projects

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Abstract. The best business strategy is useless if it is not converted into action. In this session, attendees can learn what it takes to facilitate an executive team to convert the abstract ideas of a supply chain and general business strategy into actionable projects that transform the business. The leadership skills and techniques presented require a little bit of "science" and a lot of "art." The "science" for doing this is presented in the **clouds-to-ground** method for decomposing the strategy into specific actionable projects. The "art" of dealing with a reality that does not fit neatly into the science, is addressed in the use of a simple tool for the bottom-up, strategic action **emergence** approach. The strategic action emergence approach unites the wisdom of the trenches with the vision from the top which results in minimal resistance to change.

Objective. Develop the leadership knowledge and skills of mid-management, functional managers, and other leaders in the business who are caught in the middle between employing limited resources in satisfying executive direction on the one hand and satisfying the demands of other stakeholders on the other hand.

Level Setting. To avoid miscommunication we start by reviewing the components of business involved in this approach and seeing how they fit together. This covers terms such as mission, vision, strategy, strategic objectives, strategic initiatives, projects, processes, procedures, pure-value-process, functions, organization, metrics, and measurements.

Clouds-to-Ground Approach. To go from a strategy to projects directly is too big a leap. There is a disconnect that will wind up with unaligned projects that may not support the strategy. To go from the abstract terms of a strategic statement up in the clouds to aligned projects that support the strategy, we must go down in logical steps.

For the **first** step down, we need the strategic statement broken down into three to five strategic objectives. The guiding principle of **overall strategic metric** is applied in analyzing existing strategic objectives or in facilitating executives to decompose a strategy into strategic objectives. Audience participation will be encouraged for a wider range of examples.

To take the **second** step down, we learn how to analyze each of the strategic objectives with **the principle of pure-value-process** to yield strategic initiatives. Then to take our **third** and final step down earth, we cover how to analyze the strategic initiatives by their **enablers and prerequisites** to yield projects.

We have now identified aligned projects to convert the strategy into action, but to have successful actionable projects we need to do two more things: 1) focus limited resources on a few and 2) plan to for change management. To focus resources you have to rank, prioritize, select, and fund the projects. We will cover the change management in the next section on the strategic action emergence approach.

Strategic Action Emergence Approach. The previous approach allows us to state guiding principles that help us get a conceptual handle on aligned projects. If you are starting a new business or business unit you may be able to apply the clouds-to-ground approach all by itself. However, the most likely situation in the real world is that several projects will already exist or stakeholders will be demanding them. The strategic action emergence approach calls for doing the clouds-to-ground approach first. Then you collect all the *existing* projects. Using affiliation techniques, group them into bottom-up initiatives. Perform a gap analysis by mapping the bottom-up initiatives to the strategic initiatives. This analysis should help you decide which projects to drop, if any, and which projects are missing that need to be added.

Example. At this point we will conduct an exercise using the Strategic Action Emergence Forms.

Form 1. Process Analysis Form

IT and Business Process Projects	Stakeholder	Operational Purpose	Value Type (C/I)	Financial Impact	Strategic Objective that Project Supports or Actualizes	Affiliation

Form 2. Project Alignment Form

IT/BP Project	Affiliation/Initiative	Strategic Objective Intended to Actualize	Business Strategy Supported
}			
}			
}			
}			
}			
}			
}			
}			

Form 3. Change Management Plan

Initiative Affiliation	Strategic Objective Intended to Actualize	Key Stakeholder Support Level	Stakeholder Motivators	Actions
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		
		|_____X_| -3 0 +3		

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Web site reference:
A. S. Franco, Strategy to Action Templates, http://www.asf-llc.com