

In This Issue

[Successful Strategy: Pulling It Off](#)

["Quotes"](#)

Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Solutions for Businesses](#)

[Solutions for Professionals](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)



"Quotes"

"It is an aggressive timeline. However, there is not any real good time. There are going to be bumps along the way."
~Gary Bartlett

"In most cases, it takes only a few minor adjustments to dramatically improve performance."
~Jeffrey Benjamin

"The goal is to make the issue less intimidating, and point them in the right direction. We have broken down complex and cumbersome concepts into manageable action steps."
~Steve Cole

"I see them making progress. We just need to give them as much help as we can."
~Stephanie Cravens

*"My team didn't quit. They gave it everything they had. *** We have plenty of time to turn this ... around. We are not discouraged at all."*
~Drew Dominick

"Nearly every man who develops an idea works at it up to the point where it looks impossible, and then gets discouraged. That's not the place to become discouraged."
~Thomas A. Edison

"Ideas are easy. It's the execution of ideas that really separates the sheep from the goats."
~Sue Grafton

"A good idea is about 10 percent, and implementation and hard work and luck is 90 percent."
~Guy Kawasaki

"In order to effectively manage the process of implementation of [the] master plan, a standing committee ... should be established to take



Dear Friend,

Easier Said Than Done

Have you ever noticed the number of phrases out there about getting stuff done?

Just do it!
What have you done for me lately?
Do as I say do, not as I do!
Get 'er done!

And, the list could go on.

One reason why results-focused language is so pervasive may be because we get so *little* done! Think about it. How often do we talk about what we're going to do, and sometimes plan out what we're going to do, and in the most ambitious of cases even take a couple of steps toward what we're going to do, and then...(cricket, cricket).

It's easier said than done.

So, join me in this edition of **EA Insights** as we explore the final segment of our *Successful Strategy* series. This month, we devote a few minutes to the execution phase of planning. You see, all of the brain-busting work up to this point is an exercise in futility if, at the end of the day, little-to-nothing actually gets done!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Successful Strategy: Pulling It Off

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

If you hear the term "strategic planning", what's your instinctive response?



There are some strange people, like me, who smile. There are some for whom the term generates a huge sigh because they envision the mental heavy lifting involved. But, there are a great many others who simply roll their eyes. Why? Well, they've planned and planned and planned some more...but have seen very little come of it.

Somehow something's missing. Unfortunately, the preparation that we covered in the **first part** of our series and the planning that was our focus in **part two** don't automatically produce results. And, after all, aren't results -- the end product -- why we undertake this whole process in the first place?

So, how can you position your planning effort to be effective? That is, how can you not only arrive at a nice plan but also stand a better chance of yielding outcomes? Here are a few do's and don'ts to give you a hand.

Don't be a sloppy planner.

To continue our discussion from last month, one of the best ways to position yourself to carry out more of your planning is to ensure that you're planning well. Three thoughts come to mind that are specifically linked to victory around implementation.

It's important to define success carefully.

It's hard to arrive at a sense of accomplishment when the target is mushy. Whether planning for yourself or for a team, a critical part of reaching goals is having a clear picture of what it is you're trying to attain.

It's important to break the goal down into action steps.

In haste or through assumption, the parsing out of a goal into manageable action steps often gets lost. However, when this step is skipped, it's usually more difficult to tackle a goal. Yes, the goal may be the size of an elephant, but it *is* possible to gnaw away even at an elephant...one bite at a time. Yes, there may be 150 tasks in the process to reach the goal but, by capturing each task and devising action steps, it's less likely that you'll get tripped up because you missed essential Step 57 or what goes into pulling it off.

It's important to vest planning responsibility in the hands of all involved in accomplishing the goal.

When the effort of more than one person is needed to execute a goal, ensure that everyone has developed plans for how to accomplish his or her part. You can have the most well thought out top-level plan, but if the folks who are charged with making it happen don't have a clue that they are needed or about how to move their piece forward, then, my friend, it ain't gonna happen! So, ensure that everyone is able to think through how all parts must be played out and what's needed so that implementation isn't stalled because something vital gets overlooked.

Don't leave it to chance.

I can't tell you how many times someone reaches out for support after a brilliantly crafted plan has gone nowhere. As we sit together and examine the whys, one that emerges repeatedly is that implementation was left to chance. The person failed to develop detailed or realistic timelines in the initial plan, or the lamenter didn't translate the timelines found in the plan into dates on a calendar. Also, in organizations, it may be that no one was assigned to lead the implementation or given the appropriate authority and resources to carry out the plan. Either way, what we see is an effort that never moved from theory into reality. You see, if you leave the execution of a plan to chance, if you don't schedule time to do the work, if you neglect establishing reminders, or if you under-resource the initiative, it will be hard to get things done.

Do monitor progress.

Have you heard that what gets measured gets accomplished? Say what you will, but it tends to be true. Now, there's nothing magical in measurements; the point is that what we're watching -- what has our attention -- gets tended to. And, that's why building progress updates into an implementation schedule is essential to carrying out the plan.

Don't forsake that time, whether it's just you with a one-person plan or a group planning more broadly. Build in time to step back and reexamine what you set out to accomplish, how much of it has been done, what the experience has been and how it can be maintained (if good) or enhanced (if not-so-good), and how you can continue to advance your goal. This is critical! Keeping the goal in your eyesight, and continuing to think strategically about how to bring it to pass, is non-negotiable for execution success.

Do make adjustments, if necessary.

Okay, so you had a killer approach mapped out for how to get this thing done. I get it. But, sometimes plans don't quite pan out. Something happens that you weren't expecting. People who were supposed to be in place aren't. It takes longer to complete a phase than calculated. Stuff happens!

So, what do you do? You adjust your plan!

Plans are roadmaps that we use to chart the course. But, just as your travel route to your ultimate destination may change because of bad weather or traffic, your personal or organizational plan also should be adaptable as circumstances dictate. There are times when the adjustment may be just a simple change of dates. Other times, it may involve an alteration of the goal itself. And, quite frankly, some situations warrant the scrapping of a goal entirely because it just doesn't make sense any more. That's okay. (*Though, try not to toss goals constantly; doing so may suggest that there's an issue with your underlying planning!*) The point is that rigidity may prove to be the death knell to your transition from *goal* to *reality*.

Don't get discouraged and quit.

What happens when the schedule is crazy and there's no time to do what's already on the plate much less what's viewed as this "extra" plan work? What happens when there are bumps and twists in what was supposed to be an easy road forward? What happens when things make sense to *you* but others are giving you a fit because they just don't see, can't do, or aren't feeling your vision?

Please don't get discouraged!

When those times come, remember why the goal was important in the first place...and remind those around you, too. Reassess what you're working on -- the regular and the "extra" -- then reprioritize as appropriate. And, as noted above, continually and with an unbiased eye, reconsider the strategy for accomplishing the goal; if some tinkering is in order, don't let pride over messing with your wonderfully designed plan get in the way of actually seeing it through!

But, most of all, DON'T QUIT! You may not succeed in reaching your goal every time; after all, nobody has a 100% success rate. But, you surely won't succeed if you give up.

Where does the rubber meet the road in a successful strategy process? It's at implementation. Though many people consider this to be the easiest strategy phase, it actually can be the trickiest. So, if plan execution is plaguing you, why don't you call on **Executive Advantage?** Let us partner with you as you seek to get 'er done! [Contact us today.](#)



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About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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over the work of project implementation."
~John Koech

"Even some of [his] staunch supporters are worried. He is a strong [leader] but he has never really focused on the importance of good execution[.]"
~William Kristol

"The review of the timeline is indicative of our desire to be flexible, practical, and pragmatic and to listen to ... feedback."
~Steve Pike

"But with lots of good ideas, implementation is the key, and so we need to keep our eye on the ball as we go forward ... so that it makes a real difference."
~Mitchell Reiss

"Each result has action steps to back them up. The action steps are like a map. If you use them like a compass, you will never get lost, and you will reach your destination."
~Jacqui Rivait

"We just didn't have any intensity starting out. We made some adjustments ... and spent the second half trying to come back. Our guys didn't give up."
~Richard Rogers

"Success is steady progress toward one's personal goals"
~Jim Rohn

"We will be going out to each ... unit to talk about implementation in order to keep them informed throughout the process. No one will be left in the dark."
~Doug Swink

"This is only the beginning. We will continue to work with [them] to make sure implementation goes smoothly and that the resources are available."
~Luci Willits