



Achieving radical and sustainable improvement in top line performance

Hit the Ground Running in 2012.



All Set? Wanna Bet?

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The Challenge:

With most of our clients having completed their strategic plans (including compensation plans) during Q'3 2011, there is eager anticipation to hit the ground running in the new year (if you are first starting to plan for 2012 in January it will typically have an impact in the second half of the year, with the first two quarters feeling like a continuation of 2011). Even with a completed plan for 2012, despite everyone's good intentions for a fast start/breakout, the first quarter typically fails to meet or exceed expectations. Why is this? What happened? Where did we go wrong? Is it due to an ineffective strategy or inefficient tactics or a combination?

What Works:

Reflecting on anecdotal feedback over the past 32 years in our practice, there are a number of issues that stand out.

1. **Communication:** The biggest execution challenge is making the strategy meaningful to frontline associates.

"What we got here is...failure to communicate."
...Cool Hand Luke, 1967



"The ratio of we's to I's is the best indicator of the development of a team."
...Louis D. Ergen



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
...Unknown



"If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere."
...Frank A. Clark

There is often the myth of an imaginary line that separates the strategic thinkers from the tactical doers. The failure to communicate the strategy in clear and relevant terms throughout the organization is the primary reason for misaligned execution, often resulting in frontline workers inventing their own strategy. This often results in destructive improvisation; inventing a response to fill a knowledge void. The idea that strategy is a reserved word to be owned only by the upper echelons is a myth. Strategy should cascade down throughout the organization and occurs when colleagues are made to feel empowered and to make meaningful decisions within their scope of responsibility in support of the higher order mandates.

2. **Participation:** The firms' associates can't even tell you what the firms' strategy is. This is a real problem among those who weren't involved or invited to participate in the strategy development process. If the firms' thought leaders are left out of the planning process you run the risk of alienating them with a lack of buy-in. While the inclination may be to plan with a smaller size group, we have found that the payoff of bigger group size buy-in far outweighs the risks of having too many chefs in the kitchen adding their ingredients to the plan.
3. **Leadership:** Effective leadership requires a commitment to put the right people in the right jobs. This in turn, can help address the more common obstacles to execution such as:
 - Too focused on short term tactical vs. long term strategic results
 - Lack of accountability or follow through
 - Inability to measure impact
 - Everyone too busy; lack of time; resource constraints
 - Silos or units with competing agendas
 - Inability to respond quickly to opportunities

Just Try It:

- **To get out from behind the planning "8 ball" establish a corporate planning calendar and link it to the corporate budget process and stick to it.** Delays in the planning process are problematic.
- **Refrain on the strategy at every opportunity, especially at all hands meetings.** Learning reinforcement is the hallmark of believability in the message.
- **Empower the organization to stop doing things that don't make sense and are not in alignment with the big picture.** Challenge your associates to ask, "Is what I am doing in my job contributing to the strategy and making a difference?"

And, please don't hesitate to reach out to us if there is anything we can do to lend a hand. If you have any questions, you can reach us at kappainfo@kappaeast.com.

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