

Strategy ⇒ Performance ⇒ Results and ...beyond...

Effective management meetings drive the learning process.

Focus:

Getting synergy from an organisation; Management responsibility; Resolving Corporate and Local objectives; Strategy design and strategy mapping; Balanced Scorecard; Facilitation and management team dynamics; tangible results.

Client need and likely symptoms of problems

How to make management meetings more effective? Making strategy a learning process. Ensuring the strategy is implemented.

Do your team meetings focus on understanding and analysing results and measures and reviewing performance.

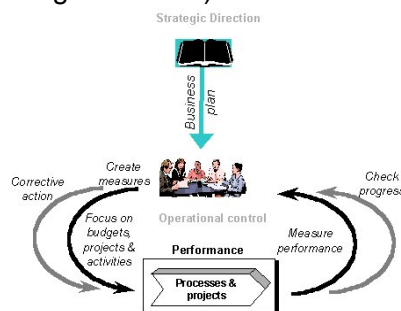
The main question that gets asked is, "Why are they not delivering?"

Likewise, the strategic and business planning process is a massive one off event. Once completed, it's a tablet of stone.

Preliminary diagnosis

85% of Senior managers spend less than 1-hour a month discussing strategy. Most of that meeting time is spent discussing operational aspects, analysing results and reviewing performance. The questions tend to be: "Why are they under-performing?", "What is the problem with this process/area/function?", "What do they need to do to get on track?". The focus tends to be operational (see diagram below).

Rarely does someone ask, "Are we communicating this strategy correctly?", "Are we setting the right objectives?", "Are we measuring the right things?", "Are we executing the right strategy?". "Is it possible we believed the wrong things about what will drive performance?"



Case study

Within a major utility, the technology group consisted of a number of separate companies. The new overall Managing Director wanted to improve the way they were managed as a whole. We introduced the new meeting approach where the Balanced Scorecard was the driver of the conversation, the information was all made available before the meeting and analysis had already been done.

The focus of the meeting was quite different to normal and moved much quicker. There was far more participation across the group, with better-prepared people. The debate was more incisive and decisions were made that everyone was happy with.

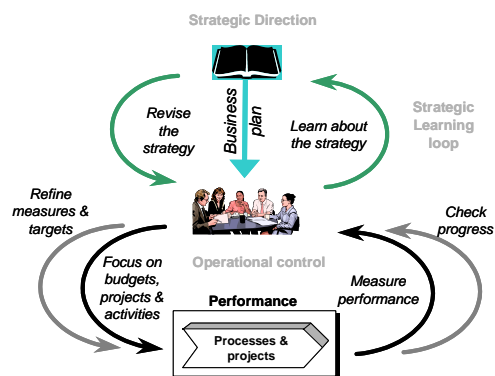
Overall the approach provided them with a far more effective and efficient way to run the business and their meetings

Underlying solutions

There are two aspects to this: How you run meetings and the core of this approach: Strategic learning. The latter requires a move to "double loop learning". This means to ask why you are doing something, as well as what you have to do. As the diagram below shows, the upper loop asks the question, what are we learning about the strategy? Should we revise it? Have we got it wrong?

The real importance of this move is that it creates continuous strategy. Rather than being a one off event, the strategy is continuously tested, assessed and revised as it progresses. This makes an organisation far more sensitive to changes in the environment, competition and the organisation.

Meetings also change. There is more emphasis on doing the analysis outside of meetings so that the discussion in the meeting changes from "What is the problem?", to "What shall we do about it?"



Results and Benefits:

The work was central to driving synergy out within the group. The value put on it, for a group with a turnover of approximately £100m, was around £10-20m in cost savings and a 20-30% increase in revenue. This excluded the substantial impact on the contracts they managed, which were of the order of £4bn in total value.

Later we re-visited the client. There, on the wall, was the recognisable derivative of that original strategy map and balanced scorecard. They had used it to drive significant change in culture through the group and change the focus as the market had changed. It was still in active use and, despite changes to management and key staff, still central to communicating the strategy some 5 years after the original project.

Want to know more?

This is one of a series of case studies and discussion papers published by Excitant Ltd.

About *Excitant Ltd*

Our name represents what we do:

Stimulate and improve organisations to perform better.

We are a niche consultancy. We specialise in helping Management teams:

- Develop, clarify and agree their strategy
- Communicate the strategy so the whole organisation is mobilised
- Work more effectively as a team, learning together, as the strategy evolves
- To bring about change in organisations, by developing the beliefs, culture and behaviours of high performance
- Ensure strategy and performance leads to results.

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