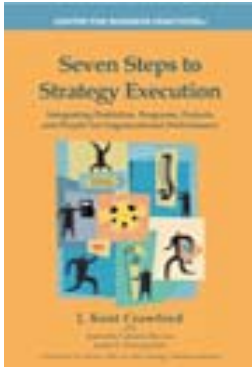


PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: *Seven Steps to Strategy Execution*

Authors: J. Kent Crawford, Jeannette Cabanis-Brewin, Jim Pennypacker

Publisher: Center for Business Practices, PM Solutions, USA

List Price: US\$34.95

Publication Date: 2008

ISBN: 1-929576-25-0

Reviewer: Hussein Mzee

Review Date: November 2007

Introduction to the Book

Very little attention has been paid to strategy execution. Instead, most of the research focuses on strategy creation. A great strategy in name only does not automatically lead to superior results. Given the tumultuous business environment in which we are all operating today, being able to execute on strategy creates strong competitive enduring advantage.

A successful strategy differentiates a business and provides the impetus for sustainable success. A poor or misunderstood strategy can be equally significant and has the potential of driving an organization completely out of business. Understanding what constitutes 'strategy' and implementing it across the organization is therefore a critical component of creating a high performance organization. The common sentiment in this 316-page book is that while successful strategy execution can be difficult to achieve, it's not an impossible feat. "*Seven Steps to Strategy Execution*" provides crucial advice for organizations that are trying to successfully implement their corporate strategies and executing with a specific interest in minimizing obstacles that get in the way of this implementation. The failure of organizations to effectively execute corporate strategy is a key factor limiting their success.

A carefully planned approach to execution is vital in order to attain organizational strategic goals and objectives and to offer organizations a framework against which to map their progress. Crawford, Cabanis-Brewin, and Pennypacker make a convincing analysis that executing a distinctive, successful business strategy can best be done by integrating performance and governance management in the seven key areas of:

- Strategy Management
- Project Portfolio Management
- Program/Project Management
- Information Technology

- Structure
- Culture
- People

The most common cause of business failure is the inability to make clear, explicit choices in these key areas. To address this problem, the text provides readers with a detailed step-by-step process of how to successfully regain control of strategy execution by introducing a Strategy Performance Management metric. The authors provide a structured way for leaders to consider what they can do early on to make sure their strategies are not derailed.

Overview of Book's Structure

What distinguishes this book from others is that the recommendations provided are based and grounded on relevant research by the CBP and by strategies that have been successfully field-tested by the PM Solutions' consulting practice. The authors offer organizations a logical framework that will assist them effectively communicate strategy in a manner and structure that eases its development into reality. The authors also go beyond the communication platform by providing a method for continually measuring performance against the organization's selected strategy performance metrics thereby helping organizations vastly increase other capabilities.

What is unique about the Strategy Performance Management (SPM) metric is that unlike other approaches to business success that integrate organizational aspects operating independently, organizations operating under the SPM framework link governance and performance management in all seven key areas.

Highlights: What I liked!

Linking strategy execution to the delivery of value through performance management is a unique managerial discipline, and perhaps the most important one. Strategy is execution. If there's one lesson that can be pulled out of this book, it is that successfully *executing* strategy is what creates value. Organizations that excel are the ones that are successful in executing to deliver a return on their investment. There are numerous reasons that make it a challenge to successfully implement strategy in the current corporate environment. The steady pace of change continues to evolve and accelerate, technology changes are frequent, and the workforce is becoming more diverse and mobile. But the underlying reason it's proving more difficult to execute strategy today is primarily because business and business strategy are fundamentally different today than they were even ten years ago.

Seven Steps to Strategy Execution addresses most, if not all, of these new facets and challenges of strategy execution. Strategy and performance management in most of the other Strategy texts I've read are often discussed in vague abstractions, using clichés such as “doing the right things right—the first time” and other well-worn phrases. That is not the case with this book.

Shortfalls: What was missing!

A number of methodologies have emerged that organizations are currently using to translate strategy. These approaches provide a framework to define organizational goals and track performance beyond just financial measures. Even though this book is fairly exhaustive, I would have liked to see more analysis on the subject of how SPM qualitatively differs from the other performance measurement systems that are widely used in the corporate world like Balance Scorecard (BSC), Total Quality Management (TQM), Malcolm Baldrige Program, and Management by Objectives (MBO)

Who might benefit from the Book

What I benefited most from this book was gaining a complete understanding of the tangible process of translating strategy. All cadres of readers from CEOs to Project and Strategy Managers and Planners would find this book engaging and find that it offers, at the very least, an alternative approach to the subject of strategy execution. For those keen to understand the role of leadership in the Strategy Execution process, how to evolve management meetings to focus on strategy execution, and how to build effective methodologies to monitor and drive strategy performance, this book definitely provides that. Readers will take away from this book a tangible process of translating strategies for their organizations

Conclusion

Top performing organizations typically generate value for their shareholders by outperforming their peers, producing sustained, predictable growth in revenue and profitability, and by deploying capital efficiently. To do this, management teams design business strategies that differentiate their offerings, manage cost, and serve their customers in valuable and unique ways. For these strategies to work however these organizations have to plan, and design implementation methodologies alongside their strategies in order to successfully execute their strategic plans. *Seven Steps to Strategy Execution* aptly describes this process in detail and in a language that resonates across corporate classes. The authors provide a comprehensive approach to strategy execution - one that addresses not only the management science portion, but also, the people, cultural and organizational factors.

I recommend this book for anyone interested in enterprise or business strategy architecture development who wants to analyze how others approach the problems involved in describing and standardizing business strategy processes across an organization. What Crawford, Cabanis-Brewin, & Pennypacker provided in this book is a guide by which the organizations can benchmark their strategy expectations and both qualify and quantify strategy execution in an enterprise context.

Purchase information about the book can be found at

<http://www.cbponline.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=Crawford%2DSevenStepstoStrat%2DPDF>



Hussein Mzee
Contributing Book Reviewer



Hussein Mzee holds a BA in Economics and an MA Degree from Kokusai Daigaku (IUJ) Japan and is currently pursuing an Executive MBA Degree in Project Management from the University of Texas at Dallas. He has wide consulting experience with major IT and telecommunication companies both in Japan and the US including Lehman Brothers, IBM-Japan, Fuji Xerox, Fujitsu-AMD, Hitachi, and DHL. He is currently employed by Perot Systems and is based in the company's global headquarters in Plano, Texas. He can be contacted at Hussein.Mzee@ps.net.