



CASCADING YOUR *BUSINESS* *STRATEGY* IN FOUR STEPS

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leaves the board room*

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THE *PROBLEM*

Analysis shows that up to **80% of a strategy** is never executed and never leaves the board room or management team! Furthermore, approximately 5% of all organisations implement their strategies successfully, but 70% of strategic initiatives fail to meet their objectives. The remaining 25% have some middling success but do not meet the full potential of the strategy devised?

The reasons for this are many. However, I see four key issues, that seem to surface again and again.

1. The burning platform is not felt through out the organisation. The burning platform, which can be aspirational or fatal, depending on the situation of the company, is rarely shared broadly in the organisation. Ensuring a broad understanding and acceptance of the burning platform, amongst the employees, is the foundation for embracing change and a successful execution of a strategy.
2. Middle management and the rest of the team do not feel involved in the development of the strategy and consequently do not feel ownership or accountability.
3. Strategies are often presented in a traditional meeting venue or canteen with little emotion and plenty of management language and bullet points. Additionally, people are often given too much detail, preventing them from understanding and embracing the core strategy story. As Albert Einstein said - **“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough”**.

1. Copenhagen Business School Leadership Lab

2. Dr. John Kotter - [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)

4. After a company has launched a new strategy, the management and middle management often focus on the day-to-day business and push the long- to mid-term strategy aside. It is therefore paramount that a continued focus on the strategy and the execution of the strategy is sustained by the top management.

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THE *SOLUTION*

The problem is solved by creating a shared consciousness and purpose. General Stanley McChrystal has come up with an eloquent elaboration:

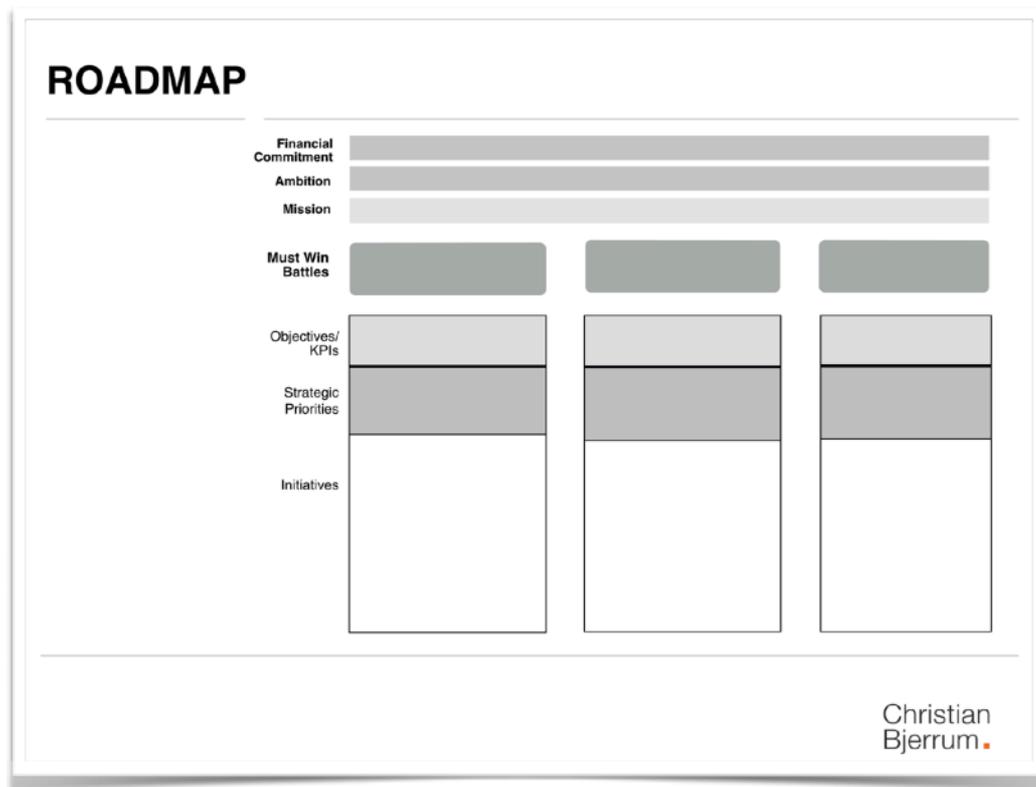
A LEVEL OF TRANSPARENCY AND INCLUSIVENESS WHERE THE ORGANISATION SHARES INFORMED PERSPECTIVES AND A SENSE OF COMMON OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR A CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD MISSION.

It is about cascading a shared consciousness and purpose down through the organisation, through involvement and engaging strategy communication.

This is done in 4 steps:

ALIGNING THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Start with a simple 2 day workshop, which focuses on uniting and aligning the Leadership Team. Have the Leadership Team co-create the first draft of the strategy roadmap and condense the ambition and strategy into a one page roadmap. A follow up day may be required to improve and clarify the strategic draft.



EMPOWER THE MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

Invite selected direct reports for a 1-2 day strategy session and ask for their help. The focus here is to improve the strategy by making the roadmap more concrete with focus on the specific initiatives. The group will also start planning for a full team kick-off. Agree on a strategic theme which will help bring the strategy to life and provide an emotional context. An added benefit of involving the direct reports is that it broadens the thinking and puts pressure on the Leadership Team to be open.

SECURE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Launch the full strategy at an employee kick-off. The Leadership Team will tell a simple and powerful strategy story, based on the strategic roadmap. They will speak in a language that everyone will understand and appreciate. The strategy story must also focus on why there is a need for a new direction to ensure a broad acceptance and willingness to change. Add an emotional and entertaining layer that will make people feel the strategy and become more engaged. Make sure to avoid death by powerpoint. Provide a forum where all the employees are taken through the strategy again by the direct reports and leadership team in smaller groups, and are asked to help improve the strategy. This cascades the ownership of the strategy.

“A level of transparency and inclusiveness where the organisation shares informed perspectives... And a sense of common ownership and responsibility for a clearly understood mission.”

- General Stanley McChrystal

MAKE THE STRATEGY LIVE

This is where it gets tougher. Human nature often seeks business as usual after the launch of a strategy. A system and communication plan will be developed, ensuring on-going and transparent communication and follow-up on the status of the strategic journey. Part of the communication should be to share progress through a dashboard or regular updates, which monitors the company's progress.

To sustain the momentum, arrange a second full team kick-off after 12 months. Focus on what was set out to be done and what has been accomplished during the first year. This time around let the presentations be more employee driven than Leadership Team driven.

THE *RESULTS*

The results of applying these four steps are:

- A **united and aligned leadership team**
- An **empowered and involved middle management and employee team**
- **Analysis confirms that when the employee is involved the strategy makes approximately 70% more sense for the individual.**
- **When the strategy is clearly understood and accepted, the employee feels approximately 55% more empowered and gives 65% more commitment.**
- **And, when the nearest leader is focused on making the strategy part of the daily work, the strategy provides approximately 60% more effect.³**
- **Consequently a strategy that has a significantly higher impact and effect on your business**

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ABOUT

CHRISTIAN BJERRUM

The world around us is changing and we are increasingly presented with new problems to solve. I am driven by two things: I want to solve problems and turn them into commercial successes and I want the companies that I work with, to make a difference. I am skilled at distilling the complexity of a business problem into a clear objective, drive the idea generation, prioritise the solutions and manage the implementation. I am passionate about strategy, business, people and ideas.

I have worked with business strategy development and strategy execution for companies like Kellogg (Europe, Middle East & Africa), VELUX (Europe), Toms Group, TV 2, Boxer TV, BC Hospitality Group, NCC & Fritz Hansen. I am in awe of how a simple and focused strategy and a great execution of strategy can impact the business results and the quality of life of the people in a company...



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