



STRATEGY EXECUTION

# Why Strategy Execution Unravels—and What to Do About It

by Donald Sull, Rebecca Homkes, and Charles Sull

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Two-thirds to three-quarters of large organizations struggle with execution. And it's no wonder: Research reveals that several common beliefs about implementing strategy are just plain wrong. This article debunks five of the most pernicious myths.

**Execution equals alignment.**

Processes to align activities with strategy up and down the hierarchy are generally sound. The real problem is coordination: People in other units can't be counted on.

**Execution means sticking to the plan.**

Changing market conditions demand agility.

**Communication equals understanding.**

E-mails and meetings about strategy are relentless—but executives change and dilute their messages. Only half of middle managers can name any of their company's top five priorities.

**A performance culture drives execution.**

Companies need to reward other things, too, including agility, teamwork, and ambition.

**Execution should be driven from the top.**

It lives and dies with managers in the middle—but they are hamstrung by the poor communication from above.

Redefining execution as the ability to seize opportunities aligned with strategy while coordinating with other parts of the organization can help managers pinpoint why execution is stalling and focus on the factors that matter most for translating strategy into results.

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