



Strategy Implementation Insights

Chapter 20

Among the ways that **McCreight & Company** differentiates itself is our Alliance Partner Network. We bring together exceptional consultants with special expertise that extends our internal capabilities to best serve client needs.

One such Alliance Partner is **Larry Gorkin of Stonebridge Consulting Group**, a recognized market strategist and expert in helping companies accelerate business growth. In this *Insights* chapter, we asked Larry to share his perspective on how leaders can achieve better business results in 2015. He outlines five essential steps.

FIVE STEPS TO BETTER RESULTS IN 2015

Whether this has been a good year or not, many leaders are already thinking about how to do better in 2015. That's because it's fall, and that means most companies are working on next year's plans.

Unfortunately for many, planning is a painful exercise with limited business building value at the end. Too much attention is focused on templates and process versus the fundamental issues that can drive meaningfully better results.

Successful leaders will use their planning process to focus on the core issues and initiatives needed to achieve breakout results in 2015. Leaders that don't move discussion beyond detailed planning processes and templates risk a plan that generates mediocre results. There are five key steps to win.

1. SET EXPECTATIONS-- The foundation for success is having the right goal and frame of reference starting out. Unfortunately, many folks go wrong here. All too many leaders set their sights on "selling the plan", or "having a plan everyone buys into". That's nice, but it misses the point.

The right goal for planning should be to have a robust discussion about how to dramatically improve business results. The focus should be less on the plan per se, versus reaching consensus about where and how to drive better performance. Many firms face complex challenges; thorough discussion is undoubtedly better than quick agreements.

2. UNBUNDLE THE DISCUSSION-- Related to the above, leaders should separate their planning and reviews into two parts. The first should be focused on the key business issues/opportunities and how to address them. The purpose here is to identify priorities and define responses. This is about strategy.

The second discussion should then focus on the detailed plan to execute the strategy. This conversation is about financials, programs, and execution. These two parts are distinctly different and need to be approached sequentially. Focusing on program details before setting priorities undermines the whole plan.

3. UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION-- At the center of any good growth plan is a clear and agreed situation summary. Smart people can generally develop good strategies when they understand and agree on the starting facts. But things quickly go wrong when leaders don't agree on the basic drivers of business results and opportunity.



We publish *Strategy Implementation Insights* periodically to share our strategy implementation lessons learned and to encourage a dialog among senior leaders - including C-suite executives and their senior leadership teams, board members, and in government, agency leaders. **Our Focus...** We are determined to be leaders and visionaries, anticipating and pragmatically addressing the needs of our clients.

Our Engagements... typically involve partnering with our clients' leaders, worldwide...to ensure their competitive superiority - identifying and addressing management issues and resources that energize or constrain strategic, large-scale change.



Our Alliance Partners... Our firms nurture relationships with more than 100 partner-level professionals worldwide. Our Alliance Partners bring to engagements in-depth experiences dealing with difficult operational, governance, information and technology challenges.

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Against this goal, a good situation diagnostic should focus on answering these questions:

- ◇ What are this year's business results and what is driving them? Where is the current trajectory likely to lead?
- ◇ What are unmet customer needs and how are they changing? What attitudes are shaping buying decisions? Answer these same questions for channel partners.
- ◇ Who are your direct and indirect competitors? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What are their apparent goals and strategies? What are the threats and opportunities?
- ◇ What macro market trends are likely to impact your business? What threats and opportunities do they present?
- ◇ What internal issues might impact your business options or ability to compete?

4. THINK BOLD-- Once the core issues and opportunities have been prioritized, challenge the team to address them in big and different ways. Virtually every industry is facing unprecedented levels of change and competition. Incrementally different plans will likely generate the same results at best.

Stretch goals open the opportunity for bigger ideas than would otherwise develop. When you have dramatically new ideas, evaluate the risks and consider if/how they can be mitigated. Remember, for different results, you need different plans.

5. ALIGN RESOURCES-- When the strategy and plan is finally defined, it's essential to ensure the organization can deliver it. There is nothing worse than a great strategy that the organization can't execute. Here you need to consider skills, program dollars, technology, and people. If there are gaps, determine how you can fill them. There is no plan until you are certain it can be delivered.

Lead a different process, and you'll get a great plan. Even better, you'll get great results!

As always, we welcome your perspective.

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