Symptoms of poor strategy

It is widely known that strategy execution is difficult for many organizations. Evidenced by studies that suggest only 13% of companies effectively execute on their strategies, there is clearly a disconnect between the plan outlined by leadership and the on-the-ground strategy execution by employees on the front-line. This disconnect can have a profound effect on organizational success, as failure to realize strategy often means missed deadlines, lost opportunities, and other more significant repercussions.[1]

1. Lack of a Clear and Defined Direction

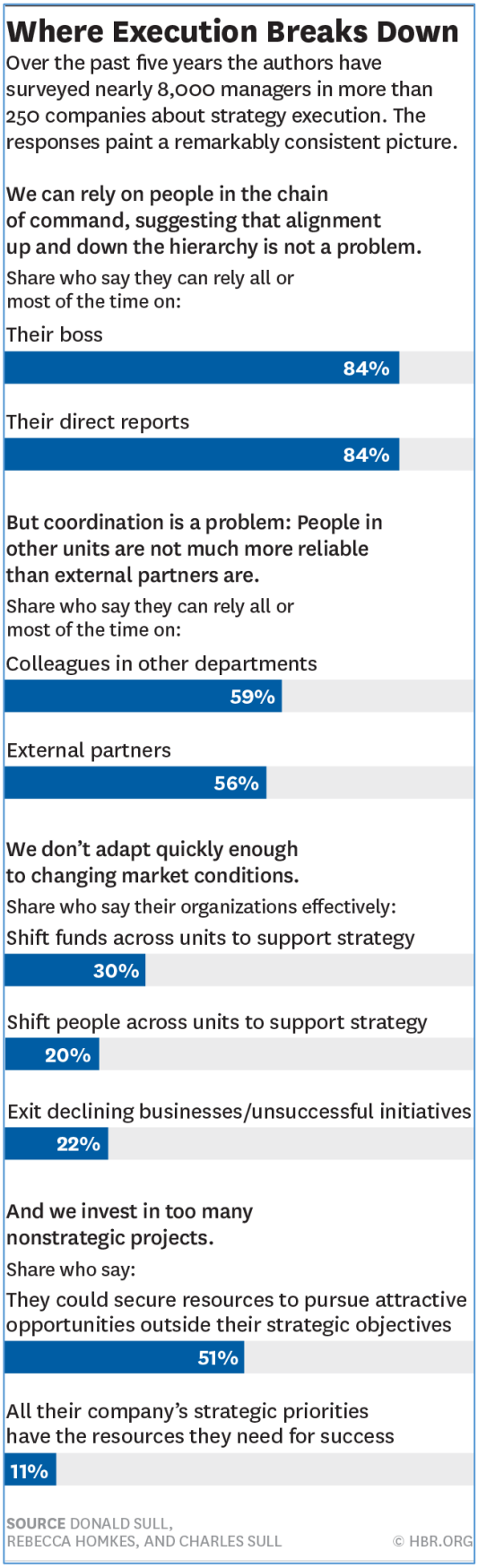
Problem: If your organization seems to have a beehive of activity, but stakeholders are merely busy for busy's sake, you may be suffering from a lack of a clear and defined direction. As a manager, take a moment to ask your team members what they are working on, and why. If the "Why" behind their work does not align with your strategic priorities or the underpinning of your operating plan, there are probably clarity issues regarding your organization's direction and priorities.

2. Poor Communication Across Stakeholders

Problem: When stakeholders systematically fail to communicate across departments, we say the organization has a "Silo Mentality." Most projects span multiple stakeholders, and require participation and coordination across the organization. But very often, each department completes their duties in a project and passes it along to the next, leading to the right hand not knowing what the left is doing. This leads to delays, priorities falling through the cracks, and a general lack of organizational cohesion.

3. Frequently Missing Deadlines for Deliverables

Problem: Timely execution of initiatives is paramount to a highly efficient and effective organization. When deadlines across departments are frequently being missed, and the organization has become complacent in regards to those missed deadlines, everyone is on a slippery slope headed toward organization wide failure. Accountability to deadlines is important, and leaders should do all they can to promote it.



[1] https://www.achieveit.com/resources/blog/7-signs-poor-strategy-execution/

Symptoms of poor strategy

4. Lack of Delegation

Problem: The mark of an effective leader is his/her ability to mobilize and coordinate team members around shared objectives. When a leader can effectively divide tasks among team members, the speed of strategy execution greatly increases. But when a leader feels he/she needs to shoulder the entirety of a project, out of a lack of trust or otherwise, the whole organization suffers. Being a coordinated, well-oiled machine is the mark of a truly great organization.

5. High Levels of Bureaucracy

Problem: This symptom is especially prevalent in larger organizations with multiple levels of reporting and management. It often takes too much time to make decisions, is too arduous to get approvals for resources, and is too difficult to navigate the "chain of command." Organizations don't necessarily have to be flat to achieve strategy execution efficiency, but leadership must understand where to draw the line when it becomes apparent that bureaucracy is hindering organizational progress.

6. Acceptance of Poor Performance or Failure to Deliver on Objectives

Problem: It is an unfortunate reality in organizations that, on occasion, employees or teams fail to meet expectations within a plan. Leaders shouldn't worry too heavily about one-off strategy execution failures, but when failure to deliver starts becoming systemic, it is important for all stakeholders to catalyze around fixing the underlying issue.

7. Excessive Change in Strategic Priorities

Problem: Above all other symptom, this one may be the most destructive to the organization's morale and strategy execution. When leadership adopts a "flavor of the month mentality," meaning they make decisions for strategic change on gut feelings rather than empirical data, employees can be left feeling confused, frustrated, and unappreciated. When a plan is communicated to team members, it is important to let is run its course, and many stakeholders are working hard to bring it to fruition. When priorities change often, rework become commonplace and time is wasted.