

A Field Guide to Success
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Many businesses have a one-, three-, or five-year strategic business plan that outlines key business objectives and the short- and long-term steps to achieve them. Where many businesses struggle, though, is in operationalizing that plan—connecting those high-level strategic objectives to the day-to-day tactical operation. Your team—every single employee (not just managers)—needs to know where your business is going if they are going to help you get there. They need guidance, direction, and clearly defined goals. All-In refers to this as a “field guide.”

Later this month I will be presenting this topic at the Women in Leadership conference in Vancouver. My talk is called “Linking Business Goals to the Workplace” <http://www.fci-cwi.com/project/vancouver/>. While I was doing some research to prepare for this presentation, I realized that executing the plan is not the only issue; a lot of companies struggle to write the plan. In fact, I have recently been made aware of some multimillion-dollar organizations that don't have a business plan. (Gobsmacked!)

So, you organize an annual off-site corporate retreat. Lots of great ideas emerge during a brainstorming session—but what's next? Some of the hurdles businesses face in writing a strategic business plan include:

- Time—Can't get to it because you are distracted by the issue of the day or week;
- Expertise—Don't know how/don't have the expertise;
- Apathy—Don't see the value, i.e. we've done that before and we never end up where we thought we would be, so it gets shelved.

Again, how can you get the results you know are possible if you don't have a plan? A good strategic plan provides a vision and direction, a guide for all decision making, and helps you set expectations and accountabilities. It identifies key performance indicators (KPIs), metrics, and reward for performance, and provides fluidity when course correction is necessary. If you don't have the time or expertise, get outside help. It is an investment in your business that you will recover.

According to a quote I read from Harvard Business School https://www.successfactors.com/en_us/lp/articles/corporate-goal-alignment.html, only 7 per cent of employees understand their organization's business strategies and what is expected of them to help achieve the company's goals. SHOCKING!

Connecting your employees to your objectives and motivating every employee, from the C-Suite to the front line, so they understand their role in achieving results, and know what they need to do every single day to be collectively

successful, is not easy, but it's certainly doable. Build your team a *field guide*; your employees want to play their part, but they need to know what the end goal is—where are they going? Do they have the tools to get there? And do they have guidance and support?

Here are a few of the things you need to think about:

- You need a champion and a cheerleader;
- Simplify the business plan—break it down;
- Make it meaningful for employees by showing “what’s in it for me” (or WIIFM);
- Develop goal alignment—from the organization, to the department level, to the manager, to the employee;
- Identify the pain points that prevent things from getting done;
- Create a communications plan;
- Create check points;
- Be open and ready to having to hit reset or correct your course;
- Celebrate wins!

In my experience, becoming better at execution by operationalizing your business plan delivers results. Not only do you have an excellent chance of meeting or exceeding your business objectives, but there are also unexpected benefits like increases in employee and management engagement, skill enhancement, and increased reward and recognition opportunities.

Let us know if we can help you build your field guide. We're ready.