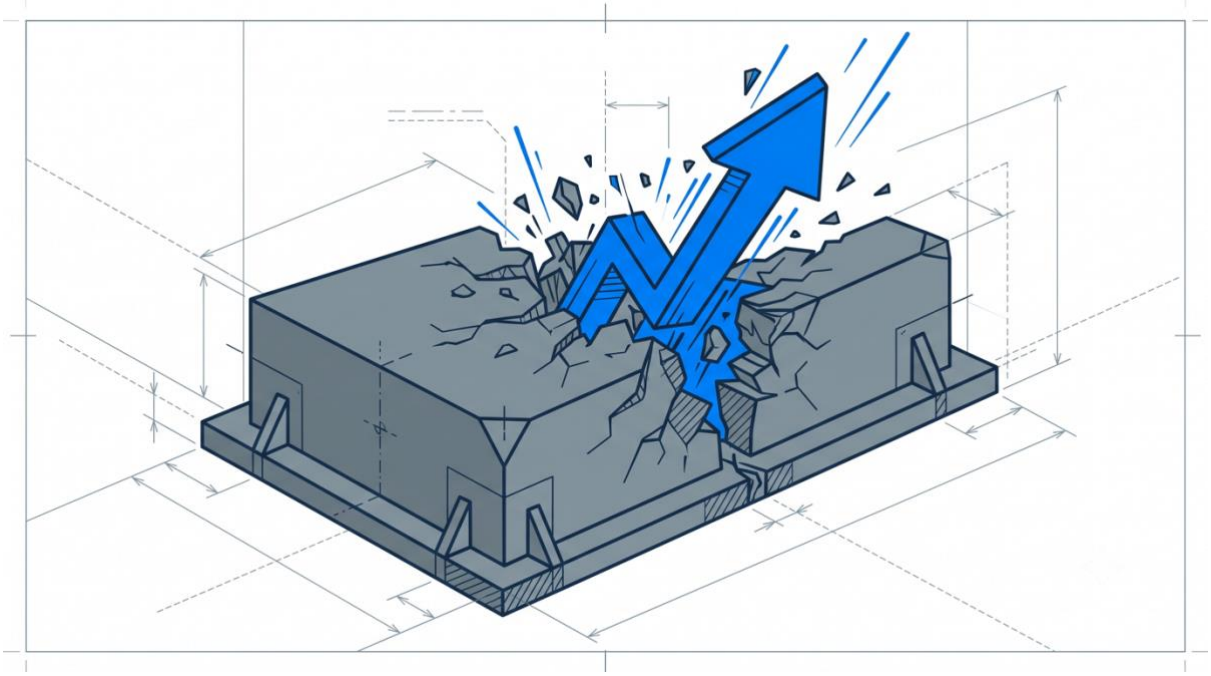
RobbinsNextGen



Newsletter - July 2026

The Strategy-Execution Stall: Why Your Brilliant Plan Is Dying in "Safe Mode"

Roughly half of the year has gone by. Chance are, several of the plans your organization launched at the beginning of the year are stalled or just plain dead.

The statistics reflect that roughly 2/3rds of business strategies fail in the execution phase. This is critical as leaders seem to put the most focus, the most effort on the strategy itself, not on the execution of that strategy, where the failure point actually is.

Even worse, of the strategies that do manage to limp across the finish line, over 80% fail to achieve their original, intended objectives.

Think about the sheer volume of capital, hours, and stress wasted in that gap. It is staggering.

When a strategy stalls, the default leadership response is usually to "push harder." They schedule more status updates, demand tighter reporting, and double down on accountability. They treat execution like a resource problem.

But it isn't a resource problem. And it isn't a strategy problem. It is a biological one.

While there are countless great leadership models "out there" and all with some merit, I've found that great leadership and high-level execution stand on three foundational pillars:

1. **Strategic Vision:** Creating, communicating, and aligning the direction.
2. **Emotional Intelligence (EQ):** The self-awareness and social management required to build psychological safety.
3. **A Growth Mindset:** The collective belief that you and your team can actually develop the traits and capabilities required to achieve the vision.

While most organizations obsess over the first pillar - spending hundreds of thousands, even millions, on consultants to perfect the strategy slide deck and roll-out plan - they tend to gloss over the second one, handing it off to HR, and they completely ignore the third.

The hard truth is this: Your Strategic Vision is completely useless without a Growth Mindset to support the execution of it.

Without the belief that your team can grow to meet the strategy, and can develop the skills and abilities necessary to change or augment the direction, your plan is just a static document.

The Neurochemistry of the Strategy Stall

To understand why execution often fails, we have to look at the brain.

Your brain is a highly efficient, energy-conserving machine. It represents only 2% of your body weight but consumes roughly 20% of its energy.

Because of this, your biology is constantly trying to save fuel. It does this by balancing tasks between two very different neural regions:

- **The Basal Ganglia:** This is the ancient, highly energy-efficient part of your brain responsible for habits. It runs on "cheap" fuel. It wants you to do exactly what you've always done, because replication costs almost nothing.
- **The Prefrontal Cortex (PFC):** This is the seat of strategic thinking, change, and complex problem-solving. It is a massive energy hog. And it's the part of the brain necessary to execute a new or augmented direction.

When you simply "announce" a new strategy to your team, at a low level of engagement, their brains default to **compliance mode**. Compliance is cheap. They nod, they agree, and they go back to doing what they were doing before.

Now, to be fair, you can't win the "execution competition" with only that first engagement signal, but you can lose it there. A strong, engaged start is necessary, but not sufficient, for sustained execution success.

So, without that strong engagement start, they will resist the change that the strategy necessitates.

They aren't resisting the strategy because they are lazy. They are resisting it because their brains are in **Safe Mode** - operating from a **Fixed Mindset** (what psychologists call *Entity Theory*).

In a Fixed Mindset, skills and capabilities are viewed as static, permanent traits. When a strategy demands that people work, think, or lead differently, the primitive brain doesn't see "an opportunity for growth." It sees a mortal threat to the self.

To avoid the risk of failing - and losing their identity as the "experts" - they subconsciously retreat to the safety of what they already know how to do. They trade the cognitive friction of growth for the comfortable autopilot of mediocrity.

The Math of Execution: Co-Creation vs. Compliance

Think of execution like a heavy set at the gym. Muscle growth doesn't happen while you are comfortably lifting weights you've already mastered. It happens during the recovery after pushing yourself.

The mathematical reality of strategy execution looks like this:

Excecution Success = Strategy Quality x Ownership

If you lock yourself in a room with highly paid consultants and build a "100% perfect" strategy, but simply announce it to your team, their ownership will sit at roughly 0%.

100% Perfect Strategy x 0% Ownership = 0% Execution

But if you co-create even an "80% perfect" strategy with your team, and plan out the roadmap with the people who actually have to do the work, their ownership hits 100%.

80% Strategy x 100% Ownership = 80% Execution

Which of those numbers would you rather see now, half-way through the year?

The 3-Step Protocol to Build an Execution Operating Systme

To bridge the execution gap, you must stop acting as a Controller who pushes compliance – because that doesn't actually work - and start acting as an Architect who designs the conditions for execution momentum.

Here is the **Rule of 3 protocol** to rewrite your team's execution blueprint:

1. "Copy-Paste" Your Domain Mindsets

Most of your team likely have a relentless growth mindset somewhere in their lives. They might be avid skiers, runners, gardeners, or musicians. In those contexts, they embrace failure, understand that struggle is just "a rep," and actively seek feedback.

- **The Action:** Have your team explicitly audit their mindsets. Identify their high-growth personal domains, and literally write down those behaviours. Then, deliberately "copy-paste" those exact mental frameworks into their current professional friction points.

2. Engage the Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC) Through Co-Creation

You cannot get commitment from compliance. If your team didn't help build the direction, they will not own the result.

- **The Action:** As the leader, you should have a vision, a direction based on your knowledge, experience, pattern recognition and the time and energy you devote to thinking about the direction. But it shouldn't be written in stone, and it shouldn't be "complete. Bring together the people will be executing the strategy and build it with them. Use leadership by questioning, context, data and guardrails to align the direction by develop the ownership through co-creation. By definition, this activity of creating something new lights up their PFC.

3. Build a 66-Day Behavioural Runway

A shift in strategy requires a shift in daily behaviour. But willpower is a battery that depletes by 2:00 PM. You cannot run a strategy on willpower.

- **The Action:** Landmark research from University College London shows it takes an average of 66 days for a new behaviour to become automatic. Stop planning for 12 months out. Build a strict, 66-day execution sprint. Put peer accountability loops and clear progress visibility in place to protect the team through the "cliff" that inevitably hits after week two.

The Challenge for This Week

Look at the primary strategic objective you set for your business back in January.

Be brutally honest with yourself: Is the execution stalled?

If it is, stop trying to "push" the strategy harder. Instead, look in the mirror.

Identify where the friction is. Is it a clarity issue (Vision), a trust issue (EQ), or is your team simply playing it safe because they are terrified of failing (Fixed Mindset)?

Find the friction, and remove it.

Your strategy won't be defined by what you wrote on a slide deck in January. It will be defined by the behaviours your team actually executes on a Tuesday afternoon in June.

While I really only preach behaviours that are applicable practically I do geek out on the research as well. If that's you, or maybe just because it's the summer, you want to deep dive on a few topics more, following are some recommendations.

Deep-Dive Scientific Resources for This Month:

- Analyze the neurological timeline of habit formation in Phillippa Lally's landmark study How Habits are Formed.
- **Carol Dweck's Study:** Use her landmark 2007 Stanford longitudinal paper Implicit Theories of Intelligence Predict Achievement Across an Adolescent Transition.
- **Project Aristotle:** Use the live, comprehensive breakdown Google's Project Aristotle: Guide to Team Effectiveness.

If you'd like to chat personally about your strategy and execution (or lack thereof), reach out to me through LinkedIn.

Have a great summer!

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