

“The old rules no longer apply” has become a 21st century business catchphrase. The Internet, advanced business process automation, market forces and the impact of corporate watchdogs have ensured that. In the process, geographical boundaries are obliterated, businesses open 24 x 7, the power of the consumer has increased, demands for returns lift each year and the list goes on. Result? An exponential rise in the expectations placed on organisations to deliver on **all** fronts.

Is it any wonder then that execution is the current catch-cry? Execution, the dictionary defines it as ‘implementation’, ‘carrying out’, ‘completing’, ‘effecting’. In other words it is the ability to deliver.

## Strategy execution – why so hard?

Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, authors of “Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done” agree that “execution is the great unaddressed issue in the business world today”. Peter S DeLisi, President of Organisational Synergies, who has spent 20 years working with organisations on strategy, has drawn the same conclusion.

Do as much or more with less - profit **and** ethics, service **and** lower costs, happy employees **and** an efficient business – this is today’s executive’s challenge, and the bigger the organisation, the bigger the challenge.



Figure 1: Answering the need for Execution

Etvia Corporation specialises in working with organisations to master strategy and business plan execution. We provide a framework which addresses the human factor and the business disciplines required to drive execution, underpinned by enterprise management software that encompasses the best of Business Performance Management (BPM) with the realities of organisational life.

Many organisations are still searching for the answer – why else the large number of change initiatives over the past 2 decades in particular? On the list in *figure 1*, how many have you been involved in? And how many have failed to deliver the full benefits, not because they aren’t worthy strategies, but because your organisation is hampered in its ability to execute them to the fullest potential? The real challenge with strategy execution is not whether the strategy is the right one, but whether you have the behaviours, the skills, the business disciplines

and the infrastructure to implement and manage it successfully.

The challenge starts once you leave the realm of theory and good intentions. The reason? Take a look at Figure 2 and imagine it represents an organisation with a matrix structure (lines of business, shared services, and branch departments). Each box represents the high level plan for a business unit.

In this example the lines map the interactions that occur in tracing the interdependencies and agreements that need to occur between the business units. This is only 2 levels beyond the overall plan, in a business with only 6 branches. It is in this complexity where the seeds of less than optimal execution are sown.

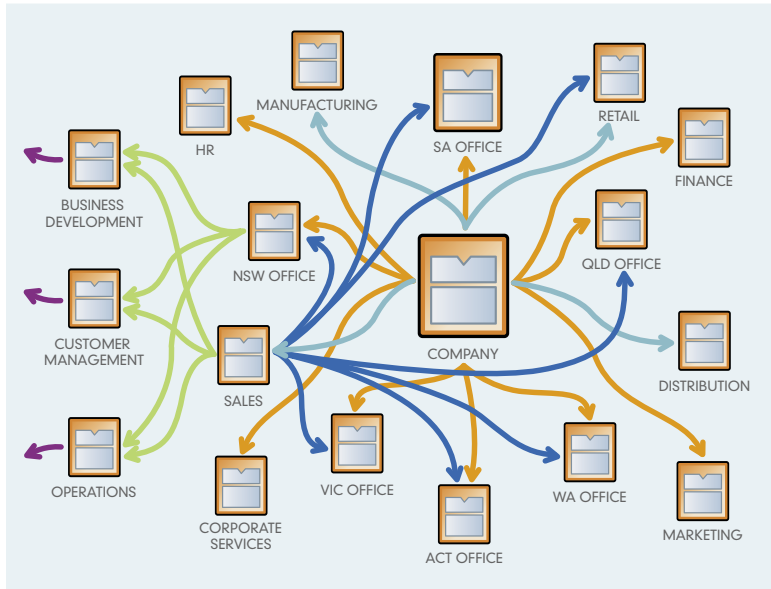


Figure 2. Business Execution Noodle Map

The sheer volume of requirements needed to provide clarity and specificity to everyone, negotiate interdependencies, keep people informed and updated, hold people to account (all important facets of being able to execute well) is overwhelming. Extend this to a larger, more complex organisation where there are numerous plans, thousands of staff, multiple layers and business units – this means millions of information items (written, spoken or reported on). It quickly becomes unwieldy and because of this there are few questions as to why organisations lack the ability to truly excel.

Direction, people capability and a communication/engagement strategy supported by a reporting package are the primary tools utilized in organisations today to manage this challenge. We intuitively know these components to be important – look at the nature of initiatives that businesses have tried in the search for performance improvement. Experience also shows us that each component in and of itself has not been the answer and that to date there has been no answer to the challenge of how to manage the complexity of information bytes in our organisation in a way that accelerates execution, rather than slows us down.

## The Answer?

In order to enhance an organisation's ability to execute, there are three major drivers to pay attention to:

- make planning and executing strategy the priority
- align, enable and engage the entire organisation for maximum performance (in action, not just words)
- Enable transparency, visibility and accountability

The ultimate position is the ability to effectively break down goals, plans & commitments and cascade them, align inter-dependencies throughout the organisation, and then manage business performance accordingly. Doing this without crippling the organisation, whilst motivating people in the process, is the dream.

The Etvia implementation framework is an interdependent framework that blends the critical elements for effective strategy execution and organisational change.

- Leadership skills and behaviours,
- Disciplined business practices, and
- Measurement and information management.

A clear understanding of existing practices and the internal 'habitat' (see Organisational Habitat paper by Etvia Corp) or environment is the basis of a customised program, reflecting the different needs of a business:

### Strategic leadership skills and behaviours

The skills and behaviour stream links personal effectiveness to professional leadership in order to drive execution and business performance. The ultimate outcome is to create leaders, who understand and practise the skills required to build an achievement culture and know how to sustain this within their organisation. These development programs are not generic; they are in context with the enterprise direction and strategies required to facilitate the change processes that are unique to each enterprise.

**Disciplined business practices.**

The internal development and re-enforcement of aligned business processes is central to engraining these new practices as the 'norm'. The cascading of plans and commitments, and the negotiating of interdependencies are critical for ensuring clear and personalised accountabilities that facilitate transparency and alignment

**Measurement and information management**

This stream builds rigor in underpinning execution capability. This is achieved through applying etvia planning methodologies and then folding this information content into Etvia Trace™. Etvia Trace™ is a new and unique application designed to facilitate execution through providing a framework which cascades plans, aligns action, provides meaning and

**As a result...**

**Clarity and purpose**

The interlocking of a thorough planning and cascade process with consideration for the human factor assists in creating a transparent process – everything is tied to a logical and commercial outcome. This process assists in lessening the politics and internal competition that exists in many organisations, particularly when it comes to resource and budget allocation negotiations.

With clear metrics and deliverables in place, employees are better aligned and more accountable for their own outcomes. Individual performance management is linked towards execution of this model, reinforcing both their role in business performance and the value of promises made

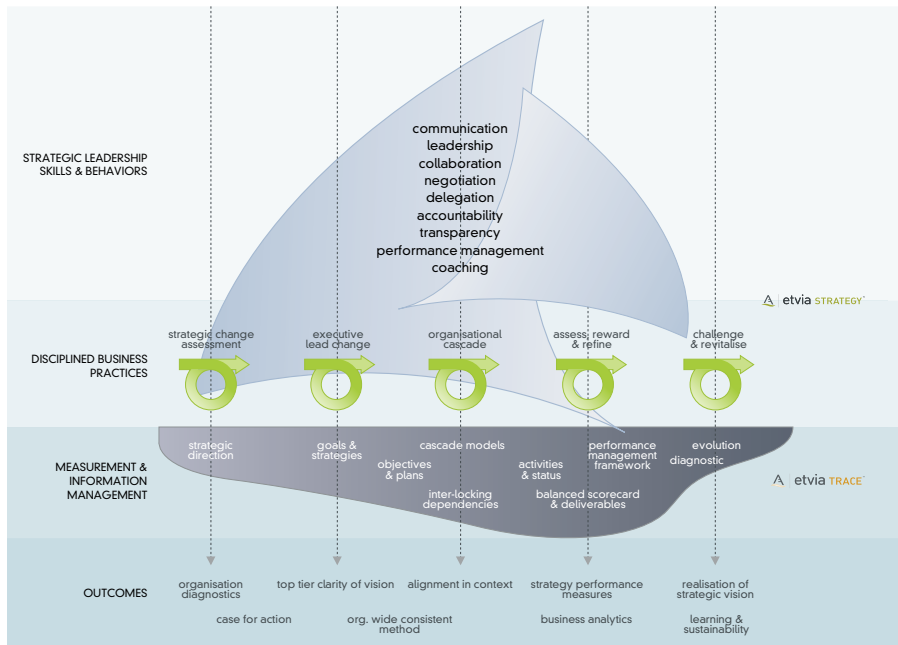


Figure 3. Implementation Diagram

context, and allows the management of business performance (beyond metrics). It provides the environment where business units execute, that can then be easily and transparently reported on. It underpins the practices required for a performance culture through reinforcing transparency, focus, prioritisation, context, clarity and engagement, and, ultimately, accountability.

**Responsiveness - the ability to improve and evolve**

Organisations are better able to take thought leadership from the conceptual level through the planning process and implement through to all operational areas.

**Currency of information and action**

Because an organisation can better track outcomes and leading indicators, they are able to respond to market and situation requirements more nimbly. They are quickly able to align the organisation in new directions and build momentum and focus

**Purpose and contribution**

A greater ability to know specifically how they contribute to their immediate unit's objectives as well as the overall performance of the enterprise allows self driven focus and prioritisation. Most people want to know they make a difference, and how.

**Conclusion**

These practices will form the backbone of how your organisation operates. It becomes 'the' way of working. Taking a holistic and disciplined approach (people, process and information management) to strategy execution creates an effective organisation capable of consistently delivering its promises – to the market, its stakeholders and its people.