



## From PowerPoint to bottom line

Supercharging your implementation efforts to deliver on the promise of your strategy

### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS, BUT WORDS TEND TO DOMINATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Picture this: after months of hard work, the strategy project team has just delivered its final presentation to the management team, receiving praise, acceptance and a commitment to move forward on the recommended path. Thorough analysis has been conducted, great solutions have been developed, recommendations have been carefully crafted, and the team members breathe a sigh of relief and victory as they leave the room, perhaps celebrating this achievement later that evening. By the time the strategy is communicated, that same team has already disbanded into its respective, disjointed day-to-day jobs. Fast-forward a couple of months – two team members bump into each other in the hallway, and ask each other how the new strategy is working out. As far as they can tell, not much has happened; they both lament the slow speed of change and assure each other that something needs to be done urgently, before shuffling on to the business at hand.

If this sounds familiar to you, it is because the majority of large-scale project recommendations and changes are not implemented or not adequately implemented. The significant efforts that go into strategy design and producing hundreds of PowerPoint slides are, in most cases, insufficiently translated into an equally high-profile, high-urgency, and highly resourced implementation. As a result, many implementation efforts generate only lackluster outcomes, and the underlying strategic initiatives, along with the leadership who initiated and communicated them, lose credibility, and the extended team that was involved gets demoralized.

### THE STRUGGLE TO GET FROM POWERPOINT TO BOTTOM LINE

The reasons why organizations typically struggle to implement initiatives are few and preventable, yet typically hard to address in practice. First, there is the challenge of the strategy itself, which may not have sufficient buy-in from the organization – in particular from middle management – and may be conceptual, high level, and unsuited to the realities of the company. All of these factors mean that it would not lend itself well to bottom-up implementation. Secondly, the right team is often not set up to run the implementation, which is equally as important as the strategy development phase and should get the same exposure to and involvement from senior management. Finally, many implementation plans tend to roll out sequentially rather than in parallel, making one change after another – the time required for this approach means that the plan risks being derailed by competing objectives, or loses momentum in the absence of continuous, noticeable progress.

## KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- **Develop an implementation plan**

The most obvious point is frequently also the least resourced and emphasized. High-level strategy goals need to be broken down into constituent milestones and work packages need to be designed, resourced and allocated. Planning needs to be given adequate time so that realistic and credible roadmaps are developed – otherwise implementation is not set up to succeed.
- **Create combined teams**

Implementation is often either the responsibility of line managers or special project managers. In reality, the best teams are a mix of both, allowing for the adequate balance between momentum and pragmatism, and the balance between strategy and business realities.
- **Establish a governance system**

Develop a governance system that audits the project, creates and measures KPIs, and is able to course-correct and escalate if results or progress are not materializing as expected. Those who are part of the governance team should have this reflected in their personal goal-setting to ensure that enough time and priority is allocated to implementation.
- **Manage stakeholders**

The management of stakeholders and their agendas is essential to the success of an implementation program. Stakeholders on all levels need to be addressed and adequately involved.
- **Ensure active senior management involvement**

Active senior management involvement and follow up is crucial to the implementation success. This means not just reviewing the reported ‘traffic lights’, but helping to remove obstacles and getting engaged in the problem solving.
- **Drive change management**

Larger initiatives require changes in organization and behavior. For this to be effective, project and line managers need to act as role models and ambassadors, not only for the strategy but for the associated behavioral changes. Through strong change management you enable organizational learning and knowledge transfer that will make the change stick and prevent the organization from falling back into the old way of working.
- **Complete a communication plan**

An extensive, long-term communication plan needs to be put into place to continuously reinforce objectives and keep the organization feeling like it is moving together in the same direction.

## A-CONNECT'S UNIQUE IMPLEMENTATION CAPABILITIES

a-connect has a long history of successfully implementing client projects in Financial Services, Life Sciences, Agribusiness, Food and Chemicals (AFC) and Private Equity. The foundation for our success is three-pronged:

- Our consultants combine **comprehensive industry and line management expertise with extensive consulting experience**. This allows them to fully understand not only the necessity and objectives of the strategy, but the real-time requirements of an organization that needs to simultaneously operate and change. Additionally, consultants with line business experience understand the ‘hidden rules of the game’!



- We offer our clients **full flexibility**. Not only do we encourage a **blended team approach** where our consultants are fully integrated with the client team, but we also recognize that, especially when it comes to implementation, a dynamic approach is necessary. Sometimes the project requires only a single external resource; other times a full team is needed to create greater momentum. Moreover, we know that these needs change over time.
- **Implementation has been part of our core offering** since a-connect's inception and we are able to draw on rich and diverse project experiences to identify what works and what doesn't work.

Find out more about the implementation projects we have conducted in **Financial Services, Life Sciences, Agribusiness, Food and Chemicals** and **Private Equity**. Or, for more information on how a-connect can help you with your implementation challenges, **contact us** today.



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