

Summary:

Like lots of other books, this one is based on research done on successful organizations, where themes leading to success are identified and boiled down into a few key principles. The principles are usually so simple, you would think that everyone already knew them.

And in this case they are very simple. The authors first assume an organization has a strategy with clear goals and a way to achieve them. If you read their first book, they also assume the strategy is a "balanced scorecard" strategy where all key stakeholders (Exec Team, Biz Units, HR, IT, and Finance) have participated in its creation. The follow-on principles are:

1. Translate the strategy into operational terms
2. Align the organization to the strategy
3. Make strategy everyone's everyday job
4. Make strategy a continual process
5. Mobilize change through executive leadership

Opinion:

If you read Building a Balanced Scorecard by the same authors, this book is a nice follow up. If you haven't read their first book, don't bother. Just read this one or better yet, just read my summary. Their latest book mostly retells the first one but does add some pretty interesting real-life stories.

I usually like this kind of book. I like the idea of doing real research, finding out where success comes from and demonstrating that in simple terms. So, I like the concept here. I also agree with the outcomes-the principles. I just found myself falling asleep several times in actually reading the book!

But...good news. I almost finished it. And there are some very do-able applications, in addition to the notion of getting key stakeholders to participate in strategy formation. Read on.

Applications:

There are plenty! Here are a couple for each principle:

1. Translate the strategy into operational terms

- Use your own company's or department's terms like MBO's, KRA's, Performance Targets/Goals, etc.
- Make the goals S.M.A.R.T.
- Remember that you can't DO a goal. You can only do activities that help reach the goal.

2. Align the organization to the strategy

- If the strategy is truly worth accomplishing, then make sure you have the right people in the right jobs to do the work
- If not, organize appropriately

3. Make strategy everyone's everyday job

- Make sure you build strategy and goals and activities into your performance management process
- Reward people (and yourself) for accomplishing activities, and reaching goals that relate to your overall strategy
- Hold people (and yourself) accountable if activities aren't done, goals are not met, and the strategy doesn't work

4. Make strategy a continual process

- Strategies should change as business conditions change, customers' demands change, competition changes, and when the strategy isn't working
- Be flexible. A three-year plan or a business strategy is not a once and done thing

5. Mobilize change through executive leadership

- Make sure people at the top DWTSTWD (Do what they said they would do)
- Make sure you do too!!
- People resist change. Get them involved IN the change early and aim to OVER-communicate in the face of change

For more information regarding this topic, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.