

Align Employees with Your Strategic Plan – Five Quick Steps

1. Give employees the conceptual tools needed to think strategically: An operations employee who doesn't understand how profit is measured will have as much trouble with this as an accounting person who doesn't understand your operation. Make sure that employees are trained to understand your business from all perspectives, not just that of their department.
2. Make sure employees understand your strategy: There is no substitute for clear, concise communication of your strategy to your employees. If you are targeting high-end customers who value service, you will best succeed when your employees understand this.
3. Structure your company around your strategy: Departments and functional job responsibilities should be structured to make it easier to follow your company's strategy. Be very wary of departmental structures and metrics that may drive people in the opposite direction.
4. Structure jobs to support your strategy: The most common mistake companies make here is to measure things that drive counterproductive behaviors. If you want strong margins, don't focus on measuring sales volume – measure margins. Of course, if you compensate for sales volume, don't be surprised if profitability suffers.
5. Use participation and communication to increase "buy-in": Employees are more supportive if they have participated in creating the strategy. This doesn't have to be as big as it sounds – even providing information to your strategy team can create a sense of participation. In addition, you will get far better support for your strategy if employees really understand the reasoning behind it. Make sure this is well-communicated to those employees whose support is critical to the success of your strategy.

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