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## Business Ownership

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### Delivering on the Strategy Promise

A few years ago MacDonald's initiated a growth strategy for China. It was playing catch-up to Kentucky Fried Chicken who entered the China market much earlier. As part of the strategy to maximize customer revenue it introduced "drive-throughs" and individual locations were refurbished. One day a manager was outside watching to see how the new revenue producer was performing. The customer drove up to the machine to place his order. He then drove forward to collect his meal and pay for it. The manager then watched a gasp as the customer parked his car in the car park, picked up his brown bag, walked into the restaurant and sat down to eat his meal. It turned out that not only had MacDonald's introduced the first fast food drive-through but the first drive-through in the whole of China. The strategy of maximizing revenue from each location by having customers purchase their meal but eating it outside the restaurant did not go according to plan. In fact one of the few absolutes in business is that *implementation never goes according to plan*.

In early 2008, Willie Walsh, CEO of British Airways, proudly announced to the nation and the world on CNN that after three years of planning Terminal 5 was ready to open. "We are waiting for the day. We have worked through every scenario. We believe we are ready." The new terminal promised a much-improved experience for travelers at a cost of US\$8.6 billion and was destined to become one of London's most iconic transport buildings.

One week later a very embarrassed Willie Walsh was back on national and global television apologizing. "Not our finest hour." was his comment. The headlines screamed, "Terminal in chaos." On the second day of operation 70 flights were cancelled and the Terminal became known as the hotel for the stranded! Cost of failure financially was US\$100 million.

Developing a strategy and delivering on its promises to shareholders are two very different things. The current staggering failure of strategy implementation has moved strategy execution to the top of many CEOs' agendas. Fortunately for most their failures, which are nine out of ten times (Bridges 10 year research,) are not as public as Willie Walsh's. Leaders must change their attitude, approaches and actions. Implementation for example can no longer be delegated. Here are six tips (summarized from my new book *Beyond Strategy*):

- 1. Be the Voice of the Strategy** - Every opportunity must be leveraged to explain the strategy and motivate staff members e.g. at offsites, make it the first item on the meeting agenda and start a corporate blog to discuss it. It is what staff members do every day that matters. It's ironic that crafting strategy is always at the top of the leaders' "to do" list at the launch but within six months it typically vanishes from the list!
- 2. Strategy cannot be implemented if it is not understood, and it cannot be understood if it cannot be explained** - Leaders have been living the strategy; staff members are hearing it for the first time. Leaders must translate the strategy into specific actions and ensure staff members understand it and are taking the right actions.
- 3. Brand your strategy** - Strategy is designed at the top but implemented from the bottom. Branded communication makes this happen. Branding the essential arguments of a strategy into images is a powerful way to achieve success. In some organizations, a slogan is used instead of an image.
- 4. Change your strategy, change your measures** - Most organizations today are using the wrong measures to track their strategy. "That which is measured improves" is the old adage. But if leaders are measuring the wrong thing, making it better will do little or no good.
- 5. Create a "To Stop" list** - When rolling out a new strategy, you are asking staff members to do things differently. Create a "To Stop" list of the actions and behaviors that no longer add value to the business. The list should be twice as long as your "to do" list. The impact is amazing.

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**6. Constantly review the strategy implementation** - This is the poorest performing area of leaders today in implementation. The odds of successfully executing a strategy that isn't reviewed frequently are slim to none. Implementation is all about taking the right actions and leaders are responsible for these actions to be taken.

All the best on delivering your strategy promises.

Robin Speculand is Chief Executive of Bridges Business Consultancy Int and bestselling author. His latest book is *Beyond Strategy – The Leader's Role in Successful Implementation*. His work begins once clients have crafted their strategy and ready to begin the implementation journey. Robin is a masterful event facilitator and an engaging keynote speaker. Visit [www.strategyimplementationblog.com](http://www.strategyimplementationblog.com)



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