

# The Job HR Never Asked For

HR leaders have been steadily moving from an administrative focus to a strategic focus over the last few years. Do they see this as an opportunity or a burden?

by Robin Speculand

In the last few years HR has been asked to assist with the implementation of total quality management (TQM), benchmarking, customer service, reengineering and IT. All were above and beyond the initial requirements of their portfolio.

The bad news for HR professionals is that this pattern is set to continue, and today HR is being repeatedly asked to lead a new area—implementation of the new corporate strategy.

Strategy implementation has burst into the business scene over the last few years. There has been a global awakening to the fact that change management cannot be applied to the discipline of executing strategy (the words execution and implementation are interchangeable) and that more often than not, implementation of strategy fails. Currently, blogs, articles and books are shouting out the statistic—

“nine out of 10 strategies fail to be implemented successfully”. This is true, not just in Europe and America, but also in Asia.

Awareness around the field of strategy implementation has been steadily growing, but it took the recession to turn the growth exponential. In the past, when leaders were failing at implementation they threw more money or resources at the problem. The global recession curtailed these habits. In addition, there is a greater pressure than ever before on leaders—to deliver on their promises to shareholders, as customers becoming more demanding and working capital contracting due to shrinking markets. Shareholders (and boards) are demanding that leaders do it right at the first time.

If crafting strategy requires an “outside-in” approach (first looking at your competition, market, new

opportunities and then working inward; as *Art of War* taught us, “Know your enemy, know yourself”—first you must know the strength of your enemy so that you know where you stand), then implementation requires an “inside-out” approach. Implementation starts with communicating the strategy, changing measures, aligning processes, reviewing performance management and training the people. Who is better to oversee the implementation than the HR Director?

HR is once again being called to arms because of their unique position in the company. They:

- (1) Move cross-functionally with ease;
- (2) Engage both the soft and the hard approach of transformation;
- (3) Have experienced similar challenges.

The decisive question is, “Do HR leaders see this as an opportunity or

a burden?" In many multi-national companies they are creating an Office for Strategy Implementation to handle this portfolio. The key responsibilities typically include:

- Communicating the corporate strategy;
- Coordinating projects across the organisation;
- Ensuring projects stay on schedule;
- Sharing best practices and lessons learned;
- Providing skills and expertise when required;
- Keeping the CEO informed of progress.

In Asia, many companies cannot afford the luxury of a strategy office. HR, therefore, is asked to step into the void. HR has been steadily moving from an administrative focus to a strategic focus over the last few years. Being charged with overseeing the execution of the strategy is an excellent opportunity for HR to cement its position at the strategy

table. The challenge ahead though is not easy and is fraught with danger.

Once HR is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the strategy execution, the first step is often to start to share the new messages with the rest of the organisation. After all, how can the staff members implement the strategy if they do not know what it is? From our research, we identified that a common mistake of the companies who failed was to just hold a town hall meeting with the CEO explaining the strategy or display a few posters. It takes much more than this.

Leaders have been living and breathing the strategy development for typically 12 to 18 months. They have examined it from every angle and had an opportunity to express and discuss their views and opinions. Staff members often hear the strategy for the first time while attending a town hall meeting and leaders

expect them to become fully engaged after a 45 minute speech!

The goal of communicating strategy is not just to explain the strategy, as many believe. This is only the first part of the goal. Once staff members know what the strategy is, the next step is to explain what you need them to do differently (to participate in the implementation) and then make sure they are motivated to do it. These additional two steps are critical.

Kaplan and Norton (a.k.a. the Balanced Scorecard) revealed from their research that 95 per cent of staff members



cannot explain what the corporate strategy is for their company. This is a significant contributor to the high failure rate of implementation, as how can you implement what you do not know? To ensure staff members understand what the strategy is, leaders must become the *Voice of the strategy* and treat their staff members as their *Strategy customer*.

### Voice of the strategy

Sharing a new strategy in a town hall meeting is only scratching the surface of explaining it. Leaders must become the *Voice of the strategy*. They must leverage every opportunity to explain the new strategy, inspire staff members to make sure everyone knows the right actions to take, and motivate everyone to take the right actions. As in an election campaign, leaders must keep repeating the message and stay on the message. Once everyone has heard, understood, and started to act on it, leaders can then shift from repeating the message to sharing what is happening.

Louis Gerstner, Chairman of the Board of IBM Corporation from April 1993 until his retirement in December 2002, once reflected on his successful turnaround of IBM and said, “All of this (implementing his transformation strategy) takes enormous commitment from the CEO to communicate, communicate, and communicate some more. No institutional transformation takes place, I believe, without a multi-year commitment by the CEO to put himself or herself constantly in front of employees and speak in plain, simple, compelling language that drives conviction and action throughout the organisation.”

Engagement is a central imperative of implementation and it is the leaders’ role to initiate the engagement. Leaders must inspire staff members to want to become involved by the communication. They must demonstrate clearly how staff members can be involved and ensure they understand the message.

An acid test of successful communication is to check to see what leaders are discussing with their teams. If it is how they can act on the strategy, then the communication is working. If it is about operational challenges or staff turnover, or how to save costs, then it is not working.

Implementing strategy successfully means changing the conversations in the organisation. It is estimated, according to Bridges research, that in a weekly leadership meeting, the team spends 85 per cent of its time discussing operations and only 15 per cent on strategy. To successfully implement strategy, this must be reversed. Part of the way to achieve the reverse is to manage the communication and specifically the agenda and discussions at meetings. For example, start every leadership meeting with a review of the measures or have the leaders ask their staff members every week, “What actions have you taken this week to make the strategy come alive?”

Staff members are bombarded daily with messages. It is estimated that currently:

- 60 billion emails are sent each day;
- 23 billion instant messages are sent each day.

This places even more emphasis on ensuring that the strategy message is heard consistently and coherently.

### Strategy customer

When leaders start to view their staff members as their *Strategy customers*, they communicate the strategy to staff members from a very different perspective and a very different approach—they “sell it”. In addition, when leaders take the time to show staff members respect, staff members take the time to show the leaders and the strategy respect. It is after all the staff members who must buy it (buy-in). This position is a mind-set shift for many leaders.

In most implementations, leaders delegate the responsibility to their staff members without proper support, encouragement and the appropriate tools and techniques. Leaders then sit back and expect the implementation to be carried out effectively. Nine out of 10 times it fails.

Leaders need to adopt the same mindset for rolling out a strategy to the organisation as they would adopt when launching a new product to customers.

Take the time to sit down with your team and discuss the new strategy.

Consider asking them the followings:

- How does the strategy impact your work?
- How does the strategy impact your department?
- How does the strategy impact you personally?
- What concerns do you have about the new strategy?
- What needs to change for you to successfully adopt the strategy?


- What new skills do you feel you need to execute the strategy?
- What can I do to support you while you implement the strategy?
- What will you do differently in your everyday work?

If you work with your staff members during implementation in the same way you work with customers when launching a product, you improve the way you view your people. As a result, your staff members will more readily adopt the strategy and resist it less.

Strategy is about making the right choices—the leader’s responsibility. Implementation is about taking the right actions—staff member’s responsibility. Therefore, leaders must ensure staff members know what the strategy is, know what to do to implement it and are motivated to take the right actions. Like trying to become fit we all know what the goal is and the actions we should take but doing it is another story. **HR**

*Note: Robin Speculand is the author of “Beyond Strategy—The Leader’s Role in Successful Implementation”.*

*Robin Speculand  
Chief Executive  
Bridges Business Consultancy Int*



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# 超越人力資源職責的工作

過去數年來，人力資源部的工作重點正不斷從行政事務轉向策略事務。人力資源部視其為機會還是負擔？



Robin Speculand

**過**去數年中，企業要求人力資源部協助實施TQM（全面品質管理）、標桿比照、客戶服務、流程再造及IT項目。這些工作都超越了該部門最初的職責要求。

在人力資源專業人士的立場來看，壞消息是將這種趨勢持續；如今，企業正不斷要求人力資源部領導新的職責，實施新的企業策略。

過去數年來，企業中策略實施項目數量激增。全球各地的企業已經意識到，變革管理無法應用於執行策略（執行與實施

這兩個詞可以互換）領域。而在更多情況下，實施策略往往會失敗。如今，博客、文章及書籍都在大聲疾呼：「90%的策略未能得到成功實施」。不僅歐美如此，亞洲亦然。

對於策略實施領域的關注與日俱增，而經濟衰退更加快了人們對其關注的勢頭。在過去，領導人在實施受挫時，便會投入更多資金或資源去解決問題。這種習慣現因全球經濟衰退而受到限制。此外，由於市場萎縮，客戶要求更為苛刻，營運資本減少，領導人要兌現對股東的承諾，須面

臨前所未有的巨大壓力。股東（及董事會）都要求領導人一次便能將事情做對。

制定策略，需要採取「從外到內」的辦法（首先研究競爭對手、市場、新機會，然後研究內部；正如《孫子兵法》教導我們的那樣，「知彼知己」首先必須瞭解敵人的長處，從而瞭解自己的狀況），而實施則需採取「從內到外」的做法。要實施策略，首先必須傳達策略，改變措施，調整流程，評估績效管理，培訓人員。還有誰比人力資源總監更適合於監督實施？

由於在公司內的獨特地位，人力資源部



再次被委以重任，因他們：

- (1) 可輕鬆開展跨職能工作；
- (2) 可採取軟性和硬性手段實施變革；
- (3) 經歷過類似的挑戰。

關鍵問題在於，「人力資源部將其視為機會還是負擔？」許多跨國公司正在設立策略實施公司，以應對這項任務，其關鍵職責一般包括：

- 傳達企業策略；
- 協調整個組織中的各個項目；
- 確保項目遵循日程；

- 分享最佳常規及汲取的教訓；
- 必要時提供技能和專長；
- 隨時向行政總監通報進度。

在亞洲，許多公司並無能力投資設立策略辦公室，於是請人力資源部來填補空缺。過去數年來，人力資源部的工作重點正不斷從行政事務轉向策略事務。受命監督策略的執行，讓人力資源部有絕佳機會鞏固自身在策略領域的地位，但其面臨的挑戰亦不容易，並充滿風險。

人力資源部一旦承擔監督策略執行的職責，首要工作往往是著手將新的訊息，傳達給公司其他部門。畢竟，如果僱員不瞭解策略，又如何實施策略？我們在研究中發現，公司常犯的錯誤是僅召開一次公司會議，讓行政總裁在大會中解釋策略，或僅張貼若干佈告。要做到工作遠不止這些。

領導人一般花12至18個月時間悉心制定策略，他們研究策略的各方面，並有機會表達、討論自己的觀點與意見。而僱員往往在參加公司會議時，才初次聽說相關策略，領導人怎能期望他們在45分鐘的講話後便全心投入！

傳達策略的目標，並非是許多人想的那樣，僅僅是為瞭解釋策略。其實，解釋僅是目標的第一步。僱員瞭解策略後，下一步便是說明你希望他們作出哪些變化（即參與實施），隨後確保激勵他們去實施變革。上述兩個附加步驟至關重要。

Kaplan and Norton系統（即平衡計分卡）研究顯示，95%的僱員不能解釋自己公司的企業策略是什麼。這是實施失敗率高的重要因素——怎可能去實施連自己都不瞭解的東西？為確保僱員確實瞭解策略，領導人必須成為「策略的喉舌」，將其僱員視為自己的「策略的客戶」。

## 策略的喉舌

在公司會議上分享新策略，僅僅是粗淺解釋策略。領導人必須成為「策略的喉舌」。他們必須充分利用每個機會講解新策略，鼓勵僱員以確保每個人都知道應當採取哪些行動，並激勵每個人採取正確的行動。正如競選那樣，領導人必須不斷重複訊息，並傳達一致的訊息。每個人都熟悉、理解訊息並開始據此採取行動後，領導人才可從重複訊息轉為分享當前發生的狀況。

IBM前行政總裁郭士納在回想自己如何成功令IBM峰迴路轉時曾表示，「所有這一切（即實施他的轉型策略）都需要行政總裁付出巨大的努力，持續不斷地傳達更多訊息。若不是行政總裁多年堅持與僱員持續溝通，用樸實、簡單、有力的語言傳達訊息，促使整個公司堅定信念，並採取行動，我認為體制變革是不可能發生的。」

忠誠是實施的核心要素，領導人有責任激發僱員的忠誠。領導人必須鼓勵僱員，通過溝通令僱員多參與。他們必須清楚的說明僱員如何參與，確保他們理解訊息。

要確認溝通是否成功，可檢查領導人與下屬團隊的討論內容，如果討論的是如何依照策略採取行動，那便是有效的溝通，如果討論的是運作方面的難題、人員流失或如何節省成本，那溝通便未達到效果。

成功實施策略意味著要改變組織的談話內容。據Bridges研究估計，在每週的領導層例會中，領導班子花85%的時間討論營運問題，而討論策略問題的時間僅佔15%。若要成功實施策略，這個比例必須倒轉。要實現這種轉變，其中一個辦法是管理溝通，尤其是會議的議程和討論內容。例如，每次領導層會議一開始可先回顧措施，或讓領導人詢問每周下屬僱員：

「本週你們採取了哪些行動讓策略付諸實施？」

僱員每天都飽受訊息轟炸，據估計目前：

- 每天發送的電郵多達600億封；
- 每天發送的短信多達230億條。

因此，我們更加必須強調確保僱員獲得統一連貫的策略訊息。

### 策略的客戶

領導人開始將其僱員視為「策略客戶」後，便會透過不同的角度，以不同的方法，向僱員傳達策略，即「推銷」策略。此外，倘若領導人花時間讓僱員感受到被尊重，僱員亦會花時間對領導人和策略表示尊重。畢竟，僱員的認同必不可少。對許多領導人而言，這種立場代表思維的轉變。

在大多數實施項目中，領導人將責任轉授予下屬僱員後，卻沒有提供適當的支持、鼓勵以及合適的工具與技術。隨後，領導人便高枕無憂，期待僱員有效開展實施，但絕大多數情況下，他們等來的是失敗。

領導人必須如同向客戶推介新產品那樣，採取同樣的思維在組織中推廣策略。

花時間坐下來與下屬團隊一起討論新策略。可考慮向他們提出下列問題：

- 策略對本職工作有何影響？
- 策略對本部門有何影響？
- 策略對個人有何影響？
- 你對新策略有何擔憂？
- 你需要哪些變化，才能成功地採納策略？
- 你覺得需要哪些新技能，才能執行策略？
- 在你實施策略時，我怎麼做才能向你提供支持？
- 你在日常工作中將作出哪些改變？

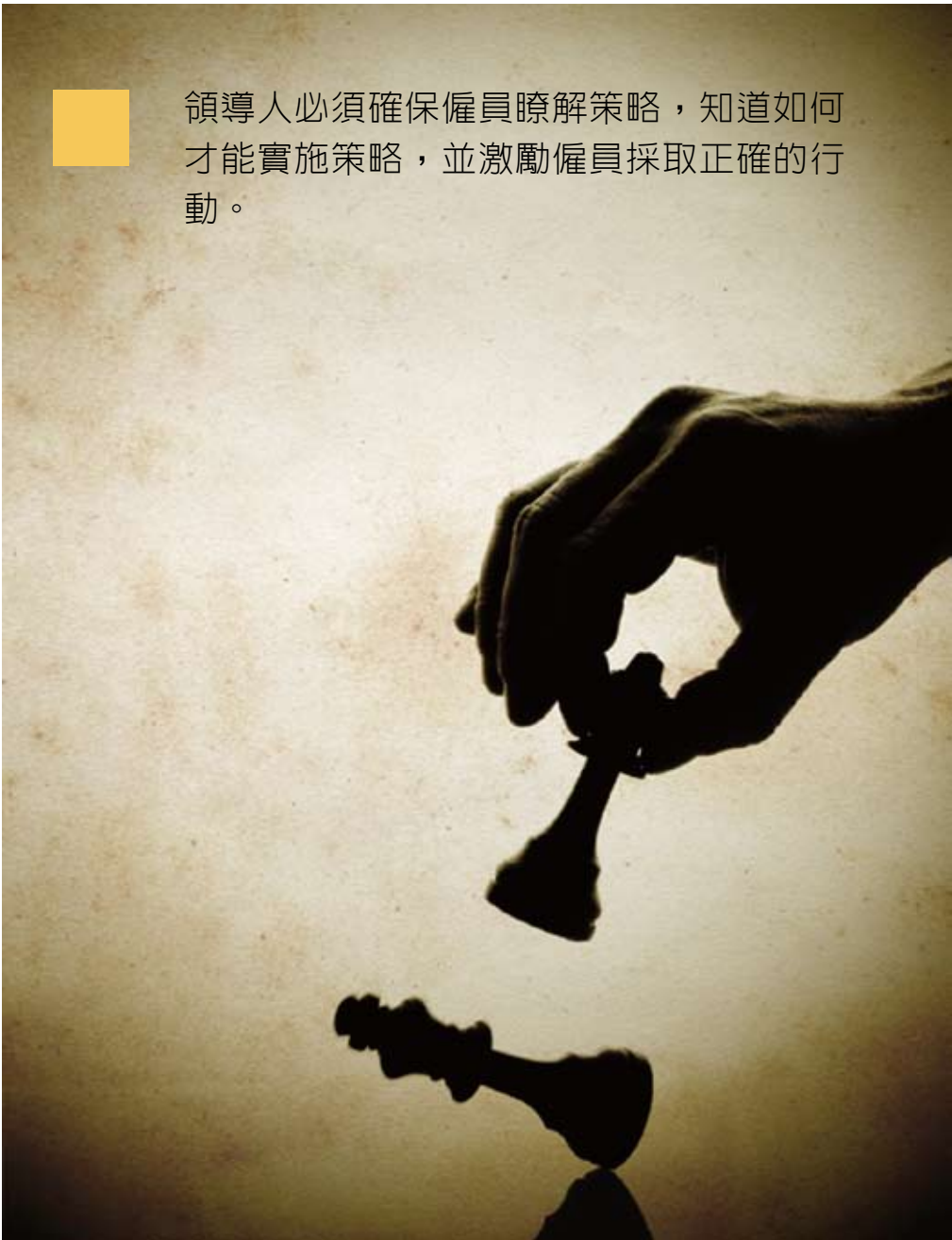
如果你如同向客戶推介產品時那樣，在實施過程中與僱員共事，便可改善對下

屬的看法。這樣，下屬將更加樂於採納策略，較少加以抵觸。

策略的關鍵在於作出正確的抉擇，這是領導人的責任；而實施的關鍵在於採取正確的行動，這是僱員的責任。因此，領導人必須確保僱員瞭解策略，知道如何才能實施策略，並激勵僱員採取正確的行動。就像健身過程那樣，我們都知道目標是什麼，應當採取什麼行動，但具體怎麼做卻因人而異。H■

註：Robin Speculand是*Beyond Strategy—The Leader's Role in Successful Implementation*一書的作者。

Robin Speculand  
行政總裁  
Bridges Business Consultancy Int

A photograph showing a hand in silhouette dropping a chess piece. The background is a warm, textured light. The chess piece is in mid-air, having just been released from the hand. The lighting creates strong shadows, emphasizing the form of the hand and the piece.

領導人必須確保僱員瞭解策略，知道如何才能實施策略，並激勵僱員採取正確的行動。