



5 PITFALLS OF ANY STRATEGIC PLAN

the Top Five Ways we've Seen Strategic Plans Fail

1 You make the plan too complicated.

Creating a 50-page long presentation with supporting graphs and diagrams that considers every possible variable with the design elements of a Hollywood movie is worthless. Your team will not remember the plan 5 minutes after you've shared it with them. When we build strategic plans with an organization, we ensure that the entire plan is captured in **less than ten slides** and can be communicated in **less than ten minutes**. We also insist that the company has no more than **three key initiatives** at any point in time.

2 You build it on your own.

Plans need to be developed with input from the key stakeholders inside your company. Including the key stakeholders allows you to build alignment with the middle management teams that will execute the plan, earn the commitment and accountability of your team members, and gain insights that only the team members closest to the action, closest to the customer, closest to the problems – can provide.

3 You don't communicate the plan again and again. And again.

At Afterburner, one of the reasons we insist that strategic plans can be presented in less than 10 minutes is that the leaders we work with will need to present them over and over. Human beings need to be told something **seven times** before they remember it. So instead of being upset that you've told your team three times already and no one remembers it, think to yourself, "Only four more to go!"

4 You don't turn the plan into disciplined execution quickly.

Connect the inspired alignment you built during the planning session to disciplined execution immediately. Every day that goes by that you haven't started accountable execution towards your plan means your team is getting less aligned. The plan becomes one more "great idea" that never happened, and people go back to working on things by themselves. Create an execution rhythm by establishing short update sessions on the same day and time each week and insist every key stakeholder attend those meetings.

5 You don't obsessively control the noise of "everything else".

You invested time and resources into building a strong strategic plan. Avoid the "sunk cost fallacy" and get the most out of your plan by communicating what tasks or projects the team should *stop* doing. Anything that is not directly related to the critical few initiatives you outlined in the planning session. This takes a strong commitment to execution, but it will also be the driving factor of the success of the plan.