How do you create buy-in in strategy implementation?

Willumsen, Pelle Lundquist; Kadir, Bzhwen A; Oehmen, Josef

Publication date:
2018

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link back to DTU Orbit

Citation (APA):
How do you create buy-in in strategy implementation?

Problem statement
Major source of uncertainty and risk for strategy work, is getting participation and ‘buy-in’ in the organization. Our empirical studies and literature identified buy-in as a central risk factor in strategy implementation. To understand how executives deal with this challenge, we utilized a sense-making model detailing how identities of participation can be achieved through negotiation of meaning or identification. Based on 16 interviews with senior managers and the theoretical foundations of participation and situated learning.

Getting people on board
"If the employees are not on board, and do not wish to make the change happen, it will not happen"

People are irrational
"People are irrational, but a strategies often build on logic, rational thinking - This is not a match."

Board of directors
"There has to be buy-in for all of the board for a strategy to succeed (Director of board)"

Getting people to take part and be engaged
According to Wenger (1998), participation and engagement is not an absolute, but rather employees will be on a trajectory towards participation or non-participation that can be negotiated through economies of meaning or realized through identification. In the interview data we identified multiple instances of fostering participation or non-participation. Sense making model conceptualizes how buy-in can be fostered through engagement, imagination and alignment, for instance by "having ones ideas adopted" (engagement) or a vicarious experience (utilizing the imagination). According to Wenger (1998), participation and engagement is not an absolute, but rather employees will be on a trajectory towards participation or non-participation that can be negotiated through economies of meaning or realized through identification.

Getting people to take part and be engaged
A duality exist between representations of a strategy and how the meaning of these are negotiated. Artifacts and people are not separate and people interpret differently. No artifact or broker stands alone. Artifacts are always, interpreted negotiated by a broker and the artifact always shapes the negotiation of meaning. This holds true for strategy implementation. We identified examples of brokers, such as pivotal stakeholders. ‘Visionary leaders/champions’, crucial representations of a strategy are thought to ‘stand alone’, but in reality they are interpreted and negotiated. In some companies this process was consciously directed, for instance: Multiple companies used ‘cascade design’ of what a strategy would mean for employees in co-creation settings.

People
• Workshop facilitators
• Pivotal stakeholders
• ‘Visionary leaders/champions’
• Making it ‘a win’ for all

Artefacts
• Reports
• Slides about the vision
• Easy to remember ‘catch phrases’
• Building a common language

“People facilitate boundary objects and boundary objects facilitate people”

Getting people to take part and be engaged
According to Wenger (1998), participation and engagement is not an absolute, but rather employees will be on a trajectory towards participation or non-participation that can be negotiated through economies of meaning or realized through identification. In the interview data we identified multiple instances of fostering participation or non-participation. Sense making model conceptualizes how buy-in can be fostered through engagement, imagination and alignment, for instance by "having ones ideas adopted" (engagement) or a vicarious experience (utilizing the imagination). According to Wenger (1998), participation and engagement is not an absolute, but rather employees will be on a trajectory towards participation or non-participation that can be negotiated through economies of meaning or realized through identification.

Getting people to take part and be engaged
• Check your strategic initiative for ways of fostering participation
• Listen to people’s ideas and involve them in the process
• Align organisational and personal goals
• Actively take into account the interplay between people and artifacts
  • Let the people side facilitate the understanding of the artifacts and vice versa
  • Identify brokers throughout the organisation
• Create a shared understanding by connecting visual cues, and artefacts with people through events, workshops, meetings etc.