

The CEO Refresher

... brain food for business!

Transforming Vision Into Value

by Renate Rooney

You have spent countless hours with your leadership team developing a vision that you believe will propel your organization to the next level and give you a significant competitive advantage. Now the real work begins.

How do you take this vision and transform it into a tangible reality that delivers true value to all key stakeholders? The answer...Integrate your people, processes and technology so that everyone and everything is moving the company toward its vision.

Companies that make the commitment to do this work will find it worth the effort when their business starts reaping the rewards of successful strategic execution.

Common Challenges

Challenges associated with transforming a company vision into a company reality include:

- **Executive abandonment**

Many executive teams mistakenly believe that once they have defined a vision for the company, it is up to management to execute it. But many managers fail to buy into a company vision because they cannot see what's in it for them and their teams.

- **Individuals and departments function as silos**

Many organizations operate as several separate silos instead of as one well-oiled machine. Silos can be functionally based or initiative based. These silos form and multiply because of conflicting agendas, minimal resources and mismanaged communications.

- **Undocumented and/or non-integrated processes**

Many companies do not define and document repeatable, measurable processes that support their strategies. Instead, work evolves informally over time. If employees change, the way that work is executed changes with them. This scenario creates an instability that can cripple an organization, as its success depends on the work style and approach of the employees doing the work. A lack of process integration can cause, errors, rework, delays, finger-pointing, low morale and, ultimately, the loss of revenue.

- **Metrics measure the wrong things**

How you measure progress in your travel from vision to value is important. If you measure success according to antiquated internal metrics and not with a customer focus, your vision will be more difficult to achieve.

- **IT applications fail to meet company needs**

As a company sets a direction and moves towards its vision, technology has to keep pace with operational changes, information needs and process requirements. It also has to be user friendly and easy to maintain and update.

- **Corporate culture does not support necessary changes**

Moving toward a vision requires incredible effort, drive and focus. It also requires organizational changes that affect operations, human resources, technology, sales and customer service. If your corporate culture resists change and teams cannot embrace the organization's new strategy, your vision will remain just that - a vision.

- **Unrealistic expectations**

Creating and executing a company vision across an entire organization is a huge undertaking. Setting realistic time frames and goals and taking the necessary time to build trust and teamwork around the vision is critical for success.

- **Miscommunication, lack of communication**

Consistent, relevant communication to all key stakeholders in your organization helps motivate people to move toward the company vision. Many organizations communicate well when launching an initiative, but they often fail to maintain a consistent communications effort.

Set the Stage for Forward Motion - Aligning People, Process and Technology

Getting people, processes and technology integrated successfully involves planning and patience. And your organization will succeed only if it commits to communicate often, communicate fully and communicate honestly. Communications is the thread that weaves through the entire alignment process.

Prepare Your People

The success of any change initiative, such as introducing a company vision and moving it toward a reality, depends on preparing your people for it. Studies show that up to 90% of associates don't understand their company's business strategy and how it relates to their day-to-day activities.

Executing a vision requires that the organization's leaders get employees on board and engaged. How should your leadership team engage your employees?

1. **Conduct a strategy review; develop goals, objectives and an action plan.**

Review the vision and strategy with employees to gain their insight and ensure they understand the company's direction. Based on the strategy, engage key employees to help establish objectives, realistic goals and supporting tactical plans with measurable milestones and timeframes. Keep them limited, too many and the organization will lose focus.

2. **Clearly define roles and responsibilities.**

As tactical plans are created, make sure the roles and responsibilities of each individual position, team, department and division in executing and supporting the company vision are clearly defined.

3. **Review progress regularly.**

Hold regular company meetings to review progress from the company perspective as well as the individual departments.

Executing strategy takes commitment from people at all levels, from executive management on down. Breaking down corporate strategy across the organization so it is directly relevant at each level - corporate, department, team and individual - helps everyone to focus on the organization's key activities. Companies that recognize and embrace this level of collaboration strengthen their chances of success.

Define and Integrate Key Processes

Without effective processes, an organization cannot deliver on its strategic objectives. How effective are your processes? Do they support your strategy while meeting your customers' needs? Do your employees understand your processes and the expectations and accountabilities of their specific roles?

If you answered *no* to one or more of these questions, your processes need work before your vision can become a reality. To ensure a higher level of success, try the following:

1. **Support process changes at the executive level.**

Commit your time and energy to champion the work. Provide the leadership, guidance and support your team needs.

2. **Create a process team.**

The process team should consist of cross-functional subject matter experts who are high performing, objective, creative and serve as change leaders.

3. **Identify and concentrate on key processes.**

To identify these core processes of the organization, it is better to view processes from the enterprise level versus vertical business areas such as operations, finance, marketing, etc. These processes usually number less than a dozen and in many cases should be identified from the customer's point of view. Examples may include: Product Development or Order to Cash.

4. **Define the future desired state of the business.**

To align processes with strategic objectives, a clear picture of the company's vision must be communicated and understood by all.

Technology's Key Role

Technology is not the solution but rather a key enabler to aligning your people and processes with your strategies. Immediate access to high-quality information is critical to an

organization's success.

Technology allows you to put the right business information in the hands of everyone in the organization, providing everyone with the ability to make fact-based decisions in a quick manner. It provides the means for information flow to extend past your four walls and allow you to better understand the needs of your customers, suppliers and partners.

Technology such as data warehouses and analytical reporting applications allow organizations to access business transactions systems (ERP, CRM, supply chain, performance management applications) and efficiently facilitate the deployment of performance metrics throughout the organization.

Like many companies, your organization may have invested substantial amounts of money in technology. Ask yourself these questions to see if it's been worth it.

- Have you realized the business value of your investments?
- Have your technology investments been fully implemented and integrated into the day-to-day operations of the company?
- Have you underestimated the degree of difficulty of getting the technology implemented?
- Have you failed to integrate the new IT systems with business operations?
- Has resistance to change been so great that it has prevented the initiative from progressing?

If you have not realized the business value of your investments, now is the time to do so.

Your business needs to work in concert with IT to realize the value of your technology. Using a disciplined project management methodology, develop and implement a solution that meets the needs of the customers and the business. Once the newly implemented systems are in place, you are ready to maximize the value of the technology.

The most successful companies are those that have integrated their people, processes and technology with their strategies. This integration allows them to create, maintain and sustain a competitive advantage - and to realize their vision.

Renate Rooney is founder and president of RCR Associates Inc. (www.rcr-associates.com), a management and operations consulting firm. She can be reached at 978.456.7377 or rrooney@rcr-associates.com .

Many more articles in [Creative Leadership](#) in The CEO Refresher Archives

The CEO Refresher ... brain food for business!

Copyright 2007 by Renate Rooney. All rights reserved.

[Current Issue](#) - [Archives](#) - [CEO Links](#) - [News](#) - [Conferences](#) - [Recommended Reading](#)

