C-SUITE MANAGEMENT SERIES – SEGMENT 9

Beyond Dashboards – Efficient, Effective and Time Sensitive Executive Execution, Monitoring and Control

Early on in my career as a junior executive, I pushed to upgrade our manufacturing and financial software. I did my homework and found a major vendor with a software solution that had a large user base and all the functionality I thought we needed. It was a tough sell internally since the COO had to defer the acquisition of some major equipment in order to support my necessary budget.

We acquired the system, bought into the use of the vendors experts along with their implementation plan and services. Bottomline, we did everything right and were told it would be a twelve-month project. Initially everything went as planned and my reports to executive management were positive.

Unfortunately, nine months into the project the wheels came off. While we were able to properly configure and launch the manufacturing functionality, we discovered it did not work in the type of environment we were operating in. The experts told us that the only fix to the issue would be to incur the cost of customizing the software and significantly extend the execution timeline.

When I discussed with the experts how to present these new found issues to executive management, the recommendation I received was that - They should understand since this is not uncommon when implementing such a major software initiative. Therefore, as senior management, if they are truly committed to the project, they need to move forward.

To this day I can remember my response to the experts – If you think that I am going to tell executive management, who committed significant company resources to this project, spent substantial amounts of money for the purchase of what is supposed to be the best software solution, implementation methodology, and experts, that a failure of the project would be the result of a lack of their commitment, you are out of your mind.

Fortunately, I took the time to perform what I would come to call a Disconnect Analysis, and discovered that we could reconfigure the system without any major programming and solve the challenges.

This allowed me to avoid having a ridiculous conversation with executive management. Instead, I was able point out to them that while the project would be slightly delayed, we were able to obtain the required functionality in our environment even though the software really was not structured to handle our type of conditions.

Obviously, in retrospect, if we would have been using Dynamic Execution and performed a proper frontend disconnect analysis, we could have determined the issue and avoided the challenges.

Over the years I cannot even count the number of times I was in meetings where a strategic initiative was having these sorts of challenges and the C-Suite were asking tough questions.

While I could fill pages here with legitimate answers, inaccurate answers, clueless answers, justifications, apologies, and just plain excuses that were given, including by myself, I won't.

Instead, I will explain that Dynamic Execution and the other concepts, tools and methodologies discussed in this C-Suite Management Series provide the tools and a structure to not only quickly answer tough questions, but actually avoid the need to ask them in the first place.

It was through the struggles and challenges I personally had on both the executive side asking these sorts of questions and the person responsible trying to answer these sorts of questions that I realized there had to be a better way.

Even using the most sophisticated of available projected management tools, implementation methodologies, and the most talented of experts, the ability to obtain strategic initiative execution resulting in required objectives on time, at budget, with full functionality was filled with challenges and significant exposure to failure.

While in many applications the use of dashboards can represent a useful tool, the C-Suite monitoring and control of strategic initiative executions is not one of them. Nor are the occasional project update meetings reviewing the implementation and budget status under varying presentation and review structures, content, and C-Suite time commitment.

However, Dynamic Execution has built-in capability to easily understand, monitor, and control from the beginning to end, the successful execution of an objective and its associated strategic initiative.

Built-In Information Platform

Under Dynamic Execution, the goal is to provide the C-Suite an information platform that, in a time efficient context, provides easy to understand data of all of the dynamics, critical factors, and exposures associated with the execution of a strategy that is expected to successfully result in the establish objective.

First Dynamic Execution incorporates built-in exposure analysis that goes well beyond the typical traditional functionality analysis used in the selection of a strategic initiative.

The exposure analysis used in the selection of the strategy results in a comprehensive and clear documentation of:

- Disconnects, Critical Factors, and Assumptions
- Functionality Tradeoffs and "When Not If" considerations
- Potential Risk Factors
- Cash and Budget Considerations
- Financial Validation of Expected Results.

This documentation provides a straightforward understandable overview and analysis of the complexity, challenges, and effort required to successfully execute the strategic initiative. No matter how good the functionality derived from a selected strategy is at meeting the goals of an objective, it is this information that provides a true reflection of the reality of what it will take to execute the strategy.

This information provides executive management and the rest of the organization an extremely powerful tool to pragmatically assess what it will really take to execute the strategy and therefore, the real likelihood of success.

Strictly from a C-Suite perspective, reviewing this documentation becomes a time efficient straightforward approach to understanding and questioning the thought process and dynamics associated with a selected strategy. Given that this level of analysis should be performed for each individual alternative strategy under consideration, it also provides the capability to quickly determine and potentially challenge the whys behind the final selection.

Built-In Monitoring and Control

Under Dynamic Execution, the goal is to provide the C-Suite a time efficient built-in system for the monitoring and control of actual conditions versus critical factors and assumptions so as to immediately recognize, assess, and address exposures during the strategic execution.

A major component of Dynamic Execution is the continuous monitoring, analysis, and feedback of actual conditions to strategy, disconnect, and assumption criteria. For each task and the overall selected strategy, there is a documentation of the specific conditions, critical requirements, and assumptions to be used as monitoring and feedback criteria. These criteria are then used to establish monitoring integration points within the operational Feedback Loop structure.

Feedback Loops support the timely and immediate bidirectional communication for the monitoring, analysis, financial validation, and adjustments required during the execution of the initiative. When the monitoring of actual conditions against feedback criteria indicates a potential issue, this information is immediately communicated for analysis including a possible financial revalidation.

This analysis can result in various alternative actions including the possible modification of tasks and/or the selected strategy.

From both a C-Suite and organizational perspective, the obvious benefits of this built-in monitoring and control structure are the immediate availability of the status, issues, and challenges associated with a strategic execution. In addition, the information and analysis are based upon actual quantifiable data that can be easily and directly traced back to the critical criteria, assumptions, and analysis used during the selection of the strategy.

This provides the C-Suite with an ability to continuously and efficiently monitor and understand the status and dynamics of a strategic execution based upon credible information.

Built-In Expanded Execution Capabilities

Under Dynamic Execution, the goal is to provide the C-Suite a built-in capability to increase the availability of strategic execution capacity through reduced execution timelines, blended strategic and operational activities, and Dynamic Scheduling.

The dynamic aspect of Dynamic Execution inherently supports a built-in capability to reduce the timelines associated with strategic executions. From Advance Critical Factor/Assumption Testing, to the laser focus on actual disconnects, to the power of assumption monitoring and Feedback Loops, there exists the opportunity to eliminate avoidable time requirements.

A blended environment of continuously executing strategic initiative activities with day-to-day operational activities also automatically represents the significant benefit of intrinsic constantly available strategic execution capacity. In addition, this blended environment supports Dynamic Scheduling and Staff Empowerment that infuses major efficiency into the execution process.

There are two major benefits derived from these efficiencies and reduced timelines. First, the shorter the timeline the less potential risk of failure due to perpetually changing conditions.

Second, shorter timelines not only provide capacity to execute more initiatives in the same period of time, but also increase the ability to manage and execute multiple initiatives simultaneously. This in turn has the benefit of creating an ability to better manage "When Not If" challenges.

Conclusion

I hope it is obvious that these built-in capabilities represent a new set opportunity for improved C-Suite strategic execution management, control, and involvement. Involvement that is both effective and time efficient in providing the ultimate value of significantly increasing the accomplishment of their organizational Objectives.