



# Is Your Company Stuck? 10 Simple Strategies to Move Forward

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Every year, I conduct numerous strategic planning workshops. Using an audience response polling system, I ask participants to rate how much of their last strategic plan has actually been accomplished. Less than 10% of the audiences report that they have “accomplished everything we set out to do and have been wildly successful.” Additionally, when asking companies to “grade” their strategic accomplishments, even high performing organizations rate themselves only a “B” or “B+” on average, indicating that SOMETHING in the plan was left undone.

If your answer to any of the following questions is YES, your company may be “stuck”...

- Does your company have one or more goals or initiatives that didn't happen (or meet your expectations) over the last year?
- Are you or others frustrated because you “can't get to” certain things or “you can't afford it?”
- Are you or others frustrated because you never seem to deal with “the elephant in the room?”

So what can you do to move forward? Here are my “Top 10” simple strategies to help you keep moving:

**10. Look in the mirror** - Often when things are stuck, everyone or everything else is to blame. Sometimes, we are our own worst enemies for failing to recognize where we are holding things back.

**9. Schedule “evaluation” time** - Many of us are moving so fast that we don't take the time to stop, step back and evaluate what we are doing. Periodically, at least quarterly, set aside time to talk about what is working, what is not working and strategies to

## Top Ten Strategies to Move Your Company Forward

10. Look in the Mirror
9. Schedule “Evaluation” Time
8. Smooth “Ruffled Feathers”
7. Encourage Vetting Concerns
6. Empower Change Facilitators
5. Evaluate “Working Relationships”
4. Question Management “Systems”
3. Question Capability
2. Question Capacity
1. Challenge Assumptions

improve.

**8. Smooth “ruffled feathers”** - Change is hard for many, and sometimes emotions stand in the way of progress. Acknowledge issues, separate the people from the process, and help people see the possibilities moving forward.

**7. Encourage vetting concerns** -It is important to voice all concerns and address them through the planning and implementation process, but don't let the concerns stop the process.

**6. Empower change facilitators/project managers** - Sometimes things are stuck because no one is in charge of the process to move things forward or writing down project plans and adhering to schedules.

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Put someone in charge of being the keeper of the “to do” list, even if it means giving them some training in project management and/or process facilitation.

**5. Evaluate “working relationships”** – Teams are created with individuals who have complimentary skills to solve a problem or determine a work plan. If the individuals have never worked together before or do not have the “blessing” from their supervisors, efforts may be in vain. Individuals figure out how to get the job done, but if one of them leaves the job or the company, the effort is not sustained because the working relationships were not “institutionalized.” Ensure that the cross-functional work teams and processes that you need to get important work accomplished endure.

**4. Question management “systems”** – As organizations grow, many don’t invest in the systems required for continued growth. This includes clarifying appropriate supervisory levels and “span of control,” documenting policies and procedures, training managers to problem solve and support employee training and development in ways that honor the company’s core values. The lack of these systems will show up in increased turnover and middle management burnout.

**3. Question capability** – Sometimes new things don’t get done because individual(s) don’t have the technical skills to do them. I see this in nonprofits where “volunteers” attempt to provide technical expertise an agency doesn’t have, and often don’t have the necessary skills themselves. Organizations are better off finding a volunteer or consultant who can help them assess the technical skills of their staff or hiring a consultant who is able to do the work in a fraction of the time. This may seem like it costs more in the short run, but will save time and resources over the long run.

**2. Question capacity** – Sometimes things don’t get done because there is no time to do them. Already busy people (at least the ones I know) are not waking up and working between 2 and 4 am to get important not urgent things done. However, people may be spending time doing things that could be eliminated. Look at how you spend your time and re-prioritize your work to get the most out of your current capacity.

And my #1 simple strategy to help you keep moving forward is:

**1. Challenge assumptions** – Organizations often “stay stuck” because there are hidden commitments and assumptions that underlie behavior. One client recently stated “we can’t afford it are the words we use right before we spend a lot of time and money on the wrong things.” Some commitments and assumptions are based on fears or conditions that no longer exist. Creating an environment to identify the “stuck places” and call them out, will start to catalyze change.

If you are struggling, getting some “outside perspective” from a third party facilitator can help you identify your “stuck places” and more quickly identify an action plan to move forward.



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