THE DRIVERS AND INHIBITORS OF STRATEGY EXECUTION

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature reveals that the ability to execute strategy is more important than the quality of the strategy itself. Researchers indicate that despite the importance of the strategy execution process, far more research has been carried out into strategy formulation rather than into strategy execution. The literature shows that executives fail to execute up to 70 percent of their strategic initiatives, this research set out to explore the drivers and inhibitors of executing strategy.

This research involved a qualitative study which consisted of in-depth, face-to-face interviews. A total of 25 executives were interviewed from a large South African financial institution. Content and frequency analysis were used to extract key constructs from the data obtained during the interview process.

The outcome of this research has resulted in drivers and inhibitors critical to effective strategy execution being explicitly defined. The findings have been used to develop an empirically based framework which highlights six key factors which must be considered simultaneously in order to successfully execute strategy. These are: obtaining top executive commitment, generating engagement at all levels, communicating a clear, tangible strategy, cascading accountabilities, selecting the best people to drive key initiatives, and the ability to monitor and track progress.
DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

..................................................

Thershen Chetty

28 September 2010
DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my wife Sajidah and daughter Tatiana. You have and will continue to inspire me in our journey towards the pursuit of happiness.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people for the significant contribution they have made in helping me complete this research:

My supervisor, Professor Margie Sutherland, thank you for your valuable input, encouragement and excellent time management skills!

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My parents, Ivan and Vasantha Chetty, thank you for showing me the importance of having a good education from a very young age.

Lastly, to my wife Sajidah and daughter Tatiana, thank you for all the sacrifices you have made over the past two years and for always being there when I needed you the most.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

Successful CEOs understand the need for a sound business strategy and invest significant time, effort, and money in strategy development. But the real value of strategy can only be recognised through execution - the ability to execute strategy is more important than the quality of the strategy itself (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Martin, 2010).

While this may run counter to deeply entrenched beliefs, the new emphasis on execution reveals a simple truth: it doesn't matter how good the plan is if you can't make it happen. Most companies have the know-how and insight to create the right strategy - executing it, however, is another matter. The pace of change itself poses many obstacles to successful strategy execution - often before the planning process is even finished, that well-crafted plan is obsolete. More important, many companies lack the tools for turning strategy into an execution process that guarantees accountability and yet is adaptable to change (Kaplan & Norton, 2001).

The failure to execute strategy results in 70 percent of CEO dismissals (Charan & Colvin, 1999). Successful CEOs know that strategy gets you to the starting line, but its execution that gets you to the finish line (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). In The Conference Board’s list of the top 10 CEO challenges in 2007, “execution excellence”, ranked number one worldwide. Respondents said execution is a bigger challenge for them than
is risk management, staying on top of market trends, or even ensuring top-line growth. The significant statement “... great strategy, shame about the implementation ...” (Okumus and Roper, 1998, p.218) captures the essence of the problem.

Strategy execution suffers from a general lack of academic consideration (Edgar and Taylor, 1996; Noble, 1999; Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002; Otley, 2003, Raps, 2005). Okumus and Roper (1998) further observe that despite the importance of the strategy execution process, far more research has been carried out into strategy formulation rather than into strategy execution, while Otley (2003) concludes that literature is dominated by a focus on long range planning and strategy content rather than the actual execution of strategies, on which little is written or researched. Reasons put forward for this apparent lack of research effort include that the field of strategy execution is considered to be less attractive as a subject area, and that researchers often underestimate the difficulties involved in investigating such a topic – especially as it is thought to be fundamentally lacking in conceptual models (Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002).

A well formulated strategy, great product, or breakthrough technology can put an organisation on the competitive map, but only solid execution can keep it there. Organisations have to be able to deliver on their intent. Unfortunately, the majority of companies aren’t very good at it. In a recent survey (Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008), employees at three out of every five companies rated their organisation weak at execution – that is, when asked if they agreed with the statement “Important strategic and operational decisions are quickly translated into action,” the majority answered no.
Many organisations are able to generate innovative strategic plans, but few are able to successfully execute these plans. Some researchers note that organisations fail to execute up to 70% of their strategic initiatives (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Miller, 2002). Unsuccessful strategy execution has a tremendous financial impact on an organisation’s profits and competitive advantage. Research by the Corporate Strategy Board has found that as much as 37% of the potential value of a strategy is lost during strategy execution (Management Today, 2008).

In order for companies to be successful, the executives of today must be able to take the goals set for their organisations and turn them into results. However, a number of executives find difficulty in terms of closing the gap between goals and results – they often create great plans but are unable to deliver (Bossidy & Charan, 2002). The transition from idea to reality or stated differently, the link between strategy and operations is complex. Converting a strategy into results usually requires the coordination of disparate people and processes through activities including but not limited to strategy formulation, strategic and operational planning, budgeting, talent management, initiative management, forecasting and technology (Pateman, 2008).

The literature suggests that successful strategy execution is difficult to achieve for six key reasons (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Miller, 2002; Pateman, 2008; Hrebiniak, 2008; Franken, Edwards & Lambert, 2009). The first reason is the persistent pressure from stakeholders for greater profitability, requiring executives to re-define their strategy more frequently. This demands that strategies must be executed successfully within increasingly shorter time periods (MacDiarmid, Moukanas & Nehls, 1998).
The second reason is associated with the increased complexity of organisations. Any strategic execution is likely to affect the people, processes, structures, technologies, suppliers, and business partners that work within and across multiple functional, organisational, and geographical boundaries. Hence strategic executions are becoming highly complex, resulting in increased risk of failure due to oversight (Abell, 1999; Johnson-Cramer, Parise & Cross, 2007).

The third reason is the difficult challenge faced by executives to balance the demands of successfully executing complex change programmes with the demands of managing day-to-day business performance (Abell, 1999).

The fourth reason is the low levels of participation of a large number of managers across all functions at an early stage of executing strategy. Managers often see these early stages as bureaucratic, unnecessary, and delaying real action. However, such involvement is required to obtain commitment to change and for the development of effective execution plans (Balogun, 2006).

The fifth reason is the difficulty of securing the required resources to execute the strategy (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003).

The sixth reason is that executives know more about strategy formulation than execution. They are trained to plan, not execute plans (Hrebiniak, 2008).

In summary, successful executives spend a great deal of their time on strategy execution. They realise that executing strategy is just as important, if not more important, than formulating strategy. They know that organisational performance
invariably suffers when insufficient time and effort are spent on executing strategy, or when time and effort are exhausted on inappropriate execution actions.

1.2 Objectives of the research

Execution represents a disciplined process or a logical set of connected activities that enables an organisation to take a strategy and make it work (Hrebiniak, 2008). Without a careful, planned approach to execution, strategic goals cannot be achieved.

The successful execution of strategy is a well-recognised requirement for an organisation’s survival (Kaplan & Norton, 2001), however, most organisations continue to struggle with the management of strategy execution. A simple and systematic approach to monitor and control the execution of strategic goals is still elusive (Frolick & Ariyachandra, 2006). It is worthwhile to note that for the purposes of this research, the terms “strategy execution” and “strategy implementation” are used interchangeably.

This study will attempt to develop a practical logical framework based on empirical evidence to guide strategy execution decisions and actions of South African executives resulting in a set of fundamental building blocks that executives can use. In order to achieve this aim, it is recognised that a number of intermediate objectives will need to be addressed. These objectives include an understanding of the nature and challenge of strategy execution, more specifically the main drivers and inhibitors of strategy execution will be explored in detail. The central theme in this study will revolve around the following question: *If strategy execution is the key, then what is the key to strategy execution?*
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed in this chapter defines and describes the following with regards to strategy execution:

- What is strategy and why is it important
- The managerial process of formulating and executing strategy
- The importance of strategy execution
- The inhibitors of strategy execution
- The drivers of strategy execution
- Frameworks to execute strategy

The researcher will attempt to show that the literature has focused on many different aspects of strategy execution and offers partial problem solutions as a result. Thus it is suggested that there is a lack of agreed frameworks such that the current state-of-play of strategy implementations resembles a somewhat disjointed knowledge base, with some consensus but many important gaps remaining to be filled in.
2.2 What is Strategy and Why is it Important

A company’s strategy is management’s action plan for running the business and conducting operations. The formulation of a strategy represents a managerial commitment to pursue a particular set of actions (Markides, 2004) in growing the business, attracting and satisfying customers, competing successfully, conducting operations, and improving the company’s financial and market performance. A clear and logical strategy is management’s roadmap to competitive advantage, its game plan for satisfying customers and improving financial performance (Porter, 1996).

Formulating and executing strategy are core management functions. Among all the things managers do, nothing affects a company’s ultimate success or failure more fundamentally than how well its management team charts the company’s direction, develops competitively effective strategic moves and business approaches, and pursues what needs to be done internally to produce good day in, day out strategy execution and operational excellence (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008).

A winning strategy fits the circumstances of a company’s external situation and its internal resource strengths and competitive capabilities, builds competitive advantage, and enhances company performance. Whether a company wins or loses in the marketplace is directly attributable to the quality of a company’s strategy and the proficiency with which the strategy is executed (Miller, Eisenstat & Foote, 2002).
2.3 The Managerial Process of Formulating and Executing Strategy

The managerial process of formulating and executing a company’s strategy consists of five interrelated and integrated phases (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008):

- **Phase 1** – Developing a strategic vision of where the company needs to head and what its future product/market/customer technology focus should be
- **Phase 2** – Setting objectives and using them as yardsticks for measuring the company’s performance and progress
- **Phase 3** – Crafting a strategy to achieve the objectives and move the company along the strategic course that management has charted
- **Phase 4** - Executing the chosen strategy efficiently and effectively
- **Phase 5** – Evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustments in the company’s long term direction, objectives, strategy, or execution in light of actual experience, changing conditions, new ideas, and new opportunities.

Figure 1 displays this five-phase process.
The better conceived a company’s strategy and the more competently it is executed, the more likely that the company will be a standout performer in the marketplace (Collins, 2001). The focus of this research revolves around developing an empirical framework that executives could use to assist them in successfully executing strategy.

**2.4 The importance of strategy execution**

Strategy execution is an integral component of the strategic management process and is viewed as the process that turns the formulated strategy into a series of actions and then results to ensure that the vision, mission, strategy and strategic objectives of the organisation are successfully achieved as planned (Hrebiniak, 2008; Thompson, Strickland, & Gamble, 2008; Bossidy & Charan, 2002).
Research indicates that strategy execution, rather than strategy formulation alone, is a key requirement for superior business performance (Holman 1999; Flood, Dromgoole, Carroll & Gordon 2000; Kaplan & Norton 2001; Hrebiniak, 2008). Additionally, there is a growing recognition that the most important problems in the field of strategic management are not related to strategy formulation, but rather to strategy execution (Speculand, 2009), and that the high failure rate of organisational initiatives in a dynamic business environment is primarily due to poor execution of new strategies (Kaplan & Norton, 2008; Jooste & Fourie, 2009).

2.5 The inhibitors of strategy execution

Previous studies (Alexander, 1991; Kotter, 2007; Strabel ,1996; Eisenhardt, 2002; Okumus ,2003; Atkinson, 2006; Hrebiniak, 2008; Speculand, 2009) established that the main inhibitors to the execution of strategies include execution taking more time than planned, lack of communication, lack of coordination and support from other levels of management, resistance from lower levels , lack of control systems and execution being viewed as a set of discrete, isolated tasks.

Furthermore, executives need to balance the demands of successfully executing complex change programmes with the demands of managing today’s business performance. In situations where management is strongly tied to reward schemes based on today’s performance, it is challenging to achieve active participation for the creation of tomorrow’s organisation. However, as a result of the relentless pressure from stakeholders for continual high performance, executives cannot afford to dedicate
their time, effort and resources to one set of demands exclusively (Franken, Edwards & Lambert, 2009).

Often, as a result of the large number of concurrent change programmes, it is difficult to secure the resources to execute the strategy as most of the organisation’s resources will already be allocated. Furthermore, as such resources are limited, executives will compete fiercely for them, and once within their control, will endeavour to own them to secure their own goals (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003).

Strategy execution always involves more people than strategy formulation. This presents problems. Communication down the organisation or across different functions becomes a challenge. Linking strategic objectives with day-to-day objectives at different organisational levels and locations becomes a challenging task. The larger the number of people involved, the greater the challenge to execute strategy effectively (Hrebiniak, 2008).

Another problem is that some top level managers believe that strategy execution is below them, something best left to lower level employees. This view holds that one group of manager’s does innovative, challenging work, and then hands over the plan to lower levels to implement. If things go wrong, the lower level employees are held responsible. Execution demands ownership at all levels of management. The execution tasks, jobs, and responsibilities vary across levels, but they are interdependent and important. Execution is a key responsibility of all managers, not something that lower level employees do or worry about (Kaplan & Norton, 2008; Hrebiniak, 2008).
Notable barriers to successful strategy execution about which there appears to be a degree of agreement include Beer and Eisenstat’s (2000), six silent killers of strategy execution. These comprise: a top-down/laissez-faire senior management style; unclear strategic intentions and conflicting priorities; an ineffective senior management team; poor vertical communication; weak co-ordination across functions, businesses or borders; and inadequate down-the-line leadership skills development (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000).

Corboy and O’Corrbui (1999), meanwhile, identify the deadly sins of strategy execution as: lack of understanding of how the strategy should be executed; staff not fully appreciating the strategy; unclear individual responsibilities in the change process; difficulties and obstacles not acknowledged, recognised or acted upon; and ignoring the day-to-day business imperatives.

A survey of executives from 200 global companies with sales of more than US $500 million, identified several inhibitors to strategy execution (Muell & Shani, 2008):

- One of the most significant sources of value erosion is the lack of resources – resources are either inadequate or unavailable when needed. In South Africa inadequate or insufficient human resources contribute significantly to an organisation’s challenge of successfully implementing strategies. Due to the skills shortage, it is not only difficult to recruit the right talent, but also to retain that talent. High executive turnover sees too many key managers depart before a strategy is fully executed.
• In many instances the strategy is poorly communicated and as the strategy is
cascaded down the organisation, critical issues become lost in translation –
causing misalignment between strategic goals and operational activities and also
a horizontal misalignment and confusion between departments and divisions.

• If the actions required for strategy execution are not clearly defined, there is
insufficient focus on critical strategy initiatives as well as a lack of commitment
from key individuals. Furthermore, accountabilities are unclear and managers
are not held accountable for strategy execution.

• The organisational culture is not aligned to the strategy and silos and culture
block strategy execution efforts.

• Reward and incentives systems are not aligned to strategic goals or are
ineffective to retain key executives. Often performance related to the strategy is
not adequately measured and performance systems are not linked to overall
strategic goals.

• Poor leadership by senior management erodes the potential value of a strategic
plan which leads to a lack of buy-in from lower level managers and individual
employees.

Additionally, Aaltonen and Ikavalko (2002), recognise the role of middle managers,
arguing they are the key actors who have a pivotal role in strategic communication.
Furthermore, Bartlett and Goshal (1996) talk about middle managers as threatened
silent resistors whose role needs to change more towards that of a coach, building
capabilities and providing support and guidance.
To summarise the significant forces inhibiting execution, key themes were extracted from the literature and documented in Table 1 below. This table provides a consolidated and high level overview of the main inhibitors of strategy execution by different authors who have researched this topic.

**Table 1: MAIN INHIBITORS OF STRATEGY EXECUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inhibiting Force</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Execution takes more time than planned</td>
<td>(Speculand, 2009; Hrebiniak, 2008; Alexander, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>(Hrebiniak, 2008; Hanely, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of coordination</td>
<td>(Beer &amp; Eisenstat, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance from lower levels</td>
<td>(Hanely, 2007; Okumus, 2003; Kotter, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of control systems</td>
<td>(Kaplan &amp; Norton, 2008; Atkinson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution viewed as isolated tasks</td>
<td>(Hrebiniak, 2008; Bossidy &amp; Charan, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>(Muell &amp; Shani, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge of building the future while running as-is</td>
<td>(Franken, Edwards &amp; Lambert, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution decisions pushed down to lower levels</td>
<td>(Speculand, 2009; Hrebiniak, 2008; Beer &amp; Eisenstat, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy not clear and actions not defined</td>
<td>(Kaplan &amp; Norton, 2008; Corboy &amp; O’Corrbui, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards and incentives not aligned to strategic goals</td>
<td>(Kaplan &amp; Norton, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor leadership</td>
<td>(Muell &amp; Shani, 2008; Beer &amp; Eisenstat, 2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.6 The drivers of strategy execution

From a strategic management perspective, research suggests that adopting and executing the right practices is essential to attaining world-class performance (Brown, 2007; Laugen, 2005). While research has investigated leading practices in determining strategic content, it is only recently that processes for executing strategy have begun to be examined (Brown and Blackmon, 2005; Ketokivi and Schroeder, 2004; Minarro-Viseras, 2005).

Strategy execution has been studied from a single management perspective such as project management (Minarro-Viseras, 2005) or as a component of performance management or strategic control (Chenhall, 2003; Langfield-Smith, 1997). Such studies have focused on single projects or initiatives, but practitioners typically work in a dynamic and complex environment where there are multiple initiatives being implemented (Dawson, 2003; Pettigrew, 2003).

Management approaches to strategy execution can be placed on a continuum with prescriptive planning at one end and process approaches at the other (Saunders, Mann, & Smith, 2008). Prescriptive planning involves moving from strategies to action planning, through the process of setting objectives and performance controls, allocating resources, and motivating employees (Mintzberg, 1994).

In contrast, the process approach emphasises that successful execution depends on people changing their behaviour (Saunders, Mann, & Smith, 2008). This involves changing the assumptions and routines of people in the organisation, including managers (Dawson & Palmer, 1995; Lorange, 1998; Miller, 2002). Many studies support
the process view, which focuses on managing the interpersonal and intragroup conflicts that can derive from defensive behaviours, personality differences and poor communication (Argyris, 1999; Balogun, 2006).

Beer and Nohria (2000) and Johnson and Scholes (2002) argue that the successful execution of strategy requires a combination of three critical elements taken from the prescriptive planning (hard) and process (soft) approaches. Two elements are from the planning approach: having appropriate organisational design and structure to execute strategy; and having appropriate resource allocation and control. The third critical element is managing change, from the process approach. It focuses on diagnosing barriers to change; managing political issues, communication, and changes to organisational routines (Kotter, 2007; Saunders, Mann, & Smith, 2008).

The balanced scorecard technique has also been linked to strategy execution (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). This technique aims to provide executives with a concise summary of the key success factors of a business, and to facilitate the alignment of business operations with the overall strategy (Okumus, 2003). The developers of the technique Kaplan and Norton (2001, 2008) suggested five principles:

- Translate the strategy to operational terms
- Align the organisation to the strategy
- Make strategy everyone’s job
- Make strategy a continual process
- Mobilise change through leadership
A number of recent studies on strategy execution identify similar factors driving execution based on the above principles. These key themes have been extracted from the literature and consolidated in Table 2 below which provides a high level overview of the key execution driving forces by different authors who have researched this topic.

Table 2: MAIN DRIVERS OF STRATEGY EXECUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving Force</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational structure and culture that is receptive to change</td>
<td>(Saunders, Mann, &amp; Smith, 2008; ; Beer &amp; Nohria, 2000; Alexander, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backing of senior executives</td>
<td>(Raps, 2005; Saunders, Mann, &amp; Smith, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of management control systems</td>
<td>(Zagotta &amp; Robinson, 2002; Kaplan &amp; Norton, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing skills for change</td>
<td>(Wery &amp; Waco, 2004; Johnson &amp; Scholes, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication activities</td>
<td>(Hrebiniak, 2008; Hanely, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment of employees to the company’s vision</td>
<td>(Higgins &amp; McAllaster, 2004; Bennet &amp; Bennet, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning execution</td>
<td>(Kaplan &amp; Norton, 2001, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick the best possible team</td>
<td>(Huselid, Beatty, &amp; Becker, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear assignment and responsibilities</td>
<td>(Raps, 2005; Hrebiniak, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution of middle management</td>
<td>(Noble, 1999; Raps, 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7 Frameworks to execute strategy

Although there are a number of frameworks used for strategic analysis and strategy development, such as SWOT, five forces and value chain analysis (Voss, 2005) relatively few models have been developed for strategy execution and been widely accepted by practitioners. Researchers have noted for more than a decade that no generally accepted or dominant framework has emerged for executing strategy at either
corporate or business operations levels (Minarro-Viseras, 2005; Noble, 1999; Okumus, 2003).

Researchers have identified many factors or variables that influence the outcome of strategy executions. Typical factors in frameworks of strategy executions proposed in the 1980s were organisational structure, culture, people, communication, control and outcome (Okumus, 2003; Reed & Buckley, 1988; Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986; Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1984; Waterman, 1980). These were the first execution frameworks to have appeared in the field of strategic management; however, none have subsequently been empirically tested.

While there were no studies found that benchmarked execution practices, studies of implementing leading practices in other functional areas of organisations have identified important cultural and organisational elements (Saunders, Mann & Smith, 2008). These include: leadership championing the implementation effort, market constraints, and recognising that deploying leading practices is dependent on resolving people, process and technology issues (Detert, 2000; Jarrar and Zairi, 2000; Prajogo and McDermott, 2005). Recent research suggests that linking manufacturing/operations strategy content and process aids strategy execution and improves performance (Brown, 2007; Kotha and Swamidass, 2000; Papke-Shields and Malhotra, 2001).

Recurring elements or constructs of strategy execution in the literature include: communication; people, alignment, the influence of organisational values, and learning. Frameworks of strategy execution based on empirical studies include many of the above factors, and have been produced by a number of researchers (Roth, 1991;
Hrebiniak, 1992; Schmelzer & Olsen, 1994; Feurer, 1995; Miller, 2002; Noble, 1999; Okumus, 2003; Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2002; Freedman, 2003). A limitation of many of these frameworks is their step by step approach in which execution is represented as a sequential process. Some researchers (Collins, 1998; Dawson, 2003; McAdam & Bailie, 2002) have questioned logical sequential frameworks of change for not reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of change initiatives.

Table 3 below provides a consolidated and high level overview of key findings from empirical research into strategy execution frameworks by different authors who have researched this topic as summarised by Saunders, Mann & Smith (2008).
Table 3: KEY FINDINGS FROM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH INTO STRATEGY EXECUTION FRAMEWORKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roth (1991)</td>
<td>Coordination; managerial philosophy; configuration; formalisation; centralisation; and integrating mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrebiniak (1992)</td>
<td>Leadership; facilitating global learning; developing global managers; matrix structure; and strategic alliances with external companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feurer (1995)</td>
<td>Cross functional teams, learning; organisational structure and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller (2002)</td>
<td>Backing; accessibility; cultural receptivity; priority; resource availability; structural facilitation and flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okumus (2001)</td>
<td>Multiple project implementation; organisational learning and working with external companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hacker (2001)</td>
<td>Communication; improvement infrastructure; identify drivers; develop action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaplan &amp; Norton (2001)</td>
<td>Clarifying and translating the vision and strategy; communication and linking; planning and target setting; and strategic feedback and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaltonen &amp; Ikavalko (2002)</td>
<td>Communication; the backing of senior management; developing management systems and skills for change; organisational structure and culture that is receptive to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedman (2003), Noble (1999)</td>
<td>Commitment of employees to the company’s vision; rewards and incentives; marketing orientation; alignment between execution factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Saunders, Mann & Smith (2008)
2.8 Literature review conclusion

Miller (2002), reports that organisations fail to implement more than 70% of their new strategic initiatives. Given the significance of this fact, the focus in the field of strategic management has now shifted from the formulation of strategy to its execution (Okumus, 2003). There are some commonly used frameworks such as SWOT and industry structure analysis for researchers and practising managers in the area of strategic formulation in strategic management (Porter, 1996). By contrast, there is no agreed upon and dominant framework in strategy execution (Minarro-Viseras, 2005; Okumus, 2003; Noble, 1999; Alexander, 1991). Concerning the above, Alexander (1991, p.74) has stated that:

“One key reason why execution fails is that practising executives, managers and supervisors do not have practical, yet theoretically sound, frameworks to guide their actions during execution. Without adequate models, they try to execute strategies without a good understanding of the multiple factors that must be addressed, often simultaneously, to make execution work.” Noble (1999, p.132) has also noted that:

“There is a significant need for detailed and comprehensive conceptual frameworks related to strategy execution. To date, execution research has been fairly fragmented due to a lack of clear frameworks on which to build.”

Furthermore Hrebiniak (2008) states that, executives need and benefit from a logical framework to guide execution decisions and actions. Without guidelines, execution becomes a maze. Without guidance, individuals do the things they think are important, often resulting in uncoordinated, divergent, even conflicting decisions and actions.
Without the benefit of a logical approach, execution fails because executives don’t know what steps to take and when to take them. Having a framework positively affects execution success; not having one leads to execution failure and frustration.

In summary, a review of the literature has revealed that a comprehensive execution framework based on empirical evidence has yet to be developed in the strategic management field and this research therefore aims to close this gap. The main objectives of this research is to identify and evaluate those factors that play a significant role in driving and inhibiting strategies, and to propose an empirical framework to explain and better understand complex issues of strategy execution.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary objective of this research is to develop from empirical evidence a practical framework that executives could employ to effectively execute strategy. To achieve the primary objective, the secondary objectives of this study are to investigate and analyse responses to the following research questions:

**Research Question 1**

*How difficult do executives find strategy execution relative to strategy planning?*

This question sought to understand the comparative level of difficulty experienced by executives during the strategy making, strategy executing process (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008) and furthermore identify the main reasons for this difference. The outcome of this question will assist in understanding the major reasons why executives find difficulty in terms of closing the gap between strategic goals and results.

**Research Question 2**

*What are the drivers of strategy execution and relative strength of each driving force?*

This question sought to understand what is considered by executives to be the key drivers or enablers for successful execution of strategy. Key themes have been extracted from the literature and consolidated in Table 2 which provides a high level overview of the key forces driving execution by different authors who have researched
this topic. The outcome of this question will assist to highlight and better understand the important drivers for successful execution as ranked by the respondents.

**Research Question 3**

*What are the inhibitors of strategy execution and relative strength of each inhibiting force?*

This question sought to understand what is considered by executives to be the key inhibitors or barriers to the successful execution of strategy. Key themes have been extracted from the literature and consolidated in Table 3 which provides a high level overview of the key forces inhibiting execution by different authors who have researched this topic. The outcome of this question will assist to highlight and better understand the significant inhibitors (forces driving failure) to successful execution as ranked by the respondents.

**Research Question 4**

*How should executives optimise the execution of strategy?*

This question sought to understand the critical factors that executives need to focus on in order to optimally execute strategy. Key themes have been extracted from the literature and consolidated in Table 1 which provides a high level overview of strategy execution frameworks aligned by different authors who have researched this topic. Based on empirical evidence from this research, the outcome of this question will assist in developing a simple, practical, yet effective framework to execute strategy.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Method

The stated research questions were addressed by utilising a qualitative exploratory method, the main strategy being in-depth interviews and the focus of inquiry being executives. Marshall and Rossman (2006) recommend the qualitative methodology approach for the following types of research:

- Research that elicits tacit knowledge and subjective understandings and interpretations
- Research that delves in depth into complexities and process
- Research on informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organisations
- Research that seeks to explore where and why policy and local knowledge and practice are at odds

Furthermore, this study focused on executives lived experience – human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood. Because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive words are involved, there was a need to understand the deeper perspectives that were captured through face-to-face interaction (Morse & Richards, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to uncover and describe the executive’s perspectives on events; that is, the subjective view is what mattered. Qualitative, in-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events (Mason, 2002), there is
respect for how the participant frames and structures the responses. This design, in fact, was based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective) (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The method planned for data collection was directly related to the type of information sought. The researcher’s ontological position suggested that executives knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which the research questions were designed to explore (Mason, 2002).

4.2 Population

The population of relevance consisted of executives who have tried to execute strategy within the last 12 months. The Hay job grading system was used to define roles: 1142+ points on Hay defined a role as an executive one (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005).

4.3 Sample and unit of analysis

This study focused on the techniques and behaviours that executives could employ to execute strategy. A judgmental non probability sampling technique (Zikmund, 2003) was utilised. The associated sample size was 25 and the details of the individuals that made up the sample are listed in Appendix 2.
The unit of analysis under study was the perceptions and experience of executives who have recently tried to execute strategy. The scope of the research was limited to executives in a large South African financial institution for the reasons listed below:

- Convenience and accessibility – the organisation has approximately 700 executives
- Consistency – a common set of strategic goals is defined throughout the organisation

Furthermore, the scope of the research is described by the definitions of the following relevant terms:

- Executives – these are managers that have a significant leadership role in the organisation. They are accountable for the efficient and effective day-to-day running of the organisation, have decision making authority and may but do not necessarily report to the board of directors.
- Large South African – A publicly listed company on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE) in 2010 and has greater than 10 000 employees.

4.4 Interview Schedule

The construction of the interview schedule consisted of the following elements in order to meet the research objectives (refer to Appendix 1 for interview schedule):
• Ordinal scale questions – a Likert scale with verbal and numerical response descriptors is used. Rating scales are one of the most widely used tools research and typically require the respondent to select their answer from a range of verbal statements. The range of possible responses for a scale can vary, however, 5 point formats are the most common (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and was utilised in this case. According to Zikmund (2003) the method above is perceived to be popular for measuring attitudes as it is relatively easy to administer.

• Fixed-sum questions, to force participants to consider trade-offs (Churchill, 1986).

• Open-ended test questions – to allow free association of concepts and ideas

• Ratio-scale questions – to collect educational information

Furthermore the “Critical incident” and “Force Field Analysis” techniques were incorporated into the interview schedule to better understand, unpack and associate the drivers and inhibitors of strategy execution. These two techniques are briefly described in subsequent sections.

4.4.1 Critical Incident Technique

Critical Incident Technique (CIT) provides organisations with both a starting point and a process for advancing organisational development through a learning experience. CIT is universally applicable because it provides a generic roadmap to identify and resolve organisational problems (Davis, 2006). A critical incident is an observable form of action or form of expression, which is complete enough in itself to allow inferences to be drawn (Davis, 2006).
When using CIT the respondent is required to relate in narrative form a positive or negative experience. Kemppainen (2000) described the method as a flexible, qualitative research technique used to solve practical problems. CIT enables participants to provide details of their experiences as they perceive them, rather than them being asked specifically only on selected areas that are identified by others. In this study, respondents were free to describe their experiences and unreservedly express their feelings, providing a narrative concerning a strategy execution encounter.

4.4.2 Force Field Analysis

Kurt Lewin was a German social psychologist, best known for “Force Field Analysis” using force field diagrams (Brager & Holloway, 1992). By carrying out the analysis you can plan to strengthen the forces supporting a decision, and reduce the impact of opposition to it. There are always driving forces and inhibiting forces to a decision. The key to good decision-making is figuring out whether the driving forces outweigh the inhibiting forces before action is taken.

4.5 Interview Schedule Pre-Testing

The interview schedule design phase was followed by a pilot phase that tested the effectiveness of the interview to extract the information of interest. The pilot phase involved subjecting the constructed interview schedule to pre-testing by carrying out trial runs with two representative respondents selected on a convenience basis. The pre-test process allowed the researcher to determine if the respondents had any difficulty understanding the interview instructions and design (Zikmund, 2003). During the pre-testing phase the researcher searched for evidence of ambiguous questions, evidence
that questions have the same interpretation to all respondents and evidence of potential misunderstanding.

The pre-tests showed the interview to flow naturally and conversationally. Respondents could answer the questions relatively easily and with a fair amount of depth and quality. The only recommendation by the respondents was to spend the first five minutes of the interview setting the context before starting with the interview. The proposed change by the respondents was incorporated in each of the remaining 25 interviews.

4.6 Data Collection

In-depth, face-to-face interviews were found to be the most practical, efficient, and feasible method for collecting data in this study. This versatile and flexible method is a two-way conversation between an interviewer and a participant. An important characteristic of face-to-face interviews is the opportunity for follow up, by probing. If a respondent’s answer is brief or unclear, the researcher may ask for a clearer or more comprehensive explanation—combined with observation, face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people. The face-to-face interview is especially useful for obtaining unstructured information (Zikmund, 2003).

The respondents were contacted via both email and telephone to set up time for the interviews. All interviews were conducted in person by the researcher at the organisation’s head office in Johannesburg. The interviews were approximately an hour each with 25 executives interviewed. The measuring instrument used to collect raw data for this phase was the interview schedule that was constructed using key insights from
the literature review. The interview schedule is shown in Appendix 1. Respondents were probed on key themes from the literature review with the objective of obtaining more practical insight of the research problem and proposed solutions.

The interview also involved providing a means for respondents to free associate so that the researcher could get a sense of how issues and concerns were connected in their perceptions (Mason, 2002). The researcher obtained consent and used data recording mechanisms that fitted the setting and respondents’ sensitivities.

4.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Data analysis in qualitative research can be compared to a metamorphosis where the researcher retreats with the data, applies associated analytical techniques and finally emerges with the findings (Merriam, 1998). According to Zikmund (2003), data analysis is the application of reasoning to understand and interpret the data that has been collected.

Content analysis and frequency analysis were conducted on data obtained from the interviews (Zikmund, 2003). The data recorded during the interviews was analysed for common themes cited by different respondents. The analysis began by creating a raw data table which contained all the individual responses so that all the data could be easily and jointly viewed to facilitate the extraction of common themes. The raw tabulated data was then examined for common themes and the table was modified by replacing similar themed responses with a specific construct. It took approximately three hours per interview to capture and analyse the data. The development of the table was
an iterative process and modifications to the fields were made as themes emerged. Patterns or themes were identified during this analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Force Field Analysis (Brager & Holloway, 1992) was also used to determine the relative strength of factors driving and inhibiting strategy execution. The Force Field Analysis was conducted by weighting each factor, that is, adding the outcomes of each factor and ranking in descending order to determine factors highly ranked. This meant that the higher the weighted sums value, the greater the constructs importance. The outcome of this analysis was useful in highlighting positive forces that executives should focus on and negative forces they need to manage and control in order to successfully execute strategy.

4.8 Research Limitations

The respondents were selected by the researcher and the main selection criteria were the researcher's accessibility to the respondents as well as the researcher's consideration of the individuals that will be suitable. A total of 25 executives were interviewed from a single organisation. They possibly viewed their own projects and successes differently from the way an impartial observer would view them, which could result in response bias (Zikmund, 2003). Furthermore, the mix of convenience and judgment sampling methodology is non-probabilistic in nature which means that the results cannot be generalised to a population with any confidence (Zikmund, 2003).
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the results obtained from the data collection and analysis phase. The data analysis was designed with the intention of answering the research questions described in chapter 3. An overview of the consistency of the study showing the relationships between research questions, associated literature, data collection methodology, data analysis methods and results are shown in Appendix 3. The analysis of qualitative discussion outcomes is associated with the questions as per the interview schedule (Appendix 1).

5.2 Results of qualitative interviews

Content analysis and frequency analysis were conducted on data obtained from the discussions (Zikmund, 2003). The data recorded during the interviews was analysed for common themes cited by different respondents. The analysis began by creating a raw data table which contained all the individual responses so that all the data could be easily and jointly viewed to facilitate the extraction of common themes. The raw tabulated data was then examined for common themes and the table was modified by replacing similar themed responses with a specific construct. For example, interviewees’ responses of “Conflicting strategies” and “Not everyone on the same page” was grouped into the construct “Strategy not clear”.

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5.3 Demographics

The interview participants were identified through a judgement sampling methodology (Zikmund, 2003) that achieved a sample size of 25 with demographics as shown in Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 below. The sample was selected to study the perceptions of executives who have tried to execute strategy within a retail banking environment.

The tables below describe the sample age, highest qualification, and number of years as an executive with the modal categories shaded in yellow.

Table 4: RESPONDENTS AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>&gt;50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age of the respondents were widely spread. Table 4 above indicates that most respondents (16) fell into the 40 to 49 age category.

Table 5: RESPONDENTS HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Post Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 above indicates that all the respondents have a tertiary qualification with the majority of respondents (23) being in possession of a post graduate qualification.
Table 6: RESPONDENTS NUMBER OF YEARS AS AN EXECUTIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years as Executive</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-7</th>
<th>8-11</th>
<th>12-15</th>
<th>&gt;15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 above indicates a widespread number of years of experience as an executive with the majority of the respondents (8) having been in an executive role for between four and seven years.

The next section presents the findings related to the drivers and inhibitors of strategy execution.

5.4 Analysis of qualitative discussions outcomes

5.4.1 Comparison of the level of difficulty between strategy planning and strategy execution

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of difficulty they experienced when planning and executing strategy based on a five point Likert scale. The results are displayed in Table 7 below.
Table 7: STRATEGIC PLANNING VS EXECUTION LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY (RAW DATA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Moderately Difficult</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Extremely Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Execution</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of illustration, the “Very Easy” and “Easy” responses were combined and the same done for the “Difficult” and “Extremely Difficult” responses. The result is shown in Table 8 below. An inspection of the table shows that the vast majority of respondents (21) found strategy execution more difficult than strategic planning (2). This is consistent with the findings uncovered during the literature review.

Table 8: STRATEGIC PLANNING VS EXECUTION LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY (COLLAPSED TABLE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Easy or Very Easy</th>
<th>Moderately Difficult</th>
<th>Difficult or Extremely Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Execution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.2 Reasons for strategy execution being more difficult than strategic planning

The respondents that found strategic execution more difficult than strategic planning (21) were asked to elaborate on the challenges they have experienced when executing strategy. Five main themes emerged from the interview with varying degrees of
importance; these will be expanded upon and discussed in further detail in chapter 6. The reasons and frequencies of occurrences were ranked and are illustrated in Table 9 below.

**Table 9: REASONS FOR EXECUTION BEING MORE DIFFICULT THAN STRATEGIC PLANNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Execution demands widespread employee participation and alignment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Delegation of execution</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Time to execute is greater than time taken to plan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strategic planning and execution done in silos</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Execution is not a task</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An inspection of the highest ranking factor in the above table implies that in order to successfully execute strategy, one has to communicate with and engage people at all levels within the organisation. This was the primary reason given for execution being more difficult than strategic planning.

It is worthwhile to note that a minority of respondents (2) found strategy planning more difficult than execution; however, during the course of these two particular interviews it emerged that the stated difficult planning actions were actually linked to the strategy execution phase as defined in the literature review from chapter 2.

**5.4.3 Critical incidents of strategy execution**

The Critical Incident Technique was used to get respondents to think about a particular strategy that they have tried to execute within the last 24 months (Kemppainen, 2000).
Respondents freely described their experiences, providing a narrative concerning a strategy execution encounter. A wide range of specific initiatives were discussed by the respondents, for example item five in the table below referred to the consolidation of 15 retail bank operations centres into four world class facilities run on lean manufacturing principles. The strategy was to take the opportunity to improve customer service, improve efficiencies and give staff the opportunity to learn and grow. The approach was modelled on best practice in the outsource industry. A brief scope of some of the other projects is listed in Table 10 below.

**Table 10: SAMPLE OF STRATEGIES THAT WERE EXECUTED BY RESPONDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strateies Executed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformation of the project management design for the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrench six sigma as an organisation wide capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround of non performing card businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround of vehicle and asset finance unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation of 15 retail bank operations centers into 4 world class processing centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of the target operating model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking the unbanked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation of 30 customer contact centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running operations on lean manufacturing principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automation of cash centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An inspection of the table shows that the projects described during the interview process were all pitched at the strategic level. All respondents were asked to indicate their level of execution success on a five point Likert scale. For the purposes of illustration, the “Very Unsuccessful/Unsuccessful” and “Successful/Very Successful” response categories were combined and the results are listed in Table 11 below. An
inspection of the table shows that the majority of respondents (19) have been successful in executing strategy. It is important to note that respondents probably viewed their own projects and successes differently from the way an impartial observer would view them, which could result in response bias (Zikmund, 2003).

Table 11: LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS EXECUTION SUCCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Very Unsuccessful or Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Moderately Successful</th>
<th>Successful or Very Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.4 Criteria for successful strategy execution

The respondents that perceived they were successful in executing strategy (19) were asked to elaborate on the main factors that contributed to their success. The responses to this open ended question were analysed by content and frequency analysis as described in chapter 4. The reasons and frequencies of occurrences were ranked and are shown in Table 12 below.
Table 12: CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL EXECUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clarity of purpose</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Metrics in place to measure progress</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Action plan clear upfront</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>People engaged</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strategy well formulated and simple to understand</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Widespread organisational support</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Buy - in from senior executives</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Appropriate structure in place to deliver on strategic intent</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Success defined</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Effective Leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Planned change management activities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Consistent communication at all levels</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results above identify having clarity of purpose, metrics in place to monitor progress on action plans and engaged people as the key factors to successful execution.

5.4.5 Strategy execution driving forces

All respondents were asked an open ended question to identify the forces that were critical to execution in the various initiatives that they have implemented. Once the forces were identified, respondents were asked to allocate 100 points among the driving forces such that the allocation represented the importance of each driving force. The fixed sum scale technique (Churchill, 1986) employed forced the respondents to consider trade-offs. The more points that were assigned to a driving force, the more important it was - the sum of all the forces identified per respondent must add up to 100.
The weighted score is equal to the sum of all the scores for each particular driving force and the frequency in the table below refers to the number of respondents that mentioned a particular driving force. The frequencies of occurrences and weighted scores were complied and ranked as shown in Table 13 below. For example, item ranked three in the table below “Commitment from senior executives” was mentioned by only six respondents as a key execution driving force although its importance when compared with the rest of the driving forces was substantially higher with a weighted score of 260 points.

Table 13: MAJOR EXECUTION DRIVING FORCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Driving Force</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strong change management capability driving people engagement</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Translation of strategy into action plans with key milestones &amp; targets</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commitment from senior executives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Manage processes end to end focusing on customer requirements</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Measurement tools that track performance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Make strategy tangible</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alignment to organisational strategy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An inspection of the above table reveals that the ability to engage the workforce, translate strategic goals into action plans and secure commitment from senior executives rank amongst the most important driving forces of successful strategic execution from a weighted score perspective. This is consistent with the results displayed in Table 12. However, the spread of the driving forces listed in table 13 is
relatively close from a weighted score frame of reference; this will be unpacked in the next chapter.

5.4.6 Factors inhibiting strategy execution

All respondents were asked an open ended question to identify the critical barriers to effective strategy execution in the various initiatives that they have implemented. The fixed sum scale technique, frequency and weighted score methodologies as described in section 5.4.5 was applied. The frequencies of occurrences and weighted scores were complied and ranked as shown in Table 14 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Inhibiting Force</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Future state people, process and technology needs not fully understood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of focus</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of middle management participation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Political power plays</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of communication at all levels</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Absence of monitoring mechanisms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Structure not aligned to strategy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poor IT enablement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lack of training and support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities not defined</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A review of the above table highlights resistance to change and a lack of understanding of future state people, process and technology needs as two of the most significant inhibitors to executing strategy. It is also important to note the huge difference in
weighted scores between the first and second ranked inhibiting factors. Further inspection of table 14 also indicates a somewhat wide spread between the top and bottom ranked inhibiting factors, both in terms of frequency and weighted score. This will be explored in further detail in chapter 6.

5.4.7 Suggestions for optimising the execution of strategy

All respondents were asked how they would, going forward, minimise inhibiting forces, maximise driving forces and for any other comments with regards to making strategic execution more effective. The responses to this open-ended question were analysed by content and frequency analysis as described in chapter 4. Ten key themes emerged and the associated frequencies of occurrences were ranked and are shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15: FACTORS FOR OPTIMAL EXECUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Optimal Execution Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stimulate desire for change by making an emotional connection with people</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior executives to support the strategy and transformation agenda</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communicate a simple, tangible, clear vision</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Align action plans to the strategic goals of the organisation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Select A Players to drive key initiatives</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Automate executive metric dashboards</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Develop clear plans for servicing future capabilities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Simplify and optimise processes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Clarifying responsibilities and accountability</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Manage out people that constantly resist change</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results suggest that stimulating desire for change by making an emotional connection with people, having the support of senior executives, and articulating a simple, clear, tangible vision rank amongst the most effective ways to execute strategy. It is also important to note the closeness of spread amongst the factors in the top half of the above table; the significance and impact of this will be discussed further in chapter 6.

5.5 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to present the outcome of the data analysis. The output of the qualitative in-depth, face-to-face interviews will be used to answer the research questions as described in chapter 3. More detailed discussion of the results will be conducted in chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will answer the research questions as stated in Chapter 3. The preceding chapter presented the outcome of the results from the qualitative, face-to-face, in-depth interviews using the Critical Incident Technique, with 25 executives. Chapter 6 will analyse and interpret these results based on two inputs: the results produced in Chapter 5 and the literature review conducted in Chapter 2. This chapter will provide more insights into the research problem with the evidence that the research problem was answered.

6.2 Discussion of the results for Research Question 1: How difficult do executives find strategy execution relative to strategic planning?

The research outcomes pertinent to this question are shown in Tables 7, 8 and 9 in Chapter 5. In Table 8, the outcome of the research results indicated that the majority of respondents found strategy execution significantly more difficult than strategic planning. The above results supports the literature which states that the execution of strategy is more difficult than strategic formulation and is still seen as a major problem and challenge by executives (Speculand, 2009; Hrebiniak, 2008; Kaplan & Norton, 2008; Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008; Haudan, 2007; Otley, 2003; Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2002; Bossidy & Charan, 2002).
Management literature has focused primarily on strategy formulation and has neglected execution; hence the execution of strategy is not nearly as clear and understood as the formulation of strategy (Edgar & Taylor, 1996; Noble, 1999; Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2002; Otley, 2003; Hrebiniak, 2008). Furthermore, Haudan (2009) criticises executives for assuming that once a strategy is designed, it gets executed and highlights executives failure to look inside the process and realise that execution is much more complicated.

Five key themes emerged from the interviews as reasons for the execution process being more difficult than strategic planning. The results were ranked according to the frequency of occurrences and are shown in Table 9 of Chapter 5. All of the themes are discussed below.

6.2.1 Execution demands widespread employee participation and alignment

The conclusion that strategic execution demands widespread employee participation and alignment ranked as the most important factor (14 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents) for execution being comparatively more difficult than strategic planning. This outcome supports the literature which highlights the challenging nature of linking strategic objectives with the day-to-day objectives of the workforce at different organisation levels and locations (Kaplan & Norton, 2008; Hrebiniak, 2008). The larger the number of people involved, the greater the challenge of effective strategy execution (Hrebiniak, 2008). Communication across the organisation becomes a challenge. Effective communication is further hampered by organisational structure and incomplete information delivered erratically (Hanley, 2007).
For example, one of the respondents commented on the difficulties experienced in rolling out its strategy to its extensive branch network consisting of thousands of employees - ensuring that everyone was on the same page and understood exactly what they needed to do in their particular jobs to achieve the strategic goals was a real problem.

6.2.2 Delegation of execution

The delegation of execution was the second most important factor (12 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents) for execution being comparatively more difficult than strategic planning. Executives assume that after they have crafted their strategy, they can move on, falsely believing that the bulk of the work is complete. Speculand (2009) argues that executives’ failure to take personal responsibility for the execution process is a major contributing factor to most unsuccessful strategic executions.

Furthermore, Hrebiniax (2008), states that some top level managers believe that strategy execution is below them and something best left to lower level employees. Execution requires commitment to and a passion for results, regardless of organisational hierarchy. When senior executives plan and see execution as something below them, the successful execution of strategy is in danger (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Hrebiniax, 2008).
6.2.3 Time to execute is greater than time taken to plan

The fact that the time taken to execute is often greater than the time taken to plan strategic initiatives ranked as the third most important factor (11 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents) resulting in execution being more difficult than strategic planning. This outcome supports the view that several authors have expressed in terms of the longer time frame putting pressure on executives dealing with execution (Alexander, 1991; Hrebiniak, 2008). Furthermore, Atkinson (2006) argues that control systems need to be set up to provide the short term targets that deliver long term goals. These control systems must be dynamic and flexible, to deal with unforeseen events which presents a real challenge to executives and increases the difficulty of strategy execution (Eisenhardt, 2002, Atkinson, 2006; Hrebiniak, 2008).

6.2.4 Strategic planning and execution done in silos

Strategic planning and execution taking place in silos ranked as the fourth most important factor (ten frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents) contributing to strategy execution being more difficult than strategic planning. Successful strategic results are best achieved when those responsible for crafting the strategy are also part of the execution team (Speculand, 2009; Hrebiniak, 2008). The process of formulating and executing a strategy are parts of an integrated, strategic management approach (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008). This concurrent view is critical but difficult to achieve, and it presents a significant challenge to effective execution (Hrebiniak, 2008).
6.2.5 Execution is not a task

Execution not being a task ranked as the fifth most important reason (nine frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents) for strategy execution being more difficult than strategic planning. Execution is a process that demands a significant amount of attention and effort to make it successful (Kaplan & Norton, 2008; Speculand, 2009). Furthermore, Bossidy & Charan (2002), define execution as follows:

- Not simply tactics, but a system of getting things done through questioning, analysis and follow-through
- A discipline requiring a comprehensive understanding of a business, its people, and its environment
- A discipline for meshing strategy with reality, aligning people with goals, and achieving the results promised

Hence executives who seek a quick and effortless solution to execution problems more often than not fail in their attempts (Hrebiniak, 2008).

6.2.6 Conclusion for Research Question 1

The majority of respondents found strategy execution significantly more difficult than strategy formulation as shown in Table 8. This outcome is consistent with the views expressed by several authors (Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008; Haudan, 2007; Otley, 2003). Five factors were identified by respondents as key contributors to the above result and have been linked to views expressed by Hrebiniak (2008) and Kaplan & Norton (2008), that is, execution demands widespread employee participation and
alignment, execution is often delegated to lower levels in the organisation, the time taken to execute is greater than the time taken to formulate a strategy, strategy formulation and execution are done in silos and execution is often treated as a step or task rather than a process. An inspection of Table 9 shows that there is a small difference in the relative rankings of the factors contributing to strategy execution being more difficult than strategy formulation. Hence the strategy execution framework proposed in chapter 7 addresses all of the above factors.

6.3 Discussion of the results for Research Question 2: What are the drivers of strategy execution and relative strength of each driving force?

The research outcomes applicable to this question are shown in Table 13 in chapter 5. This question sought to understand the key driving factors for effective execution as ranked by respondents in terms of weighted scores. Seven forces were identified as key to driving strategy execution. The spread amongst both the frequency and weighted scores are relatively small and therefore each of the seven identified execution driving forces will be discussed in detail below.

6.3.1 Strong change management capability driving people engagement

It is not surprising to see that having a strong change management capability driving people engagement ranked as the top driving force for effective execution (a weighted score of 310 and 11 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). This outcome supports the argument that several authors have pushed forward with regards to effective execution being dependent on people changing their behaviour and the
management of change (Saunders, Mann, & Smith, 2008; Miller, 2002; Balogun, 2006; Johnson & Scholes, 2002; Beer & Nohria, 2000, Lorange, 1998; Palmer, 2003). Respondents perceived that consultative communication of the strategic initiative improved buy-in and helped align interpretations of the initiative. For example, one of the respondents during the interview mentioned the following:

*What we have done is set up daily 30 minute production meetings on the shop floor, to get together and talk about what went well, what did not go well and what should we start doing. So that’s how we have overcome the buy-in problems at the cold face. The outputs of these meetings then cascade upwards into management and executive forums. This approach ensures that we talk about the right things, by involving the right people, at the right time and frequency and in the right way.*

Considering the above, it is recommended that organisations introduce a two way communication programme that allows and requests questions from employees about issues regarding the formulated strategy. In addition to asking questions and seeking feedback, the communications should inform employees about the new requirements, tasks and activities to be performed by the affected employees, and furthermore, cover the reason behind changed circumstances (Alexander, 1991).

For leadership, achieving a vision requires keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles to change by appealing to basic human needs, values and emotions (Goleman, 2004; Kotter, 2007; Goffee & Jones, 2000). This was clearly demonstrated in the interviews with respondents indicating that leaders needed to be
visible, committed and walk the talk, the ability to speak to employees’ hearts and not to lose their people along the journey.

In summary, an examination of successful change leaders (Higgins, 2005; Kotter, 2007), found that they: communicate the why and how of change repeatedly; encourage risk taking; reward and celebrate innovation successes; empower employees to be creative; exhibit a positive attitude about the change; focus on organisational purpose; understand their employees emotions, help them work through those that lead to resistance to change, and use the positive emotions of employees surrounding change related issues such as making banking easy for customers, to build a mandate for change; and construct relationships with others in the firm that are critical to achieving success.

6.3.2 Translation of strategy into action plans with key milestones and targets

The driving force relating to the translation of strategy into action plans with key milestones and targets ranked as the second most important factor when executing strategy (a weighted score of 295 and 14 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). It’s also important to note that this force recorded the most number of repeated occurrences.

Translating strategy into reality requires a holistic perspective. Each employee not only needs an understanding of the big picture, but, more importantly, what he or she must do on a daily basis to contribute to it (Coon & Wolf, 2005). For example, one of the respondents used the analogy of building a house to illustrate the above point: People who execute need detailed and clear instructions – think of a builder, he needs a plan to
build a house, this plan is provided by the architect, if the plan is not understood due to lack of clarity or insufficient detail, the house will be built incorrectly, incurring unwanted costs and a dissatisfied owner.

6.3.3 Commitment from senior executives

Getting commitment from senior executives ranked as the third most important execution driving force (a weighted score of 260 and six frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). The literature shows that senior management demonstrating their commitment to the initiative increases buy-in (Saunders, Mann, & Simth, 2008). Furthermore, top executives must demonstrate their willingness to give energy and loyalty to the execution process. This demonstrable commitment becomes, at the same time, a constructive signal for all the affected organisational members (Raps, 2005).

6.3.4 Manage processes end to end focusing on customer requirements

Managing processes on and end to end basis focusing on customer requirements was ranked as the fourth most important factor when executing strategy (a weighted score of 230 and 13 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Executives must ensure that the various operational units of the business function smoothly together, that is, the organisation needs to be technically aligned. This aspect of alignment requires an organisation to align process improvement programmes with strategy (Pateman, 2008).

For example, one of the respondents implemented a Lean Six Sigma programme to remove waste and variation from the organisations core processes in order to support
the strategic objective of reduced costs through process efficiencies (standardised processes and eliminating duplication) and increased revenue through improved customer experience enabling sustainable growth.

Hence it is suggested that organisations combine scorecards and operational dashboards with measures linked to the broader strategy of the organisation. This is often referred to as the cascading effect (Kaplan & Norton, 2008).

6.3.5 Measurement tools that track performance

The utilisation of measurement tools that track performance was ranked as the fifth most important factor for driving the execution of strategy (a weighted score of 210 and ten frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Measurements must be linked in a visible, specific way to particular strategic initiatives (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). Numbers alone are simply not enough, to illustrate this point, one of the respondents comments are listed below.

*We have the cost to income ratio as one of the key metrics on our balanced scorecard. When this metric goes up, it flashes red on the dashboard and everyone panics. Executives start asking who’s accountable and what’s being done.*

To address this shortcoming, strategy measures should be expressed as business deliverables. Business deliverables articulate the specific actions that must be taken and the results that must be achieved in order to reach organisations goals (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). In summary, business deliverables measure the progress of an initiative by first identifying the key results milestones necessary to execute it. They also assist in creating a culture of accountability in which people are measured by the
strategically aligned results they produce, hence driving thinking in terms of outcomes as opposed to everyday activities.

6.3.6 Make strategy tangible

Making the formulated strategy tangible was ranked as the sixth most important factor when executing strategy (a weighted score of 160 and eight frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). The language systems and metaphors used in organisations depict the organisations values (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004). Organisations develop their own language for expressing who they are and what they are about.

For example, one of the respondents implemented a concept known as “SUE” that is, executing with simplicity, urgency and excellence and linked this to Formula One Motorsport. A lot of what goes on in change is about making interested parties feel better and positive regarding what is about to happen to them (Higgins & Mcallaster, 2004). Hence it is suggested that organisations skilfully select language and metaphors that motivate employees in order to successfully execute strategy.

6.3.7 Alignment to organisational strategy

Aligning strategic initiatives to the broader organisational strategy was ranked as the seventh most important factor when executing strategy (a weighted score of 130 and four frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). This theme involves managing the ongoing alignment of the organisation to its strategy. One of the respondents noted the following “at a business unit level, we have a unified interpretation of the organisations strategy and all activities associated with the strategy
are coordinated and aligned.” Leaders and employees must understand the organisations strategy and communicate it persistently. Incentives and rewards should be aligned to the targets that define strategic success. This is the social side of alignment, the place where executives convince the organisation to understand and support change (Pateman, 2008).

6.3.8 Conclusion for Research Question 2

Seven factors were identified by respondents as key to driving strategy execution as shown in Table 9. In terms of relative rankings there was very little difference between the top two factors, that is, building a strong change management capability driving people engagement and translating strategy into action plans with key milestones and targets. This outcome supports the argument that several authors have pushed forward with regards to effective strategy execution being dependent on people changing their behaviour (Goleman, 2004; Kotter, 2001; Goffee & Jones, 2000), and an understanding of what he or she must do on a daily basis to contribute to achieving the bigger strategic goal (Coon & Wolf, 2005).

It is interesting to note that securing commitment from senior executives scored the second lowest frequency of occurrence among the seven factors but recoded the third highest weighted score. The literature shows that senior management demonstrating their commitment to the strategic initiative increases buy-in (Saunders, Mann, & Simth, 2008), and hence is critical to successful strategy execution. It is therefore suggested that the top three factors described above be used as input to the construction of the proposed strategy execution framework in chapter 7.
6.4 Discussion of the results for Research Question 3: What are the inhibitors of strategy execution and relative strength of each inhibiting force?

The research outcomes pertinent to this question are shown in Table 14 of Chapter 5. This question sought to understand the key inhibiting factors for effective execution as ranked by respondents. All the 11 factors listed in Table 14 have been identified as inhibitors to strategy execution, however due to the significant spread between the weighted scores of the top and bottom ranked factors, only the top four ranked inhibiting factors will be discussed in detail below.

6.4.1 Resistance to change

Respondents have identified and ranked the resistance to change as the number one inhibiting factor for effective execution (a weighted score of 510 and 16 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). The dominant effect of this factor is not a surprise as several authors have highlighted the ability to manage change as one of the main challenges for strategy execution (Corboy & O’Corrbui, 1999; Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Jooste & Fourie, 2009).

From the qualitative interviews conducted, some of the reasons given for the difficulty in managing change as it relates to the execution of strategy were:

- Strategy and reason for change not understood at all levels within the organisation
- ‘What’s in it for me’ syndrome
A significant challenge that executives face when executing strategy is to anticipate and deal with potential barriers of the affected employees that could prevent them from getting things done. Execution efforts often fail when these barriers are underestimated and prevention methods are not adopted at the beginning (Raps, 2005). It is important to note that barriers against the execution of strategy can lead to a complete breakdown of the formulated strategy. Hence it is suggested that by changing the way they view and practice strategy execution, executives can effectively transform change barriers into opportunities for effective execution.

6.4.2 Future state people, process and technology needs not fully understood

‘To-be’ people, process and technology needs not being fully understood ranked as the second most important inhibiting factor for the effective execution of strategy (a weighted score of 210 and seven frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). If the degree of organisational readiness is underestimated during the strategy formulation phase, the execution plan will fall short on actions needed to align organisations operations with the new strategy (Wery & Waco, 2004). Speculand (2009), further supports this argument by highlighting one of the key reasons why strategies fail to be executed is that its operating model-its structure, processes, technology, or culture have not been changed to support the new strategy. Hence, employees continue to work the old way, using old systems, structures, and processes, but they are expected to deliver different results.
One of the respondents commented "Our people spend most of their time focusing on the as-is and even the value add of that time is questionable, much more time needs to be spent unpacking the critical capabilities needed for the future state."

Managers are often so caught up with running operations, budgets and managing performance that they have very little time for thinking about the impact of strategic change on the organisation (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003). Hence it is suggested that executives assign dedicated resources to create a detailed blueprint of the changes to processes, systems, and infrastructure required by the new strategy (Wery & Waco, 2004).

Furthermore, an organisation may need significant skill shifts to execute a new strategy, but may not have access to the right people-or may not realise the extent of the changes needed or the time it will take to get up to speed. People are an organisation's most important asset, hence it is critical to have the right people and skills in place when executing a new strategy. Careful planning during the strategy formulation process (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008) can identify competency gaps early on and allow for the time and actions needed to bridge those gaps.

### 6.4.3 Lack of focus

A lack of focus was ranked as the third most important inhibiting factor to effective strategy execution (a weighted score of 200 and eight frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Competing strategies and sub-strategies disperse attention and weaken an organisation's focus (Wery & Waco, 2004). To illustrate this point, one of respondents’ comments is recorded below.
In our matrix structured organisation I have three bosses and they all seem to have deliverables and priorities that clash with each other, this makes it extremely difficult to coordinate and align key activities. Although these sub-strategies may appear to make perfect sense individually, taken collectively they may not support and move the overall strategic vision forward (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000).

Furthermore, executives often do not realise the complexity involved in executing a particular strategy (Holloway, 2009; Raps, 2005; Wery & Waco, 2004). A number of respondents often repeated the phrase “the devil lies in the detail”.

Time was also found to be a major constraint. One of the respondents commented “we have so many initiatives on the go that at times I cannot see the forest but only the trees”. To maintain the strategic focus needed for effective execution, organisations must put in place and communicate a disciplined process for systematically reviewing, evaluating, prioritising, sequencing and managing strategic initiatives (Wery & Waco, 2004; Raps, 2005).

6.4.4 Lack of middle management participation

Lack of middle management participation ranked as the fourth most important inhibiting factor when executing strategy (a weighted score of 190 and seven frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). One of the most important things to note is that strategy execution is not a top-down approach. The success of any execution effort depends on the level of involvement of middle managers (Raps, 2005; Hrebiniax, 2008).

One of the respondents commented that managers and team leaders lower down the hierarchy levels that possess important detailed valuable knowledge are seldom
involved in the strategy making, strategy executing process (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008). This often decreases their motivation towards the initiative as they are not seen as part of the process (Hrebiniak, 2008).

Research indicates that less than five percent of a typical workforce understands their organisations strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). This is worrying as without a high level understanding of strategy, employees cannot effectively contribute to the execution of strategy. The participation of middle management is therefore critical to increase the general awareness of the strategy (Noble, 1999; Raps, 2005).

6.4.5 Conclusion for Research Question 3

Eleven factors were identified by respondents as key inhibitors to strategy execution as shown in Table 10. An inspection of the table shows that there is a significant difference in the relative rankings of the inhibitors with the top ranked item being seen to be greater than seven times more important than the least ranked factor. Resistance to change was ranked by respondents as by far the most dominant barrier to effectively execute strategy in terms of both weighted rankings and frequency of occurrences. The above outcome is consistent with the literature where a number of authors have highlighted the ability to manage change as one of the main challenges for strategy execution (Corboy & O’Corrbui, 1999; Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Jooste & Fourie, 2009). Hence it is suggested that the framework proposed in chapter seven seeks to minimise the force of this powerful inhibitor of strategy execution.
6.5 Force Field Analysis: The driving and inhibiting factors of strategy execution

Force Field Analysis (Brager & Holloway, 1992) is a technique, based on the seminal work of Kurt Lewin, used for evaluating forces that could impact on desired change. Figure 2 is a Force Field Analysis drawn up from the output of research questions two and three. It shows, the vertical axis as the scale which measures the level of effectiveness of strategy execution by executives, ranging from successful strategy execution at the top and poor strategy execution at the bottom, and the horizontal line indicating a specific level of strategy execution success or failure at a point in time.

The seven drivers and eleven inhibitors of strategy execution from tables 5 and 6 have been used to construct the Force Field Analysis as shown in Figure 2. The relative strength of each factor is represented by the length of its respective arrow. The value of the figure is that it illustrates how to push the indicator arrow upwards towards successful strategy execution. Executives need to place more emphasis on the drivers of strategy execution and simultaneously reduce the influence of each of the inhibitors.

Figure 2 indicates that to increase the level of strategy execution success, executives should focus on building a strong change management capability driving people engagement, translating strategy into action plans with key milestones and targets, securing commitment from senior executives, utilise measurement tools to track performance across all key customer processes, and communicate a tangible strategy that is aligned to the larger organisational strategy. To address the inhibitors, executives should focus primarily on breaking down resistance to change, ensure future state
people, process and technology needs are understood, focus on the critical actions that will lead to achieving intended business outcomes and increase middle managements involvement and participation in the strategy execution process.
Figure 2: Force Field Analysis

**Inhibiting Forces**

- Resilience to change
- Future state, people, process & technology needs not understood
- Lack of focus
- Lack of middle management participation
- Political power plays
- Lack of communication at all levels
- Absence of monitoring mechanisms
- Structure not aligned to strategy
- Poor IT enablement
- Lack of training and support
- Roles and responsibilities not defined

**Driving Forces**

- Successful strategy execution
- Strong change management capability driving people engagement
- Translation of strategy into action plans with key milestones
- Commitment from senior executives
- Manage processes end to end focusing on customer
- Measurement tools that track performance
- Make strategy tangible
- Alignment to organisational strategy

**Poor strategy execution**
6.6 Discussion of the results for Research Question 4: How would executives optimise the execution of strategy?

The research outcomes relevant to this question are shown in Table 11 of Chapter 5. This question sought to understand the key factors needed for optimal execution as ranked by respondents in terms of the frequencies of occurrences. All the ten factors listed in Table 11 have been identified as key to optimal strategy execution and hence each factor will be discussed briefly in the subsequent sections.

6.6.1 Stimulate desire for change by making an emotional connection with people

Stimulating a desire for change by making an emotional connection with the workforce was ranked by respondents as the number one factor needed for optimal execution by respondents (24 frequencies of occurrences were noted). Empirical research has shown that one of the most powerful techniques for making an emotional connection with people is through storytelling (Denning, 2001; Haudan, 2007). As the workforce solve problems, make decisions and take actions, situations are generated that give birth to stories describing challenges that were overcome and mistakes that turned into successes. As these stories cascade upward and downward, they externalise common knowledge and facilitate a bond and direction among workers (Bennet & Bennet, 2007).

6.5.2 Senior executives to support the strategy and transformation agenda

Senior executives support of the strategy and transformation agenda ranked as the second most important factor needed for optimal execution (22 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). This view is supported by Raps (2005) who
argues that the most important thing when executing a strategy is top executives commitment to the strategic direction itself. Executives must assume a prominent role in the execution plan, not just dictate what should be done (Hanley, 2007). If executives do not feel it is important for them to be involved, employees will most probably feel the same way. Furthermore, executives must review the status of key initiatives on a frequent basis to create a sense of urgency, to make decisions, to take action and to produce results (Hanley, 2007; Wery & Waco, 2004).

6.5.3 Communicate a simple, tangible, clear vision

Communicating a simple, tangible, clear vision ranked as the third most important factor necessary for optimal execution (21 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). The key to developing an effective vision lies in quantifying the future in a way that supports execution-basically taking the time to transform ambiguous organisation hopes and dreams into concrete, tangible targets (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). In this approach, a vision statement takes on new meaning as a starting point for articulating the specific steps that get the company from point A to point B.

6.6.4 Align action plans to the strategic goals of the organisation

Aligning action plans to the strategic goals of the organisation ranked as the fourth most important factor when executing strategy (20 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Hence it is suggested that executives employ strategic control systems to ensure that the immense effort put into preparing lengthy and detailed strategic plans is in fact translated into action (Bungay & Goold, 1991). Furthermore, strategic control systems need to incorporate both feedback and feedforward information, thus enabling
managers to know if they are on track while also providing opportunities to adapt and revise strategies when required (Bungay & Goold 1991; Otley, 2003; Wery & Waco, 2004; Atkinson, 2006).

6.6.5 Select A Players to drive key initiatives

The selection of A rated people to drive key initiatives ranked as the fifth most important factor when optimally executing strategy (19 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Being able to execute is a special and distinct skill (Drucker, 2004). It means a person knows how to put decisions into action and push them forward to completion, through resistance, chaos, or unexpected obstacles (Welch, 2005; Haudan, 2007). A key challenge for executives is to match the people that can execute, the A players, to the critical assignments in the organisation (Huselid, Beatty, & Becker, 2005).

6.6.6 Automate executive metric dashboards

The ability to automate executive metric dashboards ranked as the sixth most important factor to optimally execute strategy (18 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Research indicates that approximately 65% of executives time is spent giving and getting status reports (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). Without an efficient mechanism to report status, valuable meeting time is spent reviewing activities instead of addressing critical execution issues (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). The key is to automate status reporting and progress management so that executives can begin meetings already knowing the status of the status (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002; Raps, 2005).
6.6.7 Develop clear plans for servicing future capabilities

Developing clear plans for servicing future capabilities ranked as the seventh most important factor needed to optimally execute strategy (15 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Too many organisations fail to fully realise the structural, process and technology challenges involved with a major change in strategy which often results in even the most well planned strategies failing due to the misalignment of the organisations operating model (Wery & Waco, 2004). Budgets and operating plans must support the new strategy and performance measures, goals, and incentives must be structured to support the new ways of working (Hanley, 2007; Khadem, 2008).

6.6.8 Simplify and optimise processes

The ability to simplify and optimise processes ranked as the eighth most important factor necessary to optimally execute strategy (12 frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). It is estimated that one-third of a typical process is non-value-adding in large organisations (Speculand, 2009). The redesign of processes by eliminating waste and variation has a major impact on customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, reducing defects and cycle time, and, most importantly, revenue (Liker, 2004).

6.6.9 Clarifying responsibilities and accountability

Clarifying responsibilities and accountability ranked as the ninth most important factor necessary for optimal execution of strategy (ten frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). Executives cannot create coordination mechanisms or integrate strategic and short term operating objectives if job responsibilities and accountability are
unclear (Hrebiniak, 2008). To avoid power struggles between business units and within hierarchies, one should create a plan with clear assignments of responsibilities regarding detailed execution activities (Raps, 2005). To execute strategy, responsibility and accountability must be clear (Raps, 2005; Hrebiniak, 2008).

6.6.10 Manage out people that constantly resist change

Managing people out that constantly resist change ranks as the tenth most important factor necessary to optimally execute strategy (seven frequencies of occurrences were noted by respondents). In a typical large organisation, only 20 percent of people resist change (Speculand, 2009). These people tend to complain about anything and everything. They foster an underground resistance and lower the morale of the people who support change (Welch, 2005; Raps, 2005). Resisters only get more reactionary and their followings more entrenched as time goes on. They are change killers and should be removed from the organisation as early as possible (Welch, 2005; Raps, 2005).

6.6.11 Conclusion for Research Question 4

Ten factors were identified by respondents as key to optimally executing strategy as shown in Table 15. Further inspection of the table revealed that the results were consistent with the major execution driving forces identified by respondents and shown in Table 13. Additional analysis resulted in six important themes emerging from the output of research questions 2 and 4, namely, driving engagement at all levels within the organisation, securing senior executive buy-in, translation of strategy into action plans, communicating a clear and easily understood strategy, selecting the right people
to drive key initiatives, and establishing a metrics framework to monitor and control results. These themes are consistent with those identified in the literature review in chapter 2 and hence it is suggested that the above factors be used as input to the construction of the proposed strategy execution framework in chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consolidate the outcomes of this study in line with its main objective, that is to develop an empirical framework to guide executives when executing strategy. It will also include recommendations to key stakeholders based on the research findings and propose ideas for future research.

A scan of the business environment in chapter one revealed that the real value of a strategy can only be recognised through execution (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). Furthermore, the failure to execute strategy results in 70 percent of CEO dismissals (Charan & Colvin, 1999). Okumus and Roper (1998) further observe that despite the importance of the strategy execution process, far more research has been carried out into strategy formulation rather than strategy execution.

A review of the literature in chapter two revealed that a comprehensive strategy execution framework based on empirical evidence has yet to be developed in the strategic management field. Frolick & Ariyachandra, (2006) further observe that a simple and systematic framework to execute strategy is still elusive. Several key themes surrounding the drivers and inhibitors of strategy execution were extracted from the literature and associated with the business challenges from chapter one to form a developing strategy execution framework.

Content and frequency analysis was then used to extract key themes from the data obtained during the face-to-face, in-depth interview process with 25 executives. A Force
Field Analysis was conducted to assist in understanding the magnitude of the forces driving and inhibiting strategy execution. The output from the Force Field Analysis together with the factors identified by respondents as key for optimal strategy execution formed the core of the proposed strategy execution framework described in the subsequent section.

In summary, the execution of strategy is an unpredictable process that occurs in a complex and dynamic environment (Okumus, 2003; Saunders, Mann & Smith, 2008). However, Argyris (1999) argues that few executives can understand and have the time to evaluate all the complexities of executing strategy. The proposed framework in the subsequent section will assist by focusing executives’ attention on the key factors that need to be addressed in order to successfully execute strategy.

7.2 Strategy execution framework

The construction of the strategy execution framework unfolded as this research project progressed. The framework began with reference to the business problems identified in chapter one. The chapter two literature review allowed the business challenges to be linked to relevant conceptual constructs to form a developing execution framework for this study. The results from chapter five and discussions in chapter six were consolidated and incorporated into the developing framework to arrive at the empirically based framework as shown in Figure 3 below.
Figure 3 shows the six factors that form the execution framework. The overruling assumption of this framework is that multiple factors should be considered simultaneously when executing a strategy, that is, there must be consistency among the execution factors if the strategy execution process is to be successful. This is analogous to building a house, that is, the house cannot be considered complete if one or more of the defining features of the house are missing or not built according to specification. The importance of each execution factor and how to implement it is explained in subsequent sections.
7.2.1 Top executive commitment

A prerequisite for successful strategy execution is commitment and support from the most senior executives in an organisation, including the CEO. The literature shows the following key elements as being critical to success (Okumus, 2003):

- Personal involvement of the CEO and his direct reports in the strategy execution process
- High level of support and backing from the CEO to the new strategic initiative from start to finish
- The importance of the strategic initiative to be constantly communicated by the CEO

The empirical data shows that support and backing for the strategic initiative directly from the CEO minimises the effect of political power plays as an inhibiting factor in strategy execution. The support from the top also serves as an important driver of prioritization of resources and removal of obstacles that would otherwise hinder the successful execution of the strategic initiative.

7.2.2 Engagement on all levels

The literature shows that in order to align an organisation's culture and mobilise its people in support of the new strategic initiative, communication must be clear, consistent, and frequent across all levels of the organisation (Wery & Waco, 2004). The empirical data shows that change and an uncertain future are frightening for many
people, but consistent, straightforward communication can build trust, which is essential to succeeding in driving change.

On a daily basis, executives have many opportunities to reinforce strategic priorities and to influence employees and business partners. Executives can build passion and commitment for achieving the common goals by communicating a convincing case for change. Their role is to promote synergies among people, processes, and strategy and to ensure that resources are being applied appropriately to the key focus areas (Coon & Wolf, 2005).

Executing strategy is about creating alignment (Kaplan & Norton, 2001)-from the strategic big picture to the tactical daily work, from organisation wide goals to business unit performance, and from executives to front-line employees. Creating this alignment enables people at all levels to understand the drivers of change and own the strategy execution process.

7.2.3 Communicate a clear, tangible strategy

The literature shows that organisations not displaying clear strategic objectives often results in a fuzzy strategy being communicated (Raps, 2005). True leadership engagement involves being simultaneously visionary and tactical, that is, having both the creativity to develop a clear, practical strategy and the ability to execute it. Strategic plans can be complex; however, executives should be able to communicate their real meaning concisely, so that employees at all levels can live the strategy in their day-to-day activities (Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). In order to ensure that their strategy is clear and tangible for every person in the organisation, executives should use the following
set of questions as a checklist (Holloway, 2009): Is everyone in the organisation on familiar terms with the strategy? Will you and the rest of the organisation know when the strategy has been achieved? Does the strategy execution plan provide a structured path, clear milestones, and an easily defined picture of what success looks like to ensure that everyone knows when they have arrived? The empirical data shows employees cannot be engaged if they do not understand or cannot connect to the strategic plan of the organisation, hence making the strategy simple, clear and tangible is fundamental to execution success.

7.2.4 Cascading accountabilities

The executives of today need to ensure that hundreds or more realistically, thousands of employees are actively working towards a common goal. This requires cascading accountabilities. Each employee needs to both have an understanding of the big picture and more importantly, what he or she must to on a daily basis to contribute to it. This requires aligning employee objectives, behaviours, and development (Coon & Wolf, 2005).

The empirical data suggested that employees should associate each of their objectives to one of their business unit goals. The business unit goal in turn is linked to one of the organisations strategic goals. Another technique is to connect employees’ objectives directly to their managers’ objectives. This process defines the organisations accountability system and its success is dependent on executives holding people accountable for getting results at the appropriate level. Aligning behavioural expectations for how the employee accomplishes his or her objectives is the second
step to reaching alignment. The final step in achieving alignment is to create personal
development plans that are linked to future needs of the organisation. Aligning
objectives, behaviours, and development creates a clear line of sight between daily
activities and strategic goals. This alignment increases the probability that people will
focus on and be held accountable for what is most important.

7.2.5 Select the best team to drive key initiatives

Very often, teams are assembled in a hurried manner and are comprised of people who
are available. Hence, there is little opportunity to think critically about the specific skills
and capabilities required to execute the strategic initiative. The literature shows that
executives should focus on getting the right people in place by creating a competency
matrix that clearly defines the skills, experience, and performance levels needed to
support the strategy and also communicate the number of people that will be needed to
fill the new positions within a specified timeframe (Wery & Waco, 2004). Additionally,
executives need to identify the organisations A positions, that is, roles that involve a
significant amount of strategy execution and then focus on the A people that should fill
them.

Furthermore the empirical data highlighted that executives need to have the courage to
recruit members of the team who are smarter and brighter than them and who also
demonstrate loads of resilience. This is critical for robust debate, optimal generation of
solutions, and the ability to deliver on intended business outcomes no matter what the
obstacles.
7.2.6 Monitor and track progress

Once an alignment-focused organisation has articulated its strategy and defined the initiatives that will lead to that strategy’s execution, it must consider how it will monitor progress on a regular basis. The literature shows that in order to make sure that progress is on track, executives must translate strategy into quantifiable terms by developing a set of Key Performance Metrics (KPMs), that is, performance measures explicitly linked to strategic objectives, and monitor them closely (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Pateman, 2008). The empirical data shows scorecards and dashboards using robot light indicators as popular methods for visibly displaying key metrics. Stakeholders can then react quickly to problems, identify where things are broken, and take corrective action in a timely manner.

Executives must review the status of key strategic initiatives on a bi-weekly basis to create a sense of urgency, to make decisions, to take action and to deliver results. Furthermore, executives must adopt a look and see approach, that is, they must meet with people who are directly involved in the execution plan. This will reinforce the sense of urgency and is fundamental for successful strategy execution. Lastly executives need to ascertain whether the strategic initiative has been executed according to the plan and if not, identify the reasons for this, and then incorporate the lessons learnt into optimising future strategy executions.
7.3 Recommendations for executives and academics

In terms of the practical implications, the strategy execution framework can assist executives and academics in the following ways:

- The difficulties and challenges of executing strategy can be envisaged and evaluated using the factors in the framework as a point of reference.

- The framework can be used to conduct strategy execution training courses for middle management. As shown and explained in this research project, the expertise and knowledge of middle managers in strategy execution is critical. Hence, it is crucial that middle managers be trained about how best to put their strategies into practice using the framework as a guideline.

- Measurements drive behaviour, hence in order to instil an execution culture the factors described in this framework could be incorporated into senior and middle management performance contracts.

- The framework can be used for a retrospective analysis of past strategy execution initiatives.

- Specific questions can be asked about the role and impact of each execution factor in the proposed framework, for example, an investigation could be conducted on the dominance of certain factors over others when executing strategy using this framework.
7.4 Recommendations for future research

For future research studies, the following suggestions are given below:

- This study focused on the views of executives who have successfully executed strategy. A similar study should be conducted with executives who have failed to consistently execute strategy in their organisations.

- Empirical studies on strategy execution should also be conducted with senior, middle and junior managers by using both qualitative and quantitative data collecting methods. This will lead to a more in-depth understanding of strategy execution.

- This study focused on executing strategy in a South African organisation, future studies can investigate how international organisations execute their strategies globally.

7.5 Conclusion

This research project has provided a comprehensive review of strategy execution literature and together with the data collected in the face-to-face in-depth interviews, proposed a strategy execution framework based on empirical evidence. Strategy execution is far too complex to be explained by linear execution frameworks; hence executives are advised to employ a multidimensional approach to viewing the execution of strategy. Multiple factors should be considered simultaneously when executing a strategy, that is, there must be consistency among the execution factors if the strategy execution process is to be successful. The strategy execution framework developed in
this study and illustrated in Figure 3, provides explanations about the role and importance of each execution factor in driving successful execution of strategy.
References


Markides, C. (Summer 2004). What is strategy and how do you know if you have one? *Business Strategy Review* (15) (2) 5-6.


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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EXECUTIVES

### Interview Schedule – Consent Section

I am conducting research on the drivers and inhibitors of strategy execution. To that end, you will be asked to participate in an interview to better understand the techniques executives could use to maximise the driving forces and minimise the inhibiting forces. The interview should take no more than 60 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntarily and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be kept confidential. By agreeing to be interviewed, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research. If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below:

**Researcher:** Thershen Chetty  
Email: thershen.chetty@standardbank.co.za  
Phone: 083 719 5101

**Research Supervisor:** Professor Margie Sutherland  
Email: sutherlandm@gibs.co.za  
Phone: 011 771 4000

Signature of participant: .................................................................

Date: .............................................

Signature of researcher: .................................................................

Date: .............................................

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
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<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
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<tr>
<th>Highest Qualification</th>
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<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
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| Number of years as an executive |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 - 3                            | 4 - 7     | 8 - 11    | 12 - 15   | >15       |

**Question 1:** How difficult do you find strategic planning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1= Very Easy</th>
<th>2= Easy</th>
<th>3 = Moderately Difficult</th>
<th>4= Difficult</th>
<th>5 = Very Difficult</th>
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</table>

**Question 2:** How difficult do you find strategy execution?

<table>
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<th>1= Very Easy</th>
<th>2= Easy</th>
<th>3 = Moderately Difficult</th>
<th>4= Difficult</th>
<th>5 = Very Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Question 2.1:** What is the difference between the above two answers?

**Question 3:** Think of your most recent strategy that you have tried to execute (i.e important strategic and operational decisions that were quickly translated into action)

3.1 What was it?
3.4 What would you say were the major driving forces? (i.e what factors were key to executing the strategy described)

3.5 How would you weight the driving forces?

Please allocate 100 points among the driving forces such that the allocation represents the importance of each driving force to you. The more points that you assign to a driving force, the more important it is. When you have finished please double check to make sure your total adds to 100.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Execution Driving Forces</th>
<th>Num of Points</th>
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3.6 What would you say were the major inhibiting forces?

3.7 How would you weight the inhibiting forces?

Please allocate 100 points among the inhibiting forces such that the allocation represents the importance of each inhibiting force to you. The more points that you assign to a inhibiting force, the more important it is. When you have finished please double check to make sure your total adds to 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Execution Inhibiting Forces</th>
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</table>
3.8 How would you minimize the inhibiting forces in future strategy executions?

3.9 How would you maximize the driving forces in future strategy executions?

4. Any other comments?
## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dr Alewyn Burger</td>
<td>COO : PBB Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Willie Stegmann</td>
<td>Director: Business Performance Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Johan van Schalkwyk</td>
<td>Director: Business Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Wally Fischer</td>
<td>Director: PBB SA Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Darrel Orsmond</td>
<td>Director: PBB SA Business Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Justin White</td>
<td>CIO : PBB SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ian Weir</td>
<td>Director: Process Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mark Barrett</td>
<td>Director: Cash Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Funeka Ntombela</td>
<td>CFO : PBB SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rolf Eichweber</td>
<td>Director: Africa Electronic Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Bob Tucker</td>
<td>Director: Banking Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Marius Wait</td>
<td>Director: Africa PBB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. James Cullen</td>
<td>Director: Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Ebrahim Matthews</td>
<td>Director: Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Altu Sadie</td>
<td>Financial Director: PBB SA IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Logan Naidoo</td>
<td>Director: Service IPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Warren Porteous</td>
<td>Process Director: BPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Klaas Kruger</td>
<td>Director: Card IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. John Anderson</td>
<td>Director: Personal Transaction Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Keith Watson</td>
<td>Director: Vehicle &amp; Asset Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Indira Bhagalo</td>
<td>Director: Private Banking</td>
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<td>22. Jeff Lopes</td>
<td>Process Director: BPS</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Etienne Kriel</td>
<td>Director: Security &amp; Facilities Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Michael Jansen</td>
<td>Director: Africa Financial Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Dr Paul Fallon</td>
<td>Director: PBB Credit</td>
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</table>
## APPENDIX 3: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How difficult do executives find strategy execution relative to strategic planning?</td>
<td>Kaplan &amp; Norton (2001); Miller (2002); Pateman (2008)</td>
<td>Interview Schedule Q 2 &amp; Q3</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics; Content &amp; Frequency Analysis</td>
<td>Table 7, Table 8 &amp; Table 9</td>
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</table>

| Research Question 2 | What are the drivers of strategy execution and relative strength of each driving force? | Raps (2005); Hrebinak (2008); Noble (1999) | Interview Schedule Q3.4 & Q3.5 | Content & Frequency Analysis | Table 13 |

| Research Question 3 | What are the inhibitors of strategy execution and relative strength of each inhibiting force? | Beer & Eisenstat (2000); Muell & Shani (2008) | Interview Schedule Q3.6 & Q3.7 | Content & Frequency Analysis | Table 14 |

| Research Question 4 | How should executives optimise the execution of strategy? | Okumus (2003); Aaltonen & Ikavaliko (2002) | Interview Schedule Q3.8 & Q3.9 | Content & Frequency Analysis | Table 15 |