

Chapter 6 Causes

TheSage's English Dictionary and Thesaurus defines the word 'cause' as

- 1) A justification for something existing or happening
- 2) Events that provide the generative force that is the origin of something
- 3) A series of actions advancing a principle or tending toward a particular end

In this chapter I will identify the 5 causes that hinder the successful conclusion to any planning initiative and will show the link between the symptoms their causes and the traps that will be sprung by not doing the right think at the right time.

Recapping symptoms

Here are a few symptoms:

- 1) Having a plan simply for the sake of having one
- 2) Unrealistic goals or lack of focus and resources
- 3) Plans are overly complex
- 4) Unforeseen external circumstances
- 5) Project scope inflexible to changes
- 6) Wrong people in the wrong job
- 7) Financial estimates are significantly inaccurate
- 8) No accountability
- 9) Lack of focus

Sources: Forbes; Tempo Blog; OnStrategy; Leap Leadership

Steps to uncover a cause from a symptom

- 1) Read the problem statement carefully
- 2) Identify key word(s)
- 3) Identify risks
- 4) Isolate an explicit cause

An example using 'Having a plan simply for plans sake'

- 1) Read the problem statement carefully
"Having a plan simply for plans sake. Some organizations go through the motions of developing a plan simply because common sense says every good organization must have a plan. Don't do this. Just like most everything in life, you get out of a plan what you put in. If you're going to take the time to do it, do it right"
- 2) Identify keyword(s): "Do it right"
- 3) Identify risks: Not finding the appropriate results which will lead to 'do it right'!
- 4) Isolate an explicit cause: Implicit deliverable

Finding the explicit cause

Rather than boring you with the details as to how I came up with all my explicit causes I will simply assert that there are only 5 common planning failure causes, and they are as follows:

- 1) Implicit deliverables
- 2) Incorrect starting process
- 3) Implicit business models
- 4) Time wasted on wrong follow up steps
- 5) The cost of producing the implicit deliverables

1) Implicit deliverables

An implicit deliverable is one that is not clear and concise.

By definition implicit means “suggested though not directly expressed”. This means that anything that is implicit is ‘open to interpretation’ and does not have to conform to any ontology, taxonomy or heuristic (rule). An example of an implicit statement is

“The conceptual model is also known as the data model that can be used to describe the conceptual schema when a database system is implemented. It hides the internal details of physical storage and targets on describing entities, data type, relationships and constraints”.

Why is this implicit? Well for one thing it tries to give the impression that a conceptual model and a data model are synonymous when in fact they are not. There is a distinct difference between a ‘conceptual artifact’ and a ‘logical artifact’.

A conceptual artifact has everything to do with an idea (or dream), whereas the logical artifact has everything to do with a well laid out plan.

In this case the conceptual model is in reality the ‘knowledge’ model (which helps describe the idea), whereas the data model is a logical representation of the idea and proven by adding facts to the knowledge model and summarised by grouping certain knowledge classes under a common logical schema.

Therefore the ‘conceptual data model’ is an oxymoron (“a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction”).

The ultimate proof is the experience or as the proverbial saying goes “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”.

The problem with the word ‘implicit’ is that it has a second meaning, namely “essentially connected with”. ‘Essentially’ means “The central meaning or theme of a speech or literary work”.

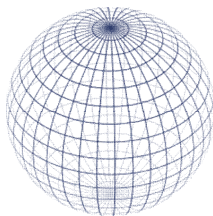
This means that the word ‘implicit’ is duplicitous and therefore cannot be a synonym for the word ‘explicit’ which in itself means “Precisely and clearly expressed or readily observable; leaving nothing to implication”.

As long as a single planning deliverable contains a single implicit statement and that statement is not resolved almost immediately, it is highly likely that whatever follows that statement may not make logical sense.

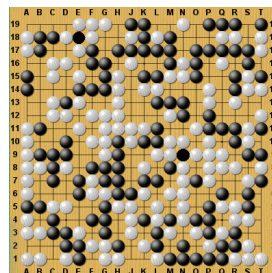
2) Incorrect starting process

The following is a repeat from Book1 Chapter 4 page 6.

The Chinese philosopher [Laozi](#) (circa 604 {BC} - circa 531 {BC}) was purported to have stated that “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”. The real problem is the direction in which that first step is taken. In a sphere there are 41,252 possible directions.



In the game of chess there are 20 opening moves/steps (16 pawn and 4 knight). In the game of Go it depends on the size of the board. The usual strategy is to place the first piece in a corner of the board and therefore there are 4 starting moves. In the game of chess there are 400 second and 72,084 third moves whereas in the game of Go there are 9 million third moves (I was not able to find out how many second moves there are).



In planning there is only 1 first step, however the success of the plan depends on what that first step is. Subsequent steps depend upon the first step and hence the trap that you may find yourself in could be sprung on the first move.

Imagine the time required to examine every possible starting position.

3) Implicit business models

Building a model is one way of trying to express the contents of a 'dream' of an 'idea'. The problem with most models is that they are either in 2 dimensions ('pixels on a medium' such as a piece of paper, canvas or on a computer screen). To add the 4th dimension (time) it is necessary to extrapolate what that model would look like after the passing of some durations (seconds, minutes, hours etc). Time lapse photography is a good example of this technique. The problem with this approach is whether or not the developer of the model followed the timeline in the exact frames as they occurred.

Trying to build a model in 3 dimensions is a lot more difficult and costly.

Designers can use a number of techniques to achieve this, however, they still depend on starting with some form of blueprint which is in fact a 2 dimensional portrayal of the object under consideration.

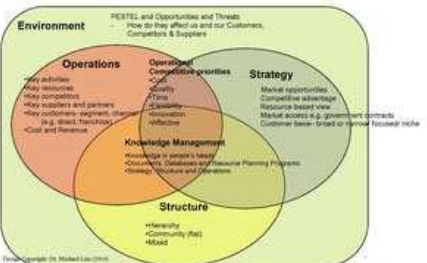


Imagine building a model of a car using plasticine, Lego bricks or Meccano pieces. Each medium poses a number of challenges such as cost, scale, amount of detail and whether or not the model can be transitioned through the passing of time.

Business models are far more complex than trying to model a car. A car is at least tangible whereas a business is a lot more complex. There are more than 1 simple model for a business model. Then again in order to build an actual car it is vital that the designers address every conceivable facet of the components that go to make up that particular make and model. Models such as the electronics, mechanical, power train etc have to be built independently and then integrated on an assembly line (the steps) in order to produce a working replica of the blueprint. One wrong model and the whole process would be a waste of resources (time, money, equipment and people).

This is also true when it comes to building business models. Get one model wrong and the entire business may fail.

Examples of business models

I have chosen 3 examples of business models to illustrate why I perceive them to be implicit. I apologise in advance if I have infringed any copyright laws but I need these images to illustrate my point. To view the image in more detail, please use the provided link ([E&OE](#)).

Model	Implicit reasons
<p>Environment-Strategy-Structure-Operations (ESSO) Business Model Development (copyright: Dr. Michael Lim 2010)</p>  <p>The diagram shows four overlapping circles: Environment (top), Operations (left), Strategy (right), and Structure (bottom). A central area labeled 'Knowledge Management' overlaps all four. Text within the circles includes: Environment (PESTLE and Opportunities and Threats, etc.), Operations (Key activities, Key resources, etc.), Strategy (Market opportunities, Competitive advantage, etc.), and Structure (Hierarchy, Community (if), etc.).</p>	<p>The Venn diagram hides the complexity of the detail. It starts off well using the environment as the ‘domain of discourse’ but then tries to explain this domain in terms of 3 overlapping sets with 7 distinctive areas. The overlap groups only mention 5. The overlap between ‘Operations’ and ‘Structure’; ‘Operations’, ‘Strategy’ and ‘Structure’; and ‘Strategy’ and ‘Structure’ all reference ‘Knowledge Management’. This proves to me that ‘Knowledge Management’ is implicit.</p>
 <p>The diagram features a central circle labeled 'Company Objectives' surrounded by four overlapping circles: Strategic Management (top), Marketing strategy (left), Organisation policy (right), and Personal policy (bottom). The outermost area is labeled 'Systems Strategy'.</p>	<p>In this model the domain of discourse is referred to as ‘Systems Strategy’. It then introduces a Venn diagram with 5 overlapping sets. The hub of the diagram represents the ‘Company objectives’ and overlay it with 4 areas containing the words ‘Strategy’ and ‘Policy’. Both these words are implicit (as they are synonyms and therefore the detail is hidden).</p> <p>In the previous model, the author at least referenced the word ‘knowledge’, whereas in this model this concept is omitted.</p>
 <p>A circular diagram with 'Business Model' at the center. It is divided into 8 segments: Sustainability (yellow), Offering (green), Unique Value Proposition (light green), Profit Model (red), Sales Performance Model (pink), Monetization (red), Ongoing Competitive Advantage (light blue), and Innovation Factor (light blue). The outer ring contains terms like GRACEFUL EXIT, MARKET ATTRACTIVENESS, PITFALL AVOIDANCE, and INNOVATION FACTOR.</p>	<p>In this model the domain of discourse is omitted, it is implied that the business model is comprised of 3 sections and 8 sub sections. There is a built in redundancy between 3 of the subsections namely ‘Innovation Factor’; Ongoing Competitive Advantage’; and ‘Unique Value Proposition’.</p> <p>What are missing from this model are terms such as: ‘Company objectives’; ‘Knowledge’; and ‘Strategy’. This redundancy and missing terms renders this model implicit.</p>

4) Time wasted on wrong follow up steps

AS if starting off in the wrong direction is enough to cause a major problem, continuing on to the next step and the next may cause even more complications.

For example: Let us assume that the planning regime you are using starts off with analysing all the data used by your enterprise. Well the first step would be to obtain all the relevant facts contained in current databases, reports and screen designs. This first step would require you to catalogue and define every data element.

The second step would require you to identify which business objective each and every data attribute was connected to in order to validate the veracity of the data attribute. This step will cause even more hardship as management would now have to spend a great deal of time identifying their specific objectives and then somehow find the link between the two.

This has the effect of springing two of the meta-traps mentioned in Chapter 4, namely:

- 1) 'Paralysis by analysis' with the traps 'Multiple brainstorming sessions' and 'Developing data before knowledge'
- 2) 'A death by a thousand cuts' with the traps of 'Poorly defined objectives'; 'No business knowledge model'; and 'Data = processed information'

5) The cost of producing the implicit deliverables

The quantification of costs is not that easy as multiple factors have to be taken into account. However I have undertaken a study which demonstrates the difference in undertaking an approach which starts off delivering implicit deliverables and the Ripose Technique which delivers explicit deliverables.

The first comparison shows the difference in costs between creating a [corporate conceptual data model](#) and Ripose, the second performing a [balanced scorecard approach](#) and Ripose.

The following table summarises the costs and waste of money:

Method	Cost	Wasted effort
Conceptual data model	\$1.23 million	\$1.06 million
Balanced scorecard	\$345 thousand	\$272 thousand

Linking symptoms to the causes and traps

Having established nature of dreams, plans, symptoms and causes, I will now link each symptom mentioned in Chapter 4 with its associated cause and identify the trap that is sprung due to the symptom and the cause.

For example: *Not understanding the environment*. This symptom is caused by not having the explicit deliverables during the strategic planning (or top-down planning phase) which will spring 2 traps, namely Misunderstood words such as Vision, Purpose and Developing multiple matrices such as Decision, Priority to compensate

See the Annexure for the full list.

Annexure

Symptoms, their cause and traps

Analyst	#	Symptom	Cause	Effective Trap	
				Type	Genre
Forbes researcher	1	Having a plan simply for the sake of having one	Implicit deliverables	Multiple brainstorming sessions	Top-Down
	2	Not understanding the environment		Requirements gathering	
				Misunderstood words such as Vision, Purpose	
	3	Partial commitment		Developing multiple matrices such as Decision, Priority	
				Multiple brainstorming sessions	
	4	Not having the right people	Requirements gathering		
	5	'Shelf life' of the plan	Multiple brainstorming sessions		
	6	A 'straight jacket' plan	Steps out of sequence	Strategies before objectives	
	7	Wrong people in the wrong job	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering	
				Strategies before objectives	
8	Ignoring reality	Steps out of sequence	SWOT or TOWS analysis on strategies		
			Requirements gathering		
9	No accountability	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering		
10	Unrealistic (or implicit) objectives		Multiple brainstorming sessions		

Dream: Plan: Experience – Book 1

Analyst	#	Symptom	Cause	Effective Trap	
				Type	Genre
Tempo Blog	1	Unrealistic goals or lack of focus and resources	Implicit deliverables	Multiple brainstorming sessions	Top-down
				Requirements gathering	
	2	Plans are overly complex	Steps out of sequence	Strategies before objectives	
				SWOT or TOWS analysis on strategies	
				Developing data before knowledge	
	3	Financial estimates are significantly inaccurate	Implicit deliverables	Multiple brainstorming sessions	
				Requirements gathering	
	4	Plans are based on insufficient data		No business priority process models	Bottom-up
				No business knowledge model	
	5	Inflexible/undefined team roles and responsibilities	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering	Top-down
Steps out of sequence				See 2	
6	Staffing requirements are not fully understood	Implicit deliverables	See 1		
			Steps out of sequence	See 2	
7	Project scope inflexible to changes				
OnStrategy	1	Unforeseen external circumstances	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering	
	2	Lack of understanding among those involved in developing the strategy and what they need to do to make it successful	Steps out of sequence	See 2	
					3
	4	Poor match between the strategy and the core competencies of the organization			
	5	Lack of accountability or of holding the team responsible	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering	

Analyst	#	Symptom	Cause	Effective Trap	
				Type	Genre
Leap Leadership	1	Lack of Alignment Between Strategy, Objectives, Vision and KPIs	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering	Top-down
			Steps out of sequence	Duplication of effort - duplicating steps	
			Implicit business models	Developing data before knowledge	
	2	Lack of Discipline	Steps out of sequence	Strategies before objectives	
				SWOT or TOWS analysis on strategies	
				Developing data before knowledge	
	3	Lack of Accountability	Implicit deliverables	Requirements gathering	
	4	Lack of Head Space		Steps out of sequence	
	5	Lack of Courage			
	ReliablePlant	1	Lack of focus	Implicit deliverables	
Steps out of sequence				Strategies before objectives	
				SWOT or TOWS analysis on strategies	
				Developing data before knowledge	
2		Lack of energy/resources	Implicit deliverables	See 1	
			Steps out of sequence	See 2	
3		Lack of understanding	Implicit deliverables	See 1	
			Steps out of sequence	See 2	
4		Lack of accountability	Implicit deliverables	See 1	
			Steps out of sequence	See 2	
5		Lack of follow up	Steps out of sequence	See 2	
6		Lack of flexibility	Implicit deliverables	See 1	