

‘A systematic Literature Review of the extant Body of Knowledge on how to successfully implement Strategy’

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In order to successfully implement a strategy – a feat that reportedly 70 per cent of organizations fail to do – management must recognize that strategy development and strategy implementation are not two separate activities, but interlinked. While there has been a substantial amount of work on strategy implementation over the past decades, there is no up-to-date literature review that combines these many findings. By systematically reviewing the articles on strategy implementation published in five highly ranked scientific journals, between 1980 and 2015, this paper contributes to reducing the existent gap in the literature. The findings of this study suggest that successful strategy implementation requires a hierarchical, three phase model: Plan, Communicate, and Manage, which managers can consult in order to increase their organizations chances of realizing its strategic vision.

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Keywords

Strategy, Strategy implementation, Strategy execution, Success, Failure, Literature Review

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5th IBA Bachelor Thesis Conference, July 2nd, 2015, Enschede, The Netherlands.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“I’d rather have a first-rate execution and second-rate strategy any time than a brilliant idea and mediocre management.”

Jamie Dimon, CEO of JPMorgan Chase

More than a decade ago, when Jamie Dimon spoke these words he was aware that having a great idea will not ensure success; only the solid execution of a sound strategy can create a competitive advantage (Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008).

With reported strategy implementation failure rates between 50 per cent and 90 per cent (Dion, Allday, Lafforet, Derain, & Lahiri, 2007; Kaplan and Norton, 2001; Mintzberg, 1994), the subject has received much attention from both researchers and practitioners (Cândido & Santos, 2015). Nonetheless, the majority of literature on the topic of strategy is concerned with the making and developing of strategic decisions (Miller, 1997). Companies are thus adept at developing strategies, but regularly fail to successfully implement these (Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008). However, only successfully strategy implementation can result in a superior organizational performance (Bonoma, 1984; Heide, Gronhaug & Johannessen, 2002; Neilson, Martin, and Powers, 2008)

As a result of this problem, there is a high demand for guidelines and frameworks to help managers combat the problems related to this issue. With a wide range of differing recommendations proposed by both researchers and practitioners, managers are faced with the increasingly difficult task of filtering out all the “noise” and finding the plan of action that best fits their (unique) circumstances (Franken, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009; Proctor, Powell & McMillen, 2013). A further reason for managers’ difficulties to find guidance suitable to their situation is that many of the studies focussing on implementation strategies are inconsistent, poorly described and lack theoretical justification (Proctor, Powell & McMillen, 2013).

When developing strategies, managers need to know what has to be taken into consideration, and what needs to be in place, in order to successfully turn a strategic vision into action.

This paper thus sets out to perform a systematic literature review of the extant body of knowledge on how to successfully implement strategy, for the time period from 1980 to 2015. The aim of this review is to determine how researchers per decade (1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s) have advised practitioners to successfully implement their strategy, thus avoiding the fate of so many failed strategies. The research question this review addresses is thus:

“What are the recommendations per decade on how to successfully implement strategy?”

The findings of this paper have several academic, as well as practical benefits. With respect to the former it contributes to the literature on strategy implementation by offering a comprehensive analysis of the available literature on effective strategy implementation published in five highly ranked journals in the time period from 1980 – 2015. With regards to the latter it provides both practitioners with a set of underlying categories which need to be addressed when trying to successfully implement a strategy. It thus offers a check list, against which managers can compare their organizations current status quo and adjust accordingly in order to reduce the likelihood of failure. Furthermore this may be considered as a benefit to academics as well, since such a set of categories provides a framework based on which to structure future research. By analysing not only the current advice on successful strategy implementation stipulated in the literature, but also by taking into account the recommendations that have been elaborated since the interest in this topic first arose in the mid-1980s (Alexander, 1985; Wernham 1984), a more comprehensive representation of the advice, thought to

influence strategy execution, is provided. Furthermore this long-term inclusion allows for observations concerning the prevalence of the recommendations over a time period of 35 years, which can aid managers in deciding which recommendations to focus on.

1.1 Defining the concepts

With regard to the posed research question, this paper needs to define the concepts it is working with.

1.1.1 Strategy

Strategy is of relevance to nearly every company, and the people working within them (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2011). However it was not until the 1960s, that strategy as a business discipline arose, due to the works of, inter alia, Chandler (1962) and Ansoff (1965) (Kiechel, 2010; Freedman, 2014). Until then the term strategy, which originates from the ancient Greek word *strategos* (Greek: στρατηγός), and literally means “army leader”, was used to describe an army general (Kazhdan, 1991). Presently there is no consensus on the definition of strategy; as such this paper elects to adopt the strategy definition provided by Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes (2011). This paper thus considers strategy to be “the long-term direction of an organisation”, as this definition includes both deliberate and emergent patterns of strategy.

1.1.2 Strategy implementation

This paper employs the terms strategy execution and strategy implementation interchangeably. “Strategy execution is concerned with: firstly, creating a portfolio of change programs that will deliver the strategy; and secondly, it involves attracting, allocating, and managing all the necessary resources to deliver these change programs” (Franken, Edwards & Lambert, 2009). Several authors have argued that the adoption of a decision can be regarded as successful strategy implementation (Bourgeois and Brodwin 1984; Piercy, 1991), Miller (1997) however sees this definition as too simple. She argues that adopting a strategy, will not necessarily lead to a successful outcome. Miller (1997) thus distinguished three features of successful strategy implementation, (1) completion, (2) achievement, and (3) acceptability. This paper chooses to follow this definition of success, as it extends beyond the simple definitions previously mentioned.

Opposing successful implementation is failure to turn the strategic vision into action. While it may be argued that not all failure (the lack of success) is bad, since companies can use failure to learn and improve (Edmondson, 2011), all failure to implement strategy will have some negative consequences, be it in the short term, or in the long term.

As such, when discussing failure, this paper adheres to the definition of Cândido and Santos (2015) with a failed strategy being considered either a strategy which was formulated but not adopted, or a strategy which was implemented, but the goal of which was not achieved.

1.1.3 Recommendations

This paper considers recommendations to be suggestions about how an organization, or individuals within an organization, should behave or act, and what needs to be done, in order to successfully implement a strategy.

1.2 Structure of the paper

The following sections of this paper are structured as follows. The second section begins by outlining the methodology and framework adopted to reach the objective of this paper. The third section includes a review of the literature, followed by a discussion of the findings in the fourth section. Part of the discussion, which is an overarching conclusion, followed by a

(sub)section addressing the limitations of this review, as (sub)section which offers practical implications and suggestions for further research.

2. METHOD

In order to determine what the advice, per decade, on how to successfully implement strategy is, a systematic literature review has been conducted. The method chosen for this review is a tabular review, which is often employed to summarize the findings of numerous studies (Dooley, 2008). By making use of a literature review, this paper will inform practitioners and researchers about the available body of research (Rhoades, 2011) on the topic of recommendations for successful strategy implementation.

This review of the literature began by gathering all papers including the wording “strategy and implement*”, “strategy and execut*”, “implementing and strateg*”, as well as “executing and strateg*” in Title, Abstract or Keywords, from the bibliographic database SCOPUS. In the search terms above the asterisk sign (*) represents wildcard characters (Cândido & Santos, 2015).

Figure 1 describes the search process performed using the SCOPUS database, with each new row representing a filtration step. The text in each row represents a limitation criterion, while the number indicates the amount of articles that remains after adjusting for the limitation (e.g. after limiting to the subject area of Business, Management and Accounting, a total of 10,286 articles remained for the search term “Strategy + implement*”).

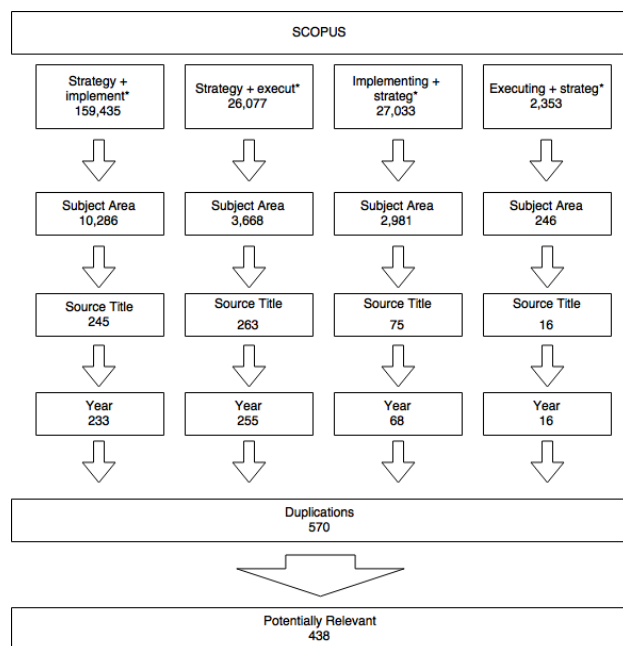


Figure 1. Database search scheme.

Initially the use of the aforementioned search terms resulted in 214,898 articles. With the purpose of reviewing only business related findings, the search results were limited to the subject area of “Business, Management and Accounting”. In order to ensure a consistent quality in the selection of sources, this paper only selected articles included in journals of high quality (3 and higher on the Association of Business Schools journal ranking). To this effect, in the second step, the source title was limited to five journals. Thus, the articles included in this literature review were published in one of the following journals from the fields of strategic-, or general management:

Strategic Management Journal (Rating: 4*), *Long Range Planning* (Rating: 3), *Harvard Business Review* (Rating: 4), *British Journal of Management* (Rating: 4), or *California Management Review* (Rating: 3).

Once the database search was complete, the articles underwent further sorting, in order to limit the findings to articles relevant for the literature review. The process is depicted in Figure 2.

In the first step the abstracts of all 438 articles were scanned for information relevant for answering the posed research question. Through the means of inductive coding 316 were excluded in this stage. The articles were excluded for either of the following reasons: 1) *the article is unrelated*, meaning that the topic of strategy implementation is not (a relevant) part of the article; 2) *the focus of the article is too narrow*, stipulating that the article contains information that is too specific to a certain context in order for it to be seen relevant for general advice on strategy implementation; 3) *the article has a different focus*, meaning that the article does not focus on how to implement strategy, but rather e.g. on the development of strategy.

In the second step (see Figure 2.) both the *introduction* and *discussion* sections of the 122 articles with abstracts that retained their relevance for further research, were scanned.

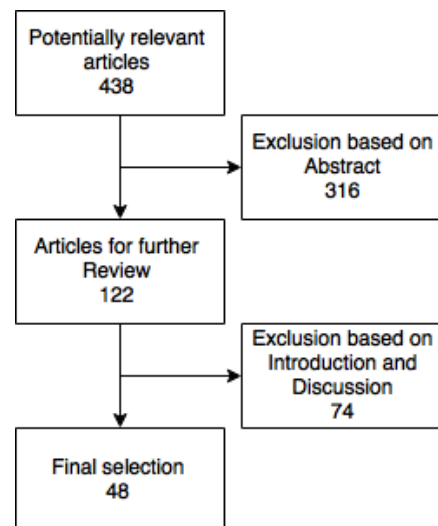


Figure 2. Article Selection Process.

Through this step 74 articles were excluded from further review, based on the same exclusion criteria as the previous review of the abstracts: 1) *the article is unrelated*; 2) *the focus of the article is too narrow*; 3) *the article has a different focus*. This resulted in 48 articles (see Table 1) which were included in the actual literature review.

3. RESULTS

As demonstrated above there is an abundance of articles on the implementation of strategy, yet their focus varies (e.g. successful implementation, failure to implement, complexity and quality of the methodology used) which demands careful analysis of the findings. The recommendations, and the amount thereof found in the articles, vary to a similar extent. While some articles give concrete guidelines and step by step instructions on successful strategy implementation (e.g. Franken, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009; Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008; Reed & Buckley, 1988; Taylor, 1997), others propose more general advice (e.g. Beer & Eisenstat, 2004; Garvin & Roberto, 2005).

In Table 1 the frequency and distribution of articles on successful strategy implementation per decade is visualized. What springs to eye is that for the period from 1980 to 1989 (1980s) only six articles concerning successful strategy implementation were published, in the journals used in this review. The first article included in this paper was published in 1984, with the majority of articles being published in the 1990s (16) and 2000s (19). Further, it is noteworthy that the articles from the 1980s and 1990s were all published in Long Range Planning, with the exception of three articles appearing in the Harvard Business Review, the first being published in 1997. It is not until the 2000s (2000 – 2009) that the articles are more evenly published by a wider range of journals, with all journals included in this review, except for the British Journal of Management, containing articles with recommendations on successful strategy implementation.

Table 1
Article Frequency and Distribution by Decade

Period	SMJ	LRP	HBR	BJM	CMR	Total
1980-1989		6				6
1990-1999		13	3			16
2000-2009	3	4	10		2	19
2010-2015	3	1		2	1	7
Totals	6	24	13	2	3	48

Note:

SMJ = Strategic Management Journal

LRP = Long Range Planning

HBR = Harvard Business Review

BJM = British Journal of Management

CMR = California Management Review

Table 1A (see Appendix), which is the result of the tabular literature review, lists the recommendations on successful strategy implementation for all articles that were included in this paper. Through inductive coding, underlying trends were identified which lead to the grouping of the recommendations into ten categories. The frequency and distribution of these categories is depicted in Table 2. While not exhaustive, these categories have been identified, by this study, to be a necessity for, or support, successful strategy implementation. As such, in order for an organization to successfully turn its strategic vision into action, the literature analyzed in this review suggests to take into consideration the following areas of focus:

1. *Communication*

Once a strategy has been devised, management must clearly communicate it (what is to be done, targets, and initiatives) to the stakeholders. Senior management must encourage open, two-way communication, giving the employees that are involved in or affected by the changes the possibility to question the decisions made, in order to understand and ultimately turn them into results. To communicate more effectively organizations can devise a strategy map, which visualizes the strategy and thus eases implementation by making providing an explicit guide.

2. *Human Resources Management*

Human Resources Management comes into place at two stages, the first being involving the right people

in the planning stage. While senior management have a good overall view of the company, mid-level managers generally have more detailed knowledge about the actual capabilities of their departments. Involving them early on in the strategy development stage will ensure that senior management has the necessary information for devising a sound strategy. The second stage concerns the guidance and control of the stakeholders involved in implementing the strategy. Senior managers must guide and manage employees' behaviors on a collective basis, and support them in developing appropriate skills needed for successful implementation of the strategy (e.g. though training). As such the HR department holds a pivotal role in turning strategy into action.

3. *Planning*

Before a strategy can be implemented it has to be thoroughly planned. While it is possible to implement a sub-par strategy, the results will nonetheless be inferior to those achieved through implementing a carefully crafted strategy. A strategy should identify potential implementation problems in the development stage, so as to address them before they occur. However, the strategy must not be too specific, thus permitting adjustments to be made during implementation, nor should it be too vague, which would leave stakeholders without a concise plan.

4. *Alignment*

Top management must ensure to dynamically create alignments between the company's corporate strategy and its strategic actions. Furthermore management must align the priorities, plans and practices of all stakeholders across the organization, which also includes executives' need to be united in the identification of actions required to bridge the future.

5. *Culture*

The organization should develop a leadership and execution-driven culture which reinforces rapid and effective decision making, and inspires employees to implement the developed strategy. This can be achieved by making the company's values and beliefs more explicit and by emphasizing the need to produce value for customers, shareholders and other stakeholders. An organization that strives to successfully implement a strategy should encourage a culture of learning, in order to accumulate more relevant strategic knowledge, which can help employees to take responsibility for a wider range of issues.

6. *Ground rules*

There is a set of rules that every organization needs to take into account when aiming to successfully implement their strategy. Examples of ground rules are: strategy and implementation are inseparable, the strategy must be feasible and of high quality, the strategy should be simple yet concrete, or purpose is always more important than pre-defined tasks. If the understanding of these ground rules is not present, strategy implementation is sure to fail.

7. *Commitment*

It is important to gain strong emotional commitment from employees early on in both the development and implementation stage. Only if everyone involved in the implementation of the strategy assumes responsibility for its execution will the vision turn into action.

8. *Resources*
The greatest strategy cannot be implemented if the people tasked with implementing it do not have the appropriate resources. Senior management must thus provide sufficient resources such as financing, manpower, technical expertise, time, or information. Without these the developed strategy will not lead to the intended outcome, or will not be implemented at all. The knowledge on the availability of resources is thus a vital part of the strategy development stage.
9. *Framework*
Frameworks or management approaches such as the balanced score card can assist managers in measuring key performance indicators to determine the state of strategy implementation. Visualization of the strategy through e.g. a strategy map can further assist in communicating the strategy to the relevant stakeholders.
10. *Structure*
There are contrasting views on whether or not to restructure an organization in order to implement strategy. Generally it can be argued that restructuring an organization to make it leaner, fitter and simpler will have a positive effect on the implementation of strategy. However, changing a structure that does not impede implementation might do more harm than good.

Table 2
Theme Frequencies and Distribution by Decade

Focus of recommendation	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	Total
Communication	3	8	14	1	26
Human resources management	4	7	11	2	24
Planning	3	8	8	2	21
Alignment	2	5	9	2	18
Culture	3	5	5	1	15
Ground rule	1	6	5	3	15
Commitment	4	3	0	0	7
Resources	4	2	0	2	8
Framework	1	3	3	0	7
Structure	0	2	2	1	5

Some of the recommendations depicted in Table 2, such as communication and planning, which are the most frequently mentioned themes supporting strategy implementation, have been discussed by a wider variety of authors (Alexander, 1985; Garvin & Levesque, 2008; Morris, & Pitt, 1994) throughout the decades. While their recommendations concerning the facets of strategy implementation on which to specifically focus on may vary, their underlying advice is to pay attention to these areas in order to achieve success when implementing a strategy. Other recommendations such as structure (e.g. Kleinbaum & Stuart, 2014; Taylor, 1995) and commitment (e.g. Jenster, 1987; Morris & Pitt, 1994) were discussed in fewer articles, being absent from the literature in the 1980s, as well as the 2000s and 2010s, respectively.

A general trend that can be identified throughout all recommendation categories, with the exception of *commitment* and *resources* which peaked in the 1980s, is the increase in

articles pertaining to the said categories, from the 1980s to the 2000s, before decreasing again in the 2010s. Even by multiplying the number of articles in the 2010s by two, so as to obtain an approximation of the total articles which would be published by the end of the decade, the amount thereof is still below the amount published in the previous decades, being the second lowest of all decades that were analyzed.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Discussion

Strategy formulation and strategy execution are interlinked (Calori & Atamer, 1990; Campbell & Alexander, 1997; Mintzberg & Water, 1985), since a great strategy is useless unless it can be successfully implemented (Neilson, Martin & Powers, 2008). Once a comprehensive strategy determining the long-term direction of an organization has been devised, all too often it reaches a standstill, as problems inhibit the successful implementation thereof (Alexander, 1985; Cândido & Santos, 2015). This is highlighted by the fact that strategy implementation failure rates of 70 per cent are commonly stated (Cândido & Santos, 2015; Franken, Edwards & Lambert, 2009). This study aims to improve managements' chance of successfully turning their vision into action by providing recommendations which are deemed by the literature to have a positive impact on strategy implementation.

The findings of the conducted systematic literature review suggest that management may adopt the following plan of action managers should take in order to successfully implement their strategy:

1. PLAN

Carefully plan a balanced strategy that is able to identify potential problems during the implementation stage and which permits to address them before their occurrence. During this stage it is important to include the right people. Only if senior management has the knowledge, which lies with the middle managers, can the necessary resources be efficiently allocated and the strategy be successfully implemented.

2. COMMUNICATE

Communicate the developed strategy to all affected stakeholders. A means thorough which to accomplish this is to involve change agents, and visualize the strategy by providing employees with a strategy map. Furthermore employees need to be able to engage in a two-way communication that enables them to question the decisions made, in order to understand and ultimately turn them into results. This would expectedly generate commitment from the employees through developing a sense of ownership.

3. MANAGE

Once the strategy has been developed and communicated to all the affected stakeholders, senior management must be actively involved in the implementation of the strategy. Executives should align the new strategy and promote a culture of learning which would inspire people to implement the developed strategy.

The aforementioned guidelines indicate that successful strategy implementation follows a "plan, communicate, manage" structure. As such, the identified categories exist within a hierarchical order and can be inserted into a pyramidal structure. Only once the lowest level, planning, has been thoroughly completed, should the strategy be communicated to stakeholders. Once the strategy has then been communicated to all the stakeholders involved, and they have been offered the possibility to understand it, senior management can, and must,

actively be involved in the implementation process. These findings imply that the most important step for strategy implementation is, in fact, the planning step, which coincides with the most important ground rule observed in this literature review: strategy implementation and strategy development are not two separate activities, but are interlinked, as argued as early as 1987 by Pendlebury, and as recently as 2015, by Leonardi.

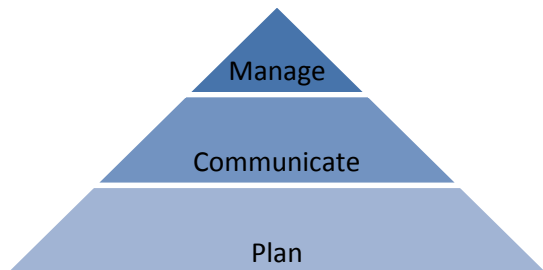


Figure 3. Hierarchy of strategy implementation.

Concerning the prevalence and frequency of the recommendations given throughout the decades the following can be stated. The three most frequently discussed themes related to successful strategy implementation, found thorough this literature review, are *communication* (26), *human resources management* (24) and *planning* (21). All three were first mentioned in articles in 1985 and have since been consistently associated with, and described as, supporting successful strategy implementation. This serves a clear indication of their importance. *Commitment* on the other hand, has not been mentioned since the 1990s. A possible explanation for this might be that scholars no longer consider commitment to be an essential part to strategy implementation, which would conclude that neither should managers.

The reason for the decrease in articles containing advice on how to successfully implement strategy may be found in the study of Cândido and Santos (2015). Their review of the literature on strategy implementation failure rates implies that the overall failure rate of strategy implementation has been sinking, with failure rates around 45 per cent being reported by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2013) and the Project Management Institute (2014). This number stands in contrast to the numbers presented in the 1980s by e.g. Kiechel (1984) and Gray, (1986). Cândido and Santos (2015) point out however, that the studies included in their review are mixed in terms of their definition of failure, and features concerning the complexity and quality of the methodology used for the analysis. Therefore, while a trend towards a decreasing failure of strategy implementation is observed, it is not possible to say whether this indeed is the case, or whether the phenomenon may be attributable to the different methodologies used in each case. As such it is not possible to determine whether this potential decrease has had an influence on the amount of papers published on successful strategy implementation.

4.2 Conclusion

High strategy implementation failure rates have regularly been reported, however there had been no substantial review of the literature on how to successfully implement strategy. This literature review thus contributes to the field of strategy through an attempt to reduce the gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive overview of the advice and recommendations given by researchers and practitioners in the time from the 1980s until the 2010s. This study has found that in order to turn a strategic vision into action, management must recognize that

strategy formulation and strategy implementation are not two separate sets of activities, but are interrelated. Basic on the findings of this review, the key to successful strategy implementation lies in the planning of a sound strategy, which accounts for possible problems during execution, and is able to allocate the necessary resources to the respective departments. The strategy should then be communicated to all stakeholders, explaining why the strategy was developed, what will happen, and who will be responsible for implementing the change. This can generate commitment from all parties involved in strategy implementation, increasing the chance of success, when being guided by a competent management team.

If organizations follow these recommendations the chance of successfully implementing their strategy should increase, thus reducing the chance of failure.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Limitations of this study

First and foremost it must be acknowledged that the reviewed literature is in no way exhaustive, with only articles published in the *Strategic Management Journal*, *Long Range Planning*, *Harvard Business Review*, *British Journal of Management*, or *California Management Review*, being included. This thus excludes much of the literature on strategy implementation, potentially constituting a sampling bias. The fact that the aforementioned journals were used to obtain articles for this review, in itself, constitutes a limitation. Secondly, the article selection process might be flawed, as the first filtration step excluded any and all articles that contained seemingly irrelevant abstracts. This may have led to the exclusion of articles containing information relevant to this review. The same is true for the second filtration process, which may have, equally, wrongfully excluded articles based on their introduction and conclusion. Finally the inductive coding of the implementation success might contain errors, with the categories being inadequately identified, or advice potentially being assigned to the wrong category.

5.2 Academic Relevance

The academic relevance of the present study resides in the fact that it furthers the knowledge in the field of strategy research, by systematically reviewing recommendations on successful strategy implementation for the time period from 1980 to 2015.

5.3 Practical Relevance

With respect to the practical relevance of this paper, these are as follows. First, managers may use the findings of this paper to determine whether their organization is on a path to successfully implementing their strategy. The presented categories relevant to strategy implementation may act as a checklist for practitioners, so as to enable them to compare the current state of their organization to the recommendations given in the literature. Furthermore the proposed plan of action may support executives that are preparing to develop a new strategy, by summing up the most important aspects needed for successful implementation.

5.4 Recommendations for further Research

The following suggestions for further research are propose. First, further research would need to be conducted in order to determine the reliability and validity of this study's findings. Due to the fact that this literature review contains only articles from five select journals, further review of the literature, with a focus on articles not included in this paper, could be undertaken. Alternatively a survey with a representative sample may be conducted, so as to find support for the categories

determined in this review. Furthermore a study linking advice and failure would be of interest, as it could provide managers with advice on how to combat a certain failure.

While reviewing the literature it became clear that, although there is advice on how to successfully implement strategy, be it in the form of abstract advice or concrete step by step instructions, there was a lack of studies that showed these strategies in action. It would therefore be highly interesting to conduct a multiple case study with firms that adopt the advice given in the literature, in order to determine their effectiveness.

Another possible research topic might be to determine whether the potential decline in strategy implementation failure has an effect on the decrease of articles containing advice on successful strategy implementation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. ir. Jeroen Kraaijenbrink for his valuable feedback during the writing of this thesis. Furthermore I would like to thank MSc. Christina Baukloh for her helpful insights and advice.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1
Recommendations on Successful Strategy Implementation per Decade

Decade	Author(s)	Article Design	Focus of recommendation	How can strategy be successfully implemented?
1980s	Alexander, L. D. (1985)	Survey	Communication	Two-way communication that permits and solicits questions from affected employees about the formulated strategy, issues to be considered or potential problems that might occur. Management must clearly communicate to all employees what the new strategic decision is about, why the strategic decision was made, and what employees' new responsibilities, tasks and duties are; Obtain Employee Commitment and Involvement early on and maintain it throughout the implementation process
			Planning	The formulated strategy must be fundamentally sound
			Resources	Provide sufficient resources (i.e. money, manpower, technical expertise, time)
			Planning	Develop an implementation plan that strikes the right balance and is neither too vague nor detailed and identifies possible implementation problems
	Hussey, D. E. (1985)	Empirical	Human resources management	Training is a powerful weapon for implementing strategy (training objectives and initiatives should be periodically reviewed by top management)
			Alignment	Close integration of training to company objectives and strategies
	Jenster, P. V. (1987)	Empirical	Resources	The quality of the available information is a vital source that can make or break a strategy; During implementation assumptions made while planning the strategy change, therefore getting the right information on developments in critical issues and the firm's strategic progress is essential to directors and managers
			Human resources management	Top management should guide and participate in the implementation; Think-positive – all negative non-constructive statements undermine the project; Involve the right people early on
			Commitment	The project and its success belong to all employees, everyone involved must take responsibility
			Culture	Success is dependent on timely completion of all assignments. Any unsolved problems must be brought to senior management's attention within 24 hours and receive immediate attention
			Alignment	All members of the organization need an understanding of the different steps; Excuses" don't get the job done – if there could be a delay, bring it to senior management's attention in due date
	Pendlebury, A. J. (1987)	Empirical	Ground rule	Strategy and implementation are inseparable; The strategy must be feasible, in terms of what it asks people to do, over the time period in consideration
			Planning	Develop actions plans which are correctly balanced between people, systems and technology
			Commitment	Gain commitment of the organization as a whole
Resources			Obtain the resources and skills necessary to implement the plan	
Communication			Document and communicate the strategy and pans	
Reed, R., & Buckley, M. R. (1988)	Case study	Alignment	Identify strategic intent by matching strategy benefits with the organization's needs.	

			Communication	Communicate what is to be done ; Interpret strategic intent into the specific managerial actions, at all necessary organizational levels, that are needed to attain the benefits.
			Planning	Develop Critical Success Factors (intermediate goals); Collate and translate all actions into comprehensive action plan; Use goal-setting to translate the CSF key activities into targets for individual managers-note: these are likely to be inputs rather than outputs.
			Framework	Produce a framework of key activities and identify the critical success factors.
			Human resources management	Link reward and appraisal systems to individual manager goals.
			Culture	Use an interventionist approach to communicate an environment of participant involvement aimed at problem avoidance.
			Control	Monitor the implementation process to ensure adherence to plans and/or modify plays as situations change
	Wernham, R. (1984)	Case study	Resources	Resource availability; Provision of reliable information and supporting materials
			Culture	Staff enthusiasm/confidence
			Commitment	Top Management Backing
<u>1990s</u>	Alexander Lord, M. (1993)	Survey	Planning	The implementation of strategy can be ensured through a series of projects.
			Control	By using project management techniques Managers can control strategy implementation
	Calori, R., & Atamer, T. (1990)	Case study	Communication	Intense communication is crucial for the implementation of strategies and the emergence of strategic actions
			Ground rule	Strategy formulation and implementation are interlinked
			Framework	Seven clusters of possible actions: formulating a ‘strategic project’, developing the resources and skills, negotiating with the environment, dealing with power, improving internal communication, influencing norms of behaviour, all this orchestrated by transformational managers.
	Campbell, A., & Alexander, M. (1997)	HBR Article*	Planning	Management needs to be able to envision the tactics for its implementation (i.e. where to get staff, how to involve customers etc.)
			Ground rule	Don’t separate strategy formulation from strategy implementation; Implementation needs to be viewed as being part of strategy development
	Christensen, C. M. (1997)	HBR Article*	Ground rule	Management must ensure that strategy is not a reflection of the biases (and possibly ignorance) of the management team
			Resources	The strategy must mirror the realities of the company’s environment, and the resource allocation must mirror the strategy
			Alignment	The management team must be united in its understanding of the problem to be tackled
			Visualization	Map the functional strategies
			Planning	Create a plan for the projects to implement the strategy, i.e. define specifically how money and manpower must be spent over time to implement the strategy
	Giles, W. D. (1991)	Empirical	Alignment	Strategy generation and implementation must be seamless

Gratton, L. (1996)	Multiple Case Study	Planning	Sophistication follows ownership, but over-sophistication hinders ownership
		Commitment	Ownership makes implementation work irrespective of strategy (Implementers must be able to take ownership of the strategy by designing their own implementation)
		Ground rule	Acknowledge that a problem exists and do something about it
		Communication	Articulate the vision
		Planning	Identify factors for strategic impact; Create pathways to the future
		Alignment	Align strategic factors with current capabilities; Align strategic intent and the behavior of individual teams; Executives need to agree on what long-term means, identify actions required to bridge the future and debate actions which take into account the likely blocks to change
Lorange, P. (1998)	Empirical	Culture	Values, motivations and the behavior of the organization's members are critical
		Culture	Learning, in order to accumulate more relevant strategic knowledge, should be at the centre of a firm's strategic implementation efforts
		Human resources management	Involve the HR department
Morris, M. H., & Pitt, L. F. (1994)	Survey	Human resources management	Training and management development
		Communication	Communicate effectively
		Planning	Strategic consequences need to be anticipate beforehand
		Commitment	Include people responsible for implementing the strategy in the strategy formulation
Pellegrinelli, S., & Bowman, C. (1994)	Empirical	Human resources management	Project and programme management
		Communication	Clear communication about strategic objectives (as put forward by Hrebiniak and Joyce)
		Experience	Experience of senior management
Piercy, N., & Morgan, N. (1991)	Empirical	Communication	Internal marketing: Develop an appropriate language for managers to describe the strategy
Raimond, P., & Eden, C. (1990)	Empirical	Planning	Need a clear vision of what the company should be
		Resources	Need the people appropriate to that vision; Need to allocate resources; Need to select information
		Control	Need Performance measures appropriate to the goal and vision
		Ground rule	The immediate emotional effect of the planning meeting on the planners is a reliable barometer for forecasting whether agreed plans will be successfully implemented
		Commitment	Strong positive emotional commitment; Involve all people who are essential to the implementation of the strategy in the planning stage

	Shaw, G., Brown, R., & Bromiley, P. (1998)	Case Study	Communication	Transform the strategy into a compelling story which tell everyone what the goals are and how to reach them
			Culture	Inspire the people who have to implement the plan
Taylor, B. (1995)	Empirical		Structure	Organization structure (initiatives concerned with: decentralization, de-layering, outsourcing and autonomous work groups)
			Culture	Company culture (company-wide communication programs promoting corporate mission statements, and training programs focused on customer care, TQM and innovation)
			Alignment	Business processes (attempts to accelerate new product development, introduce JIT, and speed-up the order-delivery process)
			Human resources management	Human resources management (managing people as a “strategic resource” with tighter measurement of performance and performance related pay)
Taylor, B. (1997)	Empirical		Structure	Restructuring the organization (making it leaner, fitter and simpler)
			Alignment	Re-engineering business processes (simplifying and speeding up the company’s key processes such as product development)
			Culture	Company culture (making the company’s values and beliefs more explicit and emphasize the need to produce value for customers, shareholders and other stakeholders; Develop learning company which focuses on the development of the human assets; Adopt participative management and employee empowerment as a company-wide management style
			Human resources management	Human resource management (revising the contract with employees, e.g. allow for more flexible working, hold staff more accountable and link rewards more directly to performance)
			Framework	Management training in the shareholder value or balanced business scorecard approach
			Communication	techniques which are designed to encourage “honest upward feedback” from employees to the management, individually and in groups
	Zabriskie, N. B., & Huellmantel, A. B. (1994)	Empirical	Planning	Formulate a competitive, winning strategy
			Framework	Make use of strategic marketing
<u>2000s</u>	Beer, M., & Eisenstat, R. A. (2004)	HBR Article*	Communication	Organization wide communication is key. The organization needs to have a collective (several levels of management across important functions and value-chain activities need to be engaged) and public (senior management needs to keep everyone three or four levels below them informed about what is going on) conversation.
	Burgelman, R. A., & Siegel, R. E. (2008)	Empirical	Framework	The Strategy diamond can be used to systematically examine a venture’s strategy execution.
			Alignment	A venture’s top management must make sure to dynamically create alignments between the company’s corporate strategy and its strategic actions.
	Dobni, C. B., & Luffman, G. (2003)	Survey	Human resources management	The key to successful strategy implementation lies in the ability to guide and manage employees behaviors on a collective basis
			Ground rule	Market orientation facilitates strategy implementation

Eppler, M. J., & Platts, K. W. (2009)	Multiple Case Study	Visualization	Visualize strategy (e.g. through a synergy map); Provide an interface to capture, aggregate, present an explore information; By visualizing progress in real-time managers can track implementation progress visually and identify deviations from the plan
		Communication	By facilitating communication, the use of visualization can lead to new insights regarding possible positive or negative interdependencies among goals or implementation steps
Franken, A., Edwards, C., & Lambert, R. (2009)	Empirical	Alignment	Strategic change portfolio alignment (identification and prioritization of an agreed collection of programs that will deliver the strategy)
		Culture	Change capability improvement (continually improve the ways in which change programs are identified and undertaken); Evoke and reinforce an organizational culture of continuous change
		Control	Manage the on-going change portfolio, conflict resolution, resources and interdependencies; Establish accountability and governance of each program; Assess the organization's strategy execution performance
		Alignment	Harmonize the strategic leadership team to support the change portfolio and to agree the need to improve the strategic execution capability
Garvin, D. A., & Levesque, L. C. (2008)	HBR Article*	Planning	Determine and assess the critical elements; Create a change portfolio to improve strategy execution capability
		Alignment	Align priorities, plans and practices across the organization; Use integrators at all levels
		Human resources management	Allow overlapping roles and responsibilities; Share responsibility for talent development
Garvin, D. A., & Roberto, M. A. (2005)	HBR Article*	Communication	Set up information funnels and filters
		Planning	Appoint translators to convert strategies into action
		Communication	Convince employees that radical change is imperative; demonstrate why the new direction is the right one; Manage employee mood through constant communication
Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2000)	HBR Article*	Planning	Position and frame a preliminary plan; gather feedback; announce the final plan
		Culture	Reinforce behavioral guidelines to avoid backsliding
		Human resources management	The key executing strategy is to have people in the organization understand it, including the crucial but perplexing processes by which intangible assets will be converted into tangible outcomes
Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2005)	HBR Article*	Alignment + Human resource management + Control	Have everyone in the organization clearly understand the underlying hypotheses, to align all organizational units and resources with those hypotheses, to test the hypotheses continually, and to use those results to adapt as required
		Visualization	Use strategy maps to communicate the strategy and the process and systems that will help to implement the strategy (visualization), they will help organizations view their strategies in a cohesive, integrated and systematic way
Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2005)	HBR Article*	Human resources management	Create a central office for strategy execution, the office of strategic management, which becomes the focal point for ideas that percolate up through the organization

		Alignment	Good coordination between the OSM and other functional departments which are responsible for: planning and budgeting, human resource alignment, and knowledge management; Align the strategies of the business units, support functions, and external partners with the broader enterprise strategy
		Communication	Communicate the strategy, targets, and initiatives to employees
		Control	Hold regular review meetings
		Framework	Make use of the balanced score card
Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2006)	HBR Article*	Framework	Use a strategy map and the balanced score card (provides a template and a common language for assembling and communicating information about value creation)
Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2008)	HBR Article*	Human resources management	Managers need to be able to translate the strategy into operational plans and the execute the plans and achieve the performance targets
		Alignment	Ensure that strategy leverages internal strengths to pursue external opportunities, while countering weaknesses and threats
		Planning	Understand the management cycle that links strategy and operations, and know what tool to apply at each stage of the cycle; Strategy needs to be translated into objectives and measures that can be clearly communicated with all units and employees
		Visualization	Make use of the strategy map
		Culture	Develop a leadership and an execution-driven culture
		Communication	Hold strategy reviews to determine whether strategy execution is on track, where problems are occurring in the implementation, why they are happening, what actions will correct them, and who will have responsibility for achieving targets
Mankins, M. C., & Steele, R. (2005)	HBR Article*	Ground rule	Keep the strategy simple and make it concrete without a clear sense of where the company is headed and why, lower levels in the organization cannot put in place executable plans
		Planning	Debate assumptions, not forecasts: the assumptions underlying the long-term plans must reflect both real economics of the market and the performance experience of the company relative to its competitors; Discuss resource deployments early; Clearly identify priorities
		Communication	Use a rigorous framework, speak a common language
		Control	Continuously monitor performance
		Human resources management	Reward and develop execution capabilities
Miller, S., Hickson, D., & Wilson, D. (2008)	Multiple Case Study	Communication	Clear communication is essential and translation is key ... The vision of the decision must be conveyed to others in integrated, non-technical language to gain receptivity and counter resistance to change
		Planning	Both manage the logistics of what has to be done, and create receptive organizational contexts
Miller, S., Wilson, D., & Hickson, D. (2004)	Multiple Case Study	Planning	Prioritize Decisions: Rank decisions importance, then put managerial energy behind them
		Communication	Ensure political acceptability: Communicate effectively with key stake-holders

		Ground rule	Don't change structures unnecessarily: If organizational structure does not impede decision implementation, leave it alone; The decision matter more than the organization: success depends on a a combination of relevant experience and firm readiness; Successful strategies demand particular rather than universal approaches to implementation
		Experience	Draw from previous experience with implementation
		Planning	A degree of planning, perceptive organizational analysis and sensitivity to human issues are all constituents of successful implementation
Neilson, G. L., Martin, K. L., & Powers, E. (2008)	Survey	Planning + Communication + Alignment+Culture	17 Fundamental traits of organizational effectiveness, devided into four categories: Clarify decision rights, Design information flows, Align motivators, Make change to structure
Shaw, J. D., Gupta, N., & Delery, J. E. (2002)	Multiple Case Study	Alignment	Congruence is necessary to ensure that organizational elements work together to promote strategic goals
Slater, S. F., & Olson, E. M. (2000)	Survey	Alignment	Requires the alignment of all functional level strategies
		Human resources management	Sales force management is important to the successful implementation of strategy
Timothy, R., Breene, S., Nunes, P. F., & Shill, W. E. (2007)	HBR Article*	Human resources management	Make use of a Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) who adds value by building world-class strategy development and execution capabilities. CSO ensures the capabilities they develop are implemented by managers and integrated throughout the organization
		Culture	Rapid and effective decision making
Tourish, D. (2005)	Empirical	Communication	Two-way communication and critical feedback are vital to success; Willingness of employees involved to implement the strategy
		Ground rule	The vision underlying the strategy has to be sound
		Culture	More employees need to take responsibility for a wider range of issues
<u>2010s</u>			
Franken, A., & Thomsett, H. (2013)	Empirical	Culture	Need to be able to adapt rapidly (response) and flexibly (range of options)
		Planning	Inclusive planning must have a rational element that facilitates the coherent linking of ends, available ways, and existing means (i.e. understand what means are available and when, who will be responsible for what, dependencies between participants and activities, priorities and timings, and operating boundaries)
		Ground rule	Purpose is always more important than any pre-defined task
Håkonsson, D. D., Burton, R. M., Obel, B., & Lauridsen, J. T. (2012)	Empirical	Alignment	The executive style (Manager/Defender, Producer/Analyzer, Maestro/Reactor, Leader/Prospector) and strategy must be aligned à executives matter

Huy, Q. N. (2011)	Case study	Human resources management	Understand and address the causes of middle manager's group-focus emotions in situ; Group focus-emotions and social identities (including language and tenure) can help or hinder strategy implementation; Middle managers emotions (as a proposed strategy can help or harm self-interest)can help or hinder strategy implementation as their emotions can influence many of their subordinates' emotions, thinking an behavior; Organization-related social identities for middle managers are key contributors to top-down strategy implementation
Kleinbaum, A. M., & Stuart, T. E. (2014)	Empirical	Human resources management	Corporate staff is central to the implementation of corporate-level strategy; Social structure of the corporation influences strategy implementation success
		Alignment	The business units general manager's prior experience and other personal characteristics (specifically, risk profile and tolerance for ambiguity)should match the business unit's strategy
Leonardi, P. M. (2015)	Case study	Ground rule	Strategy formulation and strategy implementation are not two separate activities (Mintzberg and Water (1985) but inherently intertwined
		Planning	Need to focus on the materiality through which the strategy is enacted
Parmigiani, A., & Holloway, S. S. (2011)	Multiple Case Study	Resources	Sharing of knowledge and resources
		Communication	Coordination and communication
Thomas, L., & Ambrosini, V. (2015)	Survey	Ground rule	The developed strategy must be of high quality
		Control	Management controls are central to successful strategy implementation
		Resources	Information availability

Note: * As it is difficult to determine the type of article a Harvard Business Review Articles constitutes, these have been coded as HBR Article, unless otherwise indicated.