

JACQUES PIJL

'Must-read for all leaders' – George Kohlrieser, Distinguished Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior at IMD Business School Switzerland



STRATEGY

=

EXECUTION

**IMPROVE, RENEW AND INNOVATE
FASTER IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

80% HOW-TO!

READ WHAT OPINION LEADERS HAD TO SAY ABOUT STRATEGY = EXECUTION

“Strategy = Execution means driving change. This book brilliantly shows how leadership is fundamental to inspire people to want to change because they see the benefit and are engaged in the process. Rather than something being done to them, they participate in making the change happen. This is a hands-on book and a must-read for all leaders.”

George Kohlrieser Ph.D., Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior, IMD, Switzerland, bestselling author of *Hostage at the Table* and *Care to Dare*

“Vision without action is a hallucination. Talking about strategy is easy, but as I have discovered far too often while working with CEOs, getting things done is a totally different matter. Taking care of its execution is what it is all about. People need to be mobilized to be aligned with the strategy. It is therefore refreshing to read a book where this important topic has pride of place.”

Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, INSEAD Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change

“A wealth of well-founded insights and advice.”

Ben Tiggelaar, behavioral scientist, author, public speaker and consultant

“Strategy is nothing more than a set of ideas until we move the molecules in the room. Strategy = Execution is about making ideas come alive and creates a much-needed bridge between insight and action. The methodology in this book is a success formula that’s Monday morning ready. Read and thrive!”

Peter Meyers, founder and CEO, Stand & Deliver Group and visiting lecturer at Stanford University and IMD in Lausanne

“As we head into the fourth industrial revolution, the need for Innovation, Speed and Agility is bigger than ever before. This book provides excellent, reality-based insights into how we can achieve this.”

Heiko Schipper, member of the Board of Management, Bayer AG; President Bayer Consumer Health

“It is important to take the time we need for strategy and reflection. But it will just remain paperwork if we do not turn this into practical steps with the same zeal. This book shows us how to do that and how to do it smoothly.”

Ben Verwaayen, former CEO, Alcatel-Lucent and British Telecom and Commissioner, AkzoNobel and investor and partner, Keen Ventures

“Most management books are about strategy-setting, but precious few provide handles for strategy execution. Jacques Pijl’s book is a notable exception. It’s a must-read for every strategy professional.”

Henk W. Volberda, Professor of Strategic Management & Business Policy, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

“In an increasingly VUCA world, good strategy-setting combined with organizational purpose is important, but effective strategy execution at the right speed is what determines success! After all, it’s not your slide presentations that make the difference, but timely preparation for the new reality. In this book, Jacques Pijl shows that the next change is right around the corner. He inspires leaders and teams who face big changes and shares an abundance of good ideas for tightening our focus on successful enactment and execution of a change strategy.”

Harry J.M. Brouwer, CEO, Unilever Food Solutions

“Strategy Execution is the No. 1 task facing executives. That’s one of the most important arguments in this book.”

Kees Hoving, Chief Country Officer, Deutsche Bank Netherlands

“Strategy = Execution contains many clear, directly applicable ideas, taken from practical and proven cases.”

Karin Bergstein, member of the Executive Board, a.s.r.

“This book thoroughly demystifies the concept of innovation and the practicalities of how to organize it.”

Jacques van den Broek, CEO, Randstad

“What a relief to be allowed to be passionate about strategy execution.”

Lisette van Breugel, COO, Arbo Unie

“Jacques Pijl’s practical book shows once again how an organization can remain relevant in our digitalized world. Slow down, read, and then accelerate again!”

Maarten Edixhoven, CEO, Aegon Nederland

“Jacques Pijl = strategy execution and much more, of course. In this book, he reveals his thorough and effective method. Which also makes it a great read for management consultants.”

Meindert Flikkema, Academic Director, Amsterdam Centre for Management Consulting, Vrije Universiteit

“Jacques Pijl convincingly argues why it is not strategy, but the execution of it, that makes the difference. Highly recommended.”

Ronald Goedmakers, owner and CEO, Vebego International

“This book connects thought with action in a unique way. It’s a must read for anyone who wants to shape the future.”

Henk Hagoort, Chairman of the Executive Board, Windesheim University of Applied Sciences and former Chairman of the Board of Directors, NPO

“This book goes to the core of change management: the hard is soft, the soft is hard. Balance is everything.”

Cees 't Hart, CEO and President,
Carlsberg and former CEO,
FrieslandCampina

“Highly recommended reading for anyone who wants to understand the differences and similarities between established companies and new enterprises. How do they successfully carry out their strategies? How do they go about innovation?”

Symen Jansma, founder and CEO,
TravelBird

“Strategy is static, but the new normal is continuous, daily adjustment and adaptation of execution strategy. This book is a crystal-clear guide on how to do that.”

Patrick Kerssemakers, CEO, fonQ

“An inspiring and down-to-earth explanation of how new organizations and business models see to it that they can absorb growth while continuing to rejuvenate and innovate.”

Agnes Keune, Director of Logistical
Innovation, bol.com

“A stimulating book. Execution of your strategy is just as essential as the strategy itself. Pijl’s writing makes for captivating reading.”

Hein Knaapen, Chief HR Officer, ING
Bank

“In this new world full of rapid change and digital innovation, the challenge is not only to have the best strategy, but also to execute it quickly and effectively. This book offers insight, inspiration and a wealth of actual cases, making it a must read for every executive.”

Feike Sijbesma, CEO and Chairman of
the Board of Directors, Royal DSM

“A strategy is nothing but a vision with a sell-by date, based on current information, on the best way an organization can achieve its objectives, its purpose. This book provides valuable and refreshing insights into how to turn that vision into action, how to get results and create social value through execution.”

Tjark Tjin-A-Tsoi, General Director,
Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and former
General Director, Netherlands Forensics
Institute

“In a fast-changing world, effective strategy execution is a critical success factor for businesses. Strategy = Execution provides many practical examples and tips on how to get it done.”

Herna Verhagen, CEO, PostNL

“We live in a VUCA world (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity). This is why strategy must continually be scrutinized and why its execution is even more important now. Strategy = Execution was written with passion, making it a particularly interesting and practical guide that belongs in every boardroom!”

Paul Verheul, COO, Van Oord

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	19
1 Introduction: Effectiveness, Agility and Speed are Key in Strategy Execution	23
1.1 Today's No. 1 Challenge is to Innovate Faster	23
1.2 Organizations Suck at Strategy Execution	24
1.3 The New Normal	24
1.4 Digitalization Drives Innovation	27
1.5 Uncertainty Galore	29
1.6 The Last Competitive Edge	30
1.7 Methodology	31
2 A Modern View of Strategy Execution: Six Success Factors	35
2.1 Success Factor 1: Identify and Execute 3 Types of Change	35
2.1.1 Excellence in strategy execution follows from excellence in Running and Changing the Business	35
2.1.2 Demystify 'change' and differentiate three types	38
2.2 Success Factor 2: Resist One-Sidedness	43
2.2.1 Effectiveness and agility before perfectionism	43
2.2.2 Soft is hard and hard is soft: Balance is everything	46

The Strategy Execution & Change Accelerator—SECA.NU	47
2.2.3 Strategy execution is a process like any other	49
2.3 Success Factor 3: Disrupt or Be Disrupted	49
2.3.1 Defining your digital strategy and value propositions	50
2.3.2 Stop looking at your customers in cliché ways	51
2.3.3 Navigating by means of digital structure and agile management	52
2.3.4 Developing new capabilities and a high-energy culture	53
2.3.5 Two- track technology	54
2.3.6 Lastly: Startups are not as far ahead as you think	55
2.4 Success Factor 4: Emphasize Who over Why, How and What	57
2.4.1 The right person for the right job	57
2.4.2 Strong business case for engagement	59
2.5 Success Factor 5: Make Strategy Execution Your No. 1 Priority	62
2.5.1 Strategy execution is a discipline in its own right	62
2.5.2 Magic and demystification in change leadership	63
2.5.3 Continual alignment	66
2.6 Success Factor 6: Go for 20% Strategy and 80% Execution	68
2.6.1 Reversing how time and money is spent	68
2.6.2 Standardization, discipline, rhythm and excellence	70
3 The Strategy = Execution Model: The How-To	75
3.1 The Four-Accelerator Framework: CHOOSE, INITIATE, HARVEST, SECURE	75
3.2 Four Accelerators and 16 How-To Building Blocks	76
Accelerator 1: CHOOSE	76
Accelerator 2: INITIATE	77
Accelerator 3: HARVEST	77
Accelerator 4: SECURE	78
3.3 Every Building Block Can Be Used Independently	80
3.4 Using the Strategy = Execution Model Dynamically	80
The Foldout	80
3.5 Distinction Between Strategy and Execution	82

4	Accelerator 1: CHOOSE	85
4.1	Building Block 1: AMBITION	86
4.1.1	Determine your mission, vision, values, and the Big Why	86
4.1.2	Take a critical look at your point of departure	90
4.1.3	Carry out in-depth analyses	92
4.1.4	Safeguard the preconditions	93
4.1.5	Ensure agility	94
4.1.6	Check for coherence	98
	Successful Application of Building Block 1, AMBITION	99
4.2	Building Block 2: SELECTION	99
4.2.1	Purge your portfolio	100
4.2.2	Balance your portfolio	101
4.2.3	Plan and organize each initiative	105
4.2.4	Take a two-track approach	107
	Successful Application of Building Block 2, SELECTION	111
4.3	Building Block 3: APPEAL	112
4.3.1	Tone from the top: Live the strategy	112
4.3.2	Review and enrich your strategy	114
4.3.3	Tell your story	118
	Successful Application of Building Block 3, APPEAL	120
4.4	Building Block 4: ACTIVATION	120
4.4.1	Assemble a leadership team based on your goals	121
4.4.2	Distinguish between Execution and Benefit Ownership	121
4.4.3	Launch the Execution Coalition	122
4.4.4	Execution Coalition: Lay the foundation for Execution and Benefit Ownership	126
4.4.5	Assess soft execution and change capacities	127
	Successful Application of Building Block 3, ACTIVATION	128
	Useful Tips From Successful Leaders	129
5	Accelerator 2: INITIATE	131
5.1	Building Block 5: MUST-HAVES	132
5.1.1	Answer the small why and outstanding questions	132
5.1.2	Identify the main issue	133

5.1.3	Choose an appropriate method and expertise	133
5.1.4	Analyze	135
	Successful Application of Building Block 5, MUST-HAVES	136
5.2	Building Block 6: BREAKTHROUGH	137
5.2.1	Methodical steps	138
5.2.2	Systematically gather ideas	138
5.2.3	Identify your breakthrough customer value proposition	139
5.2.4	Design, redesign and simplify	145
5.2.5	Assess the implications for your organizational structure	148
5.2.6	Design the soft side	149
5.2.7	Create a business case and set goals	151
	Successful Application of Building Block 6, BREAKTHROUGH	153
5.3	Building Block 7: EXCELLENT START	154
5.3.1	Start executing	154
5.3.2	Carry out the first execution wave	155
5.3.3	Foster new work habits	158
	Successful Application of Building Block 7, EXCELLENT START	160
5.4	Building Block 8: PSYCHOLOGICAL CHECK-IN	160
5.4.1	Write a story	161
5.4.2	Execution Coalition: Build Execution and Benefit Ownership	161
5.4.3	Have every Execution Coalition member personally check in	163
5.4.4	Expand ownership beyond the Execution Coalition	163
	Successful Application of Building Block 8, PSYCHOLOGICAL CHECK-IN	165
6	Accelerator 3: HARVEST	169
	The hard building blocks in Accelerator 3: BENEFITS and CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT	170
6.1	Building Block 9: BENEFITS	170
6.1.1	Take benefit realization management seriously	170
6.1.2	Set up a practical measuring system	174
6.1.3	Use validated learning	176
6.1.4	Measure and harvest	177
	Successful Application of Building Block 9, BENEFITS	179

6.2	Building Block 10: CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT	179
6.2.1	Concretize and align your MVP	180
6.2.2	Work out the details of your execution resources	180
6.2.3	Continue to develop your MVP	181
6.2.4	Know your way around agile	181
	Successful Application of Building Block 10, CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT	183
6.3	Building Block 11: SCALING	184
6.3.1	Spread the gospel	185
6.3.2	Widen your execution	186
6.3.3	Organize and utilize feedback	190
	Successful Application of Building Block 11, SCALING	191
6.4	Building Block 12: BRIDGE-BUILDING	191
6.4.1	Analyze the growing number of stakeholders	192
6.4.2	Execution Coalition: Expand Execution and Benefit Ownership	195
6.4.3	Consider setting up semipermanent agile development	197
	Successful Application of Building Block 12, BRIDGE-BUILDING	200
7	Accelerator 4: SECURE	205
7.1	Building Block 13: ADJUSTMENT	206
7.1.1	Secure the benefits	206
7.1.2	Visualize and monitor target realization	207
7.1.3	Adjust course	208
7.1.4	Monitoring and adjusting course in digital business models	213
	Successful Application of Building Block 13, ADJUSTMENT	215
7.2	Building Block 14: OPEN ARCHITECTURE	216
7.2.1	Maintain the content	216
	Successful Application of Building Block 14, OPEN ARCHITECTURE	217
7.3	Building Block 15: LEARNING	218
7.3.1	Choose your teachable moment, method and format	218

	Successful Application of Building Block 15, LEARNING	220
7.4	Building Block 16: THE EXTRA MILE	220
7.4.1	Embed Benefit Ownership	220
7.4.2	Execution Coalition: Finish what you started	222
	Successful Application of Building Block 16, THE EXTRA MILE	224
8	Program and Project Management are Indispensable	229
8.1	Project and Program Management During Accelerator 1: SELECT	230
8.1.1	Select a method and stick with it	230
8.1.2	Develop people's basic competencies	231
8.1.3	Complex, multidisciplinary changes require a project-based approach	231
8.2	Project and Program Management During Accelerator 2: INITIATE	232
8.2.1	Excellent start: Taking time to make an excellent action plan; Going slow to go fast	232
8.2.2	An effective project and program management structure reflects both goal and phase	233
8.3	Project and Program Management During Accelerator 3: HARVEST	235
8.3.1	Agile and Scrum require project management too	235
8.3.2	The crucial basics	236
8.3.3	Action and decision management, and progress reports	236
8.3.4	Crucial standard agendas	237
8.3.5	Structure creates more time and flexibility	238
8.3.6	Human Resource Management: A key topic from start to finish	238
8.3.7	Mindset: Entrepreneurship	238
8.4	Project and Program Management During Accelerator 4: SECURE	239
8.4.1	Program and project management deliver the results	239
8.4.2	The program's role is not over until it's over	239
8.5	Project Management is a Whole Ecosystem	241

9	Failure	245
9.1	Growing Impact of Failure: It's Life or Death	245
9.1.1	Failure costs	246
9.1.2	A critical look at failure figures	248
9.2	Examples of Complete or Partial Failure	249
9.3	Familiar Failure Factors	253
9.3.1	Bad strategies	253
9.3.2	Picking the wrong people for key roles	254
9.3.3	Lack of alignment	255
9.3.4	Grossly underestimating "what it takes to tango"	255
9.3.5	Too much or too little information	256
9.3.6	Lack of ownership	256
9.4	Less Familiar Failure Factors	257
9.4.1	Lack of differentiation, everything lumped together	257
9.4.2	A crazy portfolio	257
9.4.3	No clear execution process, but mere "ad hoc" agility	259
9.4.4	Unwise use of time and money	260
9.4.5	Ignoring soft capabilities	263
9.4.6	Imbalance between top-down and bottom-up	264
9.4.7	Imbalance between change leadership and change management	265
9.4.8	Single-mindedness	266
9.5	The New Failure in Radical Innovation	267
9.5.1	Innovation as a hobby	267
9.5.2	Risky and unnecessary mysticism	267
10	Epilogue: It's Personal	271
10.1	Modern Strategy Execution: Uncharted Waters	271
10.2	Inspiring and Sobering	272

Appendices

1	Acknowledgements	277
2	Methodology behind the Strategy = Execution model	283
3	Modern leadership: 12 key competencies	287
4	16 Timeless models for strategy analysis and strategy setting	291
5	The 10 main principles of 5 big strategy execution issues	295

6	Digital innovation: identify your customers' hidden needs	297
7	Developing an MVP by modern methods	299
8	Overview of innovative business and revenue models	303
9	Business process models	307
10	25 KPIs and 32 startup metrics	311
11	Fact sheets and planning templates	317
12	The execution coalition's five key roles compared to other popular methods	319
13	Scaling methods checklist	323
14	Quotes say it all: a selection of memorable statements by interviewees	327
15	Inspirational media for strategy execution	335
16	Glossary of terms	337
17	Index	349
18	Notes	357

PREFACE

Ben Tiggelaar

As the brilliant management thinker Henry Mintzberg points out in his seminars, most of the strategies companies devise are never implemented. He has an inkling why.

During a discussion in the Netherlands a few years back, he asked who takes the blame when the implementation of a strategy fails. His answer was simple. Those who do the implementing always bear the brunt. Leaders tend to think: we think up excellent strategies from our head offices, but those bird brains in the rest of the organization just aren't smart enough to make them work. Well if you're one of those bird brains, Mintzberg continued, I've got the perfect comeback for you. Just tell management: if we're such idiots and you're so smart, why don't you come up with strategies that idiots like us can implement?

It's a strong argument. But is it fair? Not entirely, as Mintzberg himself was the first to admit. He said nearly every implementation misstep is the result of a disconnect between the formulation of strategy and its implementation. And this, he said, was caused by the mistaken belief that you can formulate a strategy in one place, corporate headquarters, and then implement it somewhere else, in the workplace. And it's precisely this crucial point that this book explores: the interface between strategy and execution. Or, as Jacques Pijl more radically expresses it, Strategy Equals Execution. There are four points in particular that I was struck by and that make it a must-read.

1 Strategy = Execution

A strategy that is not carried out is just as worthless as no strategy at all. Which is why you need to think about execution from the very

moment you begin developing your plans. Strategy and execution are inextricably linked, and this book explains the implications of that in minute detail through the framework of four accelerators, each of which consists of four building blocks. That might sound very schematic, true. But the time for improvising and freewheeling in strategy execution is long gone. Strategy execution is a craft, and one which makes all the difference between winning and losing.

2 Honest about innovation

These days, renovations have to continue while the store stays open. Every entrepreneur and manager understands this problem. You need to devote attention to the going business because that's what makes your customers happy and earns you money in the here and now. And at the same time, you also need to put energy into what you want your business to be tomorrow and beyond. When we say innovation, we don't always mean the same thing. This book distinguishes three types of change: improvement, renewal and innovation. Each requires a unique approach. That's not easy, but it is the reality that experienced managers will recognize.

3 The work needs to be done by people

Why, what and how are important, Pijl argues. But *who* will carry out the strategy is the most important question of all. In the end, it's all about people, and about their qualities and engagement. That sounds great, but it has profound consequences. For instance, the people who will carry the execution have to 'check in' psychologically. In other words, they have to really commit to the strategy, the initiatives and the objectives that have been set. This book goes in depth on how to ensure that engagement.

4 Theory and practice

It's always good when a writer knows their literature. Some management book authors try to pass off the ideas they present as new, but that's only because they don't know their classics. No need to worry about that here. Jacques Pijl has done his homework. At the same time, he is keenly aware of the need for practicality. Which is why it's so helpful that Jacques and his colleagues are practitioners whose feet are firmly planted in the reality of consultancy. The result is a healthy dose of realism and lots of useful examples.

I love evidence-based work. Just one more thing about that. This book is a treasure trove of well-founded insights and advice. But its real value will only become apparent when you test these in your own organization. Then you'll see these great ideas come to life, and the words on the page will be transformed into good work and great results. Happy reading and happy learning!

Ben Tiggelaar

1

INTRODUCTION: **EFFECTIVENESS, AGILITY AND SPEED ARE KEY IN STRATEGY EXECUTION**

The rise of Netflix / Watson has earned a PhD / the whale curve is dead / Philips declined to buy Apple

1.1 Today's No. 1 Challenge is to Innovate Faster

We need to increase the speed with which we improve, renew and innovate our business models. This is the key management issue of our day. Organizations are caught between a rock and a hard place. They're notoriously bad at strategy execution, but this age of disruption leaves them no choice but to constantly improve, renew and innovate their existing business models. In other words, the skill that organizations are sorely lacking is the very one they need most in order to succeed. That's what leaders, professionals and entrepreneurs lose sleep over. And so they should. As one CEO recently told me, "All of us need to get better at this. Now. It's nothing short of our social responsibility. Our continued existence depends on it." This is exactly why I wrote this book. Obviously, there are worse problems in the world today. Just take a look at the news. Even so, I am convinced that

increasing our effectiveness in strategy execution is a big deal. We spend the better part of our lives working, so it'd better be on something worthwhile. People want their work to be meaningful and have a purpose. Organizations are now deliberately choosing which social values they want to reflect. We are outgrowing our old obsession with shareholder value. What counts now is value in terms of social responsibility, diversity and regional and national development. This ambition has become one of our main strategic goals. Effective strategy execution creates value and the means by which we formulate meaningful objectives.

1.2 Organizations Suck at Strategy Execution

Research has repeatedly shown that organizations are not good at strategy execution. This is nothing new. We've known this for decades and the numbers are shocking. Estimates of the failure rate range from 60 to 90%. It depends how you define failure, of course, which is something I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 9. But even if we take a highly critical view of the percentages presented in most studies, the failure rate is never less than 50%.¹ We all know examples: massive government IT projects that get bogged down, private sector mergers that never deliver the projected synergies, big restructurings that go off the rails, and cultural change programs that evaporate into thin air. Organizations are full of good intentions, but these intentions often end up paving the proverbial road to hell. This is precisely where we can gain a competitive edge, but there is a more general imperative: every organization needs to become better at strategy execution.

1.3 The New Normal

The world will never be the same as before the financial crisis of 2008. There have been too many economic, social, cultural and technological changes. Globalization and changing consumer behavior are big factors, too. All these influences are ramping up the demands on our business models at mind-boggling speed. At the same time, the rate of change is accelerating. We no longer live in an era of change, but in a change of era, to quote Jan Rotmans, professor of Transition Studies and Sustainability.² Allow me to enumerate a few phenomena that I described in my previous book, *Het Nieuwe Normaal* [The New Normal].³

Business models are crumbling before our eyes. Business models are under great pressure in many industries—travel, real estate and financial

services, to name just a few. These are known as *glacier industries* because they are simply melting away as a result of climate change in the business world. It's only a matter of time before other industries suffer the same fate. Studies show that digital disruption is affecting all sectors so we can expect a lot more melting business models in the years ahead.⁴

The traditional media are another glacier industry; in some segments, earnings are melting away by 10% a year. The director of Netflix brought up this problem at a recent keynote speech at the Cannes Advertising Festival. He asked how long media buyers would continue to attend that festival to decide on their viewers' behalf what they get to see and when. Just consider how bizarre it is that late night talk shows air when most people have already gone to bed. We spend a lot of time watching TV, yet it is one of the few products that does not allow us to choose what we consume and when. No wonder the rise of Netflix was so rapid. In the Netherlands, for instance, the channel attracted 600,000 subscribers in its first six months. This shows that linear television is fighting a losing battle. In the United States, 75% of late night shows are no longer viewed live but on demand. Yet even Netflix is now under threat from newer concepts.

Industries are converging. The triple helix model of innovation entwining government, education and business, probably offers as many opportunities as each of these sectors individually.⁵ The parties involved in this helix understand the value of cooperation and are increasingly tackling challenges together to foster economic growth and regional development. One successful example of this is Brainport Eindhoven, a cooperative alliance between the Dutch government, knowledge institutes and companies like ASML (semiconductor equipment manufacturer) and Philips Medical. Another one, Yes!Delft, offers startup programs for young high-tech firms operating near the world-class research centers of Delft University of Technology.⁶ In the USA, technology companies work side by side with institutions of higher learning in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, in Silicon Valley, and at MIT, to name just a few examples.

State and semipublic institutions are not exempt. Senior managers know that state and semipublic institutions are just as vulnerable as private enterprise in the New Normal. Under intensifying social media pressure, politicians and citizens alike are demanding more transparency, lower costs, better service and greater effectiveness. Many public and semipublic organizations are not ready to step up their

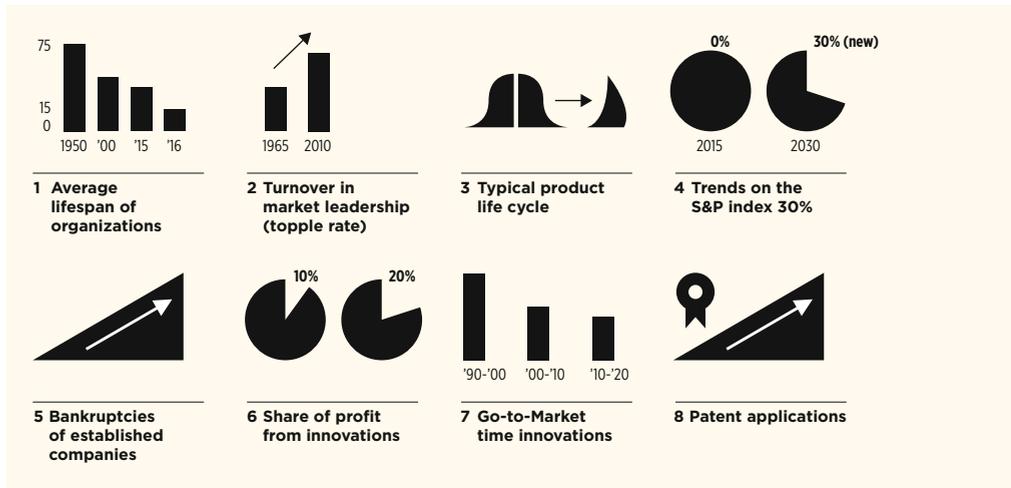
game. The demand for transparency is particularly tough to meet. Just consider the scandals that shook the Dutch government in recent years. The Ministry of Defense was forced to compensate employees who were exposed to highly toxic hexavalent chromium for years; housing corporation Vestia nearly collapsed when several senior-level managers committed fraud; and the Central Works Council of the National Dutch Police was found to have engaged in corrupt practices.

In healthcare, the meteoric rise of e-health reveals how the government, organizations and citizens are unable to keep pace with the introduction of new technology. Watson, IBM's supercomputer, has already earned a PhD and will soon be able to carry out the work done by a medical resident.

The New Normal is here to stay. By 2033, businesses will have an average lifespan of only five years, according to VINT, a Netherlands-based new technology institute run by IT firm Sogeti.⁷ The life expectancy of Fortune 500 companies was 75 years in 1950, but in 2001 it was projected to plummet to less than 15 by 2012, as we can see in the Shift Index from Richard Foster and Sarah Kaplan's *Creative Destruction* (2001).⁸ Other indicators tell a similar story. Standard & Poor's figures show the average lifespan of a business to be 61 years in 1958, 25 in 1980, and 18 in 2011.⁹ We can extrapolate from these numbers that 75% of those listed on the S&P 500 in 2014 will have disappeared by 2027.¹⁰ The topple rate, or the rapidity with which the market leaders in each industry are replaced, has more than doubled since 2010. Loyalty is a thing of the past, because customers now continuously reassess who best meets their needs. Competitiveness has increased by 100% and market positions can no longer be taken for granted. In short, the New Normal is here to stay. It is a reality, backed up with hard facts.

Figure 1 summarizes the facts that show why the New Normal is so different. The trend is obvious: continuity is no longer a given, and the most important reason for this is clearly digitalization.

Figure 1 — **The New Normal is here to stay. Its effects are there for all to see.** Innovation is a particularly tough game, but it's full of opportunities for those who know how to spot them.



Sources:

1. In *Creative Destruction* (2001), McKinsey's Richard Foster calculated that the lifespan of Fortune 500 companies, which was 75 years in 1950, would sink to less than 15 by 2012.
2. Standard & Poor confirms this trend.
3. Verkenninginstituut Nieuwe Technologie, Sogeti IT-services.
4. Deloitte Shift Index Series

Organizations underwent more change in the first decade of the 21st century than in the last five decades of the 20th century. In recent years, they have seen everything from process optimization to radical innovation; from outsourcing to rightsourcing; from joint ventures to complete mergers and acquisitions; and a constant stream of change programs. One leader who I spoke to while researching for this book even went so far as to say, “The last five years have brought more change than the fifty years that preceded them.” And organizations see much more movement on the horizon. The digitalization of society and the pressure to keep up with disruptive innovations is bound to continue.

1.4 Digitalization Drives Innovation

In the 20th century, organizations rose to dominance by achieving economies of scale and gaining customer loyalty. At first, they succeeded at this through large-scale manufacturing (General Motors), and later by controlling supply chains (Walmart) and information (Amazon). But in the 21st century, it's the customers who call the shots. Customers read consumer reviews before every purchase and change

their minds in seconds. The only way to win them over and to keep a competitive edge is to have a strategy that banks on knowing and engaging with the customer.

Companies that know how to play this new competitive game are what Forrester Research's James McQuivey calls "disruptors". The best disruptions do two things: they fulfill a basic need that end users understand, and they penetrate into the physical world of manufacturing plants and distribution networks, into the Internet of Things. The key issue is to focus on finding better ways to satisfying customers' fundamental and latent needs.¹¹

Twenty years ago, disruption took years and required huge investments, as Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen wrote in *The Innovator's Dilemma*.¹² But the digital revolution has changed that. Today's disruptors can radically transform every product and every service much faster and much more cheaply. They have a big influence on every aspect of business operations, from data management to pricing, to the management of labor and capital. It won't be long before all industries feel this influence, even those that have not yet been digitalized.¹³ In James McQuivey's estimate, today's tools and platforms have multiplied tenfold the number of people who can bring innovative ideas to market. And that's a conservative estimate. The average cost of developing and testing these ideas is just 10% of yesterday's price tag. In short, our innovative power has multiplied by 100. But that also means every business now faces 100 times more competition.

Digital disruption speeds up competition and facilitates the advent of previously unimaginable numbers of ideas. The cumulative effect is devastating for any organization that operates 'old-school'.

Digital innovation changes everything. Airbnb's growth figures show that the classic whale curves of company life cycles are ancient history. They've been replaced by graphs that more closely resemble the Empire State Building. Let's face it: the whale curve is dead! Everything is accelerating. New business models are appearing at breakneck speed, while older ones disappear equally fast. No one can predict what will happen, but we can extrapolate from the trend that this acceleration has only just kicked into high gear. The longer you wait to join in, the tougher it will be to do so because competition is a key factor. Innovator, entrepreneur and investor Marc Andreessen summed it up nicely in a 2011 *Wall Street Journal* column, "Why software is eating the world."¹⁴ If you were to draw up a list of organizations that didn't even exist 12 years ago but now either represent a big new market or have

conquered a big share of an existing market, you would see some remarkably familiar names: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Uber, Airbnb, Snapchat, Instagram, Fitbit, Spotify, Dropbox, WhatsApp and Quora.¹⁵

Leaders, managers and professionals struggle with digitalization dilemmas. Should we digitalize or not? When? With whom? How? Menno Lanting, an expert on digital technology's effect on leadership, described what digital innovation and competition truly mean when he said, "All goods and services will either become digital themselves or will be surrounded by a digital shell of services." This also goes for services you would never expect to be digitalized. Lanting mentions the garbage collection services in the city of Philadelphia, where microchips in the garbage cans gather data that help the sanitation company devise smarter routes that require 40% less personnel. In short, we must learn to live with a new reality in which our lives and work are inextricably tied to technology.¹⁶ Every organization needs to decide how to position digital innovation in their overall portfolio of strategy execution initiatives.

1.5 Uncertainty Galore

We all know our traditional way of setting up, managing and changing organizations no longer works. Thinking in blueprints, designs and cascades doesn't do the trick anymore. The ascendancy of unpredictability is best expressed by the concept of VUCA, which stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. This term originated in military jargon, but we now use it to explain how harsh the climate has become for businesses and public and semipublic institutions. *Volatility* refers to the nature, speed and dynamics of change. *Uncertainty* is about the lack of predictability combined with the fear and increased likelihood of unforeseeable big events and disruptions. Examples of this are big disruptive innovations like Uber and macro-economic events such as 9/11, or as Nassim Nicholas Taleb would call them, Black Swans. *Complexity* stands for the many-headed monsters of demands, markets, customers, managers and legislation that are making processes and systems ever more complicated. And finally, *Ambiguity* refers to the non-mathematical nature of business, that is, the fact that developments could lead to different outcomes and no one knows which one will become reality.

Facts can be explained in different ways. I have seen organizations that obstinately continued to operate on incorrect assumptions because they considered perseverance a key characteristic of successful execution. Yet, I have seen just as many organizations that pulled the plug too fast on some promising experiment. One particularly poignant

example is Philips consumer electronics passing up on an opportunity to take over Apple in the 1990s. In his autobiography, former Philips CEO Cor Boonstra maintained he did not regret this decision. Apple, he wrote, would never have become what it is today under the umbrella of the Dutch electronics company.

The demands that come with the VUCA concept are just as interesting. Many long articles have been written about them, but in essence they come down to this: high volatility requires built-in buffers and flexibility; high uncertainty demands systematic data collection, analysis, interpretation and extrapolation; high complexity requires as much simplification as possible; and high ambiguity compels us to experiment with innovations, to learn through trial and error and to scale up what works.

The worst way to respond to VUCA would be to conclude that it makes strategic planning pointless. We do need to heed human fallibility, the workings of which we are slowly unraveling. Think of the human tendency to ignore that which we know nothing about and leave it out of our decision-making, “the known unknown” as Daniel Kahneman calls it. Rather than spurring us on to try ever harder to predict the future, knowing our limitations should spur us on to build in bigger margins and resilience. That’s how we can deal with the unknown. In short, the demands put on us by the New Normal come down to the need to accelerate, to be agile and to increase our effectiveness in strategy execution.

1.6 The Last Competitive Edge

The New Normal leaves less room for trial and error. We are dealing with ever shorter product life cycles, high risks in innovation, and increasingly critical and fickle markets. This makes strategy execution even riskier and more challenging for leaders and professionals than it already used to be. This is why their focus is now shifting from “strategy for strategy’s sake,” to strategy execution. It is not the brilliance of a strategy or the analysis it is based upon that makes or breaks a company. It is the *execution* of that strategy. The difference between profit and loss depends on execution capacity. Organizations that excel in strategy execution and innovation see significantly bigger profits, productivity and achievement.

Actually, it has always been true that strategy is pointless without execution, but in the New Normal there is no escaping this fact. The newer books on strategy make this clear too. Take *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy* by Richard P. Rumelt, for instance. Or *Your Strategy Needs a Strategy* by Martin Reeves, Knut Haanaes and Janmejaya Sinha, and

Strategy That Works by Paul Leinwand and Cesare Mainardi.¹⁷ All three books stress the need for a strategy that goes hand in hand with execution.

For leaders the world over, strategy execution is the No. 1 priority. As it is for you, apparently, or you would not be reading this book. Researcher Donald Sull from the MIT Sloan School of Management cited a recent study in which 400 CEOs from Asia, the Americas and Europe rated execution their top priority out of 80 issues they face, varying from political instability and innovation to growth.¹⁸ Strategy was also the main issue identified in other recent research into leaders' main concerns.¹⁹

1.7 Methodology

Strategy execution is essential, but what makes or breaks strategy execution and innovation? At Turner, we dedicated three years to researching this question. We interviewed some 60 leaders, senior managers and senior program managers responsible for transformations of various sizes in the organizations they work for. We selected a cross-section of all levels, in the private, semipublic and public sectors, at both long-established and new digital organizations. In addition, we consulted over 300 of the most relevant books and articles in the field. Our criteria for inclusion were strict to avoid rehashing old answers to old questions. We also reviewed some 70 case studies. We did all this with just one question in mind: What makes or breaks strategy execution and innovation in our time? As you can see, the ideas in this book are deeply rooted in actual practice, and so are my Turner colleagues and I, with all the years of experience we've accumulated as organizational consultants in strategy execution.

This book is organized as follows: In Chapter 2, I make the case for a modern view of effective strategy execution. I base this on the top six success factors that direct our thinking.²⁰ In Chapter 3, I outline the concept and framework of the Strategy = Execution Model. The book contains a foldout of this model for easy reference while reading the subsequent chapters. In Chapters 4 through 7, I explain the Four Accelerators in this model: CHOOSE, INITIATE, HARVEST and SECURE. Each accelerator consists of four practical building blocks, two dealing with hard capabilities and two dealing with soft capabilities. As a whole, these constitute the best method to successfully complete strategy execution and to drastically reduce the chance of failure. Chapter 8 talks about project and program management, both of which are indispensable to strategy execution during the four accelerators. Chapter 9 discusses why strategy execution so often fails and explores the price of failure.

The main objective of this book is to convince you to make strategy execution a priority in your organization by radically reallocating people's time and aiming for a real balance between hard and soft capabilities. This book is chock-full (80%) of how-to's that can help you achieve this. In keeping with this focus on execution, I have put my analysis of frequently occurring failure factors at the end of this book rather than the beginning—unlike most everyone else who writes about strategy, innovation and change management.

I conclude with an epilogue, an overview of everyone who contributed to this study, a research methodology and a treasure trove of additional how-to's. Some of these, such as the fact sheets and planning templates, are downloadable by using the QR codes in the appendices. We've made them downloadable so we can regularly update them and offer you added and lasting value.

Why is this such a hefty book? I wanted to write a comprehensive overview of modern strategy execution. There are several books out there that deal with aspects of this subject, but none that focus solely on strategy execution and how to organize innovation, let alone on the interaction between the two. Go ahead and Google it.

A win for both established and new organizations. From the initial reactions to our findings, I can confidently say that our research has struck gold. Another aspect that makes this book unique is its combination of thorough analysis with case studies and scores of interviews with people steeped in business practice. It's a candy store for every senior manager, professional and entrepreneur facing big responsibilities in strategy execution and innovation.

We know one thing for sure: organizations are less and less able to make accurate predictions. The next decade will probably bring even more change than the previous one. And yet I am confident that the principles in this book will remain valid. I believe this because they are new principles for a new age of exponential growth that's far from over. My main goal is to offer you lots of practical handles that you can put to use right away: 80% how-to. I show you

- how to **get an overview**: six success factors and the Strategy = Execution Model, which consists of four accelerators and 16 building blocks;
- how to **find inspiration and apply it**: 16 case studies and over 50 innovations and new business models for your inspiration; and
- how to **get to work**: five elaborated approaches + a free digital assessment that will help you assess your organization's execution capacity.

I know that managers like fundamental, practical pointers and are always pressed for time. For this reason, every chapter of this book can be read and used separately. In that sense, it is a workbook and a textbook rolled into one.

This is a book for leaders, professionals and entrepreneurs who have learned the tricks of the trade through experience. And because you are my audience, I use a particular type of vocabulary and jargon. Business has lots of jargon, and sometimes too much of it. Doctors, pilots and lawyers all have their own vocabulary and we consider that entirely normal. The same should apply to MBAs and consultants. I am no fan of excessive lingo, but I do like business-specific language. We need less generic professional jargon, but more specific terminology. As Eric Ries, startup expert and Silicon Valley businessman once tweeted, “I know that management jargon gets criticized, and often rightly so. But like every professional domain, we need specialized terminology with precise meanings.” If you come across a term you are not familiar with, please check the glossary (Appendix 16).

And finally, the most important thing I want to say: Thank you to Turner Consultancy’s many sponsors, business associates, colleagues, partners and alumni who helped to make this book such a rich reading experience. During my research, I realized once again that a team is so much more than its constituent parts.

*Jacques Pijl, Owner of Turner Consultancy
December 2019*

*Want to respond? jpil@turner.nl / [@JPijlTurner](https://twitter.com/JPijlTurner)
/ <https://nl.linkedin.com/in/jacquespijl> / [#strategyisexecution](https://twitter.com/strategyisexecution)*

10

EPILOGUE: IT'S PERSONAL

A few additional motives for writing this book

10.1 Modern Strategy Execution: Uncharted Waters

Entire bookshelves have been written about strategy. Just as stacks of literature have been published on change leadership, change management, team development, motivation, process management, project management and every other element that has an impact on strategy execution. And yet, precious little is known about how these capabilities must collectively be mobilized to facilitate strategy execution. That is the gap I intended to fill by writing this book. So, my goal has been to connect the various hard and soft approaches and schools of thought. It is an approach that sharply contrasts with existing theories on change management in that it separates the wheat from the chaff. Striving for excellent strategy execution is as inspiring as it is sobering, as I was often told in the interviews I conducted for this study. Board members and senior managers rightly reject the widespread idea that everything should be fun. Which is why many of the success factors we describe can seem arduous or even downright boring. It's high time boring became the new sexy.

Organizations are not learning strategy execution fast enough. The challenges are getting bigger and the demands higher, and organizations are losing ground. They frequently prove themselves incapable of

solving hard puzzles, the must-win, wicked assignments. Instead we see *Alice in Wonderland's* Red Queen effect; no matter how hard they run, they can barely keep up, let alone get ahead.²⁰⁵ So, organizations need to dramatically up their game and get better at strategy execution.

Organizations respond to this challenge in different ways. Some remain passive, either by choice or by default. Others take action. But even organizations that recognize they have to take action often fall headlong into the trap called innovation. They experiment until they're blue in the face. Active responses are either proactive or reactive. The former come from ambitious organizations that want to become or remain a leader in their field. The latter come from organizations that are forced to change by increasing competition, or new rules and regulations—conditions that often apply to the public and semipublic sectors.

10.2 Inspiring and Sobering

Strategy execution is both inspiring and sobering. Half of this book feeds your ambitions and dreams, while the other half brings you back down to earth. What's inspiring is a sense of purpose: the joy of seeing your hard work with your co-workers and clients come to fruition. The payoff in the end is so much more than financial. In a sense, the journey is the destination because our joint efforts to execute a strategy hone our skills and nourish us.

Because the word “inspiration” has been co-opted by the “change Soviets,” to loosely quote Nassim Nicholas Taleb, it requires some explanation. To me, inspiration is not something you're entitled to as a fringe benefit of your job. It is, first and foremost, your own responsibility. It takes a lot of your own hard work to become and stay inspired, even though you can't will it, as most of us know.

Obviously, there are moments when your mind starts to hydroplane and ideas just start flowing. I personally experience this while running, speed skating and cycling, and while reading, of course. Well-written articles and books trigger so many thoughts, that I obsessively jot down notes; underline, circle and highlight passages; and fold back the corners of the pages. But inspiration can also come when least expected. You go for long periods longing for it, and then suddenly it pops up.²⁰⁶ As I said before, I'm a believer in Anders Ericsson's 10,000-hour theory popularized by Malcolm Gladwell. You need to spend at least 10,000 hours of dedicated work and practice on something to get good at it, regardless of how much talent you have or inspiration you feel. In the end, it's all about doing the work, particularly in strategy execution. And this is the sobering side of the equation.

It takes more time to get rid of nonsense than to come up with it. This is a messier part of the reality we face than those other, more elevated motives I've written about. My co-consultants and I have worked for over two decades with executive and supervisory boards, management teams, professionals and blue-collar workers on a single mission: strategy execution. This has given us a unique perspective on exactly what works, and what doesn't. That's why it was so cathartic to write Chapter 9 on failure, the reasons for it and its costs. So much garbage is spouted about failure. It takes far more time and effort to debunk this nonsense than it does to come up with it in the first place. There have been moments when I wanted to pull my hair out in frustration.

I get asked what I think of training sessions and color management consultancy. Training sessions are part of HRM's tool kit to help people develop their skills. I'd like to add that the more specific the training, the better. In my own field—strategy execution—I have grown skeptical about general training courses because the skills they offer are usually too generic to apply to any specific initiative. Methods dominated by training and coaching are too indirect. Such non-committal methods often have poor results. Skills training and coaching only work when the learners are fully committed to put in the hard work to achieve their goals, as David Maister argues in his excellent article "Why (Most) Training Is Useless."²⁰⁷ While I do teach masterclasses in strategy execution, I always kick these off with a healthy dose of skepticism and kindly ask anyone who's not intrinsically motivated to leave.

Let me say this about color management methods. Concepts such as Insights Discovery, core quadrants and management drives are valuable when applied to the purposes they were designed for. They provide insight into the individual's dominant traits and the consequences these have for their own development and the balance on their team. So don't get me wrong; I use these methods myself, but we don't need a coloring book for everything. These methods are not a suitable replacement for other crucial analyses. Proclaiming yourself a blue organization doesn't absolve you of the need to thoroughly analyze your strategy. Fortunately, the people who came up with these concepts know and stress this, too.

My view of humanity is positive and down to earth. We are all products of our beliefs and experiences. I believe that board members, managers and professionals are like everyone else in that they're primarily out to do good, not just "less bad." That's my view of humanity in a nutshell. Most of us are trying to use our talents to do something good. At the same time, I believe all of us have shortcomings that have to be taken into account if we're going to reach the point

where we can execute. I'm not going to put forward a theological treatise on the broken world we live in, but in simple terms, humans are fallible. We want to have a good time, but that's not always possible. Sometimes we need to persevere and do things whose benefits aren't immediately clear, or that are just plain boring and require more persistence, mental capacity and creativity.

In *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman has described our dysfunctionality in terms of System 1 and System 2 thinking.²⁰⁸ Those systems determine the way we think and act. System 1 is fast, instinctive and emotional. System 2 is slower, more conscious and logical. Kahneman studied several characteristic human traits that are relevant to strategy execution. For example, he observed our tendencies to jump to conclusions and to overvalue human judgement, which is characterized by prejudice. In another interesting section, Kahneman discusses framing. If we say an initiative has a 40% chance of success, we are more likely to give it our all than when we say it has a 60% chance of failure. Both statements are true, but the one you choose and your reasons for doing so have an impact. Another section deals with the sunk cost fallacy and shows that we tend to want to throw good money at things that have already turned bad. We don't want to have any regrets, so we reason that a project is bound to become successful at some point if we just keep investing in it. These tendencies can all lead to big decision-making errors.

Strategy execution requires knowledge from a range of disciplines.

Business administration is not mathematics or physics and is only partially a hard science. In hard science, we deal in purely causal relationships. Every question only has one correct answer. But because strategy execution is mainly about people, you can't do without some idea of macroeconomics, philosophy, psychology, theology and social sciences.

It is possible to avoid failure in strategy execution. That is the upbeat note I want to end on. Let's recognize that strategy execution is a fantastic profession, and *your* profession. As you've seen, there is a clear distillation of what works and what doesn't, and much of that is universal. You will need this knowledge at your fingertips all of the time, because strategy execution is never done. Everyone knows that change is the only constant, but we also know that it's getting worse. We live in times of permanent beta versions, as management thinker Martijn Aslander put it in *Nooit af* [Never done].²⁰⁹ Every product and every service is continually revised and upgraded, and every iteration and innovation must be based on down-to-earth feedback about what does and does not meet customer needs. And for this, you need modern, iterative strategy execution. This book can help you get a grip on that.

APPENDIX 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the past three years, my colleagues at Turner Consultancy and myself, as owner and Managing Director, worked on developing a comprehensive overview of the reasons why strategy execution and innovation succeed or fail. We would never have been able to do this without the extremely valuable contributions of numerous high-ranking board members, managers, staff members, program managers, colleagues and partners. Our interviewees represented every possible discipline, from strategy to marketing, sales, operations, IT and financial control. Ours was a qualitative study. First of all, we conducted more than 50 interviews with people from both private businesses and state-run organizations. Secondly, several people made a particularly substantial contribution by sharing their ideas and insights as speakers at the seminars on strategy execution and innovation that Turner regularly organizes.

In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to the following interviewees and speakers:

- Theo van Aalst, Director of Strategy and Development, PostNL
- Annet Aris, Senior Affiliate Professor of Strategy, INSEAD; Member of the Supervisory Board, ASR
- Fred Arp, former CFO, Telegraaf Media Groep
- Karin Bergstein, Member of the Executive Board, ASR
- Lydia Bestebreuer, Senior Advisor on Competence, Training & Education, Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI)
- Arno van Bijnen, Commercial Director and Member of the Executive Committee, PostNL
- Welmer Blom, Senior Vice President Middle East, Gulf & India, Air France KLM
- Lisette van Breugel, COO, Arbo Unie
- Hein Bronk, Co-Founder & Partner, The Review Group; Founder and former CEO, MYbusinessmedia
- Jacques van den Broek, CEO, Randstad

- Harry J.M. Brouwer, CEO, Unilever Food Solutions
- Ton Büchner, former CEO/Executive Committee Chairman, AkzoNobel
- Yvonne Campfens, former Executive Vice President of B2B Netherlands and Managing Director, Springer Media; former Managing Director of the Publication Workflow Group, Springer Nature
- Joke Cuperus, CEO, PWN; former Chief Engineer, Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (Eastern Region)
- Pauline Derkman-Oosterom, Director of Life Insurance, a.s.r.
- Rob Eijkelenkamp, CEO, Studio Piet Boon, former Managing Director of News and Print Media, Telegraaf Media Groep
- Ronald Goedmakers, owner and CEO, Vebego International
- Cees 't Hart, CEO and President, Carlsberg Group; former CEO, FrieslandCampina
- Jan Hattink, former Finance Director, PostNL
- Rienk Hoff, former Director of Enforcement and Surveillance, Municipality of Amsterdam
- Mijke Horneman, former Senior Strategist, CRV Holding BV
- Gert-Jan Huisman, Partner and CEO, Anders Invest; former CEO, Centrotec AG
- Symen Jansma, Co-founder and former CEO, TravelBird
- Patrick Kerssemakers, former CEO, fonQ
- Joop Kessels, Managing Director, Utrecht University
- Agnes Keune, Senior Business Developer, Bol.com
- Hein Knaapen, Chief HR Officer, ING Group
- Antoinette de Kroon, Executive Services Team Manager, Netherlands Forensic Institute
- Jeroen de Munnik, Chief of Institutional Business, PGGM
- Harry Paul, former Inspector-General, Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority
- Ton Ridder, former Managing Director, KLM Cygnific
- Audrey van Schaik, former Director of Treatment, Department of Geriatric Psychiatry, GGZ inGeest
- Thijs Stoop, Principal at Roland Berger Strategy Consultants; former Member of the Executive Board, GGZ inGeest
- Kees Stroomer, Managing Director of ISS Facility Services Nederland; former Managing Director, Tempo Team
- Gerard van Tilburg, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Board, Royal Cosun; Member of the Board, Energiegilde
- Tjark Tjin-A-Tsoi, Director-General, Statistics Netherlands (CBS); former Managing Director, Netherlands Forensic Institute
- Herna Verhagen, CEO and Chairperson of the Executive Board, PostNL
- Paul Verheul, Executive Board/COO, Van Oord
- Frank Vrancken Peeters, former Regional Managing Director for Western Europe, Wolters Kluwer

- Menco van der Weerd, former Head of Change at the Life Insurance & Mortgage Division, Aegon NL
- John de Wit, former Program Director, Tata Steel; Director of Global Procurement, Danieli Corus
- Leon van de Zande, former Policy Director for Teaching & Research, University of Utrecht
- Marjoleine van der Zwan, Managing Director, PIV Insurers' Institute on Personal Injury; former COO, MediRisk

I would also like to express my appreciation to the following organizations for providing case studies:

- Aegon
- Alcontrol Laboratories
- Arbo Unie
- a.s.r.
- Royal Cosun
- FrieslandCampina
- FonQ
- An international bank
- A medium-sized Dutch University of Applied Sciences
- Utrecht University of Applied Sciences
- KRO-NCRV
- NautaDutilh
- Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit (NVWA)
- Unilever
- Wolters Kluwer
- Würth

My special thanks to all the board members and scholars who endorsed this book:

- Karin Bergstein, Member of the Executive Board, a.s.r.
- Lisette van Breugel, COO, Arbo Unie
- Jacques van den Broek, CEO, Randstad
- Harry J.M. Brouwer, CEO, Unilever Food Solutions
- Maarten Edixhoven, CEO, Aegon Netherlands
- Prof. Dr. Meindert Flikkema, Academic Director of the Amsterdam Centre for Management Consulting, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Ronald Goedmakers, owner and CEO, Vebego International
- Henk Hagoort, Chairman of the Executive Board, Windesheim University of Applied Sciences; former Chairman of the Executive Board, NPO
- Cees 't Hart, CEO and President, Carlsberg Group; former CEO, FrieslandCampina
- Kees Hoving, Chief Country Officer for the Netherlands, Deutsche Bank

- Symen Jansma, Co-founder and former CEO, TravelBird
- Patrick Kerssemakers, former CEO, fonQ
- Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, INSEAD Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change
- Agnes Keune, Senior Business Developer, Bol.com
- Hein Knaapen, Chief HR Officer, ING Group
- George Kohlrieser Ph.D., Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior, IMD in Lausanne, writer of bestsellers *Hostage at the Table* and *Care to Dare*
- Peter Meyers, CEO, Stand & Deliver Group; Lecturer in Performance and Leadership Skills, Stanford University and IMD in Lausanne
- Heiko Schipper, former Deputy Executive Vice President, Nestlé S.A. and former CEO, Nestlé Nutrition
- Feike Sijbesma, Chairman of the Managing Board and CEO, DSM
- Ben Tiggelaar, Behavioral Scientist, Author, Public Speaker and Consultant
- Tjark Tjin-A-Tsoi, Director-General, Statistics Netherlands (CBS); former Managing Director, Netherlands Forensic Institute
- Herna Verhagen, CEO and Chairperson of the Executive Board, PostNL
- Paul Verheul, Executive Board/COO, Van Oord
- Ben Verwaayen, Supervisory Board of AkzoNobel, Partner at Keen Venture Partners, former CEO of Alcatel-Lucent and British Telecom
- Prof. Henk Volberda, Professor of Strategic Management and Innovation, Director of Knowledge Transfer, Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

I would also like to express my gratitude to the following colleagues and partners from Turner Consultancy. They are listed in alphabetical order:

Marjolein van Abbe, Joël Aerts, Marjam el Ammari, Martijn Babeliowsky, Mieke Bello, Stefan Bolt, Eugenie Boon, Mariëtte Brouwer, Peter de Bruin, Alexander Bruinsma, Susanne Chamalaun, Mariëlle Companjen, Katinka Cornelése, Alex Crezee, Johannes Crol, Jeroen Dekkers, Eveline Dusseldorp, Bas van 't Eind (oprichter), Jasper Engelbert, Patrick Eppink, Wouter Evers, Wendelina Fieret, Jurgen Frumau, Jop Gerkes, Bas Hafkenscheid, Janwillem Hekman, Evelien Hellenthal, Tjalle Hoekstra, André Holwerda, Joris van Hulzen, Gerrit-Jan Jansen, Relinde de Koeijer, Roel Kok, Coco Korse, Adriaan Krans, Sander Livius, Otto van 't Loo, Dayashri Manohar, Max Meijers, Feike Oosterhof, Ties Rijkers, Bas van Rooij, Joachim Rullmann, Annelieke van Schie, Peter Schreuder, Marga Severs, Dirkjan Takke, Bob Tasche, Dodijn Velema, Lot Verburgh, Jeroen Visscher, Bouke Waltman, Martijn Walvis, Peter Weijland.

My thanks are also due to the following Turner alumni:

Astrid Bakker-Boumans, Erik Bakker, Ben van Berge Henegouwen, Arjan van den Born, Iris Borst, Juliëtte Bos, Jikkeliën van Marle, Wido Bosch, Maria van Boxtel, Wouter Bruggers, Ithar da Costa, Martine Daniëls, Patrick Davidson, Juriaan Deumer, Erna Doedens, Andrea Doesburg, Karin van Duuren, Meindert Flikkema, Rutger Gassner, Han Haring, Marcel 't Hart, Jelmer Heida, Gerco Hennipman, Henry Hennipman, Tamara van der Horst, Robbert Jellinek, Salko Kapetanovic, Stefan Karnebeek, Barbara Kaufman, Maaikel Klein Klouwenberg (founder), Wouter Klinkhamer, Regine Kruijsdijk-Oolman, Rosalie Kuyvenhoven, Madiha Leuven-Mouchtak, Steven van de Looij, Alexander Loudon, Pieter Lugtigheid, Erwin Matthijssen, Jan-Willem Meiburg, Rik Meijering, Nicole Messer, Maaïke Pol, Ron Müller, Barbara Nederkoorn, Leonique Niessen, Linda Nieuwenhuis, Corrie Nieuwenkamp, Femke van Nieuwkerk, Niels Penninx, Colette Pijl-Leeflang, Carolijn Ploem, Willem Pluym, Suzanne Raafs, Martine Reimerink, Herbert Rijken, Rob Schipper (former commissioner), René Schreurs, Barbara Schrijver, Peter Slikker, Ralph Smeets, Sjors Stoffelsen, Rutger Strengers, Theo den Tex, Esther Timmer, Hugo Timmerman, Marcel van Tol, Joost Tolboom, Ineke Uijtenhaak, Arjan van Valkengoed, Eveline van Veelen, Rose van Velzen, Linda Visser, Enno Wiertsema, Ellen Wijnands, Mark de Wit, Feico de Zwaan.

This book is a richer work thanks to them. In the course of this research, I was once again reminded that a team knows far more than a few individuals.

In the digital age, organizations either disrupt or be disrupted. Continuity is no longer a given. Only one law applies: Strategy = Execution, because a strategy is only as brilliant as its execution. Strategy execution is the last competitive advantage. Efficiency, speed and agility in execution are more important than a perfectly mapped-out strategy based on feasibility and predictability.

Strategy = Execution is for leaders, professionals and entrepreneurs who view strategy execution, rather than strategy-setting, as their principal job.

STRATEGY = EXECUTION is 80% how-to:

- **Get an overview:** 6 success factors, 4 accelerators and 16 building blocks.
- **Get inspired:** 16 cases and more than 50 innovation methods and new business models.
- **Get started:** 5 strategy execution approaches and an online test of your organization's execution capacity.

'Talking about strategy is easy, but taking care of its execution is what it is all about. It is refreshing to read a book where this important topic has pride of place.' – **Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, INSEAD Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change**

'In this book, Jacques Pijl shows that the next change is right around the corner. He inspires leaders and teams who face big changes and shares an abundance of good ideas for tightening our focus on successful enactment and execution of a change strategy.' – **Harry J.M. Brouwer, CEO Unilever Food Solutions**

'This book brilliantly shows how leadership is fundamental to inspire people to want to change. This is a hands-on book and a must-read for all leaders.' – **George Kohlrieser Ph.D., Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior, IMD, Switzerland, bestselling author of *Hostage at the Table* and *Care to Dare***



Jacques Pijl (1968) is a thought leader and sought-after speaker on strategy execution and innovation. He has over twenty years of experience helping boards and management teams from leading businesses tackle critical issues. He is a consultant on large-scale transformations and precision interventions in the private, public and semipublic sectors. Pijl is the owner and Managing Director of Turner Consultancy and author of two management bestsellers. *Strategy = Execution* was shortlisted for Management Book of the Year and named as CEOs' book of choice by Dutch Financial Times.

'A wealth of well-founded insights and advice.'
– **Ben Tiggelaar, behavioral scientist, bestselling author, public speaker and consultant**

'This book thoroughly demystifies the concept of innovation and the practicalities of how to organize it.' – **Jacques van den Broek, CEO Randstad**