

Why your daily operations will eat your strategy for breakfast



‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast’ is a well-known quote which, if you’re in business, you’re likely to be familiar with. What it means is that, no matter how comprehensive or well-thought-through your strategy, it will fail if your organisational culture falls short.

Having been in the business of coaching for around two decades, I see first-hand the impact of organisational culture on a company’s success. Yet I believe that it can also be argued that our daily execution – those tiny habits we practise each day – will have an equally significant impact on our overall output; for better or for worse.

The impact of inconsistency

It is our daily operations – essentially, how we plan, design and consistently execute our day – which will determine whether a company delivers on its strategic plan. When entering a mine, a problem we encounter frequently is something I’ve dubbed ‘inconsistent effectiveness’. We see that without a plan or structure, workers are losing time to a “vacuum” caused by lengthy meetings or tasks that don’t yield results. There is too much waiting and wasting of time; a lack of coordination between shifts – all of which creates inconsistency in output.

It starts with purpose and planning

Therefore, the first thing we look at is whether the supervisor is aligned to the company’s purpose. *Why the supervisor?* Because they are our culture carriers and responsible for instilling and driving the company’s mission and vision among the workforce.

We typically find that while supervisors are generally familiar with the company's purpose, they cannot articulate how this translates into activity for their teams. Yet this is a critical step in driving daily operations; the workforce needs to understand how they fit into the bigger picture to secure buy-in and execute their daily functions in line with company goals. This will allow them to dig deeper, become more productive and ultimately more effective in their daily execution.

Secondly, we assess how our supervisors plan their day as this will ultimately inform how tasks are executed. *How do they manage their morning meeting? Are they constantly in "fire-fighting" mode? What are their stumbling blocks? Where is time being wasted? How can we work with them to execute their day more effectively?*

Once we have observed them and have a clear picture of how their day typically unfolds, we can coach them on making the necessary adjustments that will release productive time. *How much?* you ask. By planning and structuring their day correctly, we've been able to free up to around 30% more results-driven time.

Structuring your daily operations for success

We work with our supervisors to tightly plan and manage their days. This needs to start with the supervisor performing their morning prep, followed by a team 'huddle' - a focus and mobilisation session, hosted at the start of every shift. This helps by entrenching the company's purpose, making clear the day's targets, and articulating the back-up plan should things not go as expected, thereby setting the scene for the shift.

Once this foundation is set, the day can unfold more smoothly, as workers move into executing their shift according to plan while the supervisor monitors and controls operations.

Finally, the end of the shift should be spent reflecting on the day's activities: what went well, what didn't go so well, and most importantly, *how to solve the obstacles we faced*. These learnings can then be reviewed and carried through to the next day's prep.

Serving the strategy

By making these adjustments to the day's operations and teaching a more productive mindset and habits, we can ensure that all activities add value, thus optimising the mining cycle by up to 10 minutes in each area and boosting overall efficiency.

In our experience, we find that people love structure, direction and role clarification. If we can set this through a framework of *context* - clarifying how the work benefits the individual and the bigger picture - our operations become that much more effective.

It is what we do consistently that determines direction. Through fine-tuning our daily operations, we can effectively serve our strategy - *not* eat it for breakfast.