“Execution, not strategy, offers an exclusive competitive advantage.” (Lippitt, 2007)

INTRODUCTION
Strategic implementation is an elemental step in revolving a company’s vision and objectives into reality. To implement strategies successfully is critical for not only public but also for private organizations. Without proper implementation, even the most superior and fine strategy would not make the grade as established. In last few decades, a number of articles have been published to understand the significance of strategy implementation. Presenting not only models for better execution of strategies, as well highlighting factors that affect effective strategy implementation.

As Aaltonen and Ikävalko (2002) and Zagotta and Robinson (2002) advocate that real value of strategy can only be recognized and accepted through execution. Hrebiniak (2006) also supports the opinion that without effective implementation of strategies no business strategy can succeed. According to Kaplan and Norton (2008) managers have always found it difficult to balance their near-term operational concerns with long-term strategic precedence. They further maintain that such pressure comes with the job and is an intrinsic tension that managers cannot avoid, yet must be addressed on a continuous basis. The view mentioned is also supported by Corboy and O’Corrblui (1999) who argue that it is equally imperative to understand that strategy being applied and executed along with daily operations.

Nielson, Martin and Powers (2008) in their research discovered that 60% of the employees of different companies rated their companies being weak when it came to effective strategy execution. Charan and Colvin (1999) also note that the majority of all unsuccessful CEOs have failed due to non proper execution of strategies developed. Charan and Colvin (1999) also describe lack of execution as the failure to get the following right that is:

1. Getting things done,
2. Making the correct decisions quickly, and
3. Delivering on commitments.

Albeit most companies have the knowledge, experience and savoir faire to create a strategy, execution of a strategy often fronts to great intricacy and complexity. It can be argued that the frenetic pace of today’s business shams many obstacles to strategy implementation. Strategy implementation is therefore regarded by many authors and strategists as separate from strategy formulation. Nevertheless, transforming strategies into action is a far more complex and difficult task (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000). As pointed earlier the business environment is becoming more complex and exigent, streamlining strategy and altering fundamentals of the existing strategy becomes more frequent. As a result senior executives find themselves faced with the call to integrate a number of changes while executing the new or the revised strategy. For this reason some of the senior managers take the implementation of strategies as devils eye. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to realize the effectiveness of Eight S’s on strategic implementation and the difference between Eight S’s and McKinsey 7 S model.

THE EIGHT S’S MODEL

The Eight S’s model was developed by Higgins in the year 2005, which is a revision of the original McKinsey 7 S’s model developed in 1980. McKinsey 7S’s will be discussed in the later part of this paper. To begin with, the aim of the Eight S’s model is to enable management to more effectively and efficiently manage the cross functional execution of strategies. Higgins pins down that those executives who are successful spend a great deal of their time on strategy execution. They believe and realize that execution of strategy is as important and crucial as its formulation.

In Higgins (2005) opinion much of strategy execution revolves around aligning key organizational functions/factors with the chosen strategy. However with frequently occurring changes in the business environment, strategies are reshaped more often as compare to the past, making the alignment process a bigger challenge. Executives must align the cross functional organizational factors; structure, system and processes, leadership style, staff, resources and shared values with the new strategy so that the strategy opted can succeed (Higgins, 2005). All these factors tinted above in the Eight S model are vital for successful strategy execution.
From figure 1 it is to be noted that the figure is divided into two parts; the Seven Contextual S’s and strategic performance. Higgins (2005) says that the key here is that all the factors falling in the Contextual Seven S’s must be aligned to achieve best possible strategic performance. Importantly organization’s arrows should be pointing in the same direction that is they should be aligned with one another. The other six contextual S’s should point in the similar direction as of the strategy (Higgins, 2005). For better understanding of the model it is essential to know and understand as what the Eight S’s offer.

DESCRIPTION OF EIGHT S’S

1. Strategy and Purpose: According to Higgins, strategies are formulated to achieve an organization’s purpose. Change in strategic purpose leads to change in strategy. Strategic purpose includes strategic intent, vision, focus, mission, goals and strategic objectives. There are four types of strategies famed by Higgins; corporate-, business-, functional- and process strategies. Corporate strategy defines the business of the company is or will be involved in and how business will be conducted in a fundamental way. Business strategy depicts as how a firm in a particular business can gain competitive advantage over its competitors. Functional strategy should be aligned with business strategy, hence functional strategies in areas such as marketing, human resources, Research & Development, finance and more should be allied
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with business strategy. Process strategies are cross functional in nature and aims at integrating an organization’s processes in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

2. Structure: Higgins avows that organizational structure consists of five parts; jobs, the authority to do those jobs, the grouping of jobs in a logical fashion, the managers span of control and mechanism of coordination. Hence when executing a business strategy, decisions are to be made regarding how an organization is structured. This incriminates decisions in terms of jobs to be completed, authority to do the jobs, grouping of jobs into departments and divisions, the span of manager’s control and the mechanisms of control of such a structure.

3. Systems and Processes: Higgins has described systems and processes by stating that systems and process as enable an organization to execute daily activities. Hence, this element is about the formal and informal procedures used in an organization to manage information systems, planning systems, budgeting and resource allocation systems, quality control systems and reward systems.

4. Style: Style refers to leadership/management mode exhibited by the leaders/managers when relating to subordinates and other employees. Abridging it further, Management style is about the manner in which management treats their colleagues and other employees and what and how they focus their attention on.

5. Staff: After defining company’s strategic purpose, management must settle, as how many employees are needed and what are the required backgrounds and skills essential to achieve the strategic purpose. This factor also covers aspects such as staff training, career management and promotion of employees.

6. Re-Sources: Higgins affirms that management must ensure that an organization has access to sufficient resources toward successfully strategy execution. Resources include people, money and technology and other management systems.

7. Shared Values: Shared values on the whole relates to organizational culture. Therefore, shared values are the values shared by the members of the organization making it different and diverse from the other organizations.

8. Strategic performance: Higgins states that strategic performance is a derivative of the other seven ‘S’s. Strategic performance is possessed by an organization as a total, or for profit-based parts of the whole. Performance can be measured at any level. Financial performance measurements are critical barometers of strategic performance. However an expanded balanced scorecard approach is best.

From the above mentioned factors it evident that almost everything an organization carries out is rooted with in the Eight S’s. Indubitably by applying and using this model during the formulation of strategies, the leaders as well as the managers involved
can foresee changes that are to be made within the organization in order to make the strategy workable (Higgins, 2005). Higgins pinpoint that importantly the model serves as a road map for implementation during the execution stage, helps uncovering the causes of failure during implementation. The question that arises after this debate steers, as how Eight S’s is it different then the McKinsey 7S frame work.

MCKINSEY’S 7S MODEL
McKinsey’s 7S Model was developed by the consulting company McKinsey and Company in the early 1980s. Since then it has been extensively used by practitioners and academics in analyzing hundreds of organizations. The McKinsey 7S model was named after a consulting company, McKinsey and Company, conducted applied research in business and industry (Pascale & Athos, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The authors that are Robert Waterman, Thomas Peters and Julien Philips working as consultants for McKinsey and Company; in the 1980s, used the model to analyze over 70 large organizations. The McKinsey 7S Framework was shaped as identifiable and easy to remember in the field of business. The seven variables, which the author’s term "levers", all commence with the letter "S": These seven variables take account of structure, strategy, systems, skills, style, staff and shared values as shown in the figure below:

Figure 2

Source, Waterman et al., (1980), Structure is not organization,
Pascale and Athos (1981) regarded the McKinsey 7S Model as crucially important to managers, attempting to influence complex organizations. Pascale and Athos found that managers tend to focus their attention on those variables which respond readily to change, primarily strategy, structure and systems. A number of managers are either unwilling, or too impatient to carry on an important effort to deem completely the factors intrinsic in each of the seven variables.

The explanation for the seven variables is alike as presented by Higgins in 2005. As Higgins Eight S’s model is a revised version for McKinsey 7S’s model. Hitherto one variable which is quite noticeable in 7S’s model is the Skill’s, which does not appear in the Higgins Eight S’s model. Reasons for not appearing will be discussed in the later part of this paper, but query in hand is as what does the skill cover in McKinsey 7S’s model.

The authors (Waterman, Peters and Phillips, 1980) added Skills for an exceedingly realistic reason. As they believed that it enables to capture a company’s crucial attributes. Importantly, describing the strategic description of the company. Hence dominating attribute and capabilities of a company gives the reflection of the variable Skill. For this reason it becomes vital to come back with as why Skills was removed from Higgins Eight S’s model and why is it different then the 7S’s model.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EIGHT S’S AND 7S’S MODEL

The Eight S’s model once compared with the 7S’s differs in two ways.

1. Skills have been replaced by re-Sources as one of the 7 contextual S’s. Considering the original Mckinsey 7S’s model and by looking at the figure 2 above, the model did not contained re-Sources in it. It is believed and very much an accepted fact that an organization cannot successfully execute strategies without resources. Without additional resources such as finance, information, technology, and the time required of top management and others in the organization cannot effectively execute strategies (Higgins, 2005). However if one examines carefully in today’s context of fast and changing business environment, what composes skills as described by Peters and Waterman (1980) can be visible in core competencies and capabilities of an organizations, falling under the umbrella of Strategy “S”. Higgins (2005) very clearly states that he examined a number of firms and found that re-Sources are highly essential for an organization when it comes to implementation of strategies.

2. The second difference that is able to be seen is the addition of Strategic Performance which is the eight “S”. The reason for adding this “S” is to provide focus as what is required or what is to be achieved and closure once attaining the set objectives. As Higgins (2005) states that the “S” for strategic performance can be used in different ways, starting from objectives to measuring results.
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the discussion presented in this paper, it is very lucid that execution is the key to strategic success. Many managers are more familiar and have major proficiency in strategy formulation than strategy execution. They recognize much more about "planning" than "doing," which grounds major troubles for strategy to work. The process of implementation can be quite a challenge as discussed in the literature.

A strategy which might look fine and effective on papers, may fail to take off for a basic reason as employees might not like the change and resist it by going around its basic set requirements. Implementation of strategy may also fall short as of inadequate accessibility and availability of required resources. Derisory communication and training can play a major role for poor implementation. Similarly if people do not understand the basic essence as what is to be done or do not enclose the required knowledge, skills and expertise it become difficult for the strategy to implement and work as expected.

The seminal work of McKinsey 7S’s model has contributed to the structure of implementation framework. It assists managers in navigating their organization. Nevertheless, Higgins noted the absence of re-Sources as one of the crucial components in the framework. Thus, by adding the re-Sources as additional element, it thus views the 8S’s as a holistic approach. Two substantial evident that support the demand of 8S’s inter alia the importance of resources as the backbone of any organization. Resources in monetary terms are capital acts as catalyst to the organization to mobilize their employees, departments and workforce towards strategic performance. Strategic performance on the other hand, is seen as a yardstick of the success or failure of organization. Considering the fact of the importance of strategic performance, Higgins embedded this element in the 8S’s model making it well-built.

In the research agenda, the diversity of theoretical concepts has been introduced with relations to strategic models. Yet, the deficiency of those models is due to the failure of practical implementations. Adversely, the 8S’s model has been empirically tested in two companies i.e. General Electric and Procter and Gamble. Thus, the 8S’s is bridging the gap between the theory and practicality. The holistic features of 8S’s have taken into accounts those have been highlighted by other researchers in their previous studies.

REFERENCES