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5 Steps To Launch Your Next Plan

Are you ready to launch your next plan? You've got a timeline and budget. You have the key players on board. It's time to get going, right? Maybe not.

Surprisingly, I see companies flub their launches more often than you'd think because they miss key steps in preparing. To be undoubtedly ready to launch your next plan, you need to be clear and crisp on five specific points.

Get Ready to Launch Your Next Plan

Getting everyone "on the same page" is too vague for a plan, especially when it comes to a major project. These five elements need to be part of your plan.

1. **Definition of Purpose**
   What is the purpose of this project? Why are you doing it? Getting everyone clear on why you are working on this particular project and the impact you expect it to have on your business is crucial to keep people focused on the right things. This is also imperative to keep them engaged when parts of the project become challenging.

2. **Hopes and Concerns**
   Laying out hopes and concerns during the planning process helps form the plan itself. If you know what you hope to gain from the project, that will guide decision making. Hopes may include goals and can also include "softer" things like building team cohesiveness or enhancing your image while hitting a financial goal.

   Concerns are equally important because they indicate areas where a plan may fail or at least have some hiccups. They show where you might need additional resources or must alter the timeline or connect with another team because projects will intersect, for example. The challenge with concerns is that sometimes people are afraid to voice them for fear of being seen as a naysayer or not fully committed to a plan. It's crucial to create a safe, inviting climate where people can constructively voice concerns—at the beginning and throughout a project.

3. **Roadmap with Milestones**
   This may be more what you think of when I say "plan." Make sure you have enough (and the right) milestones in your plan. Your milestones provide the goal posts you work towards and are also checkpoints to make sure your plan is on track. Too many milestones will bog down a plan, while too few allow you to unknowingly get off track without a chance to course correct.

Roles and Responsibilities
   If Definition of Purpose is about what you are doing and why, and Roadmap is about how, Roles and Responsibilities are about who. Getting really clear on who does what is critical in every plan.

   Challenges I see arise when roles and responsibilities are unclear include inefficiencies or duplicate efforts as well as questions about who makes tie-breaker decisions and who is an informer v. who is responsible in collaborative groups. Addressing as many of these issues before the project starts leads to more success.

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5. **Next Steps**
   What are the next steps you needed to move forward with the plan? Who is in charge of officially launching the project? I've seen projects stall because key players didn't realize who was to kick off the project or what a kickoff looks like. Communication and leadership make the difference here.

Get the Right Leadership to Launch Your Next Plan

So how do you make sure you've covered your basis before launching your plan? My favorite tool is an intensive planning workshop. This deep, but focused, meeting systematically addresses each area. The workshop pulls in key stakeholders and participants to create a workable plan. This small investment in a planning workshop pays HUGE dividends in leading a project across the finish line.

Independent leadership works particularly well for intensive planning workshops since they are less likely to get stuck in office politics or stale "what we've always done" habits. Instead, they bring a fresh perspective to the project. Their neutrality allows them to ask questions in a different way, so others respond more creatively and openly. An independent leader also brings tools and approaches from various disciplines and experiences to support your project launch.

Is your project still on the tarmac and you're unsure what's needed for it to take off? Maybe you completed your own planning workshop, but there are still gaping holes and you're wondering what to do next?

A passionate organizer of people and initiatives, Erica Smigielski brings over twenty years of experience in project leadership to financial software and SaaS companies who want to launch their next big idea. She leads large-scale, complex projects like product launches and company mergers and acquisitions as well as focused efforts to bring structure and process to fast-track businesses. Erica holds certifications as a Stanford Advanced Project Manager as well as a Certified Group Facilitator, making her a master orchestrator of strategic planning, as well as a skillful communicator who can expertly navigate complex group dynamics.