

# **Corporate strategy implementation within small and medium consulting businesses**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The success of corporate strategy implementation has become the focus of many organisations in sustaining a competitive advantage. Strategic management helps organisations to set a vision, a mission and objectives that will enable them to survive and operate within a competitive environment. The main objective of this research was to determine whether owners/managers of small and medium consulting businesses implemented corporate strategies successfully. To achieve this objective, a qualitative approach was used with the aim of understanding, analysing and evaluating the success of corporate strategy implementation of small and medium consulting businesses. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with thirteen small and medium consulting business owners/managers in the Randburg Central Business District. The empirical findings indicated that owners/managers of small and medium consulting businesses would have to attend more diligently to corporate strategy implementation, with specific reference to the components of implementation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The environment is highly competitive, and organisations become more future-oriented in order to sustain their competitive advantage (Tipuric, Podrug and Darabos, 2015: 583-584). Many organisations have realised that awareness of strategic management is essential (Berg, 2011:1; Hamel and Prahalad, 2005:1). Authors confirm that organisations that establish a clear strategy would outperform those organisations implementing numerous strategies that are not well defined (Abosedo, Obasan and Alese, 2016:331; Raby, 2015:1).

Yet, some authors have suggested that SMEs give little attention to strategy and strategy implementation, and that this may have a negative influence on performance (Gibcus and Kemp, 2003:7; Kihara, Bwisa and Kihoro, 2016:233). Thus, many SMEs have strategies that

have been kept on the shelf, available only to managers to read. Strategies in larger organisations are seen more as competencies that are available to all members of the organisation in order to reach the objectives and goals.

A few small businesses have strategies that they follow, but the majority of them do not have any (Majama and Magang, 2017: 75-76; Verreynne, Meyer and Liesch, 2014: 420-423). Those businesses simply follow the day-to-day business of making a profit based on competition within the markets in which they operate (Farsi and Toghraee, 2014: 11; Radzi, Nor and Ali, 2017:46-47). Small businesses are “simple or lifestyle” businesses, not worthy of any real academic focus (Rizzo, 2011:2). In other words, their primary objective is to maximise profit.

While some SMEs have been able to grow rapidly, create jobs and increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of the countries in which they operate, others have encountered major challenges in the changing business environment (Pandya, 2012:430). Within SMEs, the strategy remains frequently imbedded, top-down, informal and intuitive (Mintzberg, 1989, as noted by Gibcus and Kemp (2003:7); Balasundaram, 2009:14). This is owing to the significant part played by owners/managers, who are generally the ones who have the vision of the organisation, whereas frequently, within the organisation, employees are not aware of the vision. Proactiveness is required to face these challenges, which cannot be resolved by economic interventions alone. Building a clear strategy does not mean that implementation will be successful (Tapera, 2014:122). Successful implementation needs to be planned carefully so that the strategic goals can be reached (Njagi and Kombo, 2014:64). This results in successful strategies that will allow managers to create, manage and monitor success within organisations.

This research focused on corporate strategy implementation in relation to the performance of SMEs. As indicated above, SMEs operate in survival mode and for this reason; they are more reactive than proactive in their management. The reactive approach makes it difficult for the strategy to be implemented. An organisation with a clear corporate strategy is more likely to share its goals and objectives with employees, which will make the implementation process easier and increase the organisation’s performance and sustainability.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review comprises a brief discussion of the strategic management process, corporate strategy, the implementation thereof, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the central business district (CBD) of Randburg and in closure, consulting businesses.

### **Strategic management process**

The process of strategic management consists of five interrelated and integrated phases, which are mainly grouped into strategic implementation and formulation (David, 2011:5). All these phases are unified, interrelated and important for an organisation to attain its vision and goals and comprise the following (Thompson, Peteraf, Gamble and Strickland, 2016:19):

- Developing and communicating the organisation’s strategic vision and its mission;
- Translating the mission into specific long-term objectives;
- Formulating strategies to accomplish the long-term goals and vision;
- Implementing and executing the strategy;
- Monitoring developments, evaluating performance and making corrective adjustments.

The first three phases are part of strategy formulation, which includes analysis, strategy formulation and goal setting. The last two phases constitute implementation, which indicates the structure creation of the internal environment and getting a response from the process. Moreover, every element of the strategic management process requires a judgement on whether to carry on with things as they appear or to generate changes within the organisation. Many authors have conducted studies on strategy and strategy implementation. However, most studies pay attention to large organisations only and these concepts and ideas can also be implemented for SMEs (Hrebiniak, 2013; Ralebitso, 2016:1). Kraus and Kauranen (2009:42) and Wheelen and Hunger (2012:6) reveal that strategic management leads to enhanced performance. The worth of strategic management for SMEs lies more in the coordination of the strategy process than a written strategic plan (Kutllovci and Shala, 2013:87-88). Various scholars have found that the formal procedure might have a negative impact on the sustainability and growth of SMEs (Robinson and Pearce, 1984:129-133). Wheelen and Hunger (2010:14) believe that the organisation's strategy is part of its main plan to reach its objectives and goals. In addition, it gives a competitive edge and helps organisations to overcome the competition.

### Corporate Strategy

Corporate strategy generally depicts the direction of the organisation regarding its management and diverse productions and business lines to gain a competitive advantage (Hoskisson, Hitt, Ireland and Harrison, 2013:225). Lazenby (2014:176) indicates that corporate strategy guides the objectives of the organisation and relates them to the resources of the organisation that should be utilised. It is also known as the "master or the grand" strategy of the organisation which means that it provides a road map of the organisation's future.

### Corporate strategy implementation

Hrebiniak (2013:5-6) states that strategy implementation is an essential element of the strategic management process and can be described as the process that transforms the formulated strategy into a sequence of actions which ensure the successful achievement of the mission, vision and goals of the organisation. Hrebiniak (2013:14-19) also states that strategy implementation constantly engages many individuals compared with its formulation as the communication flows across all levels of the organisation. However, this flow of communication might be a challenge, as the objectives should be linked to the daily activities within the organisation. Similarly, Nyamwanza and Mavhiki (2014:2-4) also explain that strategy implementation is a way in which an organisation can expand, use and integrate its structures, culture and control systems to pursue the strategies leading to a competitive edge and improving performance. Jalali (2012:284) recognises that strategy implementation has grown to be a significant challenge for management. This is caused by the integration and the dynamic sequence of activities, turning plans to achieve goals. Furthermore, Hrebiniak (2013:35) points out that the implementation of strategy may be a hard task at any level of management and may also be improved during the institution and execution of the strategy.

Various ways exist to promote strategy implementation. However, for the purpose of this research, the eight components for strategy implementation according to Thompson, Strickland and Gamble (2010:329-330) were used to explore corporate strategy implementation at small and medium consulting businesses in the Randburg CBD. These components are briefly the following:

- Build an organisation capable of good strategy execution by strengthening its core competencies, competitive capabilities, work effort and structure.
- Allocate resources to support strategy implementation.

- Establish policies and procedures to facilitate strategy execution.
- Adopt best practices and strive for continuous improvement.
- Install information and operating systems that enable the use of knowledge effectively with the support of the organisation's abilities to gain a competitive advantage.
- Tie rewards and incentives directly to the achievement of strategic and financial targets.
- Instil a corporate culture in support of strategy implementation.
- Exercise strong leadership to drive implementation forward and improve strategy execution.

Each of the above components suggests that organisations have to go through certain processes for successful strategy implementation and to overcome obstacles that may occur during the implementation.

### **Small and medium enterprises**

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2004:10) and Wang (2016:169) state that there is no one suitable definition for an SME. Different countries have different definitions, but it is generally based on the number of employees, the amount of income and the number of assets. Ardic, Nataliya and Valentina (2011:8) agree that the number of employees and income are vital factors to define the SMEs of a country. SMEs in South Africa encounter several challenges and are different from those operating in stable environments. The latter do not have adequate resources to participate in strong planning and usually end up embracing "the copy and paste" method of doing business (Nyamwanza, 2014:61).

SMEs must have strategies that enable them to develop, grow and gain a competitive advantage in the current business environment (Raymond and Croteau, 2006:1013). Therefore, SMEs have to implement new strategies and plan control techniques to protect and reinforce their competitiveness. However, SMEs are more likely to survive in their current state with no desire to improve the quality and management practices. This survival attitude may be a threat, which creates challenges (Irwin, 2011; O'Regan and Ghobadian, 2006).

### **Central Business District of Randburg**

The CBD is a central area where the majority of businesses are concentrated compared with other urbanised areas. Furthermore, most SMEs operate within a CBD to reach clients more adequately and easily (Moore, Petty, Palich and Longenecker, 2008). The Randburg CBD is situated about 12 km from the CBD of Johannesburg and is one of the most improved and significant districts in South Africa (Johannesburg Development Agency, 2016:1). This has made the Randburg CBD part of the administrative area in region three as it offers numerous opportunities, which revitalise and contribute to economic growth (Johannesburg Development Agency, 2016:1).

### **Business consultants**

Business consultants are generally contacted for guidance and opinion on business issues owners/managers are not aware of and do not understand. Consultants help organisations to deal with matters such as the improvement of productivity, design of systems, administration and the development of the business (Ferreira, 2007:78). Owners of various small and medium consulting businesses understand and realise that the performance of SMEs can be

improved by consulting businesses in their areas of experience and knowledge, while larger businesses may also use and benefit from their service. Consultants shape economies by playing a critical role in creating and building values that benefit both the public and private industry (Zenger, 1994:710-720).

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVE**

Majama and Magang (2017:73-76) and Pournasir (2013:66-67) indicate that many studies have been conducted on strategy and strategy implementation. However, these studies focus mainly on concepts and frameworks for formulating the strategy and not on how SMEs can succeed in implementing corporate strategy. The main problem is the lack of intellectual capital, which causes various SMEs to fail within five years. There seems to be a gap in literature in terms of corporate strategy implementation among SMEs, including small and medium consulting businesses, as no real evidence could be found to indicate the impact, assessment and process of strategy and strategic implementation on the performance of SMEs. As a result, the research problem revolves around the uncertainty of corporate strategy implementation within SMEs.

The research question derived from the problem statement is as follows: To what extent do owners/managers of small and medium consulting businesses implement corporate strategy successfully?

The objective of this study was to determine whether owners/managers of small and medium consulting businesses implemented corporate strategies successfully.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Goddard and Melville (2001:16) indicate that research methodology is focused on practical and coherent methods to discover solutions to problems.

### **Research design**

This research followed a qualitative research approach with qualitative surveys as the research strategy. An interpretivism research philosophy was applied with exploratory and descriptive research since it preserved the originality of interviewees' interpretation regarding corporate strategy implementation.

### **Population and sampling**

The population of this study included consulting businesses in the Randburg CBD. Purposive sampling was used to select specific businesses and interviewees with experience in and knowledge of corporate strategy implementation. Patton (2002:240) and Suri (2011:71) argue that purposive sampling significantly increases the credibility of the findings. In addition, convenience sampling was also used to a certain extent owing to the accessibility of these businesses. The sample of this study consisted of thirteen small and medium consulting businesses representing the areas of engineering, accounting and management businesses, which seem to reflect the population of this research. Thirteen businesses were selected as saturation usually occurs after twelve interviews (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006:74). In addition, these businesses had been in operation for three years or longer.

### **Data collection**

Cooper and Schindler (2011:183) state that the collection of data in qualitative research involves diverse instruments to be employed, such as different interviews (unstructured, semi-structured and structured), content analysis or documentation and observation. This research

used semi-structured interviews as the instrument to collect the data based on an interview guide that was developed from literature and the objectives of this study. Secondary data were collected in this research, firstly to ensure triangulation with primary data, and secondly to allow for integration of any additional knowledge on corporate strategy implementation. Therefore, the purpose of the secondary data was mainly to support the face-to-face interviews (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016:157).

### **Data analysis**

Spens and Kovacs (2006) define content analysis as a 'process for objective, logical, consistent study of issued information which is more comprehensive for literature reviews'. Therefore, when the data is coded, the researcher categorised the data manually using Microsoft Excel to assist and support the development of themes.

### **TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) state that for qualitative research to be useful, four criteria have to be met to ensure trustworthiness of the study, namely: **Credibility**: This research used data from a variety of small and medium consulting businesses. Credibility was achieved through persistent observation, recording the interviews, taking notes, transcribing the data collected and analysing the data. **Transferability** (applicability): The researcher provided descriptions of information of SME consulting businesses in terms of where the research was conducted, the number of interviews held and the method of collecting data. **Dependability** (consistency): Dependability refers to the ability to obtain the same outcome when the study is repeated. The researcher saved the recorded interviews and the transcripts as per ethical requirements. **Confirmability** (neutrality): Confirmability ensures that the findings reflect the viewpoints of the interviewees. For this purpose, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the interviewees for confirmation.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Section A: Biographical data**

- **Position in the business:** Eight of the interviewees were owners and five were managers.
- **Type of business:** Seven of the small and medium consulting businesses operated as management consultants, four as engineering consultants and two as accounting consultants. Most of the participants interviewed were from management consulting businesses.
- **Age of business:** One of the businesses had been in existence for 21 years or more. The majority of four (4) had been in existence for 16 to 20 years, followed by three for 11 to 15 years, two for 6 to 10 years and three businesses for zero to five years. None of these businesses had been in existence for less than three years.
- **Number of employees:** Four of the businesses employed six to 10 employees and three businesses employed 11 to 15 employees. Two businesses employed 16 to 20 employees and 21 to 25 employees, respectively, while two businesses employed one to five employees and 26 to 30 employees, respectively. According to the National Small Business Act (1996) (Department of Trade and Industry, 1996), all the SMEs were small businesses.

#### **Section B: Corporate strategy implementation**

The findings in support of the objective are reported on according to the following topics:

- The viewpoints of the interviewees regarding their understanding of corporate strategy; and
- Components of strategy implementation.

### **Understanding of corporate strategy**

Eleven of the interviewees indicated that corporate strategy was about a vision, mission, goals, objectives and giving clear direction. *"...I am saying that corporate strategy is mission, vision and objectives and all of that..."* and *"...includes the business' goals and objectives..."* Four interviewees mentioned that corporate strategy was long-term oriented. Three interviewees mentioned that corporate strategy was the blueprint of the business, strategy and processes of the business; professionalism and ethos and values in the business; a short-term objective and affected the success of the business; and day-to-day survival instinct and sustainability of the business, respectively. Finally, one interviewee indicated that corporate strategy was about having flexible approaches; building a global competitive business; and regenerating resources, respectively. The interviewees seemed to understand some form of corporate strategy, even though they were informally compared with the literature. Owners/managers were involved in running the strategy of the business on a daily basis.

The purpose of this question was to determine whether the owners/managers of businesses understood and could describe corporate strategy. It became evident that they had different understandings and perceptions. Some of the owners/managers defined corporate strategy as vision, mission, goals, objectives and as giving clear direction and others saw corporate strategy as a short-term and long-term objective and blueprint. It is evident that owners/managers did not have a clear understanding of corporate strategy as they defined strategy instead of corporate strategy. Furthermore, the interviewees' general understanding of corporate strategy seemed to differ from literature.

### **Components of strategy implementation**

The following emerged from the interviews regarding the eight components of strategy implementation:

#### **Building an organisation**

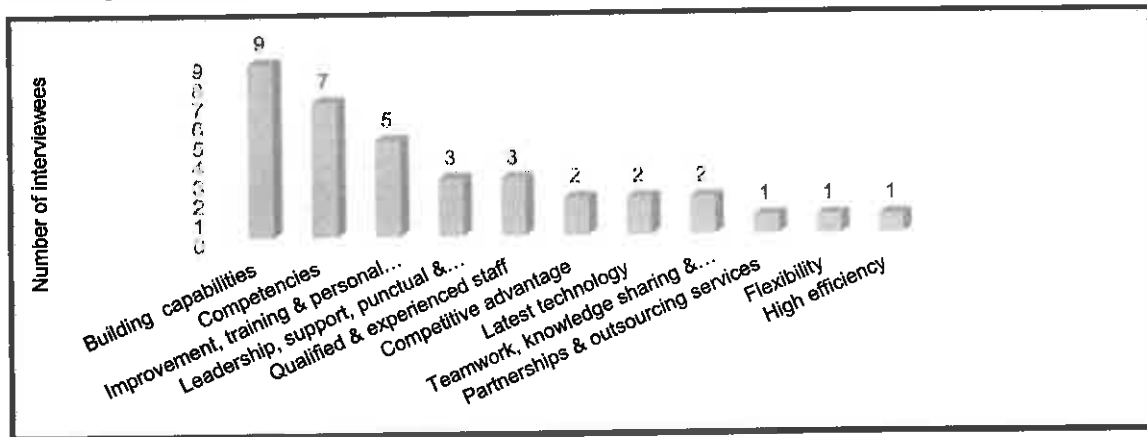
From the findings, the majority (9) of the interviewees mentioned building capabilities as most important for strategy implementation. *"...we build capabilities and competencies, we are able to actually meet our own targets."* and *"...part of our strategy is to be able to build capabilities..."* Seven interviewees indicated competencies as important, while five interviewees said improvement; training and personal objectives were also of importance. However, three interviewees mentioned leadership, support, being punctual and professional; and employing qualified and experienced staff, respectively. Two interviewees indicated competitive advantage; latest technology; and teamwork, knowledge sharing and communication, respectively. Finally, one interviewee listed partnerships and outsourcing services; flexibility; and high efficiency, respectively that assist in strategy implementation.

It is clear that the success of corporate strategy implementation is determined by significant capabilities, competencies and work efforts. Most businesses agreed that they had built their businesses with relevant core competencies and capabilities, enabling them to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation. In addition, the businesses recruited qualified and experienced staff who were willing to work hard through teamwork, sharing of knowledge and communication. Carpenter and Sanders (2009: 367-383) and Thompson, Peteraf, Gamble and Strickland, (2014:290-291) agree on the importance of building strong, capable and

competent businesses. Owners/managers have to drive strategy implementation with skilled and experience employees.

FIGURE 1:

Building and organisation

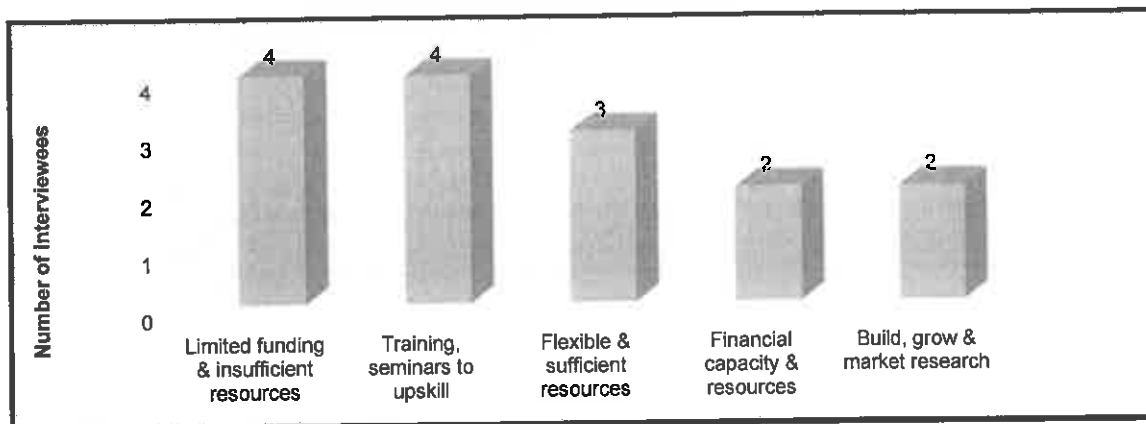


Allocation of resources

Four interviewees mentioned that funding and financial resources to support strategy implementation were lacking. "...financial, avenues and therefore the amount of resources of financial capacity input is not very sufficient..." and "...we don't currently allocate sufficient resources because of, the limited funding..." Four interviewees said that sending employees for training and to seminars to upgrade their skills had helped during strategy implementation. Three interviewees stated that flexible and sufficient resources to invest money in people were used more than anything during strategy implementation. Furthermore, two interviewees stated that financial capacity and resources; and building, growth and market research were used to help with strategy implementation.

FIGURE 2:

Allocation of resources



It is evident that the allocation of resources is one of the key issues during strategy implementation. The owners/managers acknowledged that resources were important for successful corporate strategy implementation. However, some interviewees indicated that they did not have sufficient financial resources. Those who did have sufficient financial resources available indicated that these contributed to the success of strategy implementation. Magaisa *et al.* (2014:004), Thompson *et al.* (2016:317-318) state that corporate strategies fail



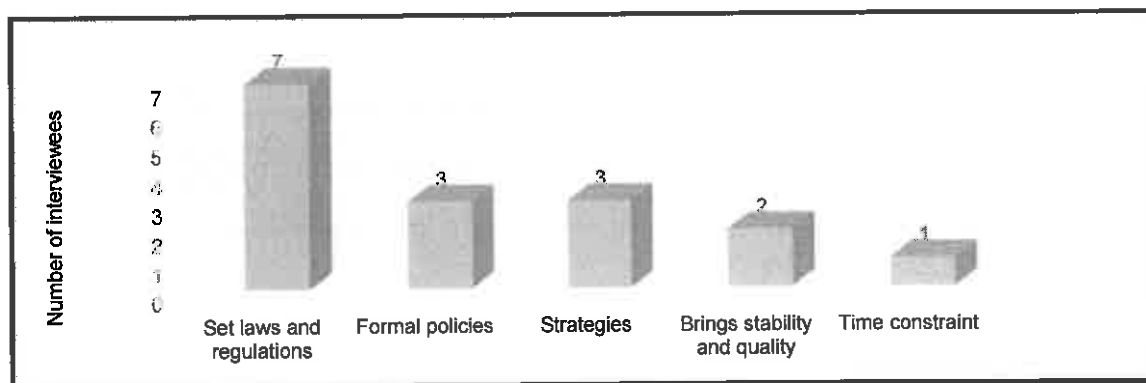
owing to insufficient resources available to the business, while sufficient resources would support implementation. Therefore, owners/managers should take action to allocate sufficient resources in support of strategy implementation.

### Policies and procedures

More than half of the interviewees (7) indicated that they had set laws and regulations. “...we abide by the laws and regulations of the, the industry...” and “...yes, the business has formal policies and procedures in place...” Three interviewees mentioned that they had formal policies and strategies in place to help with strategy implementation. Two pointed out that formal policies brought stability and quality and lastly one stated that there was a time constraint during strategy implementation.

**FIGURE 3:**

### Policies and procedures



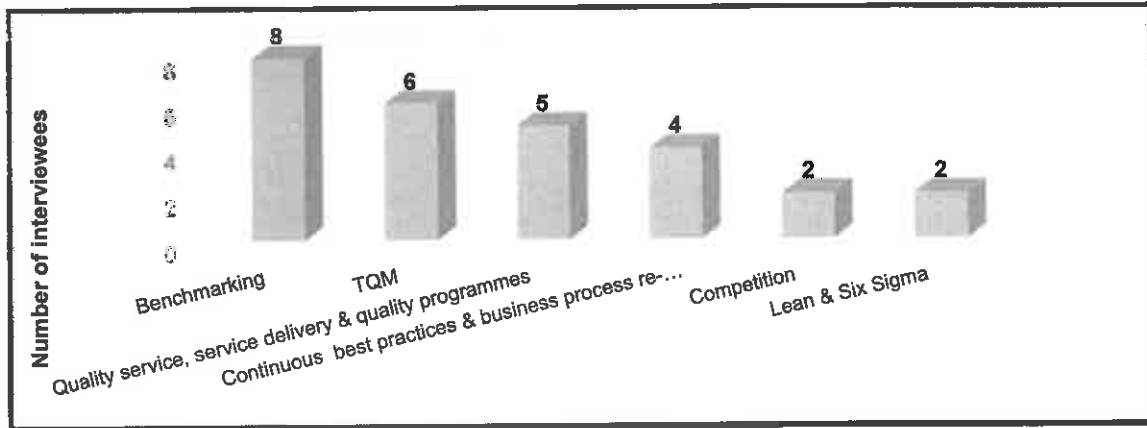
Most owners/managers had formal policies and procedures in place for strategy implementation. The majority of businesses had well-documented policies and procedures in place stipulating how employees should operate within the business. Some indicated that policies and procedures were adopted to create stability and bring quality in order to achieve their goals and objectives. According to Mukhalasie (2014:13), policies provide guidelines and exact methods, procedures and rules that sustain and boost the business in achieving its goals. Policies and procedures are therefore important to create a conducive environment for the implementation of strategy.

### Best practices

Eight of the interviewees said that they used benchmarking to assist with strategy implementation. “...we really just benchmark against those corporates and say we want to get to this level...” and “...we always benchmark ourselves against the other players in the industry...” Six used TQM, five indicated that quality service, quality programmes and service delivery were important, while four specified continuous best practices and the business process in re-engineering process. Lastly, two stated that competitions; Lean and Six Sigma, respectively were also used to assist with strategy implementation.

The results showed six elements (or themes) that enable strategy implementation to succeed. The majority of the consulting businesses benchmarked, and others used TQM and Six Sigma for best practices. This provided the businesses with ideas and ways of implementing corporate strategy effectively and efficiently. This is in line with literature, which indicates that best practices improve the quality of performance, which will demonstrate success over time (Mukhalasie, 2014:12; Thompson *et al.*, 2014:321). Owners/managers should therefore be conscious of the best practices to enhance corporate strategy implementation.

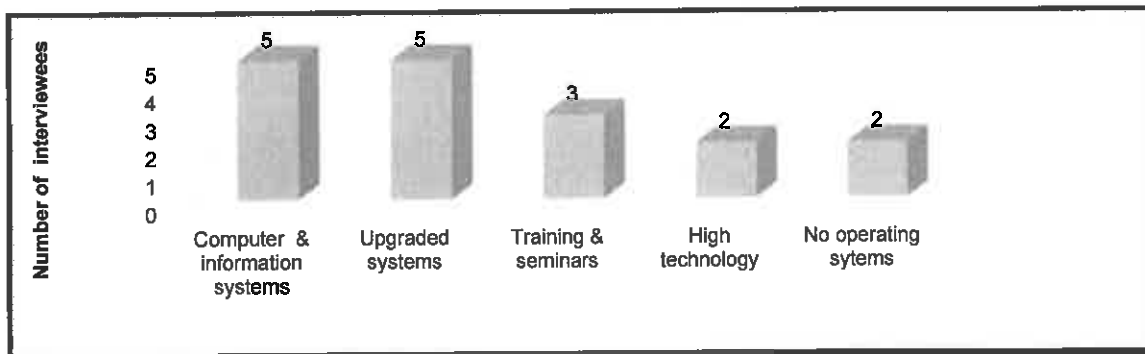
**FIGURE 4:**  
**Best practices**



**Information and operating systems**

Five interviewees mentioned that upgrading the systems, computers and information systems, respectively helped with strategy implementation. "...we use our computer systems as our key information are..." and "...we have upgraded our information technology systems, we have upgraded our software..." Three were of the opinion that training and seminars also contributed. Two used a high technology configuration design in delivering services to customers and preserving data, while two other interviewees mentioned that they did not have operating systems to support strategy implementation.

**FIGURE 5:**  
**Information and operating systems**



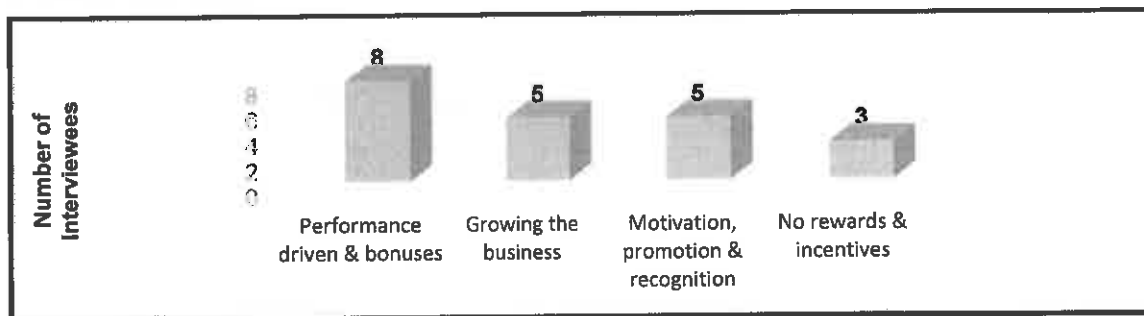
From the findings, four elements (or themes) were identified that helped businesses during the implementation of corporate strategy, namely computer and information systems, upgrading the systems, training and seminars and high technology configuration design in delivering services. Some of the businesses indicated that they did not have operating and information systems owing to the size and a lack of financial resources. It seems then that the importance of information and operating systems for corporate strategy implementation are realised within consulting businesses.

## Rewards and incentives

More than half of the interviewees (eight) pointed out that their rewards and incentives (bonuses) were performance driven. *"We have performance bonuses in our organisation. The performance bonuses are given to the employees depending on the level of their performance..."* and *"...recognises performance towards the achievement of strategic goals and vision..."* Five interviewees indicated that rewards and incentives helped the business to grow. Five interviewees also mentioned that rewards and incentives were used to motivate, promote and recognise employees. Three did not offer rewards and incentives to employees to assist with strategy implementation.

**FIGURE 6:**

### Rewards and incentives



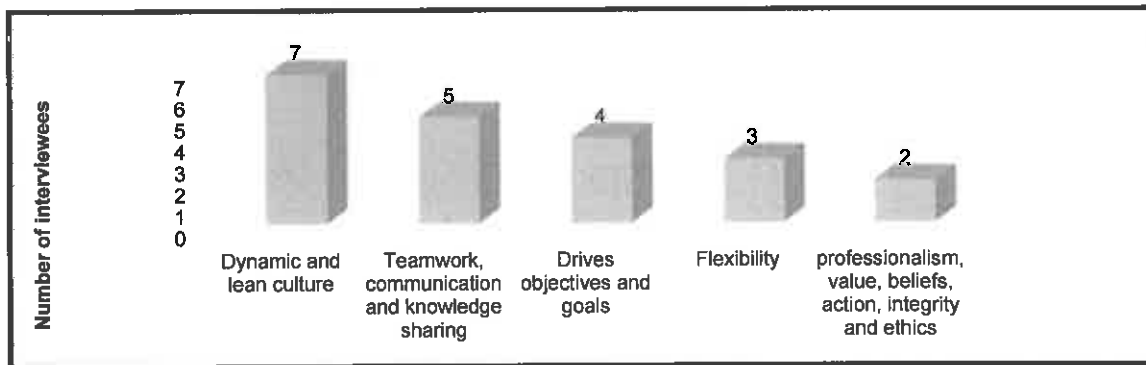
It was found that most owners/managers believed that rewards and incentives were crucial for the success of corporate strategy implementation. Most of the consulting businesses had reward and incentive systems, but these were based mostly on the performance of employees during strategy implementation. According to Mukhalasie (2014:12) and Thompson *et al.* (2016:334), rewards and incentives are important tools contributing to the success of strategy and should be aligned directly with the objectives. The application of rewards by owners/managers to ensure effective strategy implementation is important and additional rewards and incentives may also be considered.

## Corporate culture

In support of strategy implementation, more than half of interviewees (7) indicated that a dynamic and lean culture was used to support strategy implementation. *"...yes, performance driven culture with open communication channels which assist employees to be accountable with their actions and decisions..."* and *"...there is a culture of teamwork, there is a culture of oneness..."* Five interviewees stated that teamwork, communication and knowledge sharing also contributed. Four mentioned that their corporate culture drove the objectives and goals by creating a successful culture among staff. Three were of the opinion that flexibility also contributed. Lastly, two interviewees said that professionalism, values, beliefs, action, integrity and ethics drove the process of strategy implementation.

**FIGURE 7:**

**Corporate culture**



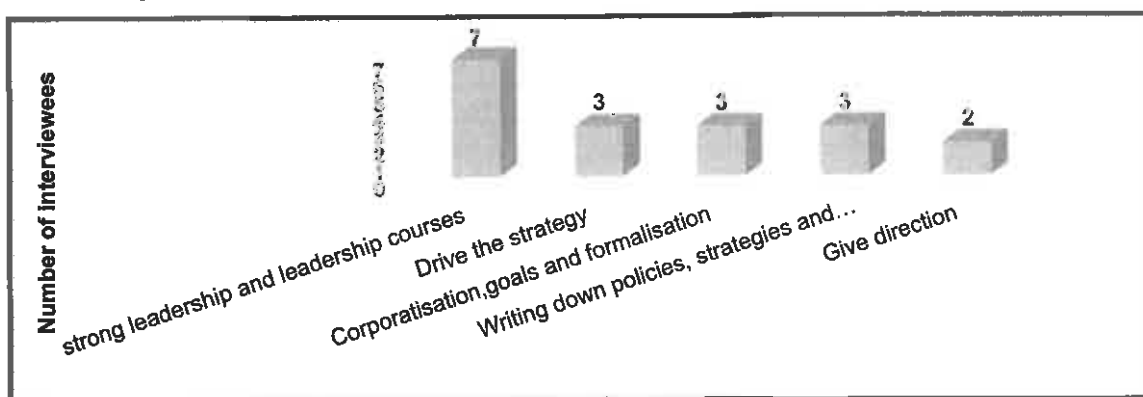
It is obvious that corporate culture is crucial for the success of any strategy within the organisation. This study indicated that corporate culture influences the implementation of strategy within small and medium consulting businesses. A dynamic and lean culture, teamwork, communication and knowledge sharing, a drive towards objectives and goals, flexibility, professionalism, values, beliefs, action, integrity and ethics were mentioned as supporting strategy implementation. This is in line with the literature, which states that corporate culture promotes values and behaviours that sustain some of the organisation's goals and is also a tool that affects the performance of employees during the implementation (Wheelen and Hunger, 2012:302).

**Leadership**

Four of the interviewees used strong leadership and attended leadership courses to help with implementation. "... I believe that requires strong leadership and I believe that it is one of the trades that we have as a business." and "...to provide leadership and that's to empower myself by taking leadership courses..." Three interviewees said that they were transformational leaders since they ensured that the goals of the organisation were achieved, and also inspired employees to remain motivated in ensuring the successful implementation of corporate strategy. Three mentioned that their leadership role enabled them to write policies, formulate strategies and goals, be role models for employees; be involved in the corporatisation and the formalisation of the organisation and acted as a driver of the strategy, respectively. Lastly, two were of the opinion that leadership helped them to give direction during the implementation of the strategy.

**FIGURE 8:**

**Leadership**



Leadership is one of the most significant facets for the growth and expansion of any organisation. The findings indicated that the owners/managers exhibited strong leadership, which drove their corporate strategy during implementation. Owners/managers improved their leadership skills by attending seminars and workshops, which are highly commendable.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study was limited to small and medium consulting businesses around Randburg CBD. However, the objective of this research was to determine how small and medium consulting businesses were implementing corporate strategies successfully to add to the body of knowledge.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

It is clear that successful corporate strategy implementation is essential and has managerial implications. Owners/managers must be able to differentiate between corporate strategy and strategy in order to make decisions and take action during implementation. This will encourage and ground the success of the corporate strategy. They also need to have budgets that should be distributed around the entire department within the business. By doing so, the success of corporate strategy implementation will increase, along with long-term survival and growth. Owners/managers need to be more conscious of the corporate strategy implementation process and should also allocate sufficient time to do so and apply the eight components of strategy implementation as framework, to assist them in implementing corporate strategy effectively.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research sought to provide some reference for owners/managers of small and medium consulting businesses in the Randburg CBD to make corporate strategy implementation more successful and ultimately to ensure sustainability and growth. Owners/managers of small and medium consulting businesses should improve corporate strategy implementation in the following ways:

- Ensure that the strategy within the business is communicated effectively to the staff members so as to embrace the implementation process.
- Implement strategy with skilled and experience employees.
- Ensure that there are sufficient resources to implement corporate strategy.
- Instil policies and procedures that will favour the growth and performance of their small and medium consulting businesses.
- Apply 'best practices', such as benchmarking, TQM, quality service delivery and programmes, and business process re-engineering to overcome the challenges of strategy implementation.
- Recognise the importance of information and operating systems for effective strategy implementation and provide continued support and understanding.
- Reward employees' performance in relation to the success of strategy implementation.
- View corporate culture as important to enhance staff members' performance during strategy implementation.

- Act as leaders and put strategy into action by addressing the eight components of strategy implementation.

## CONCLUSION

It seems that the owners/managers of the small and medium enterprises had different understandings and perceptions around the construct "corporate strategy". Although their understanding on corporate strategy may have differed, they were conscious of what strategy implementation required and the aspects that they identified closely matched the eight components for strategy implementation proposed by Thompson *et al.* (2010:329-330). They were also aware of the requirements for corporate strategy implementation. It seems that building capabilities and competencies; policies and procedures; best practices; rewards and incentives and organisational culture are most important for the success of strategy implementation.

Although it seems that most owners/managers have some knowledge of corporate strategy implementation, they however lack an understanding of how to make it really work for their businesses.

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