The Seven Deadly Roadmapping Sins

...and how to avoid them

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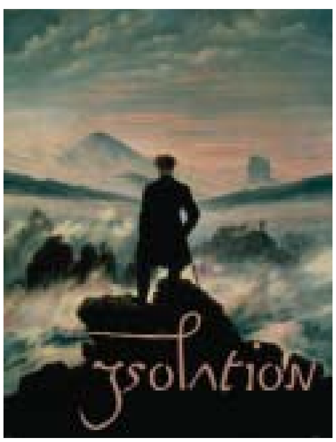
Between increasingly demanding customers, cutthroat competition and product cycles that are measured in months instead of years, forecasting future technological needs is more vexing than ever. So when one of the leading telecommunications technology providers began looking at ways to overcome these challenges, roadmapping was at the top of its list.

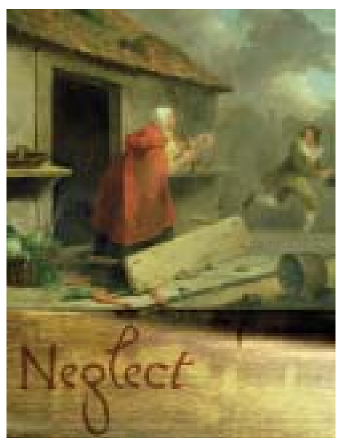
Although it had been roadmapping in a limited fashion since the late 1980s, the organization's best results weren't fully realized until it overcame the most common roadmapping pitfall: Isolation. After launching a system that allows thousands of employees worldwide to access centralized strategic plans, the company saved $200 million in the first year.

By partnering with the world's most advanced roadmapping practitioners, we at Strateva have established roadmapping best practices, as well as defined some of the biggest roadmapping pitfalls, which we reveal as the Seven Deadly Roadmapping Sins.



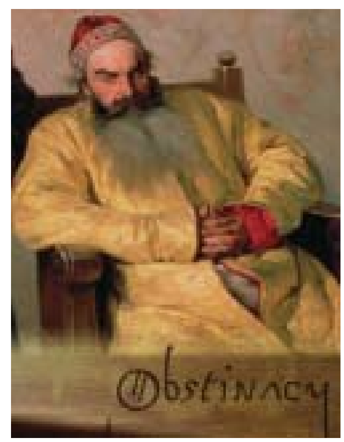
A primary roadmapping sin is isolation, or not having enough people from different job functions involved in the process. Running a successful business is a team effort, and so is roadmapping.

For example, if an organization is developing a new product or service, the success of that project depends on several disparate teams, including manufacturing, sales, marketing, customer service, technical support and more. By having representatives from each of these departments participate in the roadmapping process, you increase planning visibility and alignment across multiple segments.



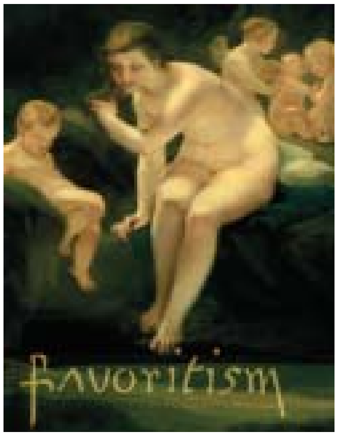
Neglecting your data by not keeping it fresh enough is another common roadmapping sin. Updating once a year typically isn't often enough. Some companies with short product cycles may even find that updating once a quarter isn't enough. That's why it's imperative that roadmaps be linked to real-time data.

So when the organization decides to make a strategic shift due to evolving customer expectations, every department involved can make the needed adjustments as soon as the shift becomes known, instead of finding out weeks too late.



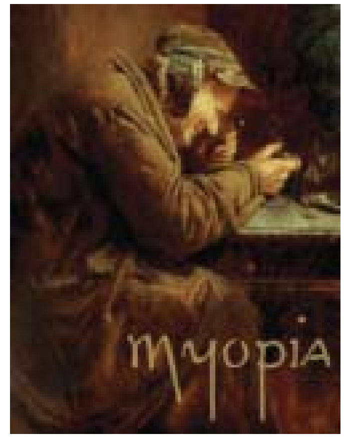
Obstinacy – the refusal to consider alternate courses of action – is another common roadmapping sin. No one can predict exactly what roadblocks a product family will face.

Maybe there will be a market shift due to evolving customer expectations. Perhaps the regulating commission overseeing an industry will make changes to its specification standard. Or maybe a major competitor will release a similar offering ahead of schedule. By mapping out several alternate courses of action, a company can make adjustments faster and with more confidence.



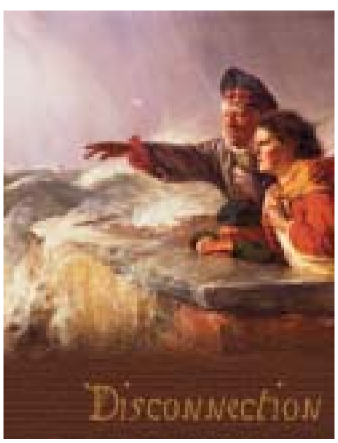
Every organization has both high-level and low-level roadmapping needs. By choosing to roadmap only one level, and remaining indifferent to the other level, an organization becomes guilty of favoritism.

Some companies only build high-level roadmaps. Others only build low-level, almost tactical engineering roadmaps. There are two reasons why those two approaches will ultimately fail. One, building high- and low-level roadmaps is important for true alignment throughout the organization. Two, if priorities should ever shift (and you can bet they will), an organization will lose momentum when it has to devote resources to building a new roadmap that has never been createdbefore.

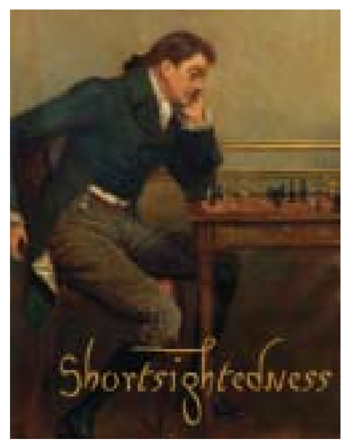


The fifth roadmapping sin, myopia, occurs when an organization focuses too closely on the development of a single roadmap, rather than focusing on building a sustainable roadmapping practice. Anyone can create a single roadmap to clarify personal vision. But lasting success can only be achieved when roadmapping is instilled as an ongoing process.

The best way to avoid this roadmapping sin is through effective training. The better roadmapping training an organization's employees receive, the greater likelihood of building a pervasive, lasting roadmapping practice.



Not including links between market, product and technology roadmaps is the sixth roadmapping sin. No matter what kind of business an organization is in, every element of its strategic plan affects another. Even if they seem unrelated at first, linking them not only makes it easier for an organization to balance "market pull" with "technology push," it also makes it significantly easier to identify new markets and other opportunities.



Lastly, there's shortsightedness, or not thinking far enough into the future to create a vision. The beauty of any roadmap is that you can plan into the future as far ahead as you like. How far ahead depends largely on the typical product life cycle. For a manufacturer of smart phones, for example, five years is a long-term outlook. For a commercial jet manufacturer, planning 50 years into the future is more common.

By developing a roadmapping framework that goes beyond the immediate future, an organization may find that seemingly unattainable goals can become realities long before the anticipated completion date.

For more information about roadmapping and how developing a roadmapping practice can benefit your organization, contact Strateva at (949) 250-9900, or visit www.strateva.com.

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