



Commercial capability and execution for consumer goods companies

THE SMARKETING EXECUTION FRAMEWORK

People. Process. Proof.

How to find where results are lost between the plan and the shelf, with the 10-question execution check.

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More than 15 years at Guinness/Diageo, Unilever, Lipton, Philip Morris International and Nestlé

Most consumer goods companies have a sound brand plan. Results are lost between the plan and the shelf.

Brand, trade and innovation budgets get spent, but revenue, market share or margin fall short of plan. Leadership sees the gap in the numbers, but the reports do not always show where performance is breaking down or what needs to change.

The numbers are symptoms. To understand the cause, I work backwards from the commercial result into the market. That can uncover:

- Customer and channel plans that have drifted from the brand plan
- Sales teams not consistently applying the agreed selling standards
- Launches that do not achieve distribution and visibility quickly enough
- Store checks that generate data but not corrective action
- Managers without enough time or structure to coach consistently in the field

“Global capability frameworks define what good looks like. The harder part is translating that standard into what a team needs to do differently with a particular customer, in a particular channel or territory, on Tuesday morning.”

Profitable growth comes when you win consistently with your category, customers and channels. That requires three things to work together: People, Process and Proof.

When commercial performance is behind plan, I use these three lenses to identify where to look first. The aim is to diagnose the execution gap before deciding whether the answer is capability building, a stronger commercial process, better visibility and measurement, or a combination of the three.

What strong and weak look like

People

Teams need the commercial skill, confidence, judgement and accountability to make sound decisions and execute to standard.

STRONG WHEN Teams can sell the priority portfolio, handle customer objections, negotiate without unnecessarily giving away margin and make sound commercial decisions. Managers reinforce those standards through regular coaching.

WEAK WHEN People understand what is expected but cannot, or do not consistently, execute it to standard.

Process

The business needs practical routines that turn commercial priorities into repeatable customer, channel and territory action.

STRONG WHEN Teams work to clear customer and territory plans, selling standards and management rhythms, so strong execution can be repeated rather than depending on individual effort.

WEAK WHEN The routine is missing, unclear or inconsistently followed.

Proof

Leadership needs timely evidence showing whether execution happened, where performance is breaking down and what needs correction.

STRONG WHEN Execution gaps become visible early enough to act, and commercial and field information leads to clear actions, owners and follow-through.

WEAK WHEN Activity is reported, but the business cannot confidently see what happened, why it happened or whether corrective action followed.

The three elements rarely fail in exactly the same way. Looking at them together helps narrow where the execution problem may sit.

Where is the execution gap?

When Proof is weak

People and Process may be in place, but the business is busy and partially blind.

YOU MAY SEE

- Problems reaching leadership too late to correct
- Store checks being collected but not consistently acted on
- Reviews spending more time debating what happened than deciding what to do next
- Difficulty connecting trade activity or promotions to execution and outcomes
- Strong performance that cannot easily be explained or repeated

A SIMPLE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

Ask which priority outlets or customers missed execution standard last week, why, and what action followed.

If the answer is difficult to produce quickly, investigate Proof.

When Process is weak

Strong People and good Proof may exist, but execution depends too heavily on individual stars.

YOU MAY SEE

- Results varying significantly between territories or teams
- A small number of strong representatives or managers consistently carrying performance
- The same execution problems returning month after month
- New team members taking too long to become effective
- Performance dropping when a strong manager or representative moves

A SIMPLE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

Ask several representatives to explain how they plan a customer call, execute it and follow up.

If good execution depends on who you ask, investigate Process.

When People are weak

Process and Proof may be in place, but completing the process is not producing the commercial outcome.

YOU MAY SEE

- Standards being followed mechanically without stronger execution
- Representatives completing activities but struggling to convert them into orders
- Customer objections repeatedly stopping progress
- Managers auditing compliance rather than improving performance through coaching
- Launch materials reaching customers without the selling quality needed to secure strong execution

A SIMPLE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

Observe the work itself.

If the process is being followed but commercial judgement, confidence or execution quality remains weak, investigate People.

When more than one is weak

When two or more areas are weak, the diagnostic establishes the sequence.

- Building capability without a workable process gives people nothing consistent to apply.
- Strengthening process without the capability to execute it can create compliance without better performance.
- And without Proof, the business cannot see reliably whether either intervention is working.

The first intervention should address the constraint most responsible for the commercial gap, while strengthening the other elements needed to support it.

Answer each question yes or no

A cluster of “no” answers indicates where to look more closely. There is no score.

People

YES NO

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 | Can our teams sell the priority portfolio and handle the most common customer objections without immediately trading away value? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 02 | Are managers regularly observing and coaching execution in the field? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 03 | Before a launch, can the frontline explain both what they are selling and why it matters to the customer? | ☐ | ☐ |

Process

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 04 | Do priority customers and territories have plans clearly connected to our commercial priorities? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 05 | Would teams in different territories describe the same core selling and execution standards? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 06 | When execution falls below standard, is there a clear routine for correction and follow-through? | ☐ | ☐ |

Proof

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 07 | Can we see quickly where priority customers or outlets are below execution standard? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 08 | Does field evidence lead to a named action, owner and follow-through? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 09 | Can we show what happened after a major promotion or launch, not simply what activity was completed? | ☐ | ☐ |

All three

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10 | When performance improves, can we explain why and repeat it elsewhere? | ☐ | ☐ |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

People

_____ no of 3

Process

_____ no of 3

Proof

_____ no of 3

All three

_____ no of 1

From diagnosis to proof

For commercial capability and execution engagements, People, Process and Proof form part of the diagnostic. Depending on the business problem, I may look at existing commercial and execution data, customer and territory plans, leadership and manager perspectives, field observation, store execution and how frontline teams work with customers.

I start by understanding which combination of People, Process and Proof is constraining performance, before deciding what needs to change. The same framework then shows whether capability, commercial routines and visibility of execution have improved.

STEP 1

Diagnose

Define the business priority, review the commercial and execution evidence, and identify the gap.

STEP 2

Build

Focused learning, tools, standards and live cases around the work that needs to improve.

STEP 3

Apply

Real customers and territories, manager accompaniment and immediate correction.

STEP 4

Prove

Review what changed in capability, behaviour and execution, then transfer ownership to managers.

ABOUT MOTUNRAYO BABALOLA

More than 15 years in consumer goods at Guinness/Diageo, Unilever, Lipton Teas and Infusions, Philip Morris International and Nestlé, across Nigeria, West Africa and North America, from frontline sales and key accounts to brand, innovation and P&L.

+23%

profitability in the first year at Lipton Nigeria

+60%

retail coverage from route-to-market work

45%

average incremental sales uplift in target accounts, from a \$4.5M trade budget

Career achievements from employed leadership roles, not client case studies.

NEXT STEP

Book a conversation with your commercial leadership team.

Tell me about the commercial problem you need to solve. motunrayo@smarketingsolutions.org
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