# Stanford eCorner

## Strategy Versus Execution, Part 2

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**Video URL:** http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2401/Strategy-Versus-Execution-Part-2

Execution-wise, SlideShare founder Rashmi Sinha believes that one of the most difficult tasks is getting people to stay focused on the problem. "It's exciting to build new features, but harder to make it work day in and day out." To do this, she explains that we identify the most important aspects of critical products on a daily basis, constantly reassessing the various frequencies and metrics of the site and business. Jonathan Boutelle stresses the importance of making these numbers easily understood and accessible for each employee of the company.

## Transcript

The scaling thing is definitely something that everybody in the company will resonate. That was a big challenge for us, which you really don't face in the beginning and then you suddenly start facing it when you're starting to grow. I don't think it's one thing. I think it's a lot of in terms of execution. Something that is hard is getting people to stay focused, getting the entire team to stay focused on a problem. It is very exciting to build new features. Everybody loves to build new features. Yeah. And it is harder to just make that work day in and day out, be metrics-driven. That part I find it hard to drill that into the company.

Not just do it myself but to get everybody in the company, that's the way we pitch. Tell me something about metrics-driven. It's the first time I heard that. What does that mean at SlideShare? What that means for us right now, for example, is that for most of the important projects that we do, the different parts of the application, we have a daily email that comes in. And we've identified what the main things we care about for that particular part of the app. We look at it. So, it's like a dashboard? Yeah, it's like a dashboard. But you do not have to go to it. It just comes on your email to everybody who is working on it. And then, we react to it.

So, we do this pretty much every day, different frequencies, depending on how fast you're moving to something. So, you've instrumented the important parts of both your site and your business. Is that true about users and customers...? Correct. And also the technical parts as well? Absolutely. One of the key insights that we've had is that metrics are very important. And I think executive dashboards are bullshit, frankly, like the idea that there is like one executive was looking at the dashboard. And that's the technical for less than optimal. And he's going to be making the decisions. And then, there is a bunch of worker bees who get assigned tasks, one column C dot two and execute it. And then, it meets the spec.

And then, the strategy guys says, "Yes, good." I think the numbers have to be pushed down into the team. And the team has to be empowered to do things that will drive the numbers. And what you'll find about that is that the ergonomics of metrics are really bad. If you use Google athletics and you tell an engineer, "OK, this is how you go to find this funnel so you can figure out what conversions are like and whether the numbers are doing well or badly." And there are six clicks and it takes two minutes to get down there. I mean, he's already hacking 55 hours a week, 60 hours a week, building important stuff, doing incredibly complicated things. He doesn't have time. And he doesn't have the inclination to go monkeying around. So, it needs to be ambient. We have LCD screens in both offices that show the charts of the statistics that we care about so that you can just glance over them like, "What is happening to CPU? That's crazy," without having to go and log onto an application and look things up. The email serves that same function.

They make it so that the numbers come to you rather than you having to go to the numbers. I think that's really important. And do you iterate quickly on those user data? Yeah. For some of the business pieces that we are working on right now, we iterate every day. Actually, yesterday I told my engineers that the email comes in at midnight, which means that I have to wait up until midnight every day to look at the numbers before deciding what we are doing today. So, I said, "Look, can we have it coming at 9:00 p.m. so that I can go to sleep a little bit earlier after having looked at the numbers." So, we iterate daily on a lot of things. Yeah. We deploy maybe 10 or 15 times a day to the site. So, the code is constantly changing and it's constantly morphing.