



From vision to execution:

**How to align your
governance strategy and
your organisation**



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The challenge of translating vision into action

A common challenge for organisations is translating strategic intent into tangible outcomes. This issue leaves a frustrating and often costly gap between an organisation's vision and execution.

"Many of us have experienced the challenge of having a great strategy but not actually being able to get traction," concedes Aisha Daji Punga, Managing Director of ImpactFULLco.

It's estimated that 60 to 90% of strategic plans never fully launch. This indicates that it's not uncommon for an organisation's management team, operational unit, and board to need a more disciplined and aligned approach to strategy execution with a clear, shared vision.

This guide outlines the importance of strategy alignment between your organisation's vision and its execution, the role of the board in managing this alignment, and practical tools and techniques, including a framework, for achieving strategy alignment across your organisation.



The gap between vision and execution



Many organisations struggle to convert their strategic plans into actionable outcomes. This disconnect often stems from a fundamental issue of a need for more strategic alignment in governance rather than poor planning. Even the best strategies can falter when boards and management teams are on different pages or strategic goals are too disconnected from day-to-day operations.

"The way traditional strategy treats future activity often lends itself to creating a gap between what's actually happening in the organisation and what the intention or the strategic plan says or thinks should happen," says Steve McCrone, Managing Director of AGLX Asia Pacific.

Closing this gap requires ensuring that leadership remains focused on the right priorities. Too often, boards become entangled in operational details, losing sight of the strategic oversight they should provide. This misalignment can lead to an organisation being busy but not necessarily moving in the right direction. The key is maintaining a strategic focus that aligns with the organisation's long-term goals, ensuring that every action supports the broader vision.

The importance of strategic choices

Strategic choices are the critical decisions that shape the future of an organisation. They form the foundation of the entire strategic plan, determining not only the direction of the company but also resource allocation and prioritisation. Making these choices requires a deep understanding of the organisation's strengths, market conditions, and long-term vision. It's not enough to simply set goals; the strategy must establish clear, deliberate choices that define what the organisation will focus on and, just as importantly, what it will not pursue. Clear communication of the strategy is then necessary to ensure everyone is aligned and working towards the same objectives.

"If the opposite of your strategy is nonsense, then it's not a strategy," says Steven McCrone.

True strategic decisions require trade-offs and should be based on real options, not vague or generic goals. Organisations can avoid the common pitfall of trying to be everything to everyone by making deliberate choices and understanding the implications of those decisions. Instead, they can focus their efforts on areas that truly matter, creating a coherent path to success that everyone in the organisation can follow with clarity and purpose.



The board's role in strategy



The board plays a pivotal role in shaping and guiding an organisation's strategy. Beyond merely approving strategic plans, the board must ensure that these strategies are visionary and actionable, aligning with the organisation's long-term goals. This involves setting the strategic direction and overseeing its execution by asking the right questions, challenging assumptions, and ensuring that management remains focused on the priorities that matter most. The board's responsibility is to create an environment where strategic decisions are well-informed and based on a thorough understanding of the risks and opportunities. This oversight helps to bridge the gap between strategy and execution, ensuring that the organisation remains on course to achieve its objectives.

A common pitfall is where boards become too focused on daily operations, losing sight of their strategic oversight role. To avoid this, boards should structure agendas to prioritise strategic discussions and regularly revisit the organisation's core goals. This approach ensures they provide the necessary guidance and support to align the organisation with its strategic vision.



Adopting an adaptive strategy

The board's ability to adapt a governance strategy is not just a luxury—it's a necessity. No matter how well thought out, a rigid strategy can quickly become obsolete in the face of new challenges, market shifts, or technological advancements. Organisations that thrive build flexibility into their strategic planning, allowing them to pivot when necessary without losing sight of their overarching goals. Adaptability ensures that the organisation remains responsive to internal and external changes while maintaining relevance and competitive advantage.

An adaptive strategy requires an organisation to be vigilant and proactive. This means regularly revisiting and, if necessary, revising the strategic plan to account for new information or unforeseen circumstances. The process involves leadership and the entire organisation, fostering a culture where feedback loops are encouraged and adjustments are made in real time. This approach helps mitigate risks and seize opportunities that a more static strategy might miss. The key is to strike a balance between maintaining a clear strategic direction and being open to change when circumstances demand it.



Organisational alignment and cadence

To successfully execute a strategy, the entire organisation must align and move in the same direction. This ensures every department, team, and individual understands how their work contributes to our goals.

“We can't afford to have different parts of the organisation pulling in opposite directions or operating at different speeds, says Aisha Daji Punga. “That's why I advocate for an organisational plan with strategic pillars rather than separate, disconnected functional plans. When we're all focused on the same priorities and working at a synchronised cadence, we can achieve far more together than we could in isolation”.

With this approach, everyone is aligned and efforts are coordinated. It also makes measuring progress easier and adjusting the course when necessary. Maintaining a consistent rhythm in reviewing and executing a strategy ensures you're always on track to meet your goals and can quickly adapt when challenges arise.

Tools to align your governance strategy



Effective communication and engagement

Clear, consistent communication is vital to successful strategy execution. Every member of the organisation must understand the ‘what’ of the strategy and also the ‘why’. Effective communication fosters a shared sense of purpose and direction, keeping everyone focused and motivated. It's crucial to tailor messages to resonate with different audiences within the organisation, from frontline workers to board members, ensuring that the strategy is understood and embraced at every level.

"Are you communicating in a way that connects with someone on your front line as well as someone on your board?" asks Aisha Daji Punga. It is important to speak the language of your audience, ensuring that communication is relatable and actionable. Focusing on clear, frequent communication can build the alignment and engagement necessary to turn strategic vision into reality.



Traffic light system for monitoring progress

The traffic light system is a powerful tool for monitoring progress. This simple yet effective system provides a clear, visual representation of where an organisation stands at any given moment:

- **Green:** on track
- **Yellow:** may need to pay closer attention
- **Red:** areas require immediate action

This system ensures accountability and allows swift action when issues arise, helping to stay proactive rather than reactive.

"If you don't have a strategy execution traffic light system, I'm pretty confident you probably won't make the shifts you need," suggests Aisha Daji Punga. This tool is crucial for maintaining momentum and ensuring a strategy translates into tangible results.



Scenario planning for the unexpected

Scenario planning is another critical tool in the strategy execution toolkit. Given the uncertainty of the future, it's necessary to prepare for a range of possibilities. Scenario planning allows you to anticipate various outcomes and develop robust strategies to handle different scenarios. Engaging in this process can identify potential risks and opportunities before they arise, giving your organisation a competitive edge.

According to Steven Bowman, Managing Director of Conscious Governance, scenario planning is one of the most underutilised tools in strategy. He says this approach equips you to pivot when necessary, ensuring that we can adapt to market or internal changes without losing sight of our long-term goals.

For instance, a company heavily invested in a particular technology might, through scenario planning, identify the risk of a disruptive new technology emerging. By acknowledging this possibility, the company can develop a contingency plan, such as diversifying its technology portfolio or investing in research and development. This proactive approach ensures the company is prepared for potential disruptions and positioned to capitalise on them.

The Strategic Alignment Framework

A framework will assist your organisation in navigating the process of aligning its vision and execution, from the definition of the vision through to its delivery.

How to use the framework

- **Start with the vision:** Revisit and refine your organisation's strategic vision, which will serve as the foundation for all subsequent steps.
- **Prioritise strategic choices:** Use the steps in this guide to make deliberate, impactful decisions that will shape your organisation's future.
- **Engage and align your teams:** Ensure that everyone, from the boardroom to the front line, understands and is aligned with the strategic goals.
- **Monitor and adapt:** Regularly review progress using strategic execution tools and be prepared to adapt your strategy as necessary.
- **Continuous improvement:** Foster a culture of continuous learning and adaptability within your organisation to stay agile in a changing environment.



Tips to ensure your framework is a success

- **Stay aligned:** Regular communication and alignment checks are critical. Make sure all departments and teams understand how their work contributes to the overall strategic goals.
- **Be flexible:** The business environment is constantly changing. Your strategy should be adaptable enough to respond to new challenges and opportunities.
- **Focus on execution:** A well-crafted strategy is only as good as its execution. Use the tools and steps in this guide to ensure that your strategic vision translates into actionable outcomes.

Revisit this framework regularly as part of your strategic planning cycle. It's not a one-time exercise but an ongoing process that helps ensure your organisation remains on track to achieve its long-term goals.

The Strategic Alignment Framework

Step	Description	Actions Required	Notes
Understand your strategic vision	Clearly define the organisation's long-term goals and ensure that they align with the overall mission.	Engage the board and senior management in refining the vision to ensure everyone is aligned.	Make sure the vision is concise and easy to communicate to all stakeholders.
Make strategic choices	Identify and prioritise key decisions that will shape the future direction of the organisation.	Evaluate potential trade-offs, focusing on areas that will have the most significant impact.	Consider using a decision matrix to help prioritise strategic choices.
Align organisational structure	Ensure that your organisational structure supports the strategic vision and is flexible enough to adapt as needed.	Review and, if necessary, reorganise roles and responsibilities to better support strategic goals.	Keep communication open to ensure that all teams understand their role in the strategy.
Develop an adaptive strategy	Build flexibility into your strategic plan to allow for adjustments in response to changing circumstances.	Use scenario planning to anticipate different future possibilities and prepare accordingly.	Regularly revisit and revise your strategic plan to keep it relevant.
Engage the board in strategic oversight	Ensure that the board remains focused on strategic issues rather than operational details.	Utilise tools such as a consent agenda to streamline board meetings and keep the focus on strategy.	Consider including strategic discussions as a standing agenda item in every board meeting.



The framework... continued

Step	Description	Actions Required	Notes
Implement a communication plan	Develop a communication plan that resonates with all levels of the organisation.	Tailor messages to different audiences, ensuring clarity and relevance.	Regular updates should be part of the communication plan to maintain alignment.
Monitor progress with strategic Execution tools	Utilise tools like the traffic light system to track progress and highlight areas needing attention.	Set regular intervals for reviewing progress, making adjustments as necessary.	Use data to inform decision-making and adjust strategies on the fly.
Conduct scenario planning	Prepare for a range of possible futures by assessing risks and opportunities.	Regularly engage in scenario planning exercises with key stakeholders.	Update your scenario plans periodically to reflect the current environment.
Foster organisational alignment	Ensure that every department, team, and individual is working toward the same strategic objectives.	Establish regular check-ins and sync meetings to maintain alignment across the organisation.	Use organisational cadences to synchronise efforts and maintain momentum.
Review and adjust strategy	Continuously review the effectiveness of the strategy and make adjustments as needed.	Encourage feedback from all levels of the organisation and be open to making changes.	Foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability.





Aligning your strategy and your organisation delivers good governance

Strategic alignment is critical for bridging the gap between an organisation's vision and its execution. Boards must play an active role in ensuring that strategies are not only visionary but also actionable and adaptable. By adopting tools like traffic light systems, scenario planning, and a framework, organisations can monitor progress, adapt to changes, and maintain alignment across all levels. Effective communication, deliberate strategic choices, and maintaining an adaptive approach are key to successful governance and strategy execution.



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