
Accelerate Your Strategy

Propel change from words to returns

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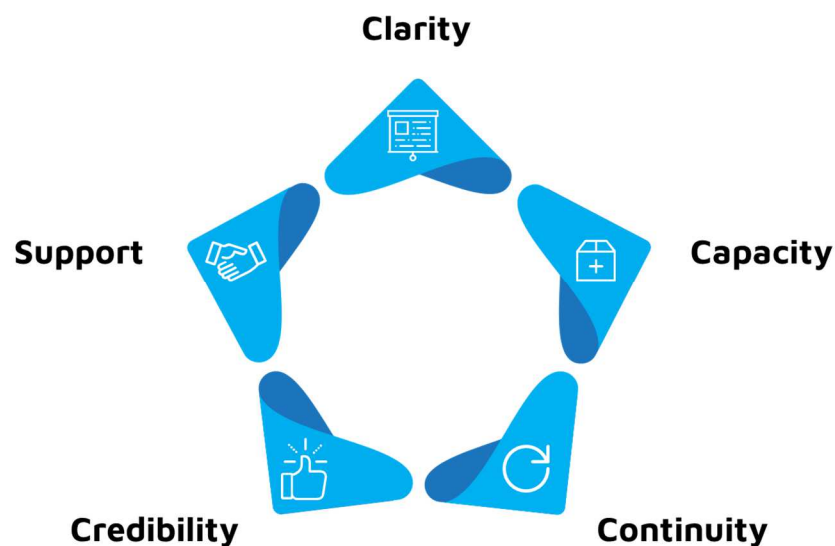


You don't develop strategy just to hang on a wall and dress up your speech to investors. You don't make investments and cross your fingers that they will generate a return. You want results. Now.

In 25 years' experience I have witnessed companies large and small wonder why they have not achieved their goals. The strategy is sound and the project team is staffed, but they just don't seem to get traction. Heads are nodding but no one's moving. Or worse yet, employees take up a stance that positions an "us vs. them" scenario.

Strong execution comes down to people. Whether you're leading a snappy startup challenging the status quo or a large company with a long history, aligning everyone on the same target is critical to success. Doing so will supercharge your progress, getting you to results and returns faster.

The Strategy Accelerator is the culmination of my experience working with companies across every industry on programs aimed at implementing strategy, transforming the business, or just adopting new technology. Regardless of the size or intent, getting people on board is critical, and can be attained by planning with five levers in mind. Applying the Accelerator allows you to plan carefully and assess progress. Ignoring one of these elements is a recipe for resistance.



Clarity

What they want to know:

- What is it?
- What do you want us to do?
- What's In It For Me? (WIIFM)
- How does this make the world a better place?

If people don't know the direction, they can't chart a course for themselves. If they are not reminded of the goal, the tyranny of the urgent can pull them off track. Your strategy must be the consistent thread in all you do. Reference it repeatedly.

To foster and increase Clarity:

- Explain the strategy to everyone.
- Don't stop at one communication. Reference strategy wherever feasible – in communications, speeches, social media, status meetings, performance reviews, and celebrations. REPEAT!
- Ensure it makes sense: Tie it with corporate values and broader strategy.
- Tell a story that illustrates the path forward and what the future looks like when the strategy is realized.
- Describe why the strategy is important to each employee, the community, the world. Call out the WIIFM!

Capacity

What they want to know:

- Can we do it?
- Is leadership willing to provide the tools I need to get this done?

Once they understand the goal, the next question employees will ask is whether it's a feasible objective. If employees do not believe they have the capacity to support the strategy – both individually and as an organization - they won't try. New directions require the right resources, from staffing and expertise to dollars and capital. At its most basic level, consider whether employees have the time in their day to take on new activities or work through the typical learning curve.

Leaders must contribute resources to make things work, demonstrating commitment to the plan. Saying the right words is not enough.

To create Capacity:

- Take stock of all your assets to determine what can be leveraged to achieve the goal.
- Advertise your strengths internally so people know what they can draw upon.
- Ensure all leaders are willing to contribute needed resources for strategic priorities.
- Add people where needed to enable appropriate focus on the strategy.
- Provide data, tools, and access where needed to support the work.
- Factor in other events competing for people's time and attention on and off the job.

Continuity

What they want to know:

- What exactly will I have to do differently in my job?
- How is this going to make my life more difficult?
- Will I still be working with the same people?
- Can I succeed?

When strategy drives dramatic breaks with the past – regardless of the logic or necessity – it's harder to get people on board. When the future is uncertain, people anchor themselves to things that are not changing. Provide those anchors: Highlight what is not changing. Getting this right is one of the most significant levers for converting resistance to buy-in.

To establish Continuity:

- Highlight what's not changing.
- Preserve employee relationships and teams where possible. These act as support networks
- Where processes are changing, make it clear what previous skills employees can continue to apply.
- Give people previews of the future, increasing the time they have to process and adapt to change.
- Emphasize continuity of values, identity, purpose and mission.
- Demonstrate fairness and compassion when people are transitioning out.

Credibility

What they want to know:

- Is the person leading the charge capable of getting us there?
- What evidence is there that this can be done successfully?

Trust is the fuel for engagement. If the messenger or the message is not credible, staff will not translate words into action. Leaders with poor track records and weak relationships will have a hard time getting people to follow them. The good news is that credibility can be built and borrowed.

To boost Credibility:

- Appoint a strong sponsor respected by employees most impacted.
- Spend time with your employees: Ask questions and listen. Demonstrate you are taking action.
- Lead from the front: Take the first steps required by your strategy to prove your commitment. For example, attend required training.

- Borrow credibility: Get an endorsement from someone who is trusted by employees (another leader, a celebrity, someone with experience employing a similar strategy).
- Draw people's attention to examples where your strategy has been applied successfully elsewhere – by the competition or players in other industries.
- Recall the past where the organization has taken on a similar challenge with positive results.

Support

What they want to know:

- How are you going to help me succeed?
- Will I lose face on the way?

Change produces fear. Sticking your neck out when the organization is under pressure can make you a target. Making mistakes while learning new skills can prove horribly embarrassing. That's the very time we need superheroes to emerge, take risks, and try out creative ways to win.

Employees will engage in a new direction to the degree they feel safe.

New directions require new learning. Mistakes come with the territory. Innovation and growth require space for trial-and-error.

To provide a strong platform of Support:

- Provide training for skill gaps.
- Equip managers to coach employees through application of new behaviors.
- Offer several options of where people can ask questions and go for help.
- Tell stories about successful risk taking.
- Draw attention to mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Increase the availability of support resources during times of transition – expect surges in demand during milestones.
- Actively motivate and exhibit pride in progress (not just wins).

Assess Your Accelerators

To determine how fast you can execute your strategy or change, use this simplified assessment. Score 1 point for each 'yes'.

Clarity:

1. I have described our strategy in a way that is meaningful for employees and our customers.
2. I regularly reinforce our direction in communications, performance reviews, and status meetings.
3. I periodically assess whether people know and understand our goals.

Capacity:

1. I have 'catalogued' a strong set of assets available to support the strategy.
2. I have added resources if needed.
3. My leaders and peers are willing to contribute resources to make it work.

Continuity:

1. I have made it clear what's not changing.
2. Employee working relationships remain mostly unchanged.
3. My strategy leverages existing skills and knowledge.

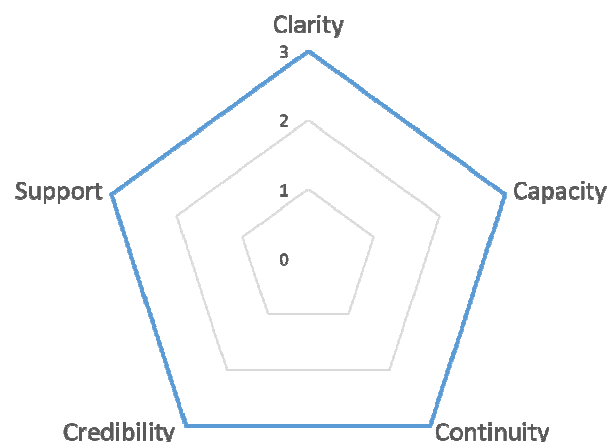
Credibility:

1. I have a trusted voice for this strategy.
2. Our company, or a comparable one, has successfully achieved a similar goal in the past.
3. I solicit employee input and give evidence that it's taken seriously.

Support:

1. I've made it clear where to go for help and training.
2. I've reinforced the circumstances under which it is OK to make a mistake.
3. Our leaders are equipped to coach and train employees for new behaviors.

Mark your score on each dimension and connect the dots.



Accelerate Your Strategy

I've yet to meet a client who lands a perfect score in every area. Gaps are OK – they show us where to direct our efforts by applying tactics to improve a dimension (e.g., strengthen credibility) and offsetting weak dimensions by boosting a complementary category.

- Low **continuity** requires stronger **support**. Coaching skills are critical in these situations. Leader kits providing scripts and steps for supporting teams are valuable resources.
- Weak **credibility** can be offset by focusing heavily on **clarity**. Repetition, telling a strong story and reinforcing benefits often boost credibility over time. For one client I crafted a relentless blitz of communication that no one could ignore so everyone knew the organization's path forward and exactly what they needed to do.
- Lack of **capacity** is often countered by the strength of a **credible** leader who can drive high levels of commitment and engagement. I've helped leaders 'borrow' credibility from trusted leaders who come alongside and endorse the message.

You've made a significant investment in your strategy and want to ensure success. Monitoring the 5 Accelerators identifies tactics needed to preserve momentum and ensure you stay on track. Applying them early illustrates a roadmap to progress quickly towards results.

My role is to help leaders like you rapidly develop strategies and accelerate execution on the path to the success. If you want to move even faster and avoid landmines that derail others from achieving their goals, I would be happy to discuss how to supercharge your progress.

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