



The Six Leadership Decisions That Turn Strategy into Results

A practical guide to asking the right questions in the right order, for leadership teams who want strategy to become everyday reality



Introduction

This guide introduces the six leadership decisions that we've found over 16 years consistently separates the leaders of organisations that turn strategy into results from those that just hope to.

This is achieved by these 6 decisions, with prompts you ask yourself in strategy meetings or those with colleagues and take action on.

They are designed to help you and your leadership team challenge assumptions, reach better conclusions and achieves the results you want from your business.

Each one is based on what we've seen work at outstanding businesses over 16 years.

What this guide is - and isn't

It isn't intended to teach you our methodology.

Instead, it offers a practical framework on how your leadership decisions and the types of questions you ask affect organisational performance.

Strategy doesn't create results in and of itself (everyone has a strategy after all); instead, the decisions leaders like you make every day do.

Enjoy it, put it to good use and get ready to see strategy the way high performing leaders do.



If you see areas where you are stuck and your business really needs to improve then get in touch, we've been doing this for 16 years and are always happy to have a no commitment call to understand why this is happening and why you may be struggling to get the results your business needs.



Exec Summary

The six decisions at a glance

There are **6 decisions and prompts** the leadership of high performing organisations make and ask in their strategy meetings and every time they check on progress:

1

Are we absolutely clear about what we're trying to achieve?

Action: Ask your fellow leadership team members what they think the strategy is, if you get different answers, make sure you become aligned.

2

How Will We Know We've Succeeded?

Action: Check whether you are discussing clear outcome or measuring activity, the latter is not strategy.

3

How do we align around outcomes?

Action: Check whether all teams are aligned on the previous decision outcomes or whether you have created internal competition.

4

How will we create commitment, not just accountability?

Action: Check by asking whether someone is committed to performing a task to whether they know why the role they play is important to the outcome.

5

How do we keep our strategy alive?

Action: Make sure your strategic reviews are regular and don't drift into KPIs.

6

How quickly do we adapt what we've learned?

Action: Make sure you are adapting your strategy to new circumstances and accept your strategy cannot control the market environment.

Take the **Six Decisions Diagnostic** to discover where your organisation is performing well - and where the greatest opportunity lies.

1 Decision 1

Are we absolutely clear about what we're trying to achieve?

Leadership Reflection

The first question leaders like yourself should ask:

If every member of our leadership team described our strategy independently, how similar would their answers really be?

Think of a leadership colleague and ask them.



Why?

//

91% of executives believe strategic alignment is critical, yet fewer than one in seven believe their own organisation is truly aligned //

- What Leaders Get Wrong About Strategic Alignment, by Jonathan Trevor, HBR January 14, 2026

High-performing organisations don't outperform because they have better ideas.

They outperform because their leadership teams make clear, consistent decisions about where the organisation is going and then reinforce those decisions relentlessly.

Decision 1 - Continued

In turn, this creates true strategic clarity, tell us if this sounds familiar:

- 1** You have a big strategic review.
- 2** The multiple-hour, multiple soggy sandwiches strategy workshop finishes.
- 3** Everyone leaves feeling aligned, energised and excited for the future, as if Tony Robbins himself was in the room.
- 4** Six weeks later, ask each executive to describe the strategy...
- 5** You hear six different versions of the strategy.

This confusion happens not because people aren't listening to you (or the sandwiches weren't any good), it is because agreement in the room upon the strategy isn't the same as shared understanding over time.



The **consequences** of this are:

- !** Priorities begin to compete rather than reinforce one another
- !** Departments optimise for themselves rather than for the organisation (KPIs)
- !** Objectives become interpretations instead of commitments.

Decision 1 - Continued

Before deciding what the organisation should focus on next, you and your leadership first need to be confident that everyone is aligned to the same vision.

That means making clear and deliberate decisions about:

- ↳ where the organisation is heading
- ↳ what success will look like (this is harder than you think)
- ↳ which strategic challenges matter most
- ↳ which opportunities deserve investment
- ↳ which organisational capabilities need strengthening.

Everything that follows depends on these decisions. If leadership cannot consistently articulate the strategy, the organisation has little chance of executing it.

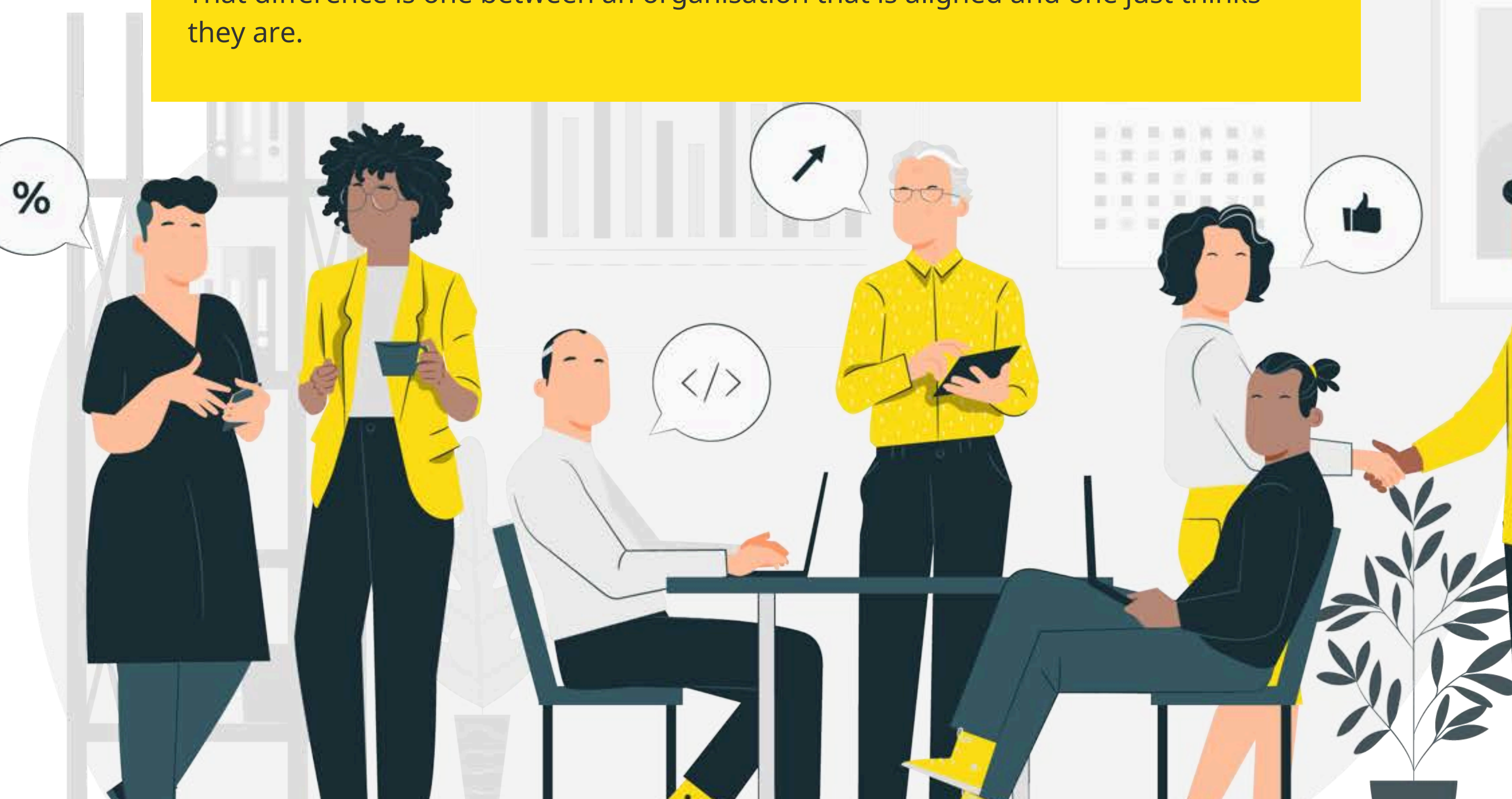
Example

Imagine asking every member of your executive team to independently write down your three most important strategic priorities.

Would the answers be identical?

Or would they simply sound similar?

That difference is one between an organisation that is aligned and one just thinks they are.



2 Decision 2

How will we know that we've succeeded?

Leadership Reflection

How much of our leadership discussion is focused on completing work, rather than creating measurable value?

Pick a department that comes to mind and write out the above question about them. Do they focus on creating a valuable outcome or on ticking off KPIs?

Why?

Many organisations mistake being busy for progress and success becomes measured by how much work has been completed rather than the value that work creates.

The problem is that KPIs and activity are easy to see (just look at how many of your sales reps are in the office on the last day of the quarter). Outcomes are much harder to see.

So, without realising it, leadership teams begin managing projects instead of delivering your strategy, and there is a difference.

Research from McKinsey, Deloitte and Gallup consistently shows that organisations achieve better business results when teams are aligned around measurable outcomes rather than simply completing activities. Organisations that define success in terms of customer and business value make better decisions, adapt more quickly and are less likely to mistake busyness for progress

-McKinsey - 2022, Deloitte - 2023, Gallup - 2018



Decision 2 - Continued

Now, high-performing organisations think differently.

Instead of asking:

“What are we going to do?”

they ask:

“What evidence will we see if we’re successful?”

That small change completely alters how your colleagues execute your strategy. They stop defending activity and they start taking ownership of their results.

Rather than measuring whether something was delivered, they measure whether it made a meaningful difference.

The activities become a means to an end, not the objective itself.



Decision 2 - Continued

Example

Imagine you and your leadership team decide to launch a new customer portal. The portal isn't the objective.

It's simply one possible solution for improving customer experience. The more important question is:

What business outcome are we trying to achieve?

- ? Higher customer retention?
- ? Lower support costs?
- ? Faster onboarding?
- ? Increased customer satisfaction?

Once the desired outcome is clear, the team is free to challenge whether the proposed activity is really the best way to achieve that outcome.



Frame your questions and problems as if looking for the outcome, not the method itself.

It may sound simple and you may think you do it already but really think about it...

3 Decision 3

How do we align around outcomes?

Leadership Reflection

Where can outcomes be shared across the departments in my business and where are we creating internal competition?

Why?

Most organisations are organised around functions, yours probably is too.

“Traditional teams organised around organisational structures are not suited to today’s rapidly changing business environment because they hinder customer-centricity, cross-functional collaboration and agility”

-Deloitte - 2020

Consider:

You're in a leadership team.

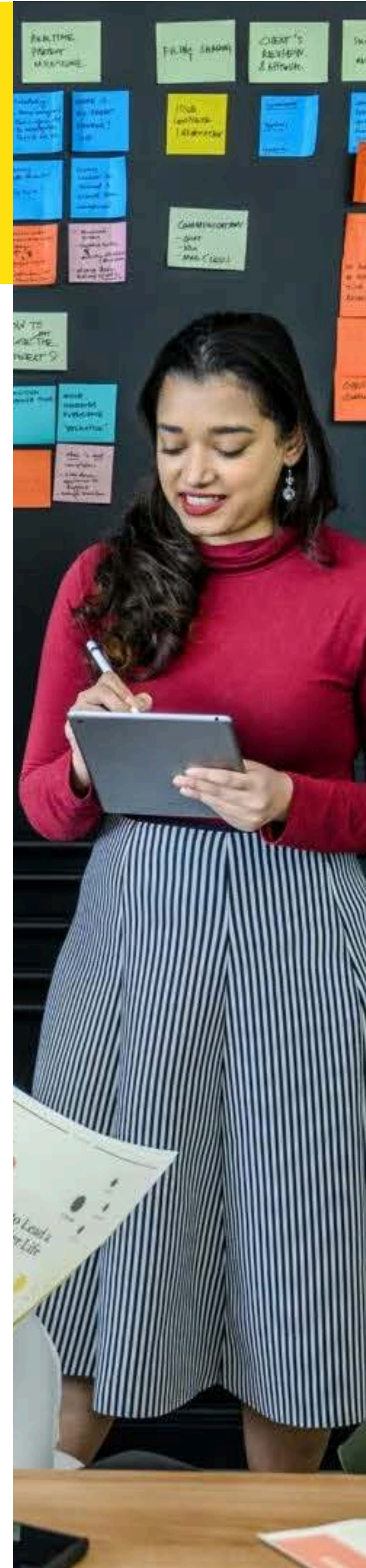
CRO: Sales has a quota

CMO: Marketing has MQL goals

CFO: Finance has EBITDA

This is how companies have evolved, and it should be optimal, right? It feels logical.

But when every function optimises its own siloed performance, it often undermines the overall performance of the organisation as the subsequent parts compete for their own targets and undermine overall growth of the whole organisation.



Decision 3 - Continued

Instead, ask yourselves:

What can no single team deliver on its own?

Those are the outcomes that deserve shared ownership across teams.

So, instead of assigning objections through functions, think about how you connect people around outcomes that no single department can deliver alone.

Your company will become high performing and get results when Marketing, Sales, Product etc stop pursuing separate measures of success and begin sharing accountability for the outcomes that matter most for the whole business

This is true collaboration.



Decision 3 - Continued

Example

Rather than Sales owning revenue while Operations owns delivery...

...both become jointly accountable for improving Customer Lifetime Value.

Sales influence who becomes a customer.

Operations influence whether they stay.

Different responsibilities.

But the outcome is the customer lifecycle and experience of your business. Your customers will feel this shift too.



Leadership Reflection - Worth Revisiting

Where can outcomes be shared across the departments in my business and where are we creating internal competition?

4 Decision 4

How will we create commitment, not just accountability?

Leadership Reflection

Ask:

Are people emotionally committed to our goals and genuinely own their objectives or am I just assuming their commitment?

Why?

Without commitment, goal setting is largely meaningless

-Latham, Wiley 2023

Now it may seem obvious to you reading this, but it is worth repeating: Strategy only succeeds when people choose to own their part in achieving it.

Leaders can assign objectives.

You can monitor progress.

You can even hold people accountable.

But you cannot force commitment. Your colleagues must feel responsible for their small share of the outcome and come to that conclusion on their own minds. This is why it is so hard to instil.



Decision 4 - Continued

Commitment comes when people understand:

- ✓ Why the objective matters (and to them)
- ✓ What success looks like across your business and to each person
- ✓ How their work contributes to the wider outcome
- ✓ Where they have the freedom to influence results

When those conditions exist, people stop completing tasks because they were asked to.

They start solving problems because they feel responsible for the outcome and, will commit fully rather than merely performatively performing a task.

Accountability becomes less about leaders chasing updates and more about teams taking ownership of progress.



Decision 4 - Continued

Example

Rather than simply assigning an objective to a team...

Ask them:

“How confident are you that we can achieve this?”

If confidence is low, don't push harder.

Ask them why and collaborate.



The blockers to the outcome they will share are far more valuable than another Red, Yellow and Green status update.

Even better people will start to solve their own problems and own the success for you.

5 Decision 5

How do we keep our strategy alive?

Leadership Reflection

Ask:

Have a look at your agenda and regularity of your leadership meetings. Do they keep strategy visible, and front of mind or do you let it disappear beneath day-to-day operations like KPIs?

Why?

Like many organisations you invest enormous time into creating your strategy
However, very few invest the same discipline in maintaining it.

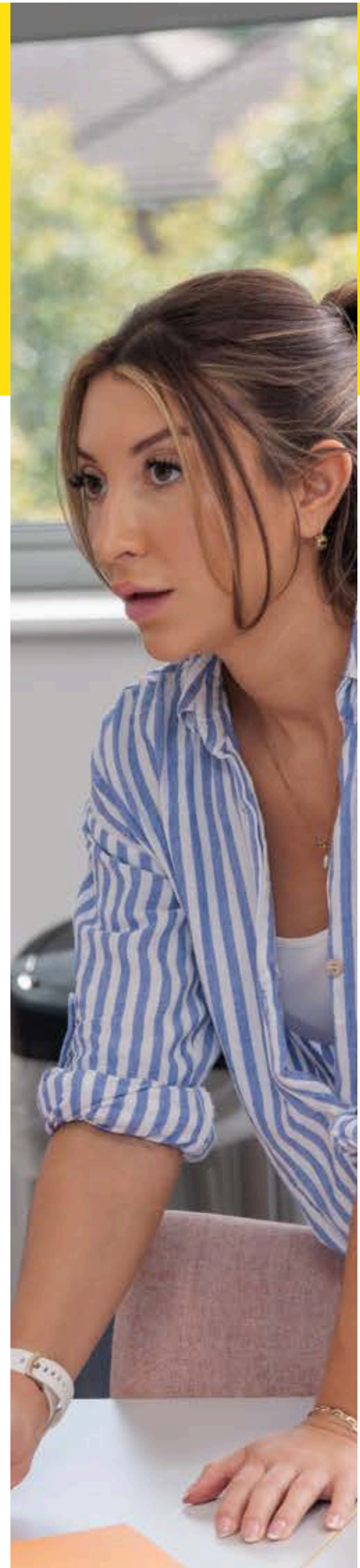
As we covered:

Objectives are launched with enthusiasm.
Then operational pressures take over.

Customer issues. Budget pressures. Recruitment...
add all these up and gradually, the strategic priorities that once dominated leadership discussions receive less attention until they are lumped into an annual review.

“Organisations that regularly review performance and adapt priorities outperform those relying on annual planning cycles. The emphasis is on **dynamic resource allocation and continual performance dialogue**, rather than static annual plans.

-McKinsey - 2023



Decision 5 - Continued

High-performing organisations create a deliberate rhythm for reviewing strategic progress so that they make performance visible, identify risks early and adapt quickly.

They keep strategic priorities in front of their colleagues long enough for them to become reality, reviewing cadence is important for protecting your strategic success.



Example

Imagine two organisations with the same strategy.

One reviews strategic progress once a year.

The other reviews it regularly, quarterly or monthly, learns from what is happening, and adjusts course before challenges become too big a problem for them to fix.

Which organisation is more likely to achieve its objectives?

The difference isn't the quality of the strategy; it is to make sure it is protected by a routine.

6 Decision 6

How quickly do we adapt what we've learned?

Leadership Reflection

Ask

Are you and your SLT regularly asking as part of your meetings: How effectively do we turn experience into better decisions?

Why?

No strategy is perfect.

A recent systematic review analysed 249 empirical studies on organisational agility and performance and concluded:

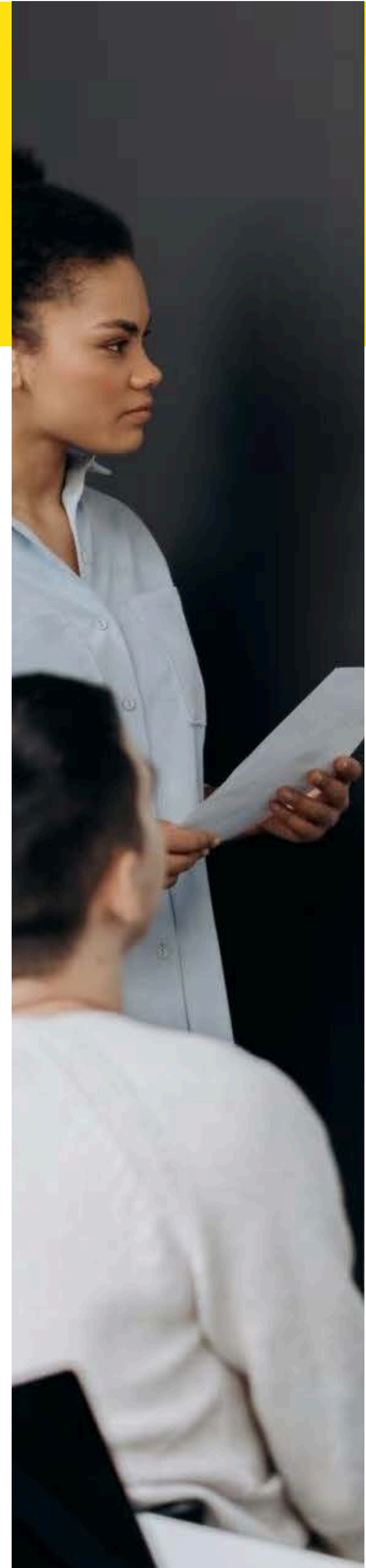
"Different forms of organisational agility have a strong, positive relationship with organisational performance across a wide range of contexts."

-Nguyen, Springer - 2025

Your market, competitors and customers change. There are only so many things you can control even as a leader and no strategy can change!

The organisations that consistently outperform their expectations are the ones that learn and adapt their strategy faster than their competition pulls ahead.

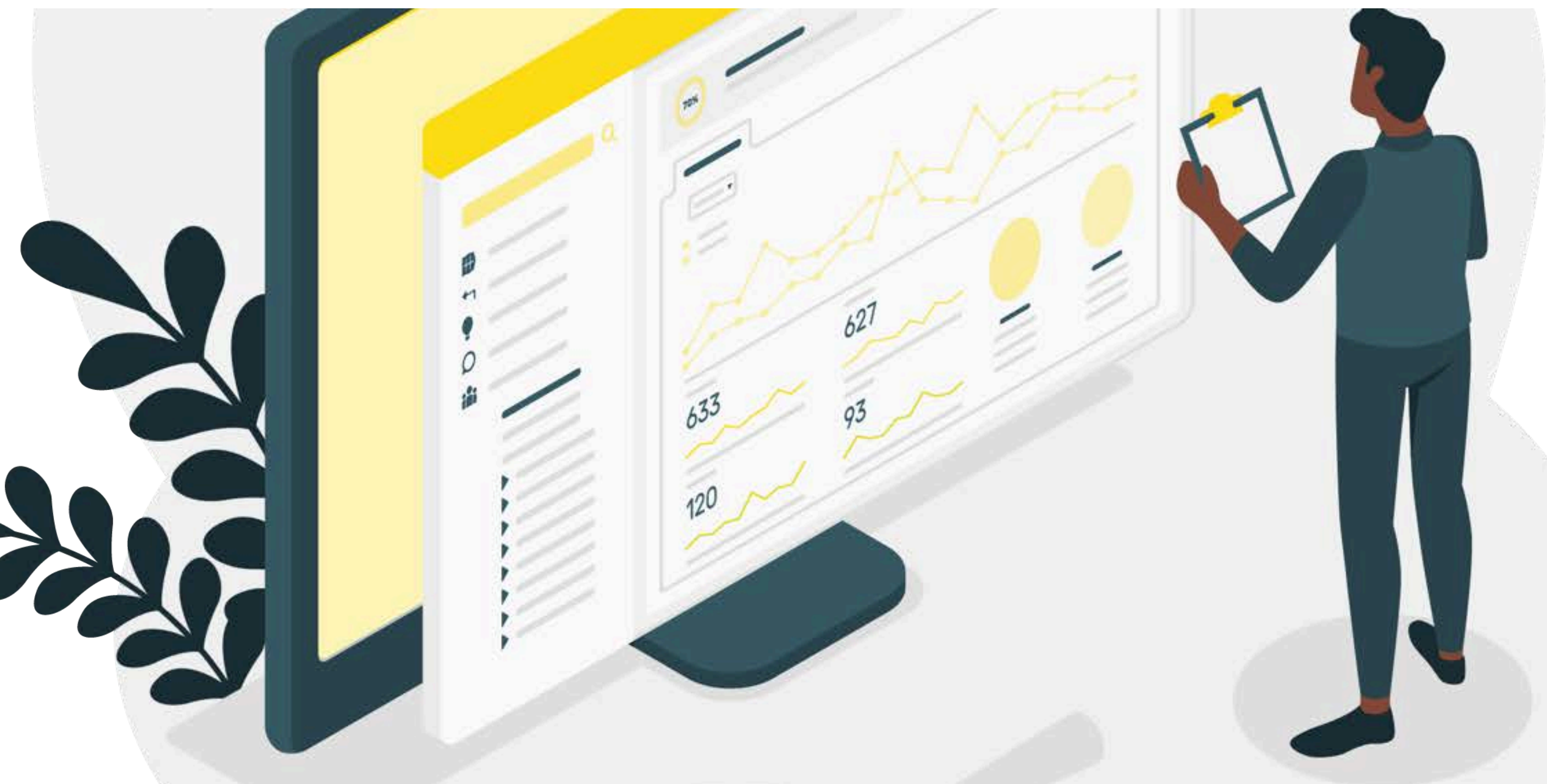
High performing organisations treat their strategy as the best current hypothesis, rather than the gospel truth, each review whether it is monthly or quarterly provides evidence and tests assumption to improve the strategy for the next cycle of review.



Decision 6 - Continued

Over time, your strategy becomes stronger because your organisation learns faster than your competitors.

Different forms of organisational agility have a strong, positive relationship with organisational performance across a wide range of contexts.



Example

So instead of asking:

“Did we hit the target?”

Ask:

“What have we learned that should change what we do next?”

Targets measure performance, but learning improves performance. You already know organisations that adapt fastest rarely stay behind for long.

Bringing it all together

Now you have the 6 decisions and questions you need to ask yourself that will put you and your organisations on the path to getting the results you want from strategy rather just setting it.

Rather than just a checklist, treat these a leadership discipline for you, your leadership and heads of teams to ask during every meeting relating to outcomes and what tasks to prioritise.

Each one asks leaders to pause, think differently and make more deliberate choices about how strategy becomes reality. Taken together, they create something far more powerful for you than a planning process.

They give you and your business organisational alignment.

When leaders create clarity, focus on outcomes, organise around shared priorities, build genuine commitment, maintain a regular rhythm and learn continuously, your people stop pulling in different directions.

Your strategy becomes part of everyday decision-making rather than an annual offsite a results become more predictable.

The organisations that outperform over the next decade won't necessarily be those with the most ambitious strategies or adapt AI the fastest or even get the most funding.

Instead, they will be the ones whose leaders like you, consistently make better strategic decisions and help everyone else commit fully to them too.



Did you find this helpful:

About There Be Giants

At **There Be Giants**, we help ambitious organisations turn strategy into measurable results.

Our work goes beyond writing objectives or implementing frameworks.

We help leadership teams like yours create clarity, build alignment, establish meaningful cadence and embed the behaviours that make strategy executable so you get the results you want by shaping what people do everyday.

Ready to find out how match-fit your organisation really is?

Great results start with better decisions.

Take the **Six Decisions Diagnostic** to discover where your organisation is performing well - and where the greatest opportunity lies.

Then, if you'd like an experienced perspective, book a debrief with our team. Sometimes one conversation changes everything.

You'll leave with greater clarity about which leadership decision will unlock hidden value in your organisation.

