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Strategic alignment keeps your organization's strategic thinkers in touch with the people who make change happen.

Bridging the Gap through Strategic Alignment

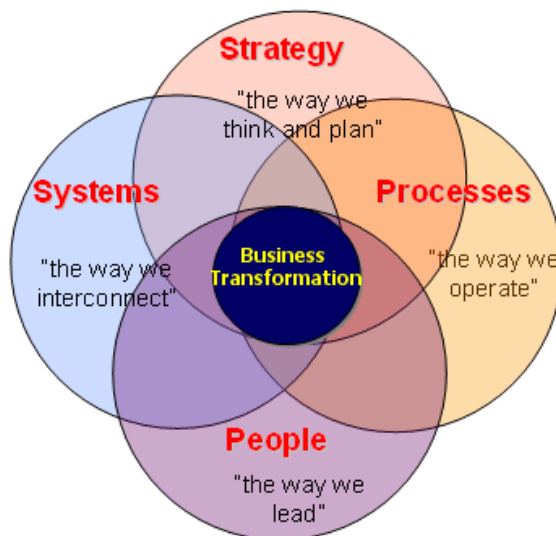
A strategy for successful business transformation

"Where do we start?" It's a good question. And it's one that every new client asks us when they are trying to determine where to deploy their Lean Six Sigma and Performance Excellence initiative.

Up until now, the traditional answer has been to start in the area with the least resistance. Go where you have some support from both executives and employees, and where you can make tangible gains that will jumpstart the program's momentum and put you on the path to sustainable change.

It's still good advice: go for the low-hanging fruit in a friendly orchard. But in today's world of competitive excellence, it's just not enough. These days, companies that want to stay ahead of the competition must go beyond process improvement and *transform* the way they do business. This means achieving not just incremental improvements, but breakthrough results by understanding and leveraging the relationship between processes, systems, people and strategy.

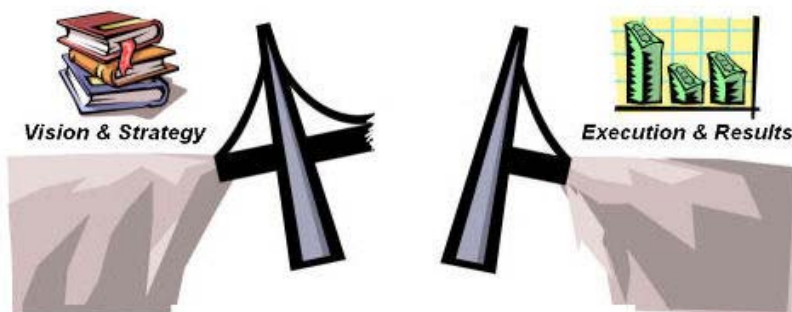
Business transformation requires the organization to focus on strategic goals, not just problems, and on disseminating those goals throughout the organization. In other words, it enables you to connect the dots between the big picture and tactical assignments -- between forward-thinking strategy and project execution. Making this link is called strategic alignment. And, today, it's the answer to the question, "Where do we start?"



Bridging the Gap between Strategy and Execution

In many organizations, there is a gap between strategy and execution. Strategy is determined at the executive level, but it's hard to translate it into quantifiable, executable and repeatable projects. As such, the projects that do get done may or may not support the strategic objectives. And the gap between management and employees grows as they continue to exist on opposite sides of the gulf of possibilities.

Companies that want to stay ahead of the competition must go beyond incremental process improvement and *transform* the way they do business.



By developing objectives, measures and targets that link the strategic and tactical levels, you can bridge the gap between strategy and execution.

Bridging this gap takes a commitment to defining breakthrough strategic goals that are attainable and sustainable, and then translating these strategies down the chain of command to the project level. How do you do this? By developing objectives, measures and targets that link the strategic and tactical levels.

For example, say that one of your **Strategic Themes** is "Service Excellence." From a customer perspective, what's one way to achieve service excellence? Well, you could "provide accurate and timely service." This becomes your **Objective**, or goal, in support of this strategic theme. (Note that you may have more than one objective, and you would also want to support the strategic theme from other perspectives – financial, internal process and infrastructure – as well as from the customer perspective.)

Now, there are many ways you could accomplish this broad objective of providing accurate and timely service. One specific approach would be to increase the "first call resolution percentage," or the number of customer support requests that are completely resolved on the first attempt. This becomes your **Measurement** for achieving the objective.

You should also specify a **Target**, or the amount by which you will improve the measurement, and the timeframe -- say, a 30 percent increase in one year.

How will you achieve the target? There may be several **Initiatives** you could employ, including your Performance Excellence program, your innovation initiative, your training and development program, or even your call center software.

Once you select the most suitable initiative, you designate the mode of **Execution** – in this case, a particular Lean Six Sigma project, training path or software enhancement.

Voila! You have just established a link between strategy and execution -- strategic alignment!

Strategic Theme	Objective	Measurement	Target	Initiative(s)	Execution
Service Excellence	Increase Customer Satisfaction	First Call Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% Year 1 • 50% Year 2 • 75% Year 3 	Performance Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean Six Sigma • DFSS • Innovation

Strategic alignment mobilizes executive leadership behind overarching strategies that enable you to satisfy the demands of shareholders, customers and employees.

What does strategic alignment accomplish?

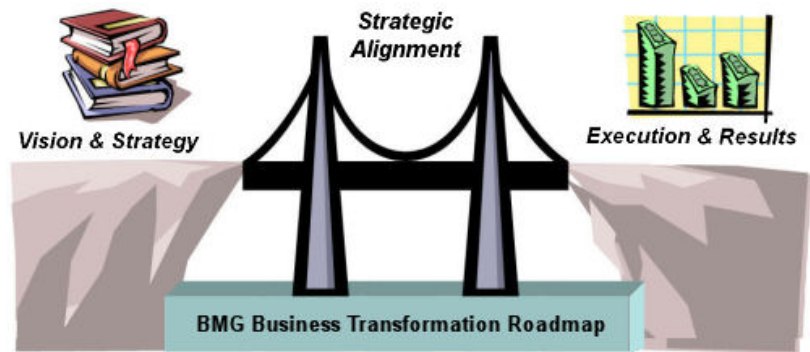
To begin with, it mobilizes executive leadership behind overarching strategies that will enable you to satisfy the demands of shareholders, customers and employees, if you have an understanding of your internal process capabilities and a robust infrastructure to support the vision.

When these strategies are translated into quantifiable, executable and repeatable projects, it ensures that everyone's efforts are aligned behind a common goal. Not only does this increase your chances of attaining that goal, it also motivates people and reduces resistance. When people can see the link between the work they do and the executive vision, they feel that what they do matters and they'll move mountains to do it well.

Finally, it puts a management framework in place for making strategy a continual process that can be realized year after year.

Strategic alignment builds a bridge between vision and strategy, execution and results. This, in turn, enables true business transformation and a strategy

for sustainable growth and success.



So where do you start?

Start where you can guarantee the best strategic alignment. If you need help determining where that is and how to do it, give us a call and let our experienced professionals help you bridge the gap.



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