



# The Aligned Enterprise: Orchestrating the Next Level of Performance

**T**oday's rapidly changing global marketplace presents new challenges to organizations of all types and sizes. Turning these challenges into opportunities requires innovative thinking and new strategies. And project-based work is how these strategies get converted into results. Therefore, for forward-thinking companies to maintain competitiveness amid a growing—and increasingly rocky—playing field, their strategies and structure must be aligned and tuned for optimal execution of project-based work.

Research at Stanford University over the past ten years has shown that improved project performance is a function of orchestration and alignment. Key, familiar aspects of a business—six overlapping and interdependent domains—must harmonize to create the next level of achievement. This white paper describes how to make that happen.

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This white paper provides a high-level overview of the Strategic Execution Framework® (SEF) developed by the Stanford Advanced Project Management program, under a partnership between IPS and the Stanford Center for Professional Development at Stanford University.

The SEF, its evolution, and its application to improve organizational alignment are described in detail in the book *Executing Your Strategy: How to Break It Down and Get It Done* (2008, Harvard Business School Press). The SEF also serves as the foundation for all Stanford Advanced Project Management courses. Detailed references and additional bibliographic details for the material presented herein can be found in the book, the courses, and at the IPS Center of Excellence for Strategy Execution website at [www.ipslearning.com](http://www.ipslearning.com).

# Introduction

To stay nimble and competitive in an increasingly global marketplace and difficult financial environment, firms today need to be able to execute their strategies consistently and reliably. In many cases, properly executing desired strategic changes is critical not only for long-term success but also for short-term survival.

According to a survey of 769 global CEOs from 40 countries (*CEO Challenge 2007: Top 10 Challenges*, The Conference Board, October 2007), execution is taking precedence over profit and top-line growth as a focus for CEOs around the world. When asked to rate their greatest concerns from among 121 different challenges, chief executives participating in the 2007 survey chose “excellence of execution” as their top challenge and “keeping consistent execution of strategy” by top management as their third greatest concern.

To execute their strategies and achieve their desired results, organizations must select and invest in specific engagements, portfolios, programs, and projects. This project-based work (PBW) comprises essentially all of an organization’s work that is not operations.

Global enterprises face a variety of challenges and trends that affect their ability to complete PBW successfully (i.e., on time, within budget, and within planned scope), including:

- **Increasing speed and magnitude of change**—Not only is there significant change occurring, but the rate at which that change is occurring is increasing; this places increased pressure on organizations to make decisions faster.
- **Globalization of markets**—Organizations are serving customers in many countries and in markets that grow, evolve, shrink, and disappear in record time; this requires

the capacity to adjust the flow and type of products and services the enterprise makes available.

- **Globalization of supply chains**—Serving these expanding and growing markets requires complex, global supply chains; these supply chains must have a continually changing set of project-based work to ensure they are current and competitive.
- **Globalization of teams**—PBW is accomplished through teams. Increasingly, these teams are global, with multiple cultures, languages, ethnicities, and geographies involved; such teams require a focused approach for ensuring alignment.
- **Virtual collaboration models**—The combination of speed and globalization requires that teams be able to collaborate from distributed locations and time zones; we are just beginning to understand what it means to execute an organization’s strategy using such teams.

Consequently, it stands to reason that maximizing performance of project-based work is critical to successfully executing the critical, innovative strategies required by today’s difficult operating environment.

To maximize project performance, all elements of an organization must be aligned and orchestrated. The Strategic Execution Framework® (SEF) described herein helps organizations identify and correct any inconsistencies or misalignments that might hinder their ability to do what they need to do. According to this proven model, the key aspects of an organization that must harmonize are:

- **Ideation:** an enterprise’s understanding of who it is and how it shows up in the world; this is expressed through its purpose, identity, and long-range vision

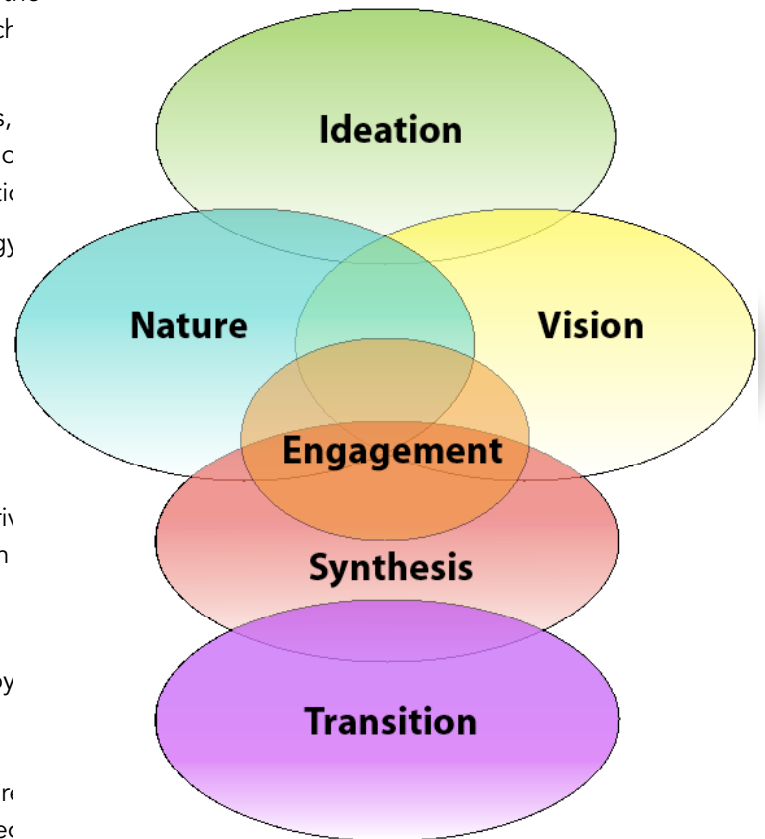
- **Nature:** an enterprise's culture, structure, and strategy; these create the environment and context within which enterprise operates
- **Vision:** an enterprise's goals, metrics, strategy; what serves as the foundation where we want to be as an organization
- **Engagement:** an enterprise's strategy and its connection to a portfolio of investments in PBW
- **Synthesis:** carrying out PBW according to the priorities set by a portfolio process; traditionally, this has been viewed as program and project management, but we strive to place this in a strategic rather than primarily a tactical context
- **Transition:** ongoing PBW driven by projects and programs and refined by process management; leads to the implementation of new or improved products and processes that are the result of executing the organization's strategy

All six of these areas, which we call *domains*, are critical to the SEF; none can be ignored. And it is no accident that the six essential domains—ideation, nature, vision, engagement, synthesis, and transition—combine to form the acronym INVEST.

Figure 1 shows the relationships among the six SEF domains, how they overlap, and how they are interconnected and interdependent.

From a high level, this graphic shows that organizations have an identity and a general sense of where they are going (Ideation). They also typically have goals and a way of measuring if these goals are met, along with some idea as to how to get the goals accomplished (Vision). This ideation and vision are expressed in the environment in which the organization exists—the organization's way of doing things (Nature). By either default or design, organizations decide how

Figure 1. The six domains



to spend their money and time (Engagement). What organizations spend time on to improve things is project-based work (Synthesis). When completed, PBW becomes part of the ongoing operations of the organization (Transition).

The SEF and how to use it to your advantage are detailed in the book *Executing Your Strategy: How to Break It Down and Get It Done* (2008, Harvard Business School Press) as well as the 13 courses in the award-winning Stanford Advanced Project Management program.

The question then becomes, "How well are these interdependent aspects of running a business orchestrated?"

Let's explore one area—or domain—at a time.

# Ideation: Where Passion and Drive Originate

Life asks three fundamental questions: Who are you? Why are you here? Where are you going? Corporate life is no exception. How a person, a government, a business unit, or a company answers these questions about identity, purpose, and long-range vision gives rise to central organizing principles that in turn drive action. We have chosen to call the domain encompassing these three fundamentals *ideation* (see Figure 2).

For millennia, ideation has played an important role in nearly every realm of human experience, from religion to politics to psychology. In corporate life, companies such as Toyota Motor, Wipro Technologies, Nokia, IBM, Boeing, Apple Computer, Intel, Cisco, Tata, and Det Norske Veritas (DNV) represent examples of organizations that have been built on strong ideation.

We have found a strong correlation between a sense of what we refer to as ideation and the ability to adapt to a changing and rapidly evolving environment. Ideation provides a context for people to perform within. With this context, people can make decisions that affect the overall enterprise in supportive ways. Without it, they must either guess or ask questions.

**Strong ideation.** Organizations demonstrate their ideation strength in unmistakable ways. We have only to visit a company such as U.S. retailer Nordstrom to see the strength of central organizing principles, which are evident in how they greet people, the store environment, how they serve customers, and so on. Even if we don't know what their mission statement says, we still sense the ideation of the company. We can easily see that Wal-Mart is different from Nordstrom, Saks is different from Carrefour, and Southwest Airlines is different from Singapore Airlines.

Despite the differences, all these companies have in common a unique, strong ideation that

is distinct and integrated into the business. This integration is essential for ideation to be a guiding force.

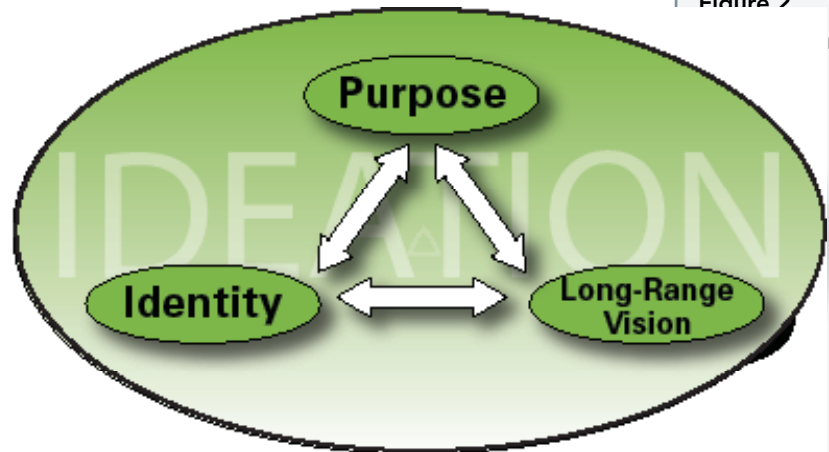


Figure 2

main

**Weak ideation.** When organizations lack distinct or well-integrated ideation, people have little context in which to act. Employees must pass decisions up the chain of command or, even worse, guess. In several companies that we have worked with, when asked to describe their organization's guiding philosophy, clients respond with widely varying, sometimes conflicting statements. While one person says that the philosophy is to "serve the customer well in all cases," others in the same company say "ship the product no matter what." As you can imagine, employees guided by one philosophy will act quite differently from those guided by another. This can be especially acute in organizations that grow through mergers and/or acquisitions.

Companies can display weak ideation in several ways:

- They are preoccupied with short-term measurements at the expense of long-term health.
- They morph from one fad to the next, launch flavor-of-the-month programs, and/or move in and out of markets.

- They have great clarity at the top of long-range vision, identity, and purpose, but fail to translate and communicate it to the entire organization.

**Key questions\*:**

*“Are the reasons your organization exist, its branding (both internal and external), and its long-range goals clear and compelling enough to attract the best people and energize them to perform at their highest level?”*

**Recommended actions\*:**

- Focus on specific actions that enhance and expand your brand, as well as how you are perceived both internally by

employees and externally by the larger world.

- Communicate long-range vision and intentions throughout the enterprise continually.
- Hire employees who understand who you are and where you want to go and are fully supportive of that vision.
- Identify, craft, and tell stories that reinforce the enterprise’s concept of what it is and where it wants to go.

*\*Key questions and recommended actions for each domain excerpted from **Executing Your Strategy: How to Break It Down and Get It Done** (2008, Harvard Business School Press)*

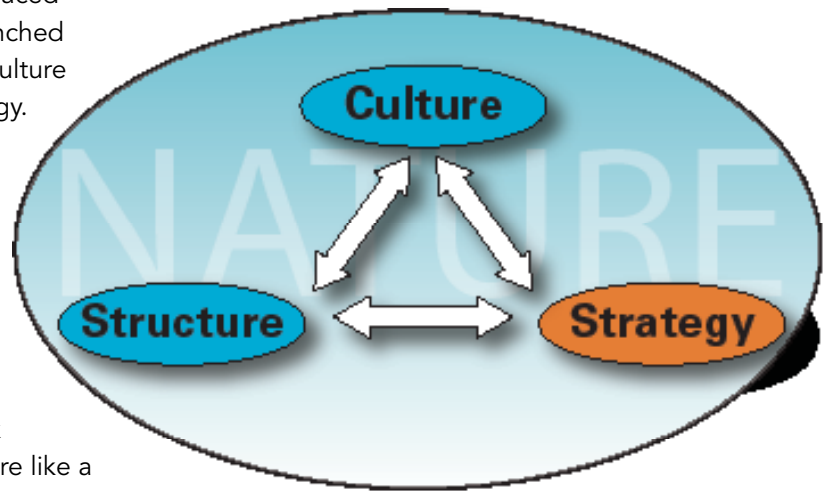
## Nature: Creating the Conditions for Strategic Execution

The nature domain (see Figure 3) is often overlooked in the just-do-it world of fast-paced global competition. Initiatives are launched without considering the influence of culture and structure on the viability of strategy. The result can be disastrous.

**Culture.** *Culture* means how we do things. All people in the world eat by one method or another. Some use sticks; some use metal utensils; some use their bare hands. The result is the same, but the means are different. Similarly, all companies seek profits in different ways. Some are more like a sports team (collaborative), some are more like a community (cultivative), some are more rules-driven (controlling), and others are like a university (competence-focused). Every company has elements of all four types but has a bias for one, and this is the source of its competitive edge.

**Structure.** Jay Galbraith (University of Southern California) uses the phrase *matrix structures* to describe two kinds of fundamental organizational design decisions made by companies. In a weak matrix structure, the company consists

Figure 3. Nature domain



of independent departments—or silos—that are designed to create and maintain deep technical expertise. In a strong matrix structure, people work in cross-functional teams on project-based work. Most organizations consist of a combination of functions and cross-functional teams. The greater the level of cross-functional work, the stronger the matrix.

**Strategy.** Think of strategy as the path we take to get to a destination. If we know where we are,

and we know where we want to be, then strategy is the route we are going to take to get from where we “R” to where we want “2B.” Our sense of where we “R” comes from knowing where our performance stands. Where we want “2B” comes from our sense of goals. (See the Strategy discussion in the section on the Engagement domain for more on this formula.) Strategy, then, is how we link R + 2B together and depends on how we want to organize ourselves (structure) and how we do things (culture).

**Fit.** A fit occurs when components go together well. A company that is very hierarchical (weak matrix), with a culture based on producing the best technical solutions (competence), and a strategy built on delivering the highest technology products in the marketplace is probably well-aligned; it has a good fit. Intel Corporation, with its “copy exactly” culture, vertical structures, and highest technology strategy, is an example of good fit.

**Misfit.** A misfit occurs when components lack harmony. A company with a hierarchical structure and rules-driven culture that launches a customer-intimate strategy is an example of misfit. A rough equivalent would be a govern-

ment tax service launching a user-defined tax return process.

**Key questions:**

*“Is the organization’s structure designed to make it easier to accomplish project-based work? Does the culture support the types of working relationships that the strategy requires for successful execution?”*

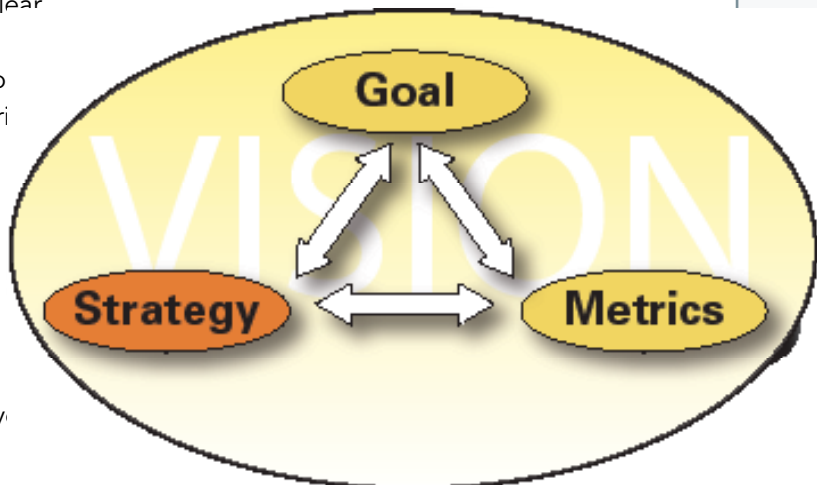
**Recommended actions:**

- Conduct an organizational culture assessment to understand how the culture and structure can be better aligned to enable the selected strategies.
- If there is non-alignment among culture, structure, and strategy, consider adjusting the strategy to fit the existing culture; culture changes very slowly.
- If culture change is considered, do it in a thoughtful, structured approach; it is a long-term project!
- For any major set of project-based work, reflect the organization’s culture and structure in how the work is designed as well as executed.

## Vision: What We Want, Our Yardstick, and Our Plan to Get It

Vision comprises strategy, metrics, and goals (see Figure 4). After all, if your goals are unclear it doesn’t really matter how you get there. Although this management concept is far from new, companies still suffer from a lack of clarity about their paths (strategy), the goals the paths are supposed to lead to, and the metrics that measure success. Moreover, the metrics at the top of the business are mostly financial and expressed differently from those used to measure the contributions of individuals and teams doing the work. Metrics drive behaviors; behaviors drive results.

Figure 4. Vision domain



When the three critical elements of vision are not in alignment, the organization suffers from a lack of coherence, and performance suffers. This incoherence probably accounts for why many people see obvious misalignments between what is said and what is actually done.

**Strategy.** Harvard Business School's Michael Porter notes that companies can have two fundamental strategies:

- **Cost leader.** Being a "cost leader" entails competing through small margins and large volumes. To earn above-average profits and gain above-average returns on invested capital, a company with this strategy must focus on operational efficiency. This focus may take some serious innovation, as in the case of retailers not owning inventory; the goods on their shelves belong to the supplier until sold.
- **Differentiation.** A company competing in this way seeks to maximize value by emphasizing branding, features, and customer value. These companies tend to focus on higher-margin goods and services. Such companies might look at emphasizing total cost of ownership as a means of counteracting price pressure.

**Metrics.** Much can be learned about a company simply by looking at what measurements are being used to drive performance. In the airline industry, one standard measure is the cost to move a single seat one mile. Optimizing around that metric, as in the case of Southwest or India's SpiceJet, requires a different focus than optimizing around end-to-end passenger comfort, such as the experiences Singapore Airlines or Virgin Atlantic Airways provides.

**Goals.** To be more than empty promises, goals must be tied to metrics and supported by strategy. Without metrics, a company can't know if it's reached its goal. Without being grounded in a coherent strategy, a company has less chance of

meeting its goals. For example, Southwest and Singapore Airlines might have the same earnings goals, but very different ways of reaching them. Southwest (using a cost leader strategy) measures time on the ground, while Virgin Atlantic (using a differentiation strategy) measures customer satisfaction. At all levels, from leadership to operations, a company must align its goals with its strategy and metrics.

**Alignment.** A well-aligned company is one that reduces or eliminates conflicts between and among goals, strategies, and metrics. Ideally, a firm's financial and market presence goals, its product strategy, and its operational efficiency measures all align. Companies must periodically realign their goals, metrics, and strategies because of the dynamic and evolving environment of business. Today's well-aligned enterprise may become tomorrow's train wreck, because the marketplace moves the tracks often and unpredictably.

### Key question:

*"Are goals and their associated metrics and enterprise reward systems designed so that people throughout the entire organization know exactly what to do to meet their own as well as the organization's objectives?"*

### Recommended actions:

- Conduct strategy formulation across the organization both vertically and horizontally.
- Conduct strategy execution mapping workshops to ensure all operational activities and project-based work are fully aligned with the corporate strategy and customer needs.
- Implement metrics that consistently reflect the enterprise's strategy, goals, culture, and structure.
- Create scorecards, dashboards, and similar reporting processes that fully support strategy alignment with corporate goals and vision.

# Engagement: Putting Our Money Where Our Mouth Is

Strategy is the organizational talk. Managing the portfolio of PBW needed to implement that strategy is the walk.

Organizational integrity requires coherence and alignment at this stage of the SEF. As individuals, we may say that we are aggressive investors. If, in fact, our investments are in certificates of deposit and government treasury notes, what we say is out of alignment with what we do. Organizationally, we might say that we're "customer-focused" while we're actually cutting costs that interfere with customer service. Actions speak louder than words.

Just as an individual's spending habits reveal his or her personality and actual intentions, so does a company's. The funding trail never lies; an organization's actual strategy is revealed by where the money gets spent. This is the "hard part" because tough, disciplined decisions must be made as part of portfolio management. Deciding how to invest in a portfolio of project-based work is the heart of converting strategy into action.

**Strategy.** In the engagement domain, the role of strategy is slightly different than in the vision and environment domains (see Figure 5). Strategy consists of knowing where we are, where we want to be, and the path we are going to take to get there. This formulation can be abbreviated as "R+2B+Path." Knowing where we are requires us to know what our current performance is, what we use as measurements, what our current organizational structure looks like, and what our cultural environment is. The "2B" side is knowing what structural changes must be made, the cultural shifts required, goals, and metric changes. Knowing the path requires making choices about a fundamental approach. For example, a company might approach market-share goals through product innovation or by pricing strate-

gies. On the other the types of investments needed to accomplish product solutions are vastly different from those required by cost- and price-cutting.

**Portfolio.** Just as an individual can have a portfolio of investments, every organization has a portfolio of project-based work (projects, programs, initiatives, and similar non-operations activities). Just as individual investors must constantly manage their portfolios, so must organizations manage their portfolios, through ranking projects and reconciling resources to demand. Ideally, leaders must align the portfolio with goals based on strategy—connecting the dots. To maximize return on investment (ROI), leaders must make tough calls and set limits, learning when to say "no." If leaders default in this process, the penalty is that individuals will have to manage using their best guesses. Good guesses win; bad guesses lose. Proper portfolio management minimizes the role of guesswork.

**Alignment.** Creating engagement alignment requires using selection criteria, relative weights between criteria, and scoring anchors to differentiate one program or project from another within any given criteria. Frankly, this process is part art and part science. Without clarity around goals, metrics, and strategy, an organization has no way to decide how to decide, so the process becomes a guessing game, a political battle, or is simply abdicated in some organizations. An organization that can show a direct connection between a set of goal, metric, and strategy-oriented criteria and the set of project-based

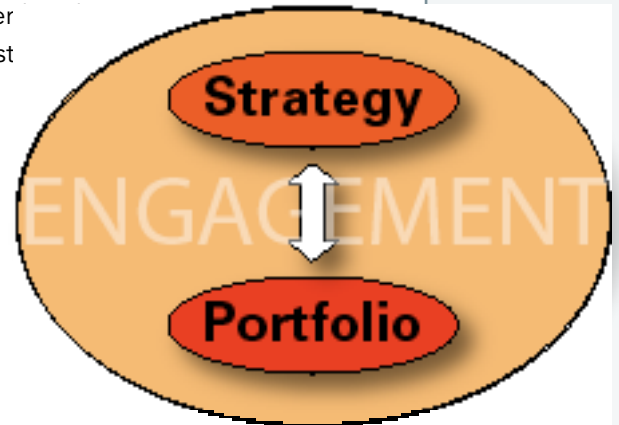


Figure 5. Engagement domain

work (programs and projects) that are selected and funded is on the path to alignment. If it can also show that resources are allocated to programs and projects in priority order and that any unaffordable or non-aligned projects are kept from draining resources, the organization has the process in place. If it uses the process as an ongoing business practice, it will be more likely to maintain alignment over time.

### Key question:

*“Can the organization trace the connections between its portfolio of project-based investments and the strategies and associated goals guiding the organization?”*

### Recommended actions:

- Conduct portfolio management of project-based work by design, not default.
- Develop culture-appropriate tools, templates, and processes for active portfolio management.
- Plan for and conduct education of senior leaders and managers in the criticality of well-designed and implemented portfolio management processes that are fully aligned with key strategies and initiatives.
- Create a high-level strategic execution office (SEO) that oversees the enterprise’s various portfolios of work.

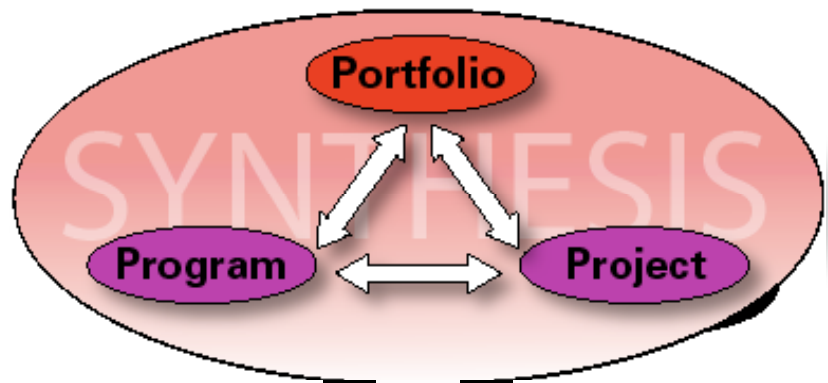
## Synthesis: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Execution means how well organizations deliver on their portfolio of engagements in project-based work (programs and projects). The synthesis domain (see Figure 6) has three key performance areas:

- Process methodology for running project-based work (project, program, and portfolio management)
- Process maturity for these process methodologies
- Sponsorship of teams conducting project-based work (project, program, and portfolio teams)

To satisfy the ongoing demand for better predictability in project outcome and therefore improve execution, much has been done in the last 10 to 15 years to develop standards and training in the management of project-based work, especially for companies that produce or rely on an increasingly complex array of technologies. There has been increasing emphasis on professional accreditation, certification, education, and training, all in the quest to improve execution of strategy via project-based work.

Figure 6. Synthesis domain



**Process methodology.** Companies need a common or at least compatible set of project, program, and portfolio management processes. The value of a common approach and common vocabulary cannot be overestimated. Project and program management fundamentally asks us to do three things: decide where we’re going, plan our journey, and watch where we’re going. We could probably agree that none of these is optional. That means we need good processes for initiating, planning, and executing. Project management processes give us control over managing the scope, schedule, and resources of

an individual project. Program management processes let us manage the white space between multiple related projects. Portfolio management processes provide the priority set and resource allocation to get the job done.

All three processes are critical and are core skills in today's enterprise. The world is too complex, and margins are too tight, for the old ways. In surveys of IT executives, respondents consistently list project management as a critical best practice. Respondents also mentioned portfolio management as providing one of the highest returns on investment, and noted strategically designed program/project management offices as worth doing well.

**Process maturity.** Even as they recognize the need for process maturity, many organizations are now questioning the return on investment on what seem like innumerable efforts to benchmark, standardize, inspect, audit, and categorize their processes. The classic approach to process maturity is that a company must build project, then program, then portfolio expertise. However, our experience is that a simultaneous development of portfolio, program, and project management is a better approach. Maturity is best viewed on a scale where "no formal approach" is the bottom of the scale and "best-in-class performance" is at the top.

**Sponsorship.** Successful management of project-based work depends on running the project day

to day and overcoming obstacles while looking for new opportunities to exploit. Without someone to help overcome obstacles and invest in opportunities, the project or program manager is marginalized. Active executive sponsorship helps ensure project success, especially when portfolio management processes are weak or non-existent.

### Key question:

*"Do investments in project-based work support each other synergistically and reflect the strategy of the overall organization?"*

### Recommended actions:

- Educate those who lead and manage project-based work in those practices that enable successful execution of strategy through programs and projects.
- Develop and implement robust education for all sponsors on their critical role in supporting successful execution of corporate strategies via project-based work.
- Establish strategic program/project management offices (SPMOs) that support individual projects and programs as well as large initiatives and organizations.
- Provide inclusive and widespread training in a common approach for managing project-based work across the enterprise.

## Transition: The Road

Transition is the ultimate measure of all business work. It is where the goods that were thought of in our goals and the path we chose in terms of strategy and the execution of our programs and projects deliver results. Ultimately, the transition domain is where we either make money or lose money; we either deliver on our goals or we do not (see Figure 8). This domain can be understood in terms of three major categories:

- Breakthroughs or incremental change as a result of programs and projects
- Ongoing processes of doing business
- Metrics to assess how well the organization is meeting its goals

Companies set goals based on a difference between today's results and tomorrow's desired results, taking into consideration changes in

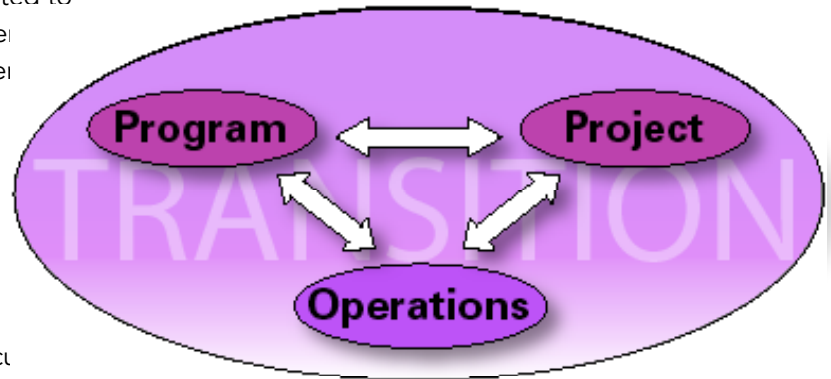
the business landscape. For example, current revenue and profit results are contrasted to the desires of tomorrow, and the difference creates tension, which drives the enterprise forward. So transition is where yesterday's goal for today meets today's results.

**Breakthroughs.** There are two types of transition changes: continuous and discontinuous. Breakthroughs are where discontinuous changes occur. When the first tractor was put to work in a field, farmers' performance showed a discontinuous (breakthrough) change. No matter how well farmers had continuously improved the process of plowing with a team of horses, the introduction of tractors dramatically changed the slope of the improvement curve for plowing. A project or program delivered the first tractor, and every new model of tractor required another project or program. The basic idea of a project or program is to create something that did not exist before, so that this new something can be an ongoing result generator. Temporary projects and programs transition their outputs to ongoing processes. New programs and projects always create a level of organizational change.

Organizational change depends on people, process, and tools. We have looked at process. People are more complicated. When projects are planned without taking possible resistance by employees into consideration, the transition to a new system is often a battle, resulting in poor adoption and performance. More than one initiative has fallen prey to organizational resistance. When unaccounted for, these issues can put a project or program that reaches launch stage at high risk. Project leaders and sponsors can mitigate such resistance by appreciating structural, cultural, metric, goal, and investment issues.

**Ongoing processes.** One of the more challenging tasks of an enterprise is maintaining the advantage of old systems while gaining the

Figure 7. Transition domain



advantage of new ones. In between breakthroughs, continuous process improvement is the organization's best weapon in the battle to improve performance. This is where approaches such as Six Sigma excel in providing the context to improve ongoing operations.

**Metrics.** Metrics used to measure operations must align with those used to formulate goals. Conflicting or unclear metrics harm performance. Suppose a company's goal is "improved customer service," and, to reach it, the company decides to use customer service survey ratings as a benchmark. Meanwhile, the company introduces a productivity metric (call duration) in its call centers. Operationally, the customer service rep's motivation is to get the caller off the line as fast as possible, even if that means hanging up on the customer. This behavior (terminating calls and rushing to meet a call time) is diametrically opposed to the original goal of better customer service!

**Key question:**

*"Do the outputs of project-based work translate rapidly and seamlessly into the desired benefits for the ongoing operations and the target customers, whether internal or external?"*

**Recommended actions:**

- Implement enterprise-wide processes for collecting and sharing lessons learned

throughout the life cycle of project-based work.

- Structure specific processes for managing the hand-offs from project-based work to operations. This is critical for long-term success of the services, products, and processes, developed via program and projects.

- Develop processes for managing benefits generated from project-based work throughout the entire life cycle.
- Provide for ongoing feedback from those who actually use and/or benefit from the outputs of project-based work.

## Connecting the Dots: The Aligned Enterprise

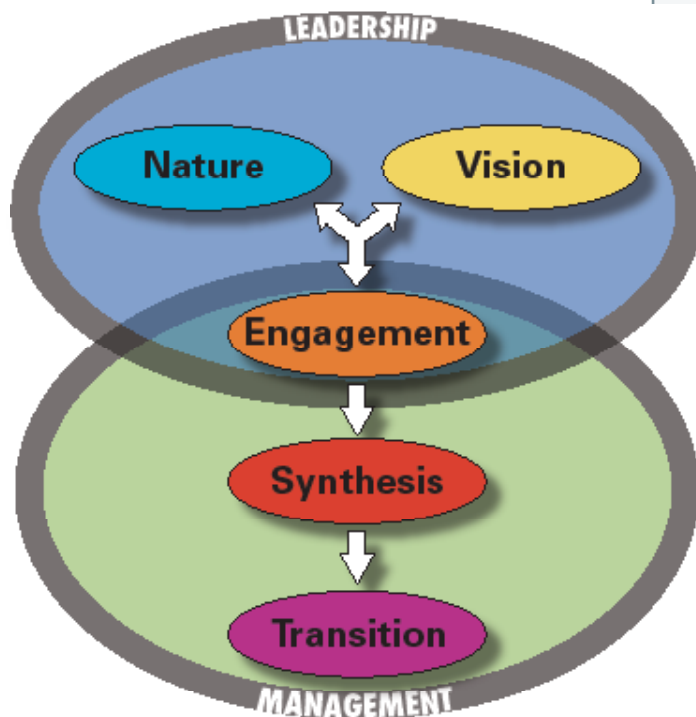
**Leadership for execution.** Alignment comes from doing the right things and doing them right. But how do you define what is “right”? We see “right” as doing things that (1) align with the organization’s goals, (2) are measured, (3) line up with company culture, and (4) are supported by structure.

Using this definition of “right,” organizations are positioned to achieve coherent strategy. Good strategy requires engagements that deliver on goals. This is where disconnection between what we say we want, and what we actually invest in, can easily take place. Engagement requires reconciling an organization’s capacity to its demands. These demands arise from the additional work of projects and programs to support goals, combined with managing ongoing operations work. Implied in this process is that investment will be made with sound information on schedules, effort levels, and resource skill levels, among other data elements.

If we look beyond the engagement domain, the challenge for the organization is carrying out plans to deliver the end products or services that serve the organization’s goals (see Figure 8).

**The aligned enterprise.** What does a well-aligned enterprise look like? Most people have experienced alignment at some level, and the signs are extremely clear. In a well-aligned company, the organizational structure is flat where speed and customer focus are critical, and hierarchi-

Figure 8. The aligned enterprise



cal where optimum product is most important. Structure, then, is tuned to a major competitive weapon called culture. To Dell, control is a cultural imperative; to Barclays, global collaboration is a requirement; and at Google, cultivation is the imperative. At Pfizer, competence reigns as the cultural centerpiece. Strategy, then, leverages structure and culture instead of conflicting with it.

When a goal-based strategy requires changes to structure and culture, the well-aligned orga-

nization invests in changes to structure and culture as a part of the portfolio of projects and programs. Strategy is also the linking element between goals and metrics. Goals give the long-range target; metrics provide the yardstick of effectiveness. Both goals and metrics are used to formulate criteria, weights, and scoring anchors that help prioritize portfolio engagements.

In a well-aligned enterprise, the organization is clear on the engagement priorities. The priority set is backed by fact-based data for costs and benefits, so that the organization truly puts its

money where its mouth is. Project and program teams execute projects based on a scalable methodology that assures smooth translation into operations.

What is most striking about a well-aligned enterprise is the remarkable lack of confusion, cynicism, criticism, and burnout. These are all replaced with a sense of purpose, clarity, continuous improvement, helpful systems and structures, flexibility, drive, and motivation. And—most of all—*performance*.

# The Strategic Execution Framework:

## Translating business strategies into effective results

Putting together all six domains (see Figure 9) adds up to the complete Strategic Execution Framework. The SEF is a powerful management model that will help you ensure that your critical initiatives are on track to achieve their intended results. This model was developed jointly by IPS and the Stanford Center for Professional Development and is a key feature of the award-winning Stanford Advanced Project Management curriculum.

Organizations use the SEF to develop improved systemic solutions to planning and executing project-based work by:

- Investing resources more wisely across their entire portfolio of projects and programs
- Leveraging a powerful set of monitoring and management tools and techniques
- Helping individual managers get more done through better leadership skills

### How to learn more

The SEF, its evolution, and application are described in detail in the book *Executing Your*

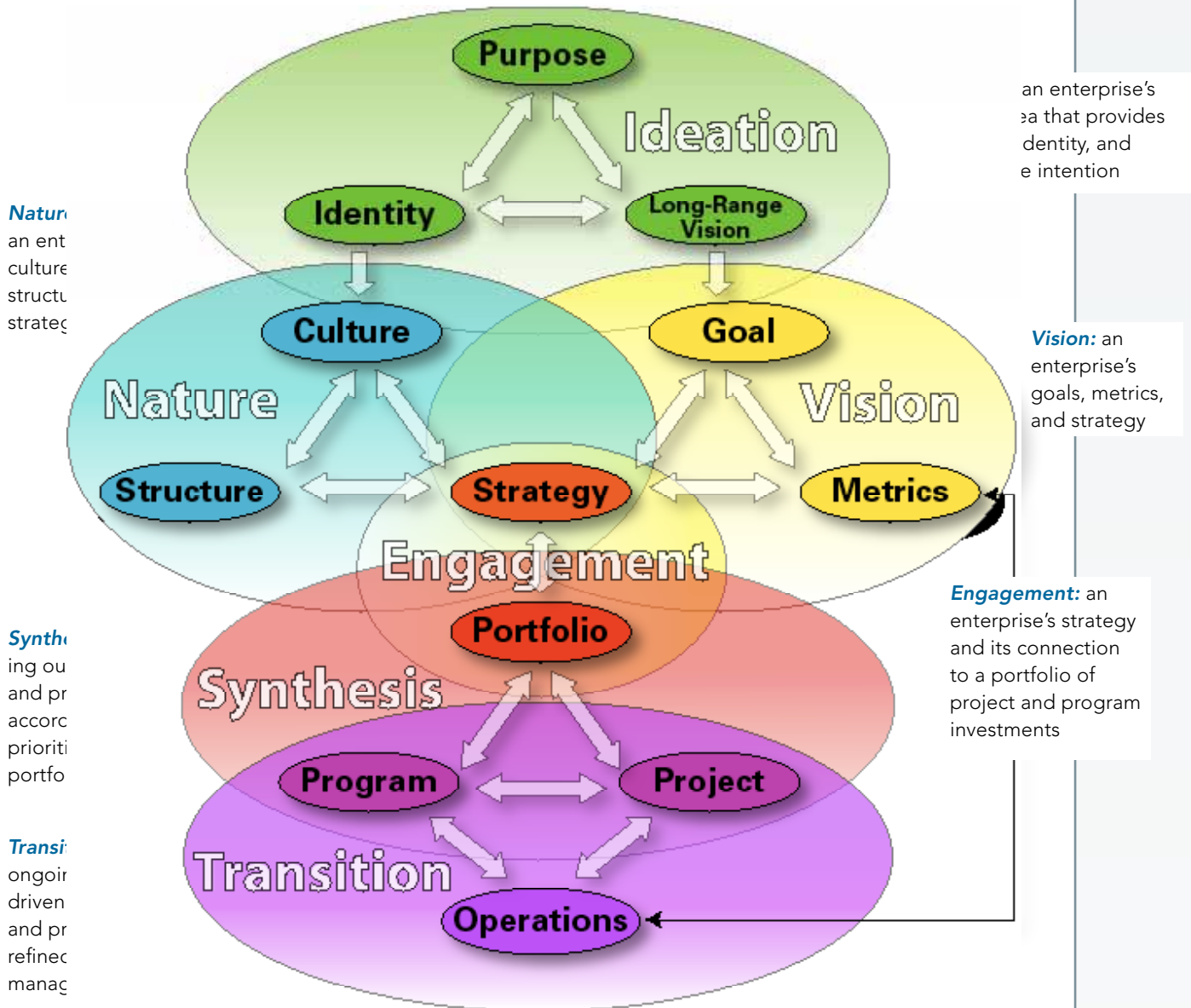
*Strategy: How to Break It Down and Get It Done* (2008, Harvard Business School Press).

The SEF also serves as the foundation for all Stanford Advanced Project Management courses. The Stanford Advanced Project Management curriculum provides a comprehensive education in using the SEF to steer your organization into alignment. Completing six courses earns participants the prestigious Stanford Certified Project Manager (SCPM) credential.

Stanford Advanced Project Management course sessions are held in four modes: (1) on campus at Stanford University, (2) virtual, asynchronous on-line, (3) instructor-led on-line, and (4) on site at client locations. Sessions are held at Stanford University three times a year; IPS also delivers these same courses at client locations worldwide.

For more information about this award-winning curriculum, including how to earn your Stanford Certified Project Manager (SCPM) credential, please contact IPS at [stanford@ipslearning.com](mailto:stanford@ipslearning.com) or visit <http://apm.stanford.edu>.

Figure 9. The complete Strategic Execution Framework



### For help applying the SEF to your organization

To help our clients jump-start their application of the Strategic Execution Framework and accelerate the realization of its benefits, IPS provides fundamental and advanced project management training, FastPLAN® strategic execution planning workshops, and Strategy Execution Mapping workshops.

To learn more about how IPS can help your company achieve better goal alignment and real productivity gains, call us toll-free (U.S. and Canada) at 866.802.1152, or locally at +1.650.578.6311. You may also e-mail us at [stanford@ipslearning.com](mailto:stanford@ipslearning.com), or visit us at [www.ipslearning.com](http://www.ipslearning.com).

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