



Integrating strategy and leadership

Developing leaders in the pursuit of an
enterprise's future success

It is an age-old problem: an organisation has a strong vision and strategy for the future, but it is not sure how best to develop its people to achieve the desired outcome. We all want leaders who can pursue strategy with a keen sense of purpose, inspire passion in others, and significantly influence day-to-day operations to achieve the necessary results. But how do we build such capacity in our potential leaders?

The answer lies in integration.

This paper explores developing leadership competence in the pursuit of a strategic intent as the best way to deliver on strategy and achieve the vision.

What is Strategic Intent?

Strategic intent¹ is a collective term that describes the aspirations of an enterprise to position it for future success. While the traditional strategic planning attempts to match internal resources and capabilities to external opportunities and threats, a strategic intent focuses on creating new capabilities to exploit future opportunities. Strategic intent involves a deliberate and well publicised implementation process that focuses the enterprise on a future radically improved state. It builds in sustainable improvement over time. Normally a strategic intent will involve medium to long-term targets and requires the commitment of top management. It creates a sense of urgency and drive for future improvement.

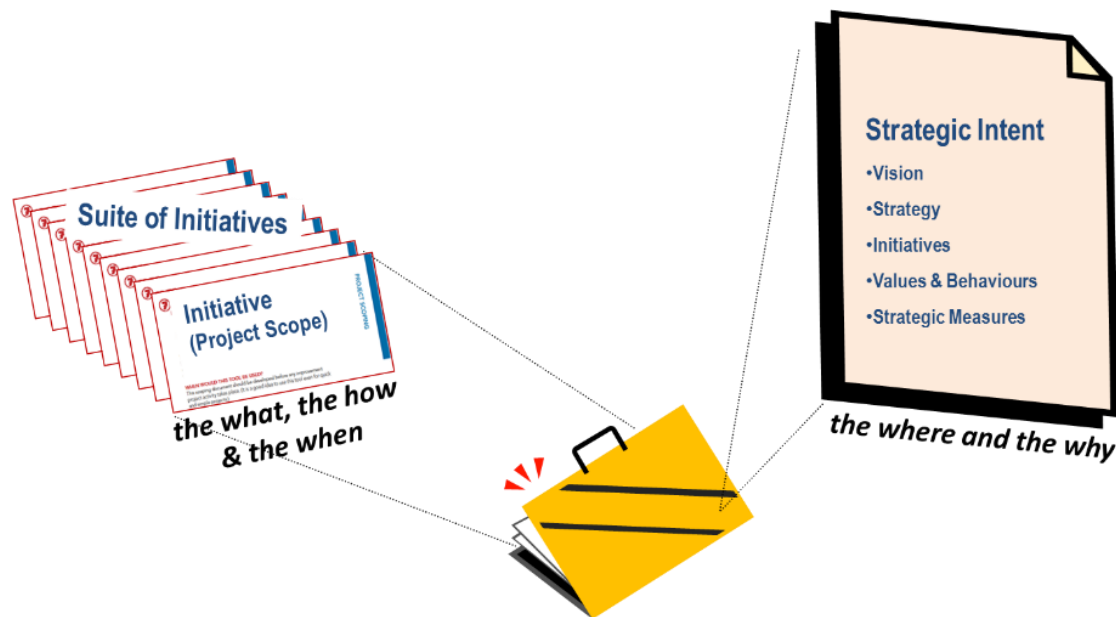


Figure 1. A typical one- or two-page Strategic Intent with a fully scoped suite of initiatives. Together these neatly provide the blueprint for action to sustain success for the long term.

In practice, a strategic intent will include the vision for the enterprise, its strategy to achieve the vision, a list of initiatives to support the intent and each initiative scoped to provide clarity about what is being done. Values and expected behaviours are normally included and all of the above are beholden to strategic measures to indicate success (Fig. 1).

¹ Jackson D. 2013. “*The Leader Who Inspires*” Chapter 18

What is leadership?

There are many definitions of leadership, but the following is used for the purposes of this paper: *“Leadership is the ability to influence others to achieve something that is beyond what we think we are capable”*².

The Current Reality

If leadership development does exist in an organisation, it is usually a composite of leadership theory, psychometric profiling, self-understanding and experiential learning. While this is a generalisation, leadership is seen, for the most part, as an important skill in its own right. Consequently, it tends to sit separate to other disciplines of learning.

This separation of leadership development from the rest of learning is convenient because it means we can send our potential leaders to participate in an external course. This will boost their career options and, of course, ensure that we retain their services. Although leadership development is easy to out-source and administer, it is usually expensive and often only aligned with the individual.

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Many leadership programs tend to provide an introspective view of the way people lead and influence. Such programs are a lesson in self-understanding within the context of personal preference and leadership theory. Some programs are based on grounded research, but many more are based on intuitive (but not necessarily well-researched) thinking. In short, leadership is reduced to individuals understanding what motivates them, differentiating their motivations from those of others, and then learning how to cross the ‘no man’s land’ of difference and preference to arrive at a way of dealing with everyone so that each individual is motivated to contribute to an organisation’s success.

I would suggest this approach does not work well. At worst, leadership development can be extremely poor value for money; at best, the benefit is incrementally better than the investment in time, energy and funds. However, most participants do feel good about the process and about themselves. And yes, I will concede, graduates do convert some learning into habits in their day-to-day deliberations, and things do improve – but only slightly.

² ibid Strategy One

Integrating leadership with strategy

A better approach involves integrating leadership development within the context of an organisation's strategy. Assuming the organisation has an aspiration for the future, such as a strategic intent, this approach aligns leadership development with the pursuit of this vision.

Let us go back to the definition of leadership: "... *the ability to influence others ... beyond what we think we are capable*". The requirement, then, is to make sure leadership development activities support the need to transform the organisation through strategy.

This provides the much-needed context for leadership development. In other words, tapping into a person's passion, so they are inspired to influence their organisation to work towards becoming a future high-performing enterprise.

Unleash the passion in people to influence the organization to secure a future high performing enterprise. "Unleash the passion": this is clichéd.

Integrate, but with what type of leadership development?

If we accept there is a need for close alignment between leadership and strategy, let us look at the components of a strategic intent to get an idea of the genre of leadership development required.

A strategic intent includes:

- a desired future (vision)
- an approach to get there (strategy)
- a way to get there (initiatives)
- a consistent way of acting (values and behaviour)

It makes sense, then, to 'learn' leadership within the context of this intent.

The focus is on a highly practical program that contains tools and techniques to develop the habits reflective of an exceptional leader.

To achieve an effective integration, the leadership program should have two major characteristics.

Firstly, it should be 'tuned' to the strategy of the enterprise, heavy on application and light on theory. The focus is on a highly practical program that contains tools and techniques to develop the habits reflective of an exceptional leader. These habits can be learnt and practiced until they become central to a person's behaviour. Applying leadership is based on grounded theory, but the emphasis on that theory is low.

Secondly, the content of the program should be aimed at delivering *values-based* leadership. Values-based leadership defined by Kraemer is a combination of four guiding principles – self-reflection, holding multiple perspectives in balance, self-confidence and genuine humility³.

³ Kraemer, H. M. 2011. *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership*

Leaning on Collin's significant research on leadership in long term successful companies, I would add a fifth: *ambition for the success of the enterprise*⁴.

Values-based leadership programs contain topical and sometimes confronting subjects. Some notable programs recommend real responsibility, true authenticity, advocating for success, the importance of relationships, seeing opportunity in constraint, and not being a slave to consensus.

The content of the program should be aimed at delivering *values-based* leadership.

In addition to Kraemer, other thinkers in the values-based leadership space include Fred Kofman, John Maxwell, Ken Blanchard, John Kotter and of course the author.

How best to integrate values-based leadership

It is important that we see leadership development as something an enterprise owns. This is best achieved by an enterprise building its own internal capacity to organise, coordinate and deliver a values-based leadership program. Most enterprises do not have the capacity to develop a unique program, but a simple solution is available. They can now easily organise and access a customised online leadership development program from within.

The value of online learning to support leadership training

An online learning approach to leadership development has a number of advantages over a one-size-fits-all, face-to-face program.

Consistency

An online learning platform that provides the necessary content for values-based leadership enables an enterprise to manage delivery internally, thereby providing all participants with a consistent learning experience.

Managed Internally

Rather than sending leaders and leaders-in-waiting to participate in an externally conducted leadership program, online leadership training is managed from within.

Participants set the pace

Leadership is delivered at a pace to suit an enterprise and its strategic intent.

Aligned to intent.

Learning is modified to and contextualized with an enterprise's strategic intent.

⁴ Collins, J. C. 2001. *Good to great: why some companies make the leap - and others don't*



Value for investment

The values-based leadership program is mostly delivered online with additional material tailored so that it is aligned with an enterprise's unique strategic intent. This minimizes external contributions and, therefore, external costs. The extent to which an external leadership specialist is used to help tailor and deliver the program depends on the enterprise's maturity and unique context.

What program is the most suitable?

LWI (Leader Who Inspires) is an online learning program that can be aligned with the implementation of an enterprise's strategic intent. It contains 8 disciplines and 7 principles of values-based leadership within a learning framework of video and written content, assessment, tools, workbooks, an adult learning cycle, and an action plan.

LWI was created to ensure individual development fulfils personal aspirations, as well as to assist an organisation to perform more effectively in the pursuit of its strategic intent.

LWI's comprehensive set of features enable current and potential leaders to:

- Participate in a unique online learning experience.
- Access content that explores the essential disciplines and principles of values-based leadership.
- Use built-in assessment processes to track progress as leadership capability develops.
- Undertake learning tailored to the organisation's strategic intent.
- Integrate the program with staff development processes.
- Align individual goals with corporate strategy.
- Opt for face-to-face delivery.
- Create a robust mentoring program.
- Gain the experience necessary to deliver leadership training to others.
- Be inspired to inspire others.

LWI is based on Dan Jackson's book "The Leader Who Inspires – increase your influence and ignite your passion to succeed"⁵.

⁵ Jackson D. 2013. "The Leader Who Inspires" www.leaderwhoinspires.com.



Summary

This paper argues the case for organisations that have a vision and strategy for the future to align the pursuit of those aspirations with a values-based leadership program. It also argues that an online learning program will provide a unique leadership development experience in the context of an enterprise's strategic intent.

LWI is an online learning program that deals comprehensively with the disciplines and principles of values-based leadership. LWI is supported by content video, workbooks, assessments, tools, learning cycles and action plans all wrapped up in an adult learning experience designed to equip people with exceptional leadership skills.

LWI wraps up an adult learning experience designed to equip people with exceptional leadership skills.

LWI aligns an individual's pursuit of success with the enterprise's desire to secure a successful future.

For more information

More information is available at www.LeaderWhoInspires.com, or click here for a discussion with LWI founder and author of 'The Leader Who Inspires' Dan Jackson, or contact him at author@leaderwhoinspires.com.