

February 2025

Strategic Insights

Finding Operational Flow

(Take 15 minutes to reflect on these key questions)

Briefing #2

Is Your Strategic Plan In Motion?

Last month, we explored 15 dimensions and 45 questions to get you thinking about and processing the many factors that contribute to your strategic plan. I hope it was helpful to carve out 15 or so minutes to scan your organization and its many physical, structural, and social systems to see what parts may need your attention to determine its direction and functionality.

But it's one thing to "have" a strategic plan in place and yet another to "operationalize" that plan. A good strategic plan helps an organization make the journey from 100 feet to just under 6 inches above the ground. Yet, **within those final 6 inches, there are still infinite ways NOT to get traction and your desired outcomes.**

Making the Shift from Good Intentions to Focused Action

Since we are at the end of February and moving ever closer to the second quarter of the year, perhaps now is a good time to take another 15 minutes to assess whether you have your strategy, operations, and action planning in place to ensure your success throughout 2025.

When considering your annual operating plan, consider these five essential elements and corresponding questions, and see if they are in place:

Who (at the Center):

- Are your current strategic initiatives clear, well crafted and the most important?
- Do you know "who" your initiatives and goals are serving and would they agree?
- Are there any adjustments that need to be made to optimize these initiatives and goals to ensure key stakeholder groups are on board?

What (the Inputs):

- Are the right leaders and teams in place to drive the work?
- Do they have the necessary resources (capital, tools, and time)?
- Are there any adjustments that need to be made regarding the who and what above? Are they clear on their roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities?

How (the Process):

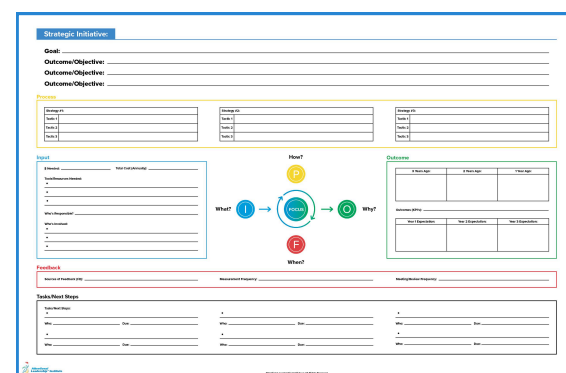
- Are the critical success factors and strategies clearly defined?
- Are the tactics being leveraged driving each strategy?
- Which strategies and/or tactics might need refinement?

Why (the Outcomes):

- Are you paying attention to the outcomes? How often?
- Is there a clear correlation between what you are "Doing" and what you are "Getting"?
- Are your trend lines moving in the right direction?

When (Feedback):

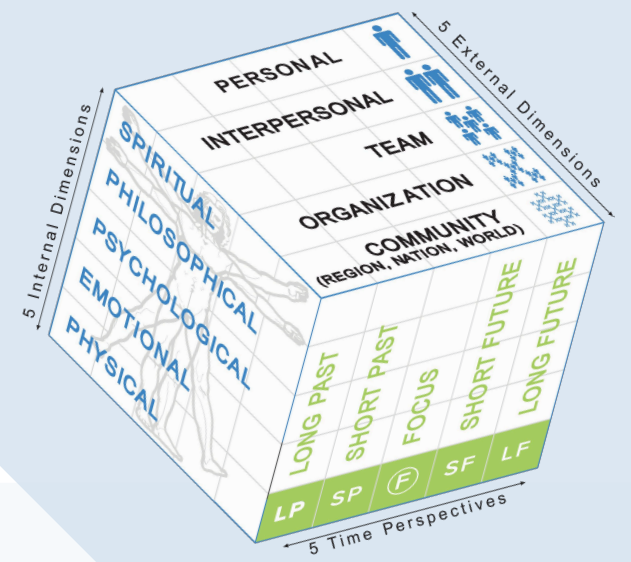
- Are your sources of feedback (internal and/or external) clear and accurate? Are you measuring the right things?
- Are you getting timely data to make better decisions?
- Are you adjusting your Inputs, Processes, Outcomes, Feedback loops, and even your strategic Goals to ensure you are using your time, energy, and resources wisely?



When helping clients fully operationalize their strategic plans and initiatives, we use these same questions to ensure we are on the right path. It's one thing to be busy; it's another thing to know what you are being "busy about".

There are few things more motivating than seeing a direct correlation between what you are "doing" and what you are "getting"—as an individual, team, or organization. The more you can draw this correlation between staff effort and organizational outcomes, the greater their motivation, discretionary effort, and meaning they and their teams will find in their work.

With just a little bit of time set aside each month to review these 25 questions, you can be sure that you are fully operationalizing your strategic plan and moving towards your Ideal Future State through your current goals and objectives by those executing the work.



Strategic Focus and Performance Focus

Strategic Focus—identifying **What's Important Now (WINs)**—is the foundation of **Performance Focus**, which drives day-to-day activities. By aligning daily actions with strategic goals through a clear operating plan, you can know where, when, and how long to focus your attention—what I call **Attentional Leadership**—on your WINs (Whats Important Now) so you can more intentionally move the organization towards its intended direction.

Flow at Every Level of Your Organization

Flow isn't just an individual experience—it's a systemic principle. Cultivating flow within relationships, across teams, departments, the organization, and yes, yourself, creates a high-performance culture where everyone can thrive. This is where people want to be, and proper operational planning can help them, and you, achieve it.

To stay on top of your game, ensure your Focus, Inputs, Process, Outcomes, and Feedback loops are clear and current. This keeps your eye on the ball!

Conclusion: Leading with Strategic Flow

Our strategic and operating planning process helps leaders engineer flow by identifying what drives performance and what creates drag. Sustained flow isn't just about getting your strategy right—it's about creating an aligned, focused organization that delivers on its mission every day.

If I've piqued your curiosity, I'd be happy to send you a copy of my new book, *The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership*. Email me at bruce@attentionalleadership.com to request your copy. My mission is to help leaders, teams, and organizations achieve their mission by finding their flow, so please feel free to contact me if you'd like to discuss these frameworks and principles further.

Warm regards,



Dr. Bruce H. Jackson
Principal
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