

December 2025

# The 30–40–30 Model For Strategy That Moves

*(Take 15 minutes to reflect on these core questions this month)*

**Briefing  
#7**

## Introduction

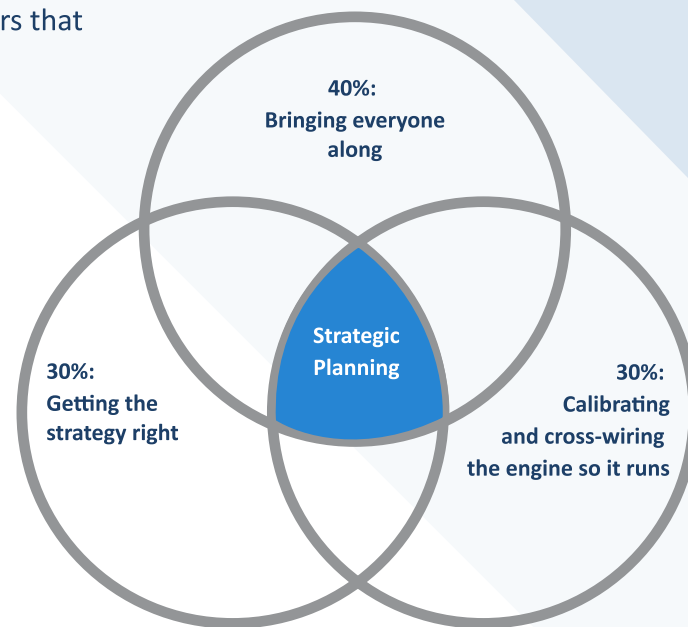
When people hear “strategic planning,” it can feel abstract—with so many moving parts to identify and understand. In practice, strategy is much like a machine: interlocking gears that must be forged, properly placed, timed, and tuned—each playing a specific role.

I like to use the race-car metaphor when discussing strategy—where strategy is a vehicle—one that takes into consideration where the organization has been, where it is now, and where it seeks to go.

Our approach—leveraging the **5–Alignments™**

**Framework** and the **FOCUS Planning Process** helps you pay attention to your **WIN (What’s Important Now)**—your **Strategic Focus**—and align those gears so the engine fires, wheels turn, and the vehicle moves towards its intended destination through daily **Performance Focus**.

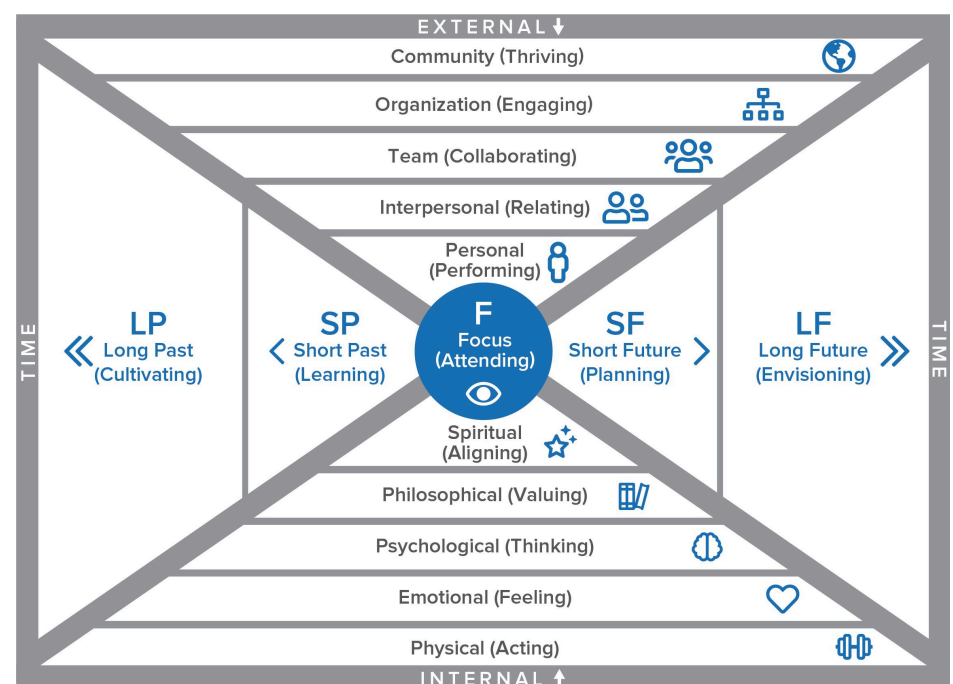
*Because so many people see strategic planning as an event and not an ongoing and iterative process, this brief frames and allocates the value and impact of strategy as 30–40–30:*



## How We “See” Before We Build: The 5–Alignments™

Getting strategy right requires not just “systems thinking” but three-dimensional thinking—scanning outside, scanning inside, and doing so through time. When engaging with clients, we leverage the 5–Alignments™ Framework, where time and attention are given to exploring the Future, External, Internal, and Historical factors, all relevant to our Focus in the here and now.

- **Future Alignment** moves from the long future to the short future to the now—clarifying destination, milestones, and current posture.
- **External Alignment** scans the operating environment: socioeconomic, technological, environmental, economic, political, industrial; comparators and competitors; member and market signals.
- **Internal Alignment** examines the board, senior leadership, staff, systems, and culture—the mechanisms that actually turn the wheels.
- **Historical Alignment** widens the iris from short past to long past to cultivate wins, harvest losses, challenge assumptions, and internalize lessons.
- **Strategic Focus** is the act of placing your attention with intention on your WINs so that what matters most right now gets the bulk of your time, attention, and resources.



Once you begin to “see” all these moving parts—to see as an Attentional Leader—it’s essential to understand their relationships and observe how strategy cascades down to the ground, who does it, and how each part relates to and aligns with the others. From my experience, the value and impact distribution looks something like this:

## 30% — Getting the Strategy Right

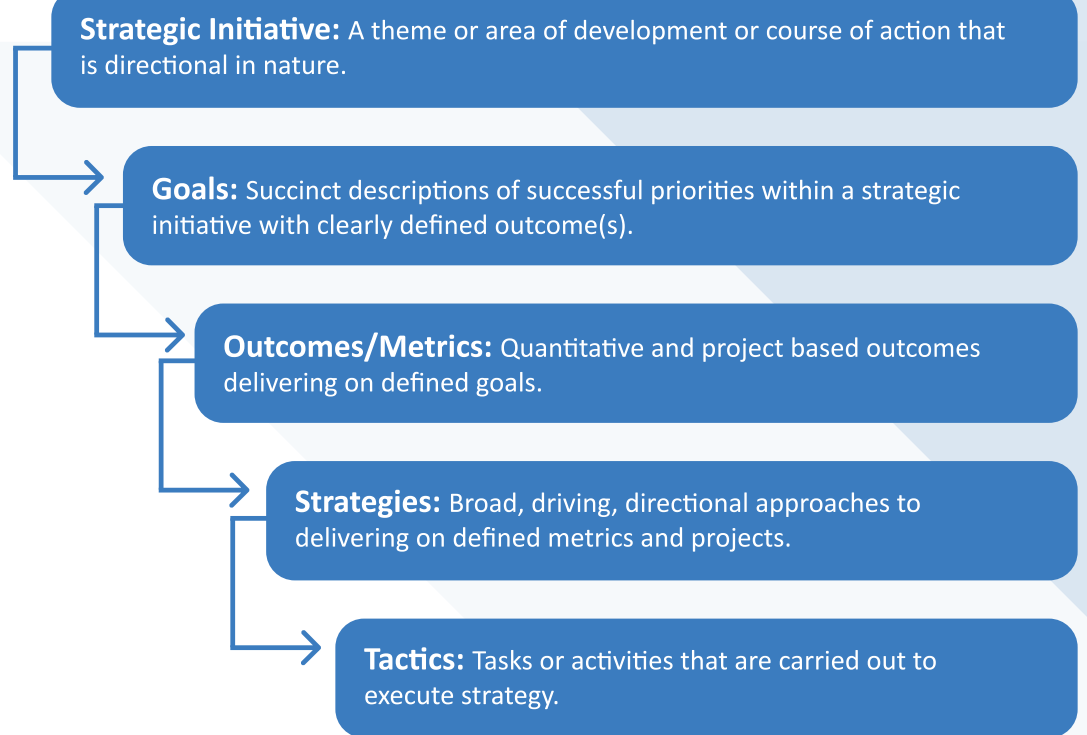
This is the architectural work—clear choices and a cascade everyone can hold in their head—where the metaphor of the Bonsai Tree makes real sense—intentionally trimmed and shaped with a few helpful rules:

- No more than 3-4 Strategic Themes (Initiatives)
- Up to 3 Goals per Theme
- Up to 3 Outcomes/Metrics per Goal (observable)
- Up to 3 Strategies per Outcome/Metric (how)
- Up to 3 Tactics per Strategy (concrete plays)
- Operating elements (owners, budget, timelines, templates, dashboards)

### Why It Matters

From the ground up, operating elements drive tactics; tactics drive strategies; strategies move outcomes/metrics; outcomes/metrics fulfill goals; goals advance the theme/initiative—then back up the chain for governance and accountability.

Seeing broadly, narrowing intentionally, and cascading gently towards the ground is how you get your strategy right. But few care about a strategy they don't help build, so let's talk about an even bigger factor:



## 40% — Bring Everyone Along

The greater value lies in the social and political spheres. Strategy done with and through people—not to them. This creates collective ownership and the real horsepower. Proximal Stakeholders (board, staff, close partners/funders, key benchmark orgs) and Distal Stakeholders (members, clients, community voices, allied institutions) each deserve a voice. Using surveys, interviews, focus groups, and working sprints, running structured conversations (town halls → team huddles → 1:1s) with similar prompts: What's the problem? What's possible? What matters now? People commit to what they help create—and that commitment becomes social, political, and economic capital.

### Why It Matters

Your strategy is only as good as the social capital and support you have to execute it. Design a strategic plan without it, and you'll be constantly selling and/or explaining it. Do this up front, and you'll find greater alignment and an accelerated path towards achieving it.

## 30% — Calibrate and Cross-Wire the Engine

Plans become motion when each strategic initiative, with 1–3 optimally focused goals, is designed as an independent wheel that rolls in concert with the others (think of it as an All-Wheel-Drive vehicle). When each of your strategic initiatives (no more than four) has clearly defined goals (no more than three) with a comprehensive operating plan for each, the very process of leveraging staff and volunteer teams to design and build their operating plans—with each team reviewing, commenting, and invested in each other's plans—allows everyone to go deep into their own plans while developing greater awareness of how everyone else's operating plans have been designed for greater cross-collaboration.

This helps everyone make the shift from “this is my job” to “this is my organization”—with greater appreciation and understanding of how each goal and corresponding operating plan helps them see the entire organization.

### Why It Matters

Helping everyone make that shift from thinking in isolation (their job or their team) to seeing the whole system increases understanding and appreciation for everyone else's role. This helps people see how the organization and its elements are interconnected, with everyone recognizing their role in moving the entire organization toward its ideal future state. Looking through a broader strategic lens, you can ensure you are not only getting your strategy right but also achieving optimal alignment and buy-in.

## CEO/Senior Leader Reflection (15 minutes)

Use the following questions to scan your staff and teams this month:

### 1. How “on the mark” is your strategy:

- Are your 3–4 strategic initiatives clearly defined and still on target?
- Are the 1–3 goals under each initiative well-crafted and properly focused?
- For each goal, are outcomes/metrics clear, and do you have an operating plan and review cadence in place?

### 2. Who’s on board?

- Are your proximal stakeholders (Board, staff, key partners) fully invested and committed?
- Are your broader stakeholders (members, alliances, community) aware of—and aligned with—your direction?
- Do you have the social and political capital you need to achieve your ideal future state through the initiatives and goals you’ve set?

### 3. Is the engine calibrated and cross-wired?

- Do teams and individuals understand each other’s goals and roles?
- Are dependencies and interdependencies clear and actively managed?
- Do feedback loops and dashboards give you a reliable picture of progress and inform timely course corrections?

There are more questions to consider, but these are a good start. If one or more of these stand out for you, I’m happy to send over a more in-depth analysis rubric to help you take a deeper look at your strategic engine—no charge, just happy to help.

## In Closing

Remember that world-class strategy isn’t just a document; it’s a tuned vehicle on the right track, with the right team—all in sync.

The first 30% gets the architecture right. The middle 40% builds ownership and energy. The final 30% turns decisions into dependable motion—inputs, processes, outputs, and fast feedback loops cross-wired across the whole system to ensure you finish this strategic cycle and complete the race that you defined at the beginning.

Answer the questions above and you’ll know whether your strategy is not only grounded but on the right track and moving at full pace in the direction you chose—together.

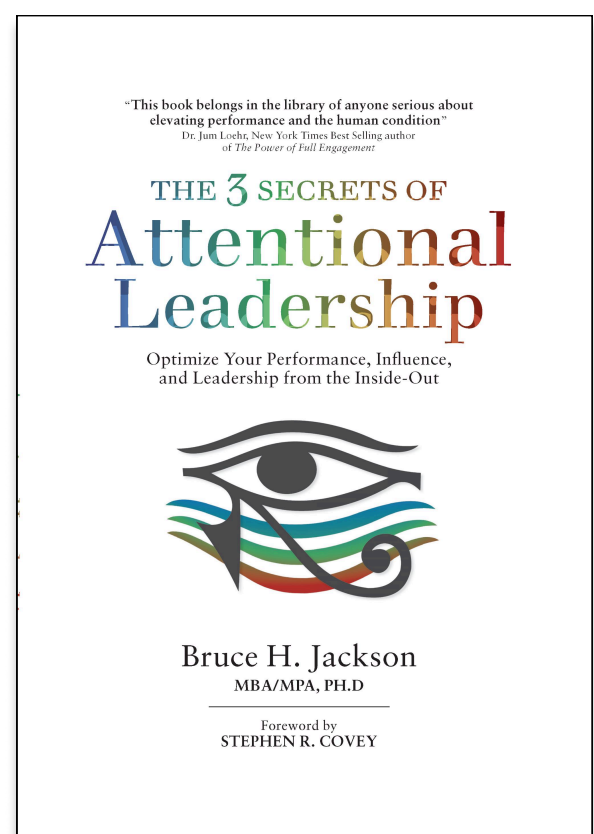
This brief builds on principles from my book, *The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership*, where I describe how Strategic Focus fuels Performance Focus in yourself, your teams, and your organization.

More to come...

Sincerely,



Bruce H. Jackson, MBA/MPA, Ph.D  
Principal  
Attentional Leadership Institute



## Optional: Upcoming Opportunity For Leaders

For those who are looking to begin 2026 with greater clarity and focus, we're hosting a full-day leadership experience in Salt Lake City on January 13, 2026.

It's a hands-on session designed to help leaders identify their WIN (What's Important Now), align their attention and energy for the year ahead, and explore key practices from *The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership*.

If this would be helpful to you or your team, details are included below.

# Becoming an Attentional Leader

**A Full-Day Experience to Elevate Focus, Flow, and Performance**

*Attendees will receive a free copy of the book: *The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership**

Facilitated by

**DR. BRUCE H. JACKSON**

*Leader, Team & Organizational Strategist,  
Author, and Global Thought Leader*



**JANUARY 13, 2026**

SALT LAKE CITY, UT | 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

*Save \$100.00 when you register before December 22, 2025*

### **START 2026 WITH CLARITY, FOCUS, AND INTENTION.**

#### **What The Day Includes:**

- A thoughtful reset to begin your year with clarity and intention
- A guided journey through the foundational elements of Attentional Leadership
- Reflective 1080° Sweep™ Assessment to map your Flow Assets and Flow Liabilities
- Applied exercises to identify your WIN (What's Important Now) for 2026
- Crafting your Personalized Flow Formula to align your attention, energy & environment for greater impact
- Early access to the framework from Bruce's upcoming book, with a print copy provided to each participant