

# From whiteboard to reality; how to get your team behind the plan

## Why strategy often stalls in business

For many businesses, creating a business strategy feels like ticking the big box; a clear plan, a bold vision, goals written on a whiteboard. But the real challenge isn't setting direction, it's getting there.

Plenty of strategies look good on paper but fizzle out in practice. Priorities compete and operational tensions arise. Teams can often find themselves pulling in different directions. What started with energy slowly loses momentum. Sound familiar?

This isn't a sign of failure. It's a sign of a very common gap between strategy and execution. And it's one that can be fixed, not with more PowerPoint decks, but with better focus, clarity and leadership.

## What the research tells us

The MIT Sloan Management Review article *Turning Strategy Into Results* (Sull et al., 2015) breaks it down: the biggest reason strategies don't deliver results isn't poor planning, it's poor translation. Strategies

become stuck in high-level language that doesn't connect with the day-to-day work of employees.

The findings identify key factors that separate businesses who turn strategy into action from those who don't:

**Clear priorities:** Organisations that focus on a few, well-communicated priorities are more successful. Ambiguous or conflicting goals stall action.

**Line of sight:** Employees need to understand how their daily work links to the bigger picture. Without this, motivation drops and execution drifts.

**Coordinated action:** Teams need to work in sync, not in silos. That means aligning resources, decisions, and incentives across the business.

**Adaptability:** In today's environment, being able to flex, learn and adjust quickly is a competitive advantage. Rigidity kills momentum.

It also reveals a worrying statistic: only **55% of middle managers** can name their company's top five strategic

priorities. That's not a people issue — that's a leadership and communication gap.

## What are other organisations are doing?

### BrewDog got right (and wrong)

Take BrewDog. They're known for boldness, not just in product, but in how they've grown. From launching *Equity for Punks* to expanding globally, they built a strategy that people bought into, literally.

In the early days, BrewDog's strategy was clear: be the rebellious alternative to mass-market beer. They backed it up with distinctive branding, a direct-to-consumer funding model, and strong employee identity.

But in recent years, the company has faced criticism for not walking its talk internally. Reports of staff burnout, internal culture issues, and hasty bar closures suggest a disconnect between strategy and employee experience.

This gap, between bold plans and operational follow-through, is exactly what the Sloan research warns against. Strategy fails when the message doesn't match the experience, or when leaders don't bring people with them.

### How Timpson leads with values

Timpson, a family-run UK retail chain known for key cutting, shoe repairs and dry cleaning, has taken a values-led approach to strategy execution. Their "upside-down management" model flips traditional leadership structures, empowering store managers with autonomy and trusting them to run their shops like owners.

This decentralised leadership approach supports their strategy of high trust, high service, and community connection. Instead of enforcing rigid targets, they focus on creating a culture where employees feel safe, supported, and accountable.

The result? Consistently high customer satisfaction and employee retention, even during economic pressure. Timpson shows that strategy doesn't always need dashboards and KPIs. Sometimes, it needs trust, clarity, and people who genuinely care.

### How businesses can turn strategy into results

You don't need a corporate machine to execute strategy well. What you need is clarity, consistency, and connection.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

### 1. Simplify your priorities

Strip it back. Focus on 3–5 core goals. Make sure everyone understands them, not just the leadership team.

### 2. Connect the dots

Make it easy for people to see how their work contributes to the bigger plan. Use team meetings, 1:1s and informal comms to keep the strategy alive.

### 3. Align behaviour with direction

Your strategy isn't just what you say, it's what you do. Leaders need to model the behaviours that support the strategy. Mixed messages kill trust.

### 4. Build in feedback loops

Encourage your team to speak up about what's working and what's getting in the way. Adjust based on what you hear. Agility is the new strength.

### 5. Invest in your managers

Middle managers carry the message. They're your link between vision and action. If they're not confident in the strategy, your teams won't be either.

## How GrowPros helps

We help businesses turn strategy into results by focusing on what really makes change happen - people.

We work with leadership teams and managers to:

- Clarify your strategic and mental narrative so everyone understands the 'why' and the 'how'
- Coach leaders to communicate clearly and consistently
- Develop simple systems to keep strategy front of mind without adding admin
- Create behaviour change that makes the strategy real in everyday actions

We help you close the gap between vision and execution, so your strategy doesn't just sit in a document, but shows up in what people do.

## Key references

- Sull, D., Turconi, S., Sull, C., & Yoder, J. (2015). *Turning Strategy Into Results*. MIT Sloan Management Review
- BrewDog Ltd. and public reporting via The Guardian, 2025