

The *HOW* of Leadership

Julie Williamson, PhD

An Abundance of Strategies

Companies have a phenomenal number of strategies highlighting **WHAT** they intend to do. Operations, talent, sales, IT, corporate – you name it, there's a strategy documented somewhere. Businesses spend a huge amount of time and money developing these strategies. Consultants are called, meetings are held, binders are created, and charts are developed. Maybe there's even a clever infographic!

After the consultants go home, meetings wind down, and infographics get pinned on the wall, the world goes back to normal. And a year later the annual cycle starts all over again.

Strategies are critically important for businesses – people need to know what the direction is and why they are heading there. Unfortunately, the investment in strategy is often lost because leaders don't personally change their decisions and behaviors in ways that deliver on the agreed-to plans.

Strategy unexecuted is potential unrealized.

An Explosion of Goodness

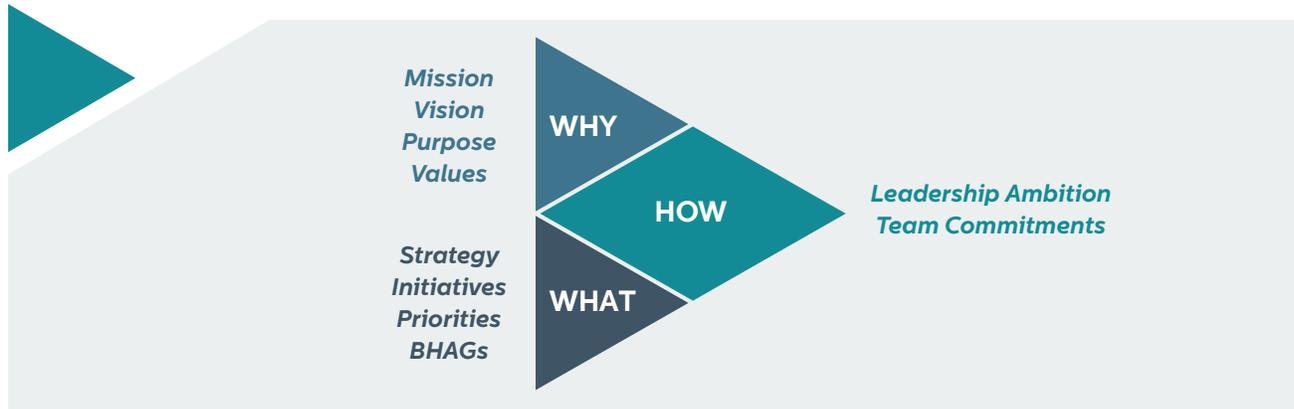
In almost equal measure, companies spend resources defining **WHY** they do what they do, often bringing in brand firms to create beautiful mission, vision, and purpose statements (what we call MVPs), underpinned by values that tell the world how they intend to act. The MVPs typically highlight a positive social impact, leading the industry in some way, and/or delivering to customers. Values are almost always some version of integrity, respect, excellence, innovation, accountability, and customer focus.

MVPs and values are worth stating because they clarify intention. Unfortunately, they tend to stop at clarity, becoming beautiful posters, knickknacks, and taglines for marketing to customers and employees rather than guardrails for decisions and action. MVPs and values only become more than words on a page when the most senior leaders visibly align their actions to them.

Nothing changes until leaders change.

The Missing Link

It is rare for leaders to be as clear on how to work together as they are on what they do and why they do it. We are obsessed with closing that gap.



HOW leaders lead together is the **missing link**. Senior leaders must define and align to how they work together to deliver more than any of them can do individually, if they want to create exceptional results organizationally. The strongest WHAT and WHY will fail to be executed without clarity on HOW senior leaders lead together.

Many leadership teams do well in a tactical crisis – they drop everything, come together, move quickly and decisively to mitigate the threat, and have success. The existential crisis of irrelevance needs equal if not more attention, and having a defined HOW of working is the best defense and offense. Not only does it ward off threats, it also drives growth in unexpected areas, because opportunities are identified early and converted fast.

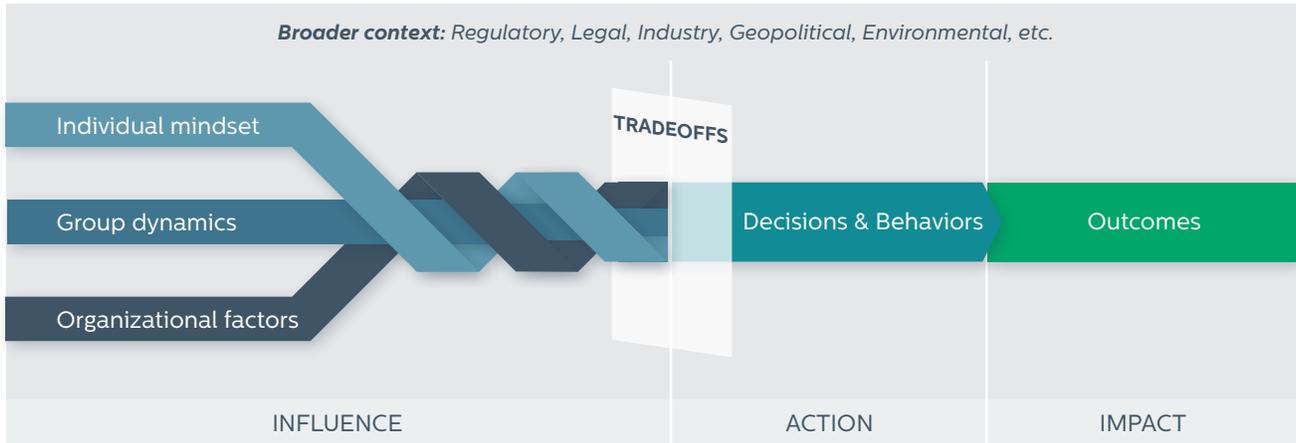
Without a clear HOW, organizational strategies and visions struggle to gain momentum and deliver results.

Navigating complex connections to deliver differentiated results is the hottest skill for executives to have in today's business world. The world is becoming ever more interconnected, and the white space between functions, P&Ls, and geographies is the most powerful reservoir of new ideas and game changing innovations. It goes untapped when leaders don't have clear ways of working together to explore, invest, and deliver.

That's why we are obsessed with helping senior leaders focus on HOW they lead together to deliver on what they want to do and why they want to do it. As leaders get clear on how to lead together and to work in alignment with each other, the rest of the organization learns to do the same. The result? Innovation, transformation, growth. Without the need for a crisis.

Start with Self

Leaders must start with themselves – how they show up is disproportionately impactful. That’s why we focus on a small group of influential leaders to define the HOW and align decisions and behaviors to it.



Alignment requires leaders to change deeply entrenched behaviors and decision processes to create different outcomes. At Karrikins Group, we focus on individual mindsets, group dynamics, and organizational factors that leaders bring into their processes. Then we help leaders identify the tradeoffs they negotiate every day that influence the outcomes they deliver.

Legacy ways of working hold teams back from delivering on their strategies and honoring their missions and visions. We believe that every executive in an organization has the potential to impact success, and it takes new ways of talking about and acting on tradeoffs to make it happen. Through our work, leaders get a new vocabulary for wrestling with tradeoffs, and they are able to connect with colleagues to solve problems in new ways.

Leaders must have the courage to change themselves before they work to change others.

Changing mindsets, dynamics, and factors is HARD WORK. It takes courage to go first, and intention to stay the course. It can be especially difficult for the most senior leaders in an organization. We help senior leaders dig into what gets in the way of partnering across the organization. In doing so, they unlock latent capacity and huge opportunities.

It is only by doing things differently that teams create different outcomes. Our singular focus is on helping teams to define and deliver on new ways of working together to create different outcomes.

Sometimes the solutions are as simple as changing organizational factors, like the order of a meeting agenda. Most of the time, the solutions require leaders to dig into individual mindsets and group dynamics, and show up in new ways that take courage and discipline to deliver. We stand shoulder to shoulder with clients as they navigate the changes that are needed and shift into powerfully aligned ways of working together.

To Define the **HOW**, Do It Together

This work cannot be done independently or by delegates. Executives must do the work together to create accelerated and impactful results.



When we work with companies to co-create their HOW, we engage with the most senior leaders in the organization, typically the CEO and their direct reports. This can't be delegated – the most senior leaders must invest the time to understand themselves before they can bring this type of transformation out to the rest of the organization.

We create the space for executives to work together in an effective and impactful process. The HOW they create moves them quickly to a new model of leadership that accelerates growth and transformation.

Constructing an aligned executive team is a challenge worth accepting.

Constructing an aligned executive leadership team from a group of independent business leaders who normally only interact for status updates and crisis management is a challenge worth accepting. When the work is done, the team knows how to execute collectively on agreed-to strategies and MVPs. They are aligned to mutual success because they've

shifted personally in ways that fundamentally change the trajectory of the whole organization. We believe in the power of HOW and the impact of alignment because we've seen it accelerate transformation and growth. When senior leaders put in the time and effort, the results are remarkable. They include:

- Stronger market position
- Accelerated financial growth
- Faster speed to market for new products
- More predictable outcomes
- Increased productivity throughout the organization

The organization delivers on leadership commitments in a way that sends a clear message to employees, customers, communities, and investors: ***we are aligned as a team***. It is a powerful platform and a compelling message that can't be created through clever marketing, big binders, or fancy charts. It comes from the leaders themselves.

About the author:



Julie Williamson, PhD

Chief Growth Enabler, Karrikins Group

Julie's enduring interest in change starts with herself. She has pursued different educational, work, and personal opportunities over the last 30 years, always leaning into growth opportunities. She has been a technologist, a strategist, and today as a social scientist she finds passion and energy working with leaders of companies around the world as they tackle some of the biggest challenges in their companies. In today's increasing complex and interconnected world, Julie knows the power of aligned leadership. Through alignment, leaders can successfully discover and explore incredible new opportunities. That's why Julie is committed to helping the most senior leaders in organizations come together to convert on the potential that exists in the space between organizational P&Ls, functional areas, and other silos.

Contact us:

For more information, reach out to us at hello@karrikingroup.com. We'd love to talk with you about how we could inspire your leaders to move from agreement to alignment and deliver amazing results for your organization.

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About Karrikins Group

Karrikins Group is a global behavior change company that aligns leadership and organizations to accelerate transformational change. Find out more about the Karrikins Alignment Journey at www.karrikingroup.com.

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