

The **HOW** of Leadership

Julie Williamson, PhD

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.

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!

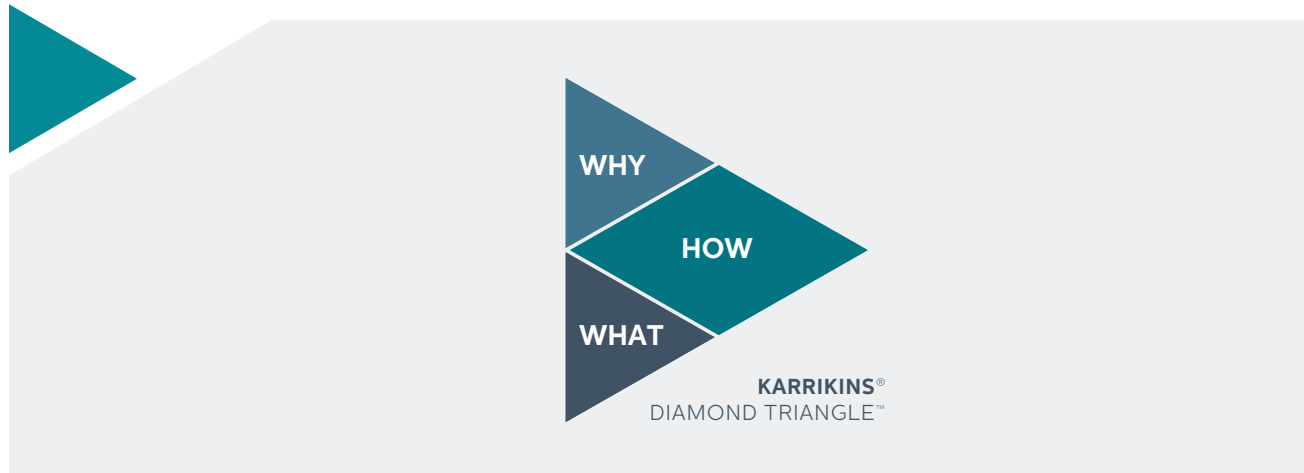
After the consultants go home, meetings wind down, and infographics get pinned on the wall, the world goes back to normal. And a year later the annual cycle starts all over again.

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.

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.

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

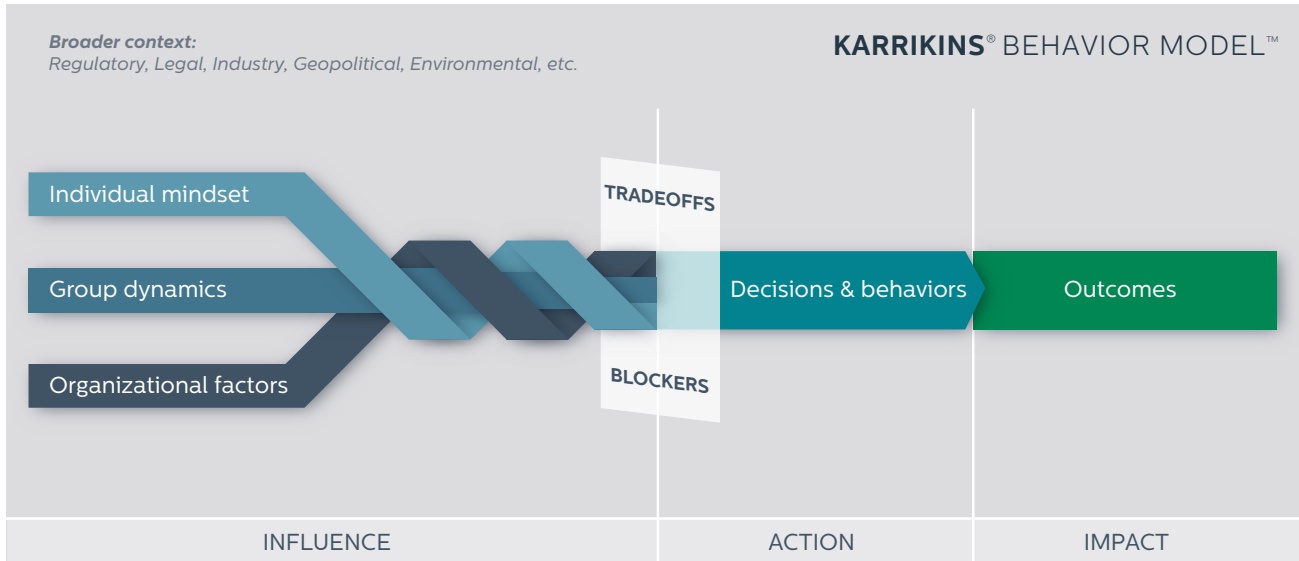
Navigating complex connections to deliver differentiated results is the hottest skill for executives to have in today's business world. The world is becoming ever more interconnected, and the white space between functions, P&Ls, and geographies is the most powerful reservoir of new ideas and game changing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

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.

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

How leaders show up has a disproportionate impact. 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 entrenched behaviors and decision processes to create new outcomes. At Karrikins Group®, we focus on the individual mindsets, group dynamics, and organizational factors that influence leaders. Then we help leaders identify the tradeoffs they negotiate every day that create those outcomes.

Leaders must be willing to do the work to create clarity about mindsets, group dynamics, and organizational factors that impact how they navigate tradeoffs and blockers. From there, new decisions and behaviors can be defined and demonstrated. It is only by changing how they work together that teams create new outcomes – that's why the HOW is our singular focus.

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. We help senior leaders dig into what gets in the way of partnering across the organization and prevents them from converting on ambitious goals.

We work shoulder to shoulder with clients as they navigate the work of building their Diamond Triangle™ and identifying how to shift into powerfully aligned ways of working together. As teams of leaders work through our Alignment Journey they morph into a Leadership Team that is coordinated, focused, and performing at a level that is unattainable without a clearly defined HOW. It takes courage, discipline, and curiosity to do this work, but the end results are well worth it.

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

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



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.

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.

Constructing an aligned team is a challenge worth accepting.

Constructing an aligned team from a group of independent business leaders who normally only interact for status updates and crisis management is a challenge worth accepting. When this 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 ultimately change the trajectory of the whole organization. This can't be delegated - the team must invest the time to change themselves before they attempt to change the organization.

They include:

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

Knowing the HOW of leadership in an organization 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

Partner and Chief Growth Enabler

Julie is a growth-minded leader who believes executives set the standard for others through the example they provide. She is a strategist, technologist, and a social scientist who puts her energy toward working with leaders around the world as they tackle some of the biggest challenges in their industries and organizations.

In today's increasingly complex and interconnected world, Julie knows the power of aligned leaders to deliver on strategy and create value. That's why she focuses her time and energy on helping senior leaders come together to deliver the work that matters most.



KARRIKINS
GROUP

We are **Karrikins**.

We're world-class facilitators, cultural changemakers, behavioral scientists, and experience creators, but above all, we're people looking to make a lasting and positive impact. With decades of diverse experience in helping companies set ambitious strategies and act on them, our leaders guide our collective impact and enable transformative growth for leaders and teams.

Visit us at karrikinsgroup.com to learn more about our game changing alignment solutions for executive teams, delivery teams, and individuals who are ready to lean into the power of alignment to deliver on their most ambitious goals. Through our Alignment Institute we offer catalytic workshops, individual programs, and smaller group experiences.

KG Alignment Institute

KG Alignment Journey

KG Board Alignment



KARRIKIN (n): a group of compounds found in the smoke of burning plants that stimulates seed germination and catalyzes growth.