



STRATEGY REPORT

# You're doomed or you adapt

THERE WILL BE WINNERS AND LOSERS.  
THIS IS HOW TO WIN STRATEGY IN 2022.



cascade



# In Brief

We asked thousands of organizations about their strategy.  
**The results weren't good.**

1. The vast majority of strategic plans are doomed to fail.
2. While other disciplines have evolved, strategy has failed to adapt.
3. Some have taken notice.
4. Those who get it, win. Those who don't, lose.
5. This is how to win (the IDEAL method).



**Tom Wright**  
Founder & CEO



**cascade**



**Karim Zuhri**  
General Manager & COO



**cascade**



# Most strategies fail.

## A sobering 9 out of 10 organizations fail to execute their strategy.

Although there are countless reasons a strategy may not succeed, this report sheds light on the stark difference between those that fail and those that succeed. Learn why most fail, and what you can do to join the 10%.

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An untold truth that leaders ignore and employees accept —  
**Strategy is broken and nobody is fixing it.**

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While most disciplines have evolved dramatically in the internet age, modern strategy has failed to adapt.

Marketing has moved from logos on billboards, to targeted ads right under your thumb. Logistics has moved from mathematicians around a table, to predictive algorithms. Sales from the good old-fashioned diary, to advanced CRMs with real-time information. And yet strategy has stayed the same. While everything evolved around it, strategy never left the spreadsheet.

The way organizations communicate their visions, objectives & work relies on an outdated process. Leaders fall into the trap of thinking about strategy in terms of “presenting” & “sharing” - when they should be thinking about “collaborating” & “exposing.”

**Your plans die in boardrooms and you need to know why.**

We partnered with Momentive, SurveyMonkey’s business arm, to survey 1,750 people on their approach to strategy.

### **The conclusion?**

Getting your plan in the hands of your people is the hardest and most important thing you can do for your strategy - and your company’s success.

**By the end of this report, you’ll never view strategy the same way again.**

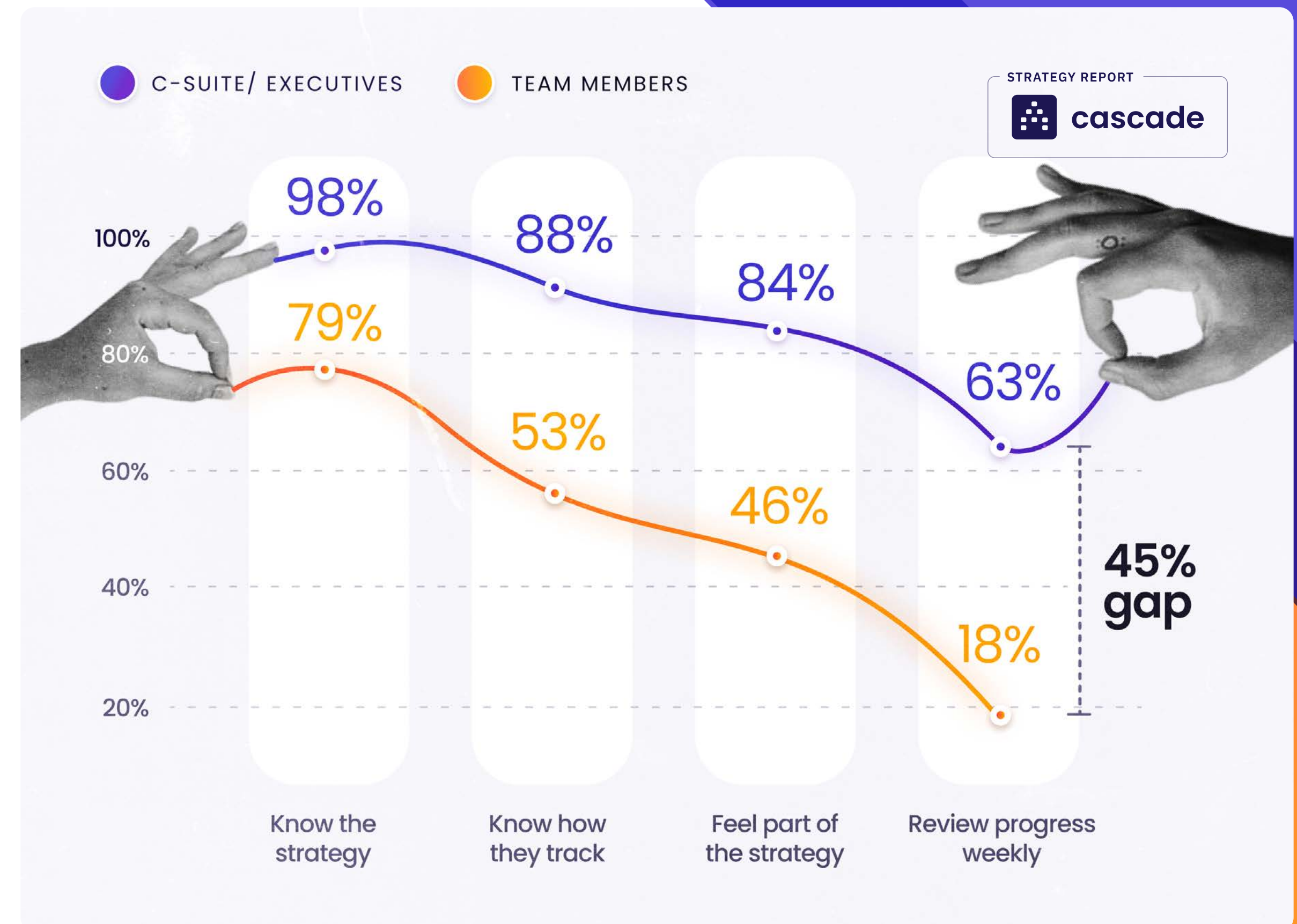


# 1 Strategy is monopolized by the leaders.

The further from the top, the less people know about their company's strategy.

Team members are often left clueless about their company strategy. Their goals aren't clear, they don't understand how their work contributes to the organization's strategy and as a result, they're left uninvested and disengaged.

Employees don't **know** where to find the strategy. And even when they do, they're disconnected from the **tracking**, the results. This leads to team members not **feeling** like they contribute to your business, which leads to disengagement and **not reviewing the progress** weekly.





## The gap between team members & C-Suite executives keeps getting bigger.

For a moment, picture strategy as a battle.

Those executing the strategy day-to-day are the boots on the ground. The ones getting the job done. The leadership team acts as commanders devising the strategy from their ivory tower, far away from the frontline. Often leadership teams are making decisions without knowing the reality of the frontline. On the flip side of the coin, many of those on the frontline aren't actually aware of the strategy or their objectives.


### This is a BIG problem.

There is a complete disconnect between people creating the strategy and those executing it. Everyone has experienced this yet it's widely accepted: **"That's just how it works"**.



**Jordan Colreavy**  
Head of Category Strategy

L'ORÉAL  
PARIS

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**"Teams feeling a disconnect between day-to-day activities and business strategy are a real concern."**

Teams operating without clarity of the overarching business strategy will ultimately lead to 3 things:

- 1) Team disengagement,
- 2) Subpar business performance
- 3) Loss in market competitiveness.

So, what are the causes or triggers? Is the problem the strategy itself, or is the problem the way it is communicated in businesses?

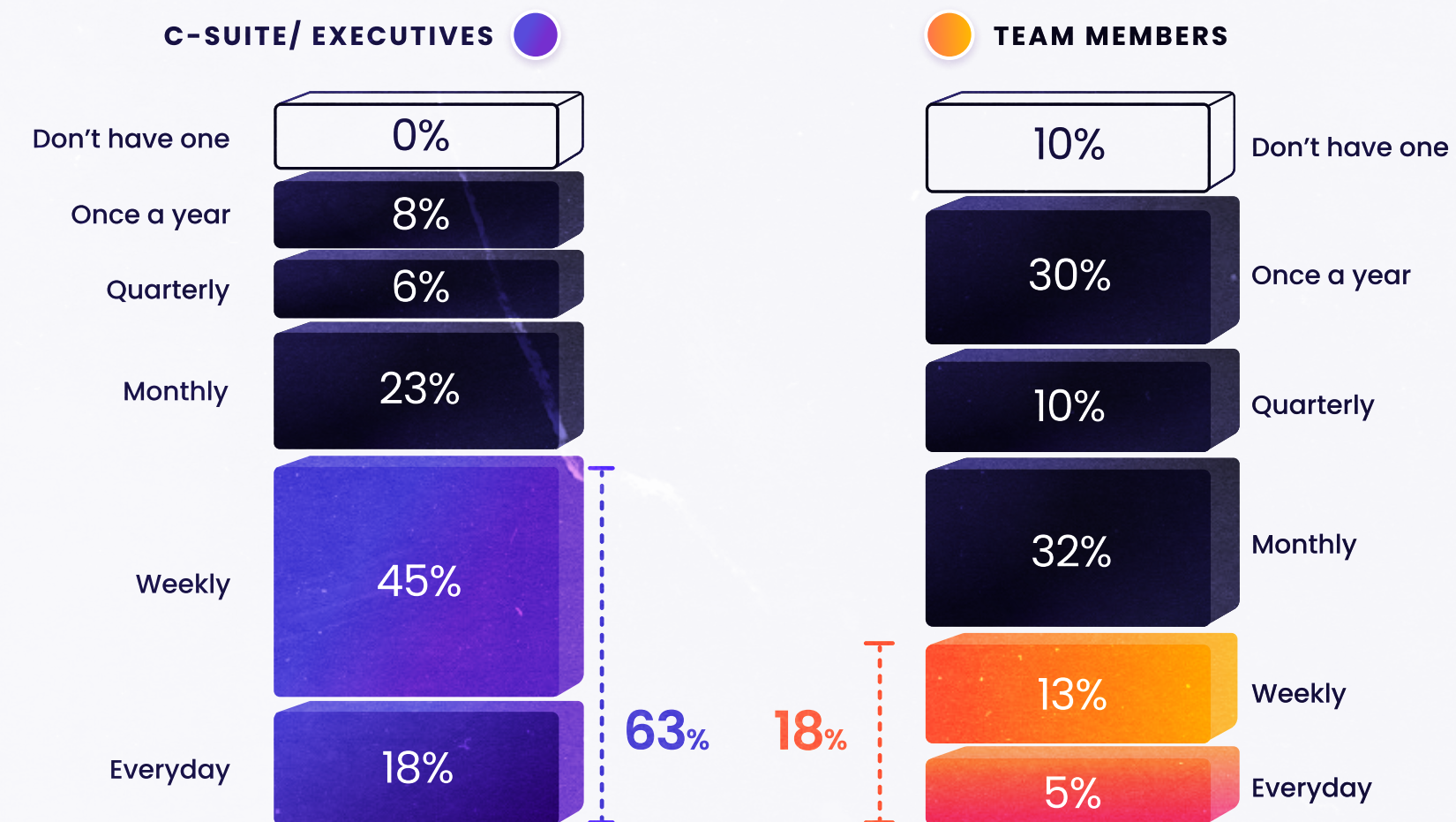
Strategy is the NorthStar that guides the business towards a set of common goals. But that NorthStar is pointless if no one can see it.

Seeing it is half the challenge, they also need to understand it in its simplest form. For this to happen, businesses need to have strong buy-in from all teams, especially those who will be part of delivering the strategy".



## 2 People don't care about strategy.

### Frequency looking at strategy



While 63% of the C-Suite look at the strategy at least weekly, 32% of team members look at it at most once per month and 30% of them look at it only once or twice a year.



People don't engage with strategy, they **don't understand** it and consequently, **don't care** about it.

Strategy isn't a part of people's daily activities and decisions. The problem is strategy communication. As we move further from the top, strategy engagement deteriorates.



carhartt  
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**Trish Heusel**

Vice President Strategy,  
Insights & Innovation

We are a company with strong values that weave through every part of our organization. Those values are even more evident when they are tied to long-term & daily project planning.

A clear strategy helps tie all these efforts together and allows everyone to see how meaningful their daily contributions are along the way.



## 3 Teams are focused on anything but the strategy.

Team members don't have a clue how their strategy is progressing over time. They are left in the dark and end up making decisions independent from their organization's top strategic priorities.

Leadership, however, typically understands the state of the strategy. They see opportunities, they have visibility of change, and adapt the plan accordingly. While the frontline workers see new trends immediately, it takes too long for the leadership to get familiar with the changes. And when the plan is finally adapted, it's simply too late to avoid the downturn.

**The change of strategy is rarely understood by the greater organization until it's too late.**

The culprit here isn't some grand mystery, it comes down to a lack of communication. Strategy isn't being effectively communicated to the wider organization wasting immeasurable resources and solving problems that don't matter to the business.



**Leadership is very aware of the strategy's progress.  
But the same cannot be said for team members.**



## 4 Executors and leaders see things very differently.

In most organizations, the thought process between different sides of the business is completely disconnected. The survey showed that few employees have access to strategy at all times and the decline in strategy visibility seems to be linear from top to bottom.

While 3/10 team members citing they do not have access to strategy may not seem extreme, the real eye-opener is the difference between what leadership thinks and what executors experience. Noticeably, those numbers inflate across all areas when it comes to strategy tracking.

People that don't have access to strategy.



**Travis Metcalfe**

Manager of Strategy,  
Innovation, and Engagement



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**"I think that the fundamental problem with strategy comes from not making your strategy a priority."**

I don't think it is a conscious decision for most to not make it a priority and many executives have likely fallen into the trap of thinking that having a meeting or two on your calendar at some regular cadence is enough. Making strategy a priority means you have taken the time to reflect on where you have been, where you are, and more importantly, where you are going".

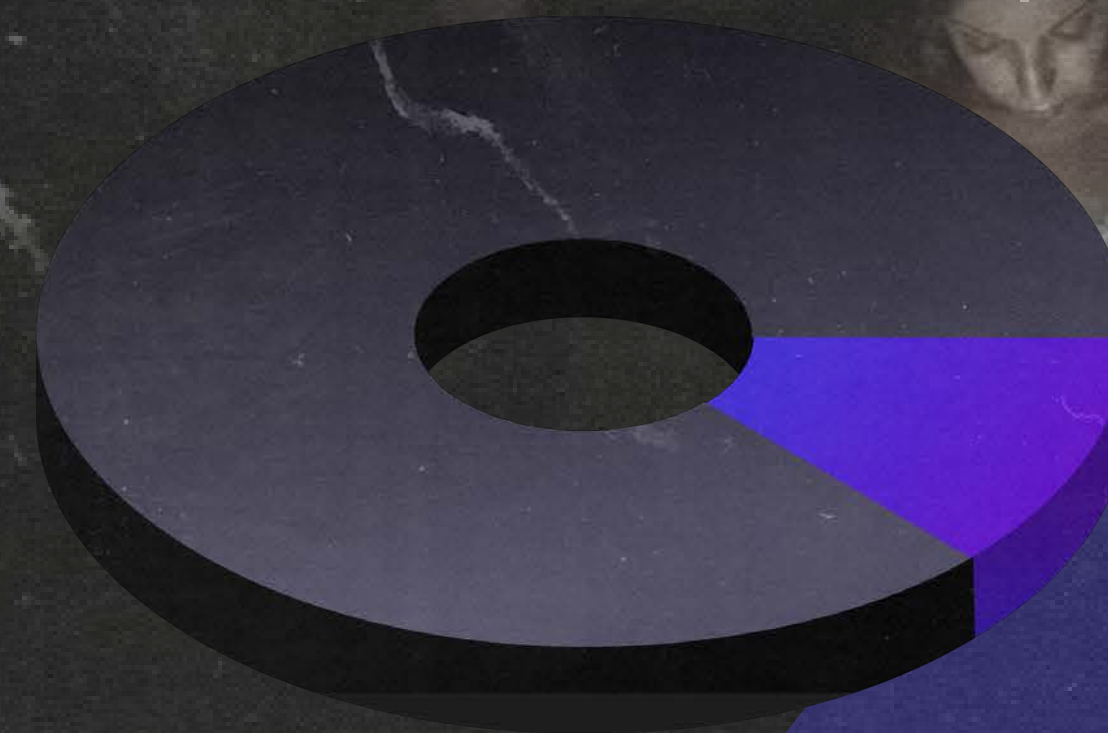


Almost **half your teams have no idea how you track your strategy.** We repeat, **half your teams...**

Getting the strategic priorities to the front line requires constant effort.

Don't know how they track strategy execution.

12%



● C-SUITE/ EXECUTIVES

47%



● TEAM MEMBERS



# 5 Those that aren't involved, aren't effective.

Effectiveness means being able to achieve our desired targets, our goals and in consequence execute the strategy successfully. But when people aren't working towards the same goals you have a big problem. Not only will the strategy and its execution fail, but employees will also get demoralized and demotivated.



**Erica Santoni**  
Principal, Diversity Equity & Inclusion

**intuit**

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“Strategy is the link between “why” a company exists – its purpose, its mission – and “what” employees need to do in order to achieve that desired future state.

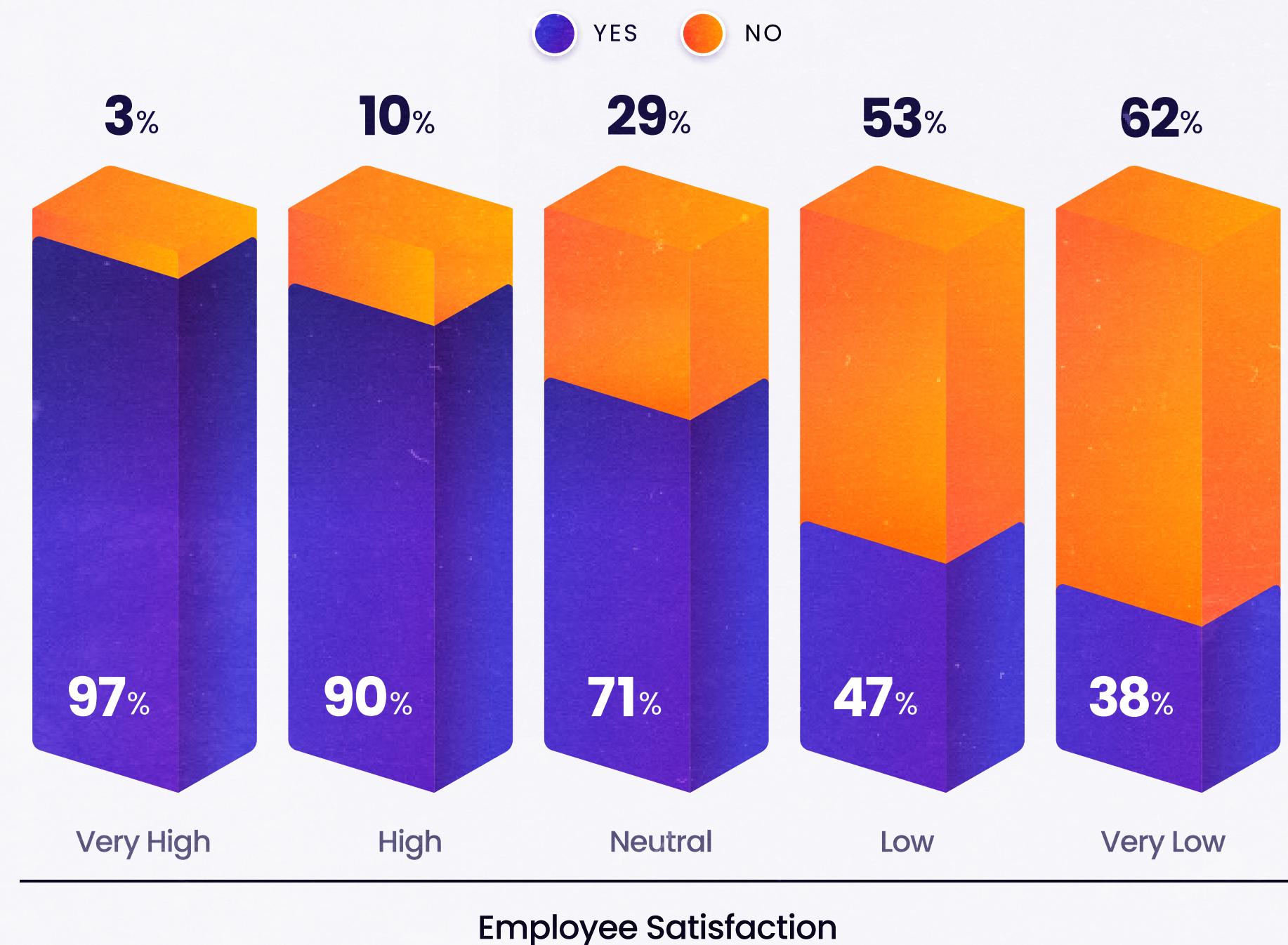
The stronger the link is, the higher employee engagement and satisfaction is, which in turns drives higher retention and increased performance.

Those values are even more evident when they are tied to long-term & daily project planning. A clear strategy helps tie all these efforts together and allows everyone to see how meaningful their daily contributions are along the way".

When it comes to those that are working toward shared strategic goals, there is a stark difference between those happy with their role, and those that are unhappy.

## Is everyone working towards the same goals?

STRATEGY REPORT







97% of satisfied employees report that they work towards shared goals, while only 38% of unsatisfied employees say the same.



This only makes the strategy disconnect even bigger, and we can clearly see that disengagement with strategy grows within unsatisfied employees: **6 of 10** very unsatisfied employees look at the strategy only once or twice a year.

The cost of this could be even higher if we think about what happens when employees quit. Businesses need to invest in hiring new people, with all the associated costs of onboarding, training and cultural fit for new employees. But what does this have to do with strategy?





## 6 Strategy is stuck in the boardroom.

Leaders are the experts, they've climbed the ropes, and they have the scars to prove it. Naturally, they are the best equipped to make strategic decisions and develop the plan that steers the company in the right direction. Sounds reasonable, but there's a lie in that statement.

Although leaders are often the most experienced members of their organization, they lack the complete picture necessary to make great strategic decisions.

This won't be earth-shattering to most. In fact, this is why strategy consultants are hired in larger organizations where the context is so vast that the leadership team needs support to hear the voices of their own employees. And like we've seen, this is a "must" to develop a winning strategy.

While creating a grand plan may deliver something everyone is happy with at the start of the year, it doesn't mean the plan will work when the dust settles.



**Mike Lardner**

Ex-Director Corporate Strategy



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**"The main problem with strategy is that it's usually not even strategy, it's just the first pass at next year's budget!"**

It's an annual cycle of secret meetings that exhausts resources and ultimately no one is closer to understanding where, why, or what they should be doing! This is left in a PowerPoint until next year and it's such a manual effort to synthesize that it's often not even updated or tracked to give people an update on progress.

Strategy is everywhere, all the time, not just annually - you should be asking big, bold questions, assessing trends, investing in tech, and keeping tabs on where you are vs where you want to be, and not just in a purely financial sense!"



# 7 Static plans are doomed to fail.

You pour your energy and resources into a grand plan at the beginning of the year, and present it to the wider company with a beautiful slide deck. Everyone loves it and you clink champagne glasses.

## Job done, right?


Fast forward two months and that slide deck hasn't been opened since the beginning of the year. The strategy spreadsheet is either in version five or six depending on who you ask. No one really remembers what the plan was, most have reverted to working on things they think should be done rather than working toward the strategy. Challenges appear and opportunities arise, things change but the strategy just crumbles when it desperately needed to adapt.

Static strategic plans are like a high-stakes Jenga game. They are so grand and methodical that you're left without an inch of flexibility. Just the suggestion of change and the whole thing comes crashing down.



**Annie Lucchitti**  
Marketing Manager  
Streets, Weis & local brands



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**“Working in a framework of setting a strategy & spending 12 months executing one PowerPoint or piece of paper no longer exists.**

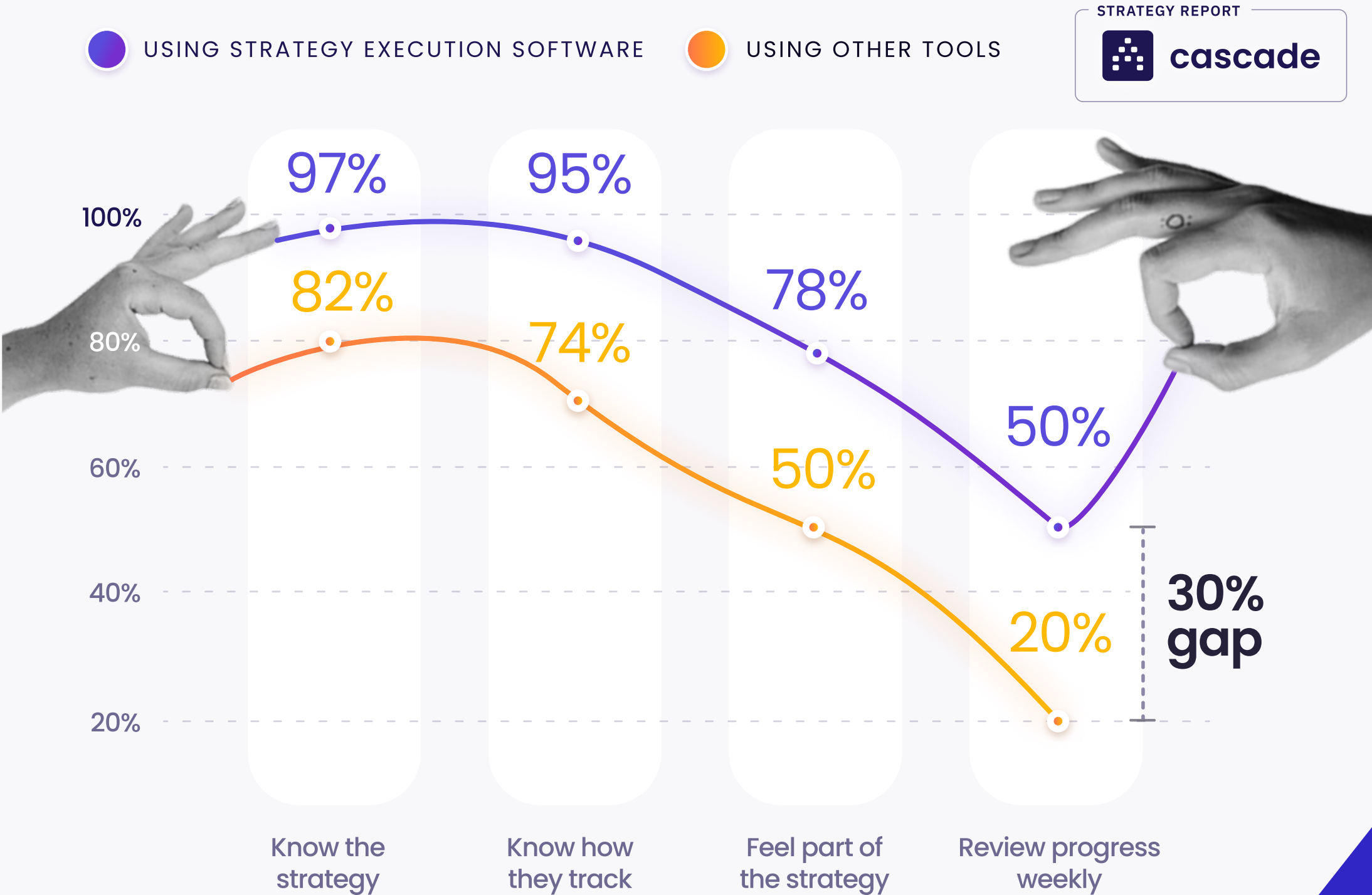
As a business or brand, you have to remain agile at every level of the strategy to ensure that you're both responding to the market that could be changing before your eyes, but also creating value with the resources you have”.



No matter the PowerPoint design, the number of slides, or even the style of illustrations. **Nothing will save your strategy from dying in that boardroom pitch.**

To say PowerPoint is suboptimal for strategy would be an understatement. PowerPoint is a presentation tool. It wasn't built for collaboration, engagement, tracking goals and KPIs. But especially, it wasn't build for your strategy to adapt fast. There's a better way.

You need a platform that was created exclusively for executing strategies.



Sam Sterling  
Chief Strategy Officer  
AKQA

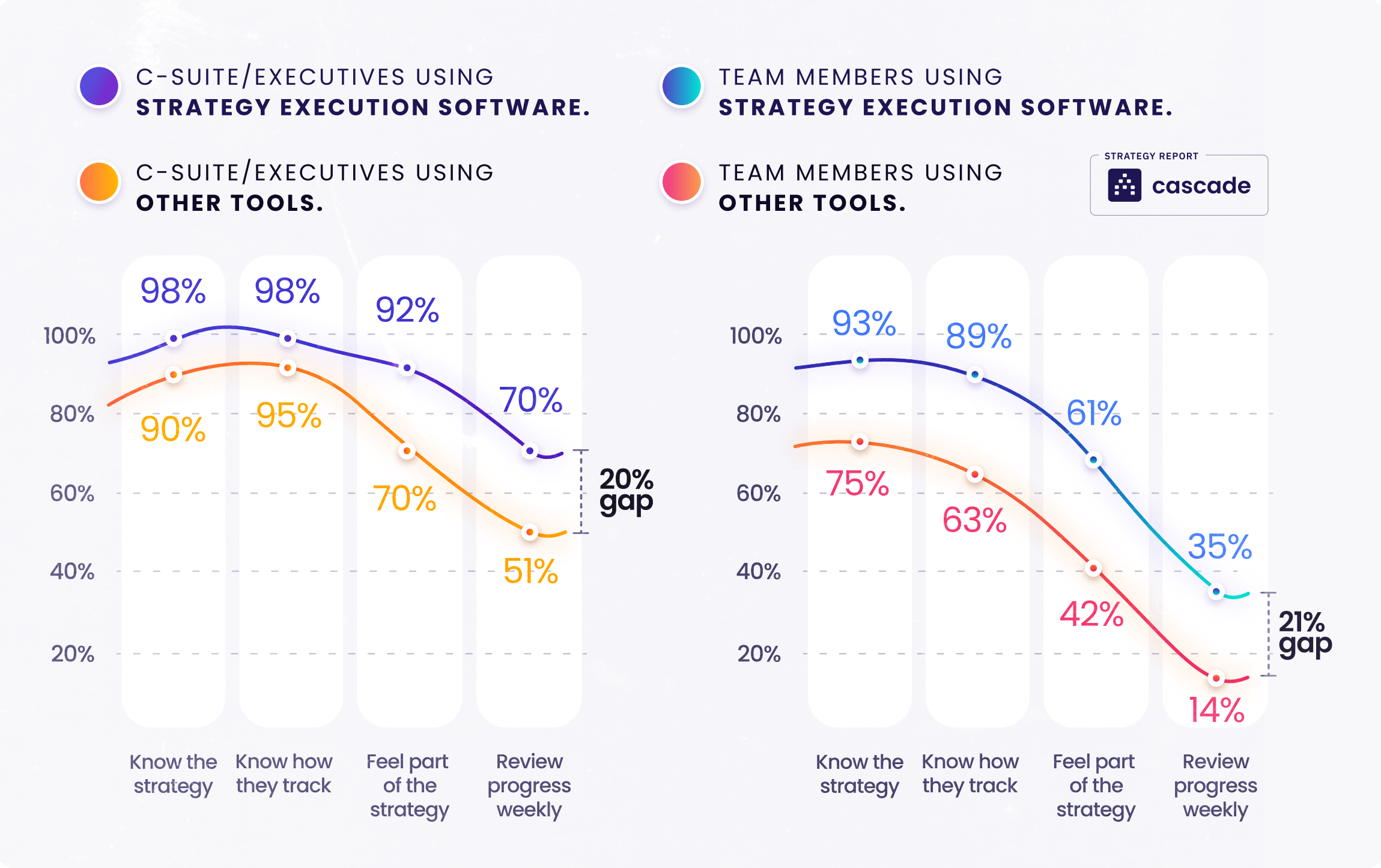
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Clarity regarding strategy is one of the key drivers of autonomous execution. If people understand what you're working toward and have guardrails in place, they can be empowered to make their own decisions and don't need everything to be 'run up the chain' to get approved. This allows you to move fast and at scale.

A compelling strategic proposition that intellectually justifies both today's work and the future evolution of the organization is essential for success when it comes to performing in the short term and engaging in sufficient exploratory activity to perform and grow in the long term as circumstances change.



This GAP does not discriminate between job roles. Either for C-Suite/Executives or Team Members, people using strategy execution software are more connected to strategy:



People who use a strategy execution platform know their strategy and also know how it's tracking. But simply knowing the strategy is not enough. Specially when we see numbers dropping when asked if they feel part of the strategy and - what's worse - if they review it weekly.

What's the point of knowing the strategy if people don't feel engaged and don't work with the strategy in mind?

Strategy should be everyone's BAU. Everyone in the organization should work on things that will impact on the strategy, but this mindset shift is part of a cultural change. Tools can accelerate that change, but they won't solve the issue if everyone goes back to work as they did before.

A strategy execution platform can help accelerate that change and bring strategy closer to everyone. And the organizations that achieve this, oh they will be the winners! To join the winning team, you need to say goodbye to your PowerPoint slides and embrace change.



## 8 There will be winners & losers.

Modern strategy is being challenged. Every day more and more companies start to realize that it's a race to the top. Organizational change is urgently needed.

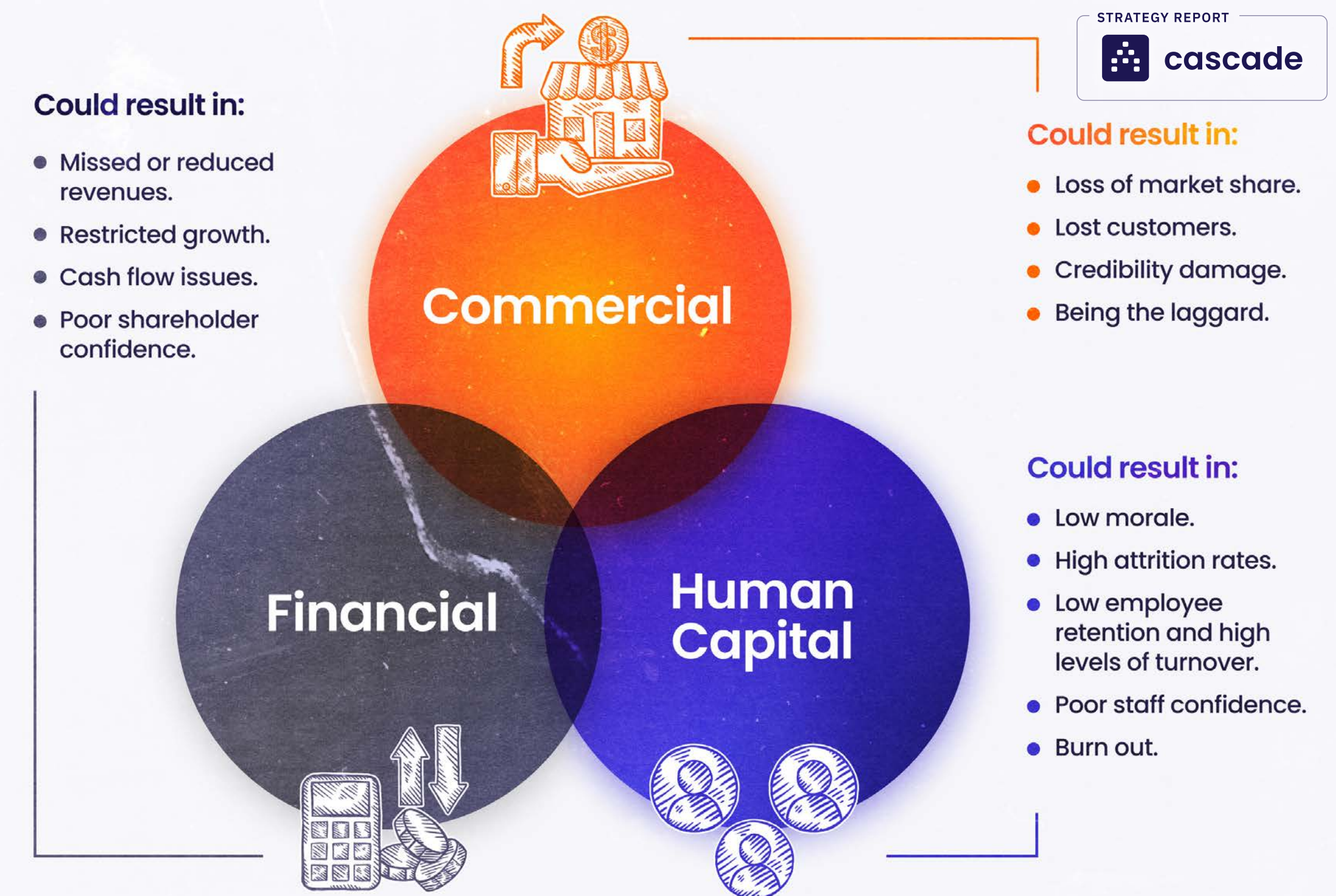
Losers like the old hats in marketing who stuck to their guns and continued to invest everything in radio during the boom of social media only to find themselves unemployed. Losers like the many industries that failed to adapt to the advantages of modern tech solutions and became obsolete.

Like everything else, those that don't adapt, lose.

### These losers are the 90% of companies that fail to execute their strategies.

When the plan fails, those countless hours and resources used for the development of the strategic plan go up in smoke. Time wasted.

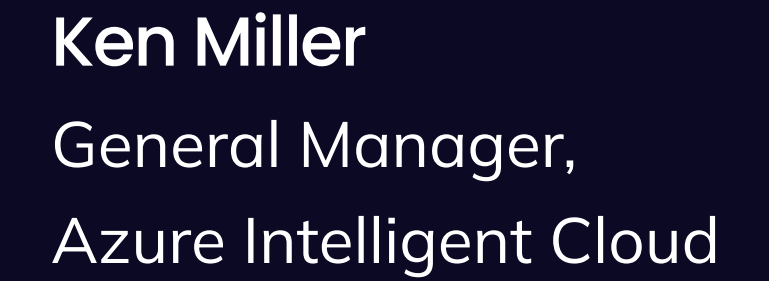
But this is just the surface level. The flow-on effects are where you really feel it.






And to complicate things further, you may have “the perfect plan”, but then out of nowhere, things change \*cough\* COVID-19 \*cough\*. Your organization is now stuck with a static plan that can’t adapt.

The inability to adapt quickly brings huge costs. Companies today need to be flexible in our fast-changing world or they risk not being able to keep up with changing consumer tastes and preferences. Bye-bye customers.



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Strategy is about creating a winning plan. How are we going to do something that allows us to compete stronger and win together? Right? But what I've learned recently over the last 18 months since we've been going through this global pandemic is that you've always got to have a plan B”.



# Now, let's talk about the winners – the 10%.

Those who do innovate their approach to strategy and are able to execute.  
They will use strategy execution as a competitive advantage. They will be the leaders.

## Strategy execution will enable individuals to...

Propel company growth

Shorten feedback loops

Lower operating costs, higher profitability

Manage human resources effectively

Have clear responsibility and accountability



Cement their competitive advantage

Determine areas to improve

Respond faster to customers and market needs

Be more efficient in their internal communication

Increase internal capability to manage execution & change



# How to win.

Fixing your broken strategy is easier than you think.  
The answer is the IDEAL methodology, let's break it down:

## I Inclusion

- Stop** Hiding your strategy in the boardroom.
  - Start** Bringing everyone together to contribute to the strategy. Everyone knows something about the business that others don't whether it's unique pressures, market insights or customer needs. Collaborate, don't proscribe.
- Logistically for large organizations, this is only practically possible with strategy execution software.**

## D Dynamic

- Stop** Creating grand strategic plans.
  - Start** Involving everyone in your planning process and you won't be short of ideas. Establish goals and outline a general approach quickly. You can't wait months to refine it all to a perfect plan. Become comfortable knowing that your dynamic plan will change often. Prioritize the best ideas first and start executing quickly! Be open to experimentation and iteration as you progress.
- For large plans, rapid adaptability is only practically possible with strategy execution software.**

## E Engagement

- Stop** Pushing your people away from the vision.
- Start** Including everyone in the strategy. When you do, something magical happens. They buy-in deeply, and fight for the strategy because it's not just the company strategy, it's their own. Engagement increases enormously and they achieve more than ever before.

## A Alignment

- Stop** Isolating your teams and duplicating work.
- Start** Sharing ownership of the strategy with you teams. Because everyone is included, and the team is engaged, alignment comes easier and faster than ever. As alignment increases, dynamic iteration skyrockets. Because the alignment comes naturally from shared ownership of the strategy, people are more willing to drive the strategy through its iterations wherever that may go.

## L Leadership

- Stop** Stop putting barriers in front of people who want to step up.
- Start** Making everyone a leader. Because people are aligned with the strategy, everyone is engaged and people feel deeply included leaving everyone with a real sense of ownership and accountability. Naturally, they step up on behalf of strategy and lead the charge to its success.



# The IDEAL methodology proposes a new (and improved) way to strategy execution.

One that transforms strategy into action and closes the enormous gulf between the strategic plan and real-world execution.

Not all companies are the same and many begin by solving this on a team level rather than challenging their wider company culture.



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**Thibault Mesqui**


Managing Director of  
Saint Lucia



**Make your strategy  
based on a vision.**

Make sure you know where you're coming from, honestly, and put your tactics in place. Share, share, and share your strategy with everyone."



Follow me: 

**Pia Heidenmark Cook**

Senior advisor to Ingka Group/IKEA



"It's fundamental to know that we learn as we go, because if you're going to sit and make this perfect plan knowing every piece and what will happen, then you'll be paralyzed by perfection. You never know what can happen.

**Things change so fast, now  
you need to write your  
strategy, agree on your  
strategy and almost execute  
it at the same time".**



Cascade Strategy Execution Platform was created to bridge this gap with visibility, dynamic and adaptive plans, agile iterations and a relentless focus on what actually matters. It bridges it through inclusivity, teamwork, and by giving ownership and meaning to every person in the organization.

Although the mindset of IDEAL can be used without Cascade, you will quickly find that you need a home for your strategy. A place where your organization can collaborate inclusively & change rapidly when opportunities arise or things change:

**Inclusion**

- Rally your entire organization around strategy.
- Collaborate with your teams.
- Ensure everyone's day-to-day work aligns with the top level strategy.



**Dynamic**

- Identify risks before it's too late.
- Know if, when and how you should course-correct.
- Adapt to changing priorities without a hassle.
- Easily adapt to changes in business landscapes and priorities.



**Engagement**

- Connect individual goals to business outcomes.
- Empower team members.
- Encourage teams to focus on work that matters.
- Measure individual impact to drive accountability.



**Leadership**

- Communicate changes without endless meetings and email threads.
- Know what everyone is working on, how it's progressing without having to chase anyone for updates.
- Measure the success of your strategic initiatives in real time.



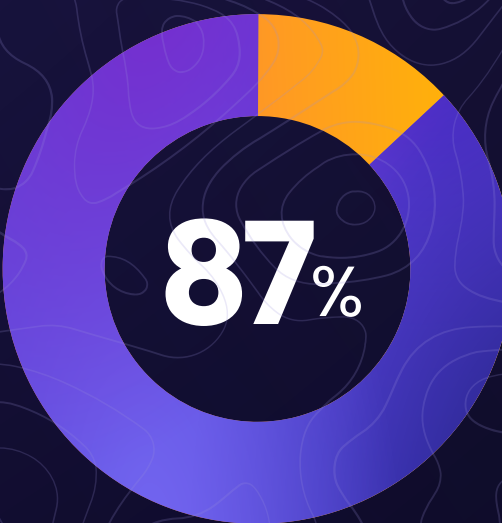
Cascade is changing the game!

# Cascade users were asked about their strategy execution.

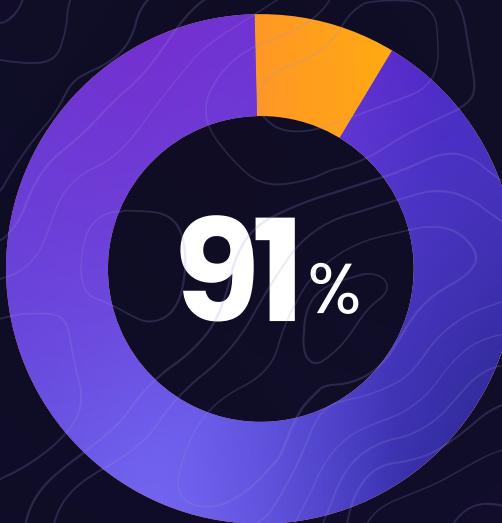
Cascade Strategy Execution Platform was created to bridge this gap with visibility, dynamic and adaptive plans, agile iterations and a relentless focus on what actually matters. It bridges it through inclusivity, teamwork, and by giving ownership and meaning to every person in the organization.



Reported being on track with their strategy.

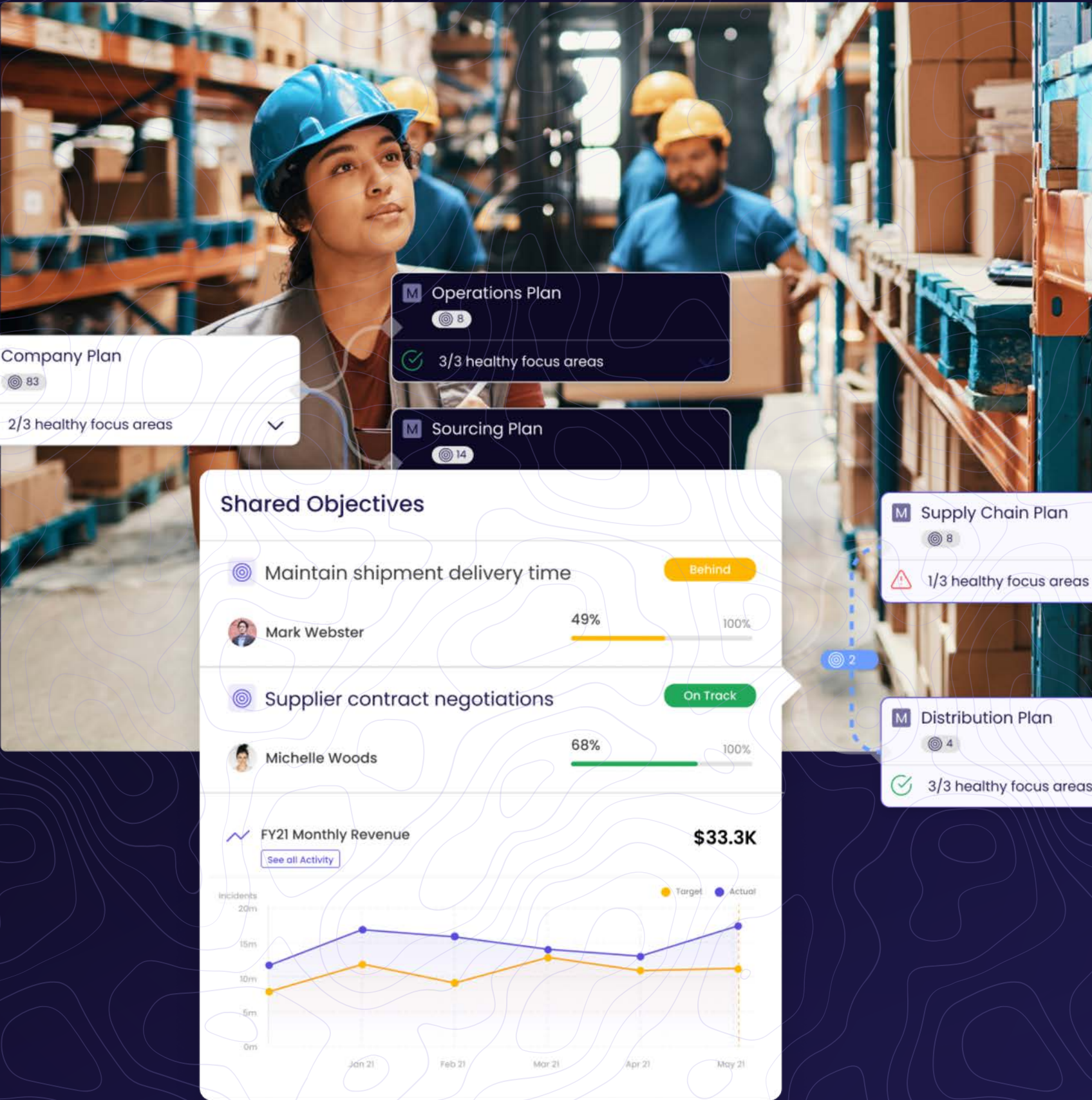


Felt their everyday work was connected to the strategy.



Felt everyone was working towards the same goal.

\*From a external survey conducted by Momentive with over 1,750 respondents.



Are you ready to revolutionize the way you do strategy?  
Create a free account, or speak with our team.

Book a demo

Start free trial



## About the report.

This survey was completed in partnership with our research partner **Momentive**, Survey Monkey's business arm.

The report is based on a survey involving answers from **1,765 people** of all reporting levels, from team members and individual contributors all the way to C-level executives at mid to large organizations, with 1,000 employees or more. We collected data across 9 industries and three continents, **53%** from the **USA**, **37%** from the **UK** and **10%** from **Australia**.



## About Cascade.

**The world's #1 Strategy Execution platform.**

Cascade is a strategy execution platform that helps over 8,000 teams across the globe transform their strategies into action and their visions into reality.

Our customers are redefining the world - from battling the AIDS epidemic to establishing a supply chain for COVID-19 vaccines to building the world's fastest Formula One car.

