



# Staying Aligned with Your Team in High-Stakes Situations

A Strategic Approach  
for Leaders at Every Level

OCTOBER 2025

**An Interactive Keynote  
with Cathy Ach**



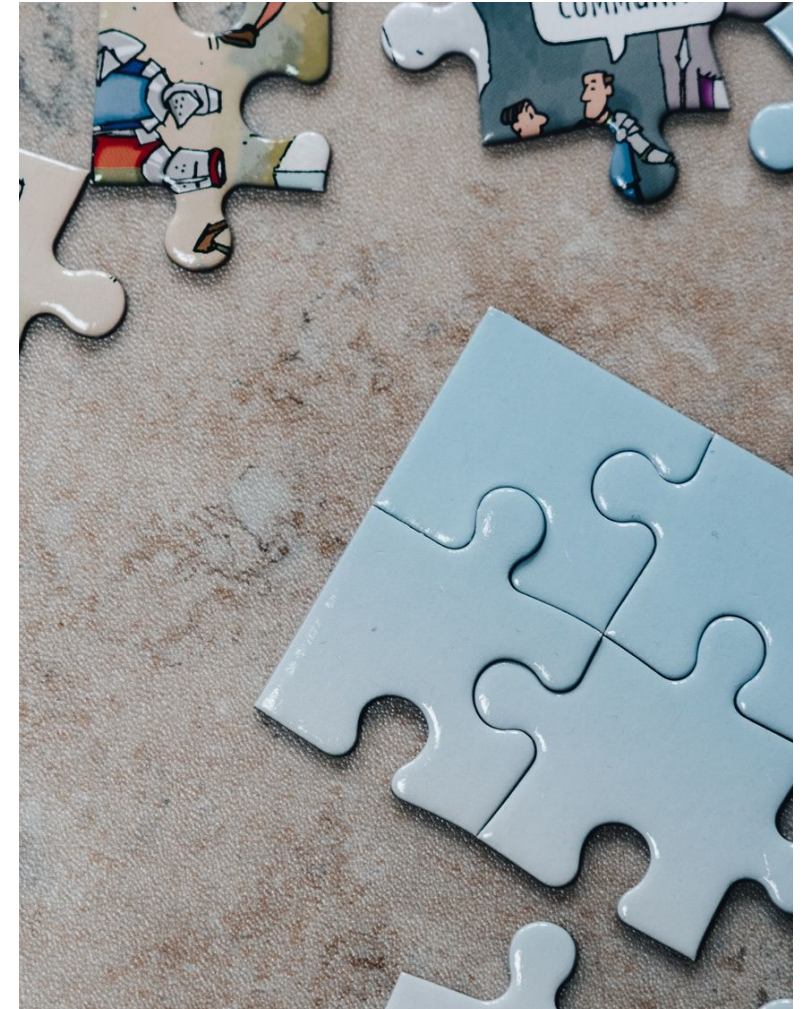
# The Box Top Challenge

*Are you someone who loves to do puzzles?*

*If so, have you ever tried putting together a puzzle without first looking at the box top?*

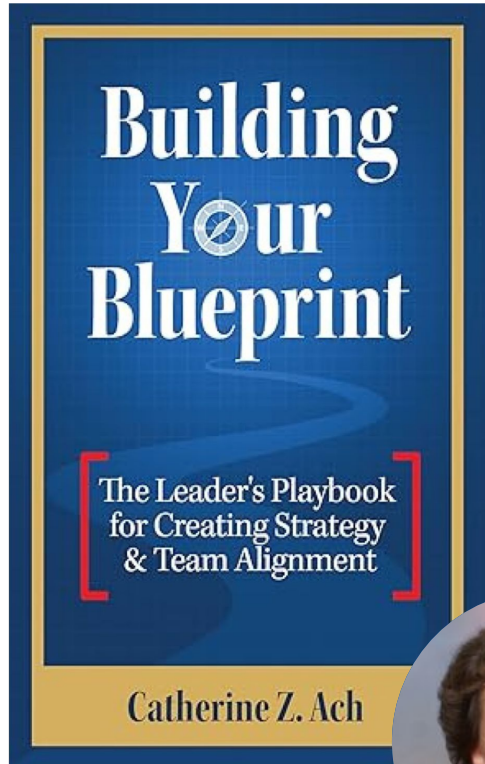
*It's an altogether frustrating experience – I don't recommend it!*

*And yet, we ask other people to do it all the time. It's like we flick people puzzle pieces all day long and never show them the box top.*



## Meet the Facilitator & Author

# Cathy Ach



Strategy & Change  
Consultant



Executive / Leadership  
Coach



30+ years of experience  
helping leaders transform  
complex strategy into  
actionable plans



Certified Dare to Lead™  
Facilitator

*President & Founder*



*“Enable and inspire leaders to  
reach their full potential ... and  
lift up others along the way.”*

# Three Key Takeaways



## **ACTIONABLE FRAMEWORK**

To foster more  
effective strategic  
thinking & planning



## **PRACTICAL TOOLS**

To facilitate all four  
phases of the Strategic  
Blueprint Process



## **COMMON LANGUAGE**

To help unify and  
align your team for  
successful execution



PLEASE SHARE YOUR RESPONSE  
IN MENTIMETER

What gets in your way  
of creating strategy  
and team alignment?

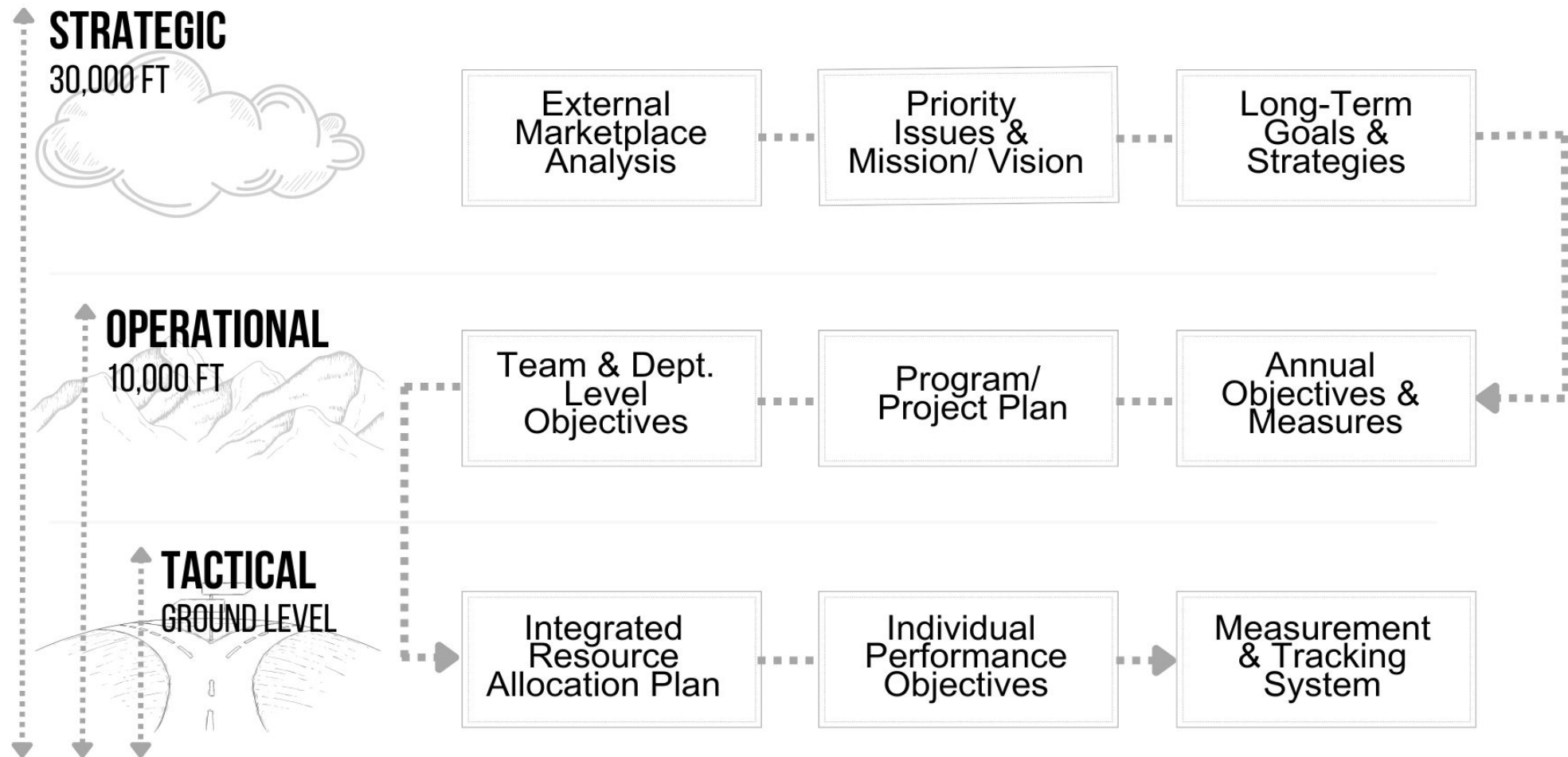
# The Leadership Reality

“I'm too busy executing to think and plan strategically.”

“Not all of the people on our team work well together.”

“We're stuck in reactive mode and not skilled at planning for the future.”

# The Altitude Chart – A Strategic Planning Roadmap



**HOW DO YOU DISTRIBUTE YOUR TIME TODAY BETWEEN THESE THREE LEVELS?**  
Please share your response in Mentimeter.



# Strategic Blueprint Process (SBP)

SBP helps you look beyond today's challenges to create tomorrow's success.

## Phase 1: Marketplace Analysis

Looking up and  
out to see what's  
coming

## Phase 2: Strategic Planning

Creating your  
vision + strategy  
for the future

## Phase 3: Annual Planning

Translating  
long-term into  
short-term plans

## Phase 4: Team Alignment

Aligning your team  
+ preparing for  
execution



# Phase 1: Marketplace Analysis

LOOKING UP & OUT is how you **understand what's coming next.**



MARKETPLACE  
SHIFTS



TECHNOLOGY  
CHANGES



CUSTOMER  
NEEDS

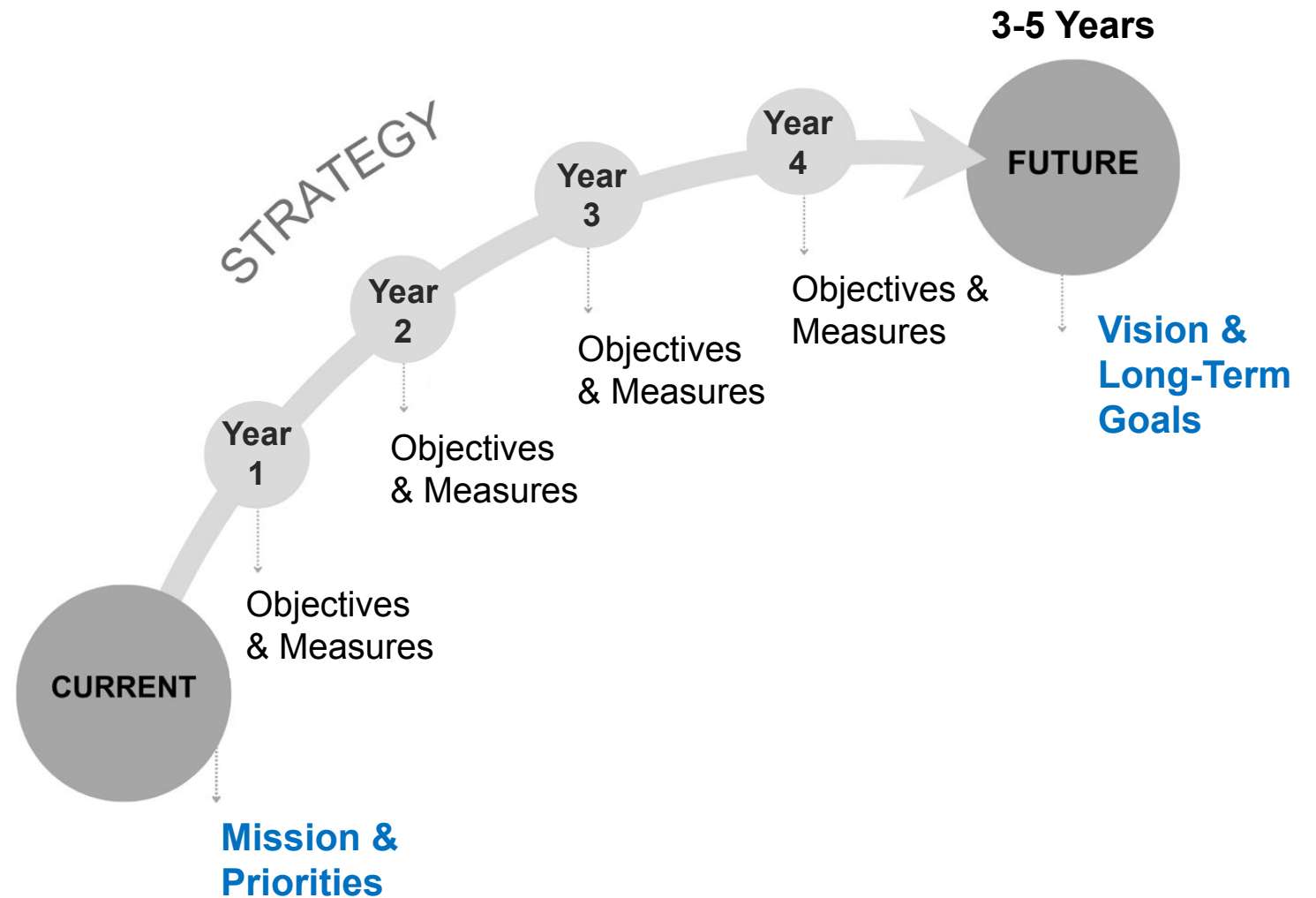


INDUSTRY  
EVOLUTION



# Phase 2: Strategic Planning

Creating your vision + strategy is how you **set direction for the future.**





## A top-down view of a group of people sitting around a table, engaged in a collaborative design session. The table is covered with a large, colorful diagram featuring a central lightbulb icon, surrounded by various shapes, lines, and text labels like 'DESIGN', 'RESEARCH', and 'INSPIRATION'. The participants are actively drawing and discussing the diagram.

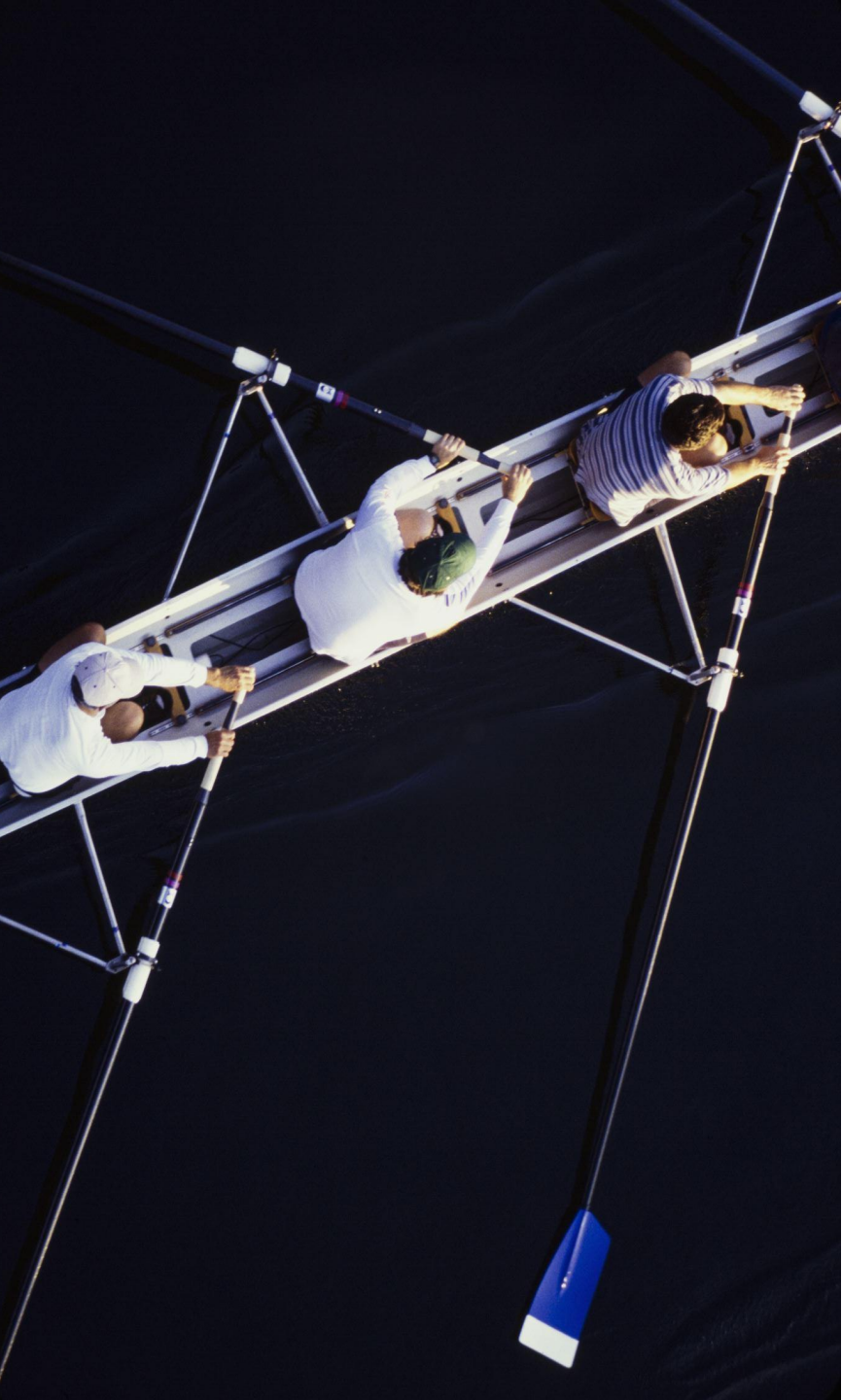
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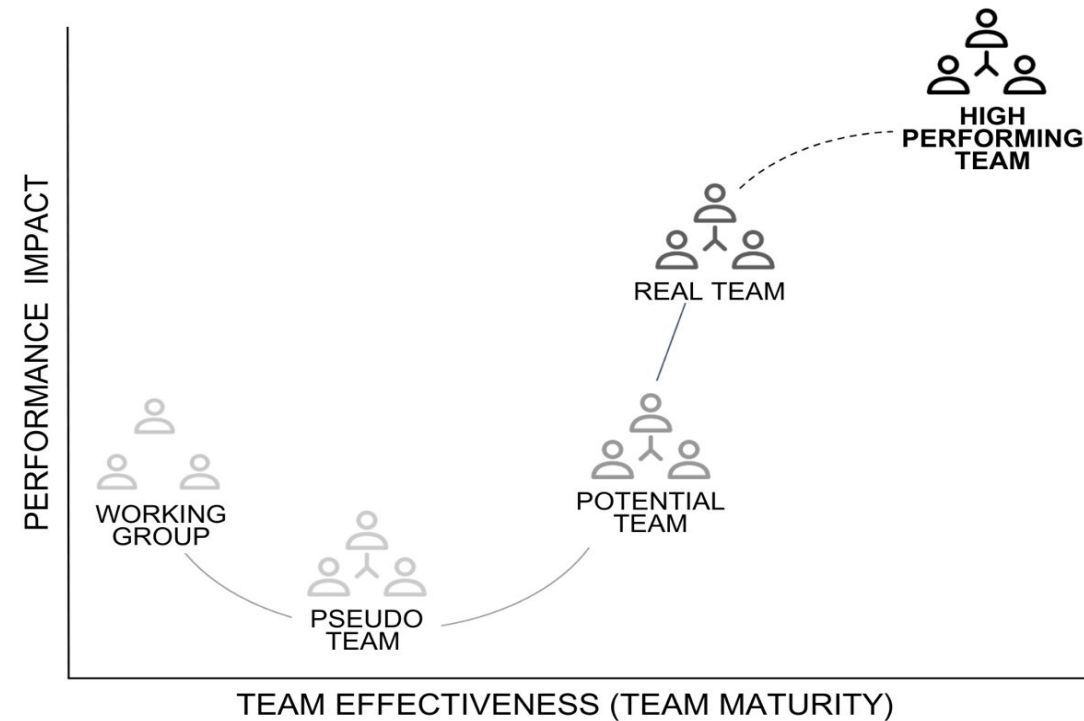
# Why Do Teams Matter in Organizations Today?





# Phase 4: Team Alignment

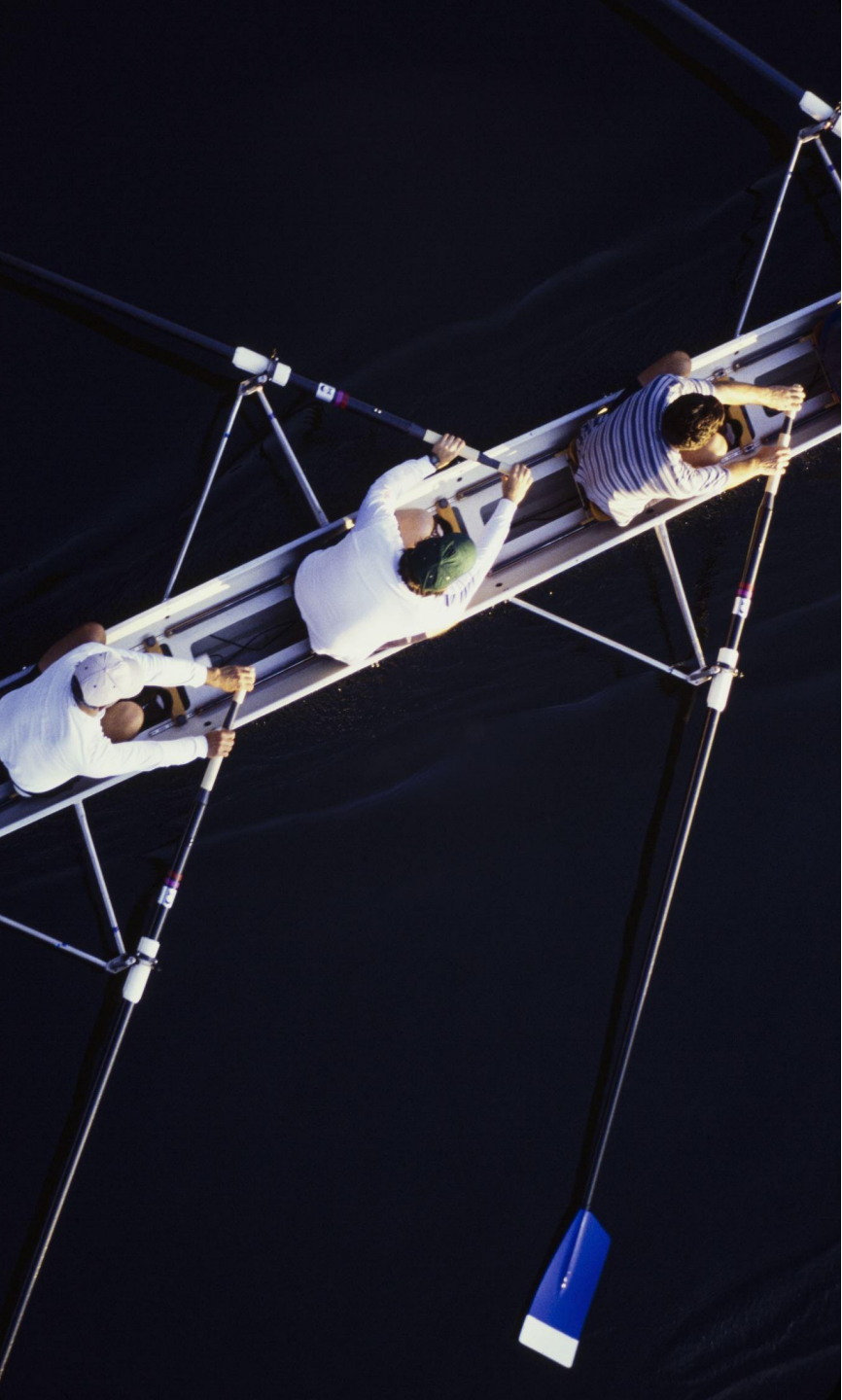
Aligning your team + disseminating your plans is how you **prepare to execute successfully**.



Source: Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organizations* (Brighton, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1993), Figure II-I, 82.

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# Phase 4: Team Alignment

Defining your terms is a critical part of moving effectively through this phase

- **Working Group:** “This is a group for which there is *no significant incremental performance need* or opportunity that would require it to become a team.”
- **Pseudo-Team:** “This is a group for which there could be a significant, incremental performance need or opportunity, *but it has not focused on collective performance and is not really trying to achieve it.*”
- **Potential Team:** “This is a group for which there is a significant incremental performance need, and *that really is trying to improve its performance impact.*”
- **Real Team:** “This is a small number of people with complimentary skills who are *equally committed to a common purpose, goals and working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*”
- **High-Performing Team:** “This is a group that meets all conditions of real teams, and *has members who are also deeply committed to one another’s personal growth and success.*”



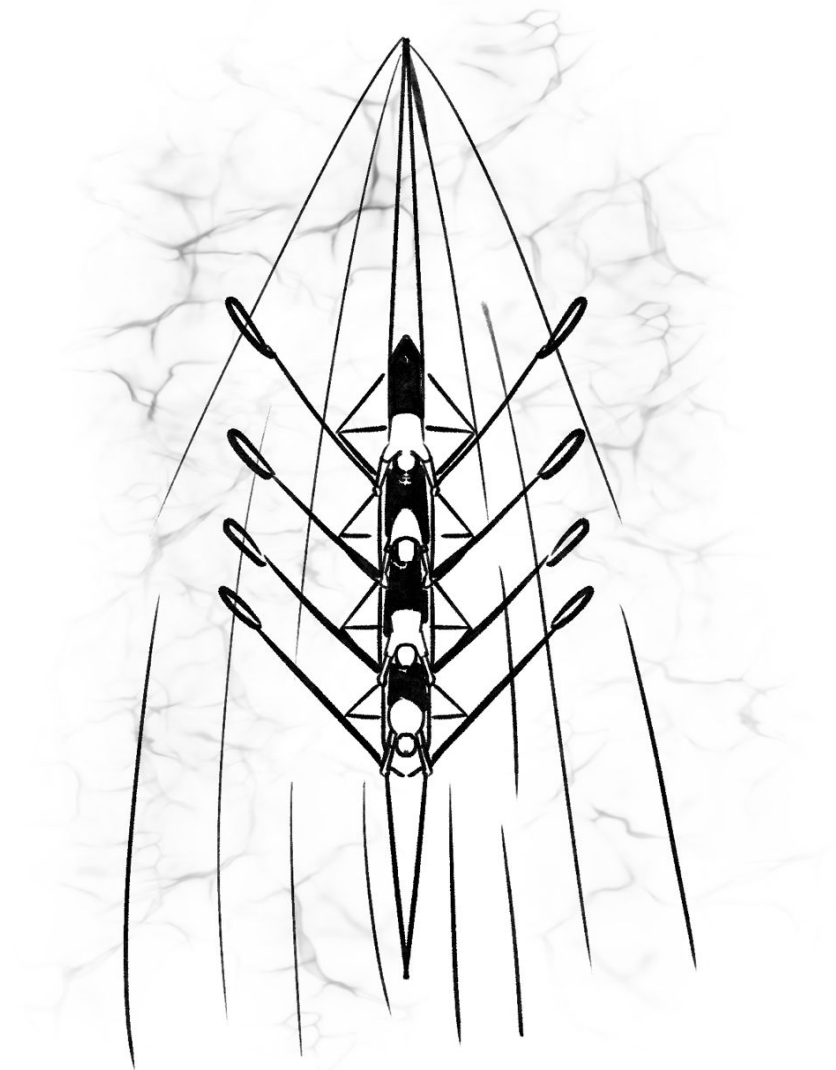
# Exercise: Aligning Your Team for Execution

*What does it feel like to participate on a high-performing team?*

Consider the difference between being on a real team vs. a high-performing team.

Being on a “real team” means that you meet the following four conditions: *“equally committed to a common purpose, (shared) goals and (consistent) working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”*

Being on a high-performing team means that you meet all four conditions of a real team, **AND** *have members who are also deeply committed to one another’s personal growth and success.”*



# What Causes Misalignment?

PLEASE SHARE YOUR RESPONSE  
IN MENTIMETER

- ❖ *Conflicting priorities*
- ❖ *Ineffective decision making*
- ❖ *Poor communication/  
collaboration*
- ❖ ??
- ❖ ??
- ❖ ??



# What Drives Alignment? Seven Actionable Ideas ...

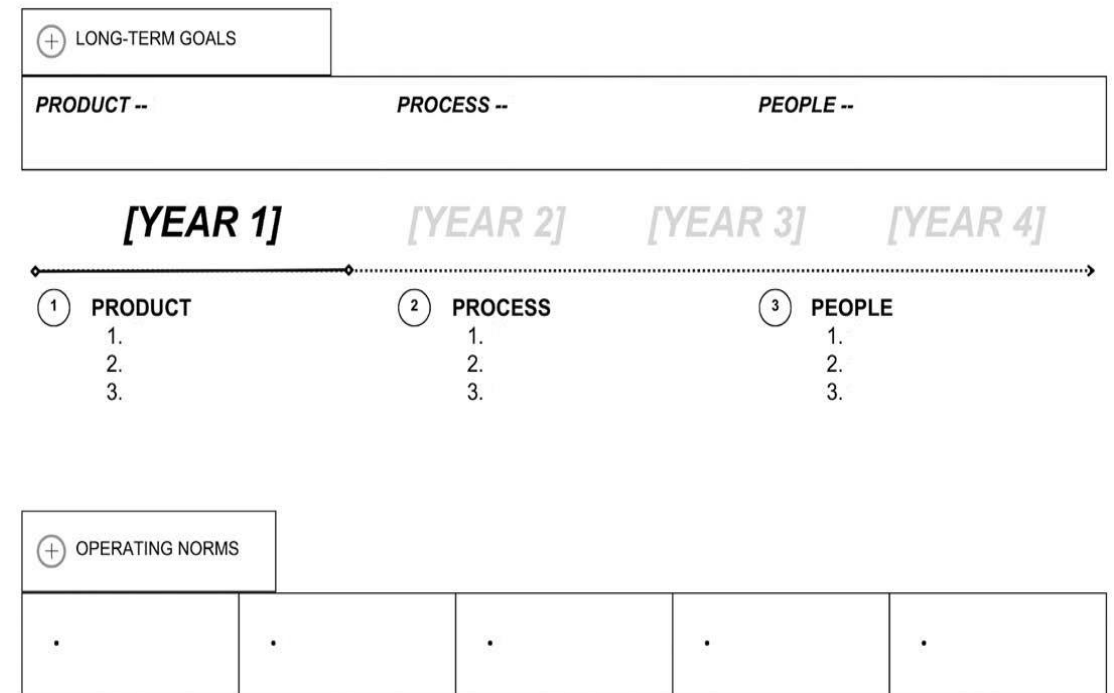
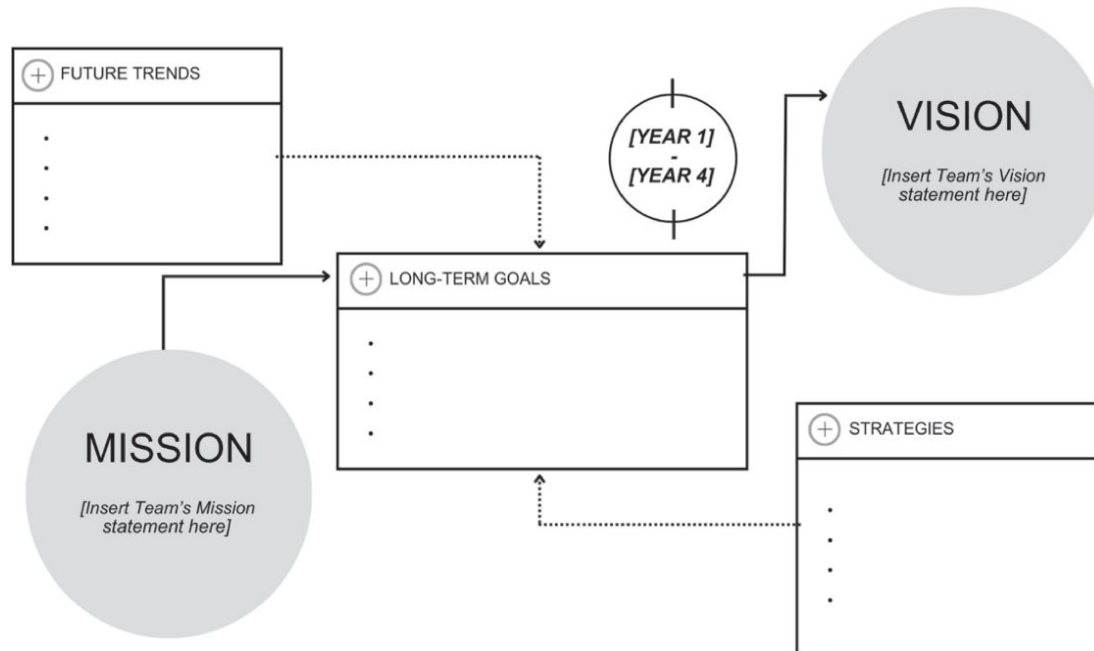
- ❖ *Communicate your vision (and translate it into shared goals)*
- ❖ *Set clear expectations/ operating norms*
- ❖ *Invest in building trust*
- ❖ *Establish a foundation of “psychological safety”*
- ❖ *Replace blame or criticism with curiosity*
- ❖ *Determine your measures of success*
- ❖ *Learn to PAUSE – BREATHE – ASK A QUESTION*



*\*Pyramid from Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni © 2002.*



# Strategic Blueprint – Pages 1 + 2



# The Power of the Whole Story



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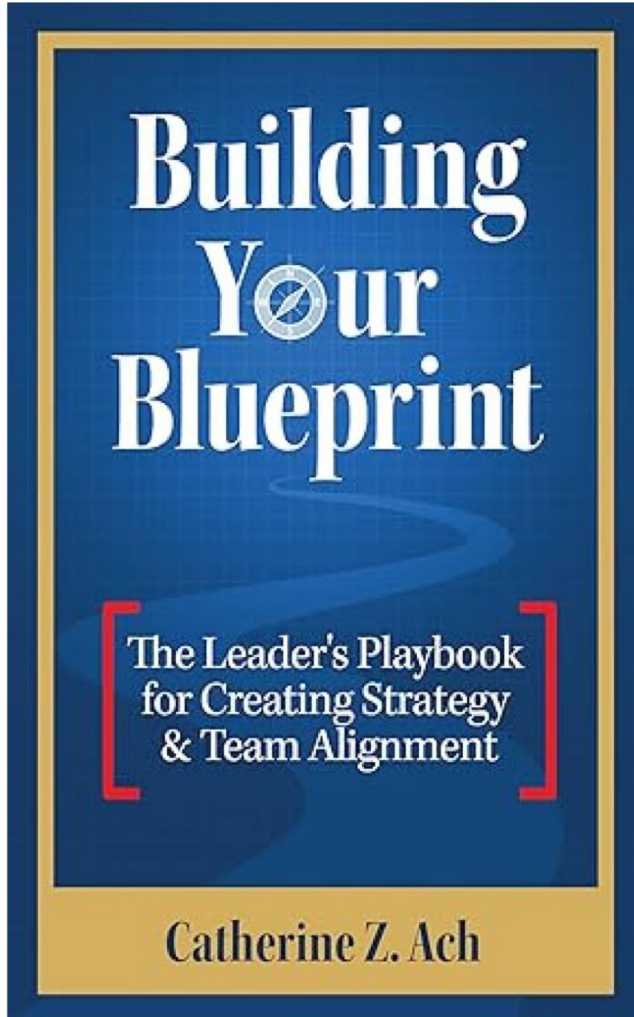


## **COMMON LANGUAGE**

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# Start Your Journey Today



## Available Now:

- Building Your Blueprint: The Leader's Playbook for Creating Strategy & Team Alignment [Amazon]
- Digital SBP Toolkit @ [www.learningparadigms.com](http://www.learningparadigms.com)

## Coming Soon:

- Experiential Workshop
- Certification Program

