

10 finer points of strategy

Quality, innovation, profitability, and growth all depend on having strategy and execution fit together seamlessly. If they don't fit—if you can't deliberately align them in a coherent way—you risk operating at cross-purposes and losing your focus.

Every leader should keep these 10 principles in mind:

- 1. Aim high.** This is what people mean when they say “priorities.” Don't compromise your strategy or execution.
- 2. Build on your strengths.** You know what you and your organization are best at. Press ahead with your unique capabilities and you'll achieve more faster.
- 3. Be ambidextrous.** This is about skills and diversity, not venturing into areas you don't know. Ambidextrous managers can think about technical and operational details in depth and consider its broader ramifications.
- 4. Clarify** everyone's strategic role.
- 5. Align structures to the strategy.** Set up all your structures, including incentives and metrics, so they reinforce your company's goals.
- 6. Transcend functional barriers.** Bring people from different functions to work together informally and creatively.
- 7. Become a fully digital enterprise.** No more excuses—it's way past time.
- 8. Keep it simple, sometimes.** First, be as simple as possible. Second, let your strategy be your guide in adding complexity. Third, build capacity to manage complexity.
- 9. Shape your value chain.** For instance, let your vendors track what's selling best.
- 10. Cultivate collective mastery.** This is the state you reach when communication is fluid, open, and constant across functional boundaries.

— Adapted from [“10 Principles of Strategy Through Execution,”](#) Ivan de Souza, Richard Kauffeld, and David van Oss, strategy+business.