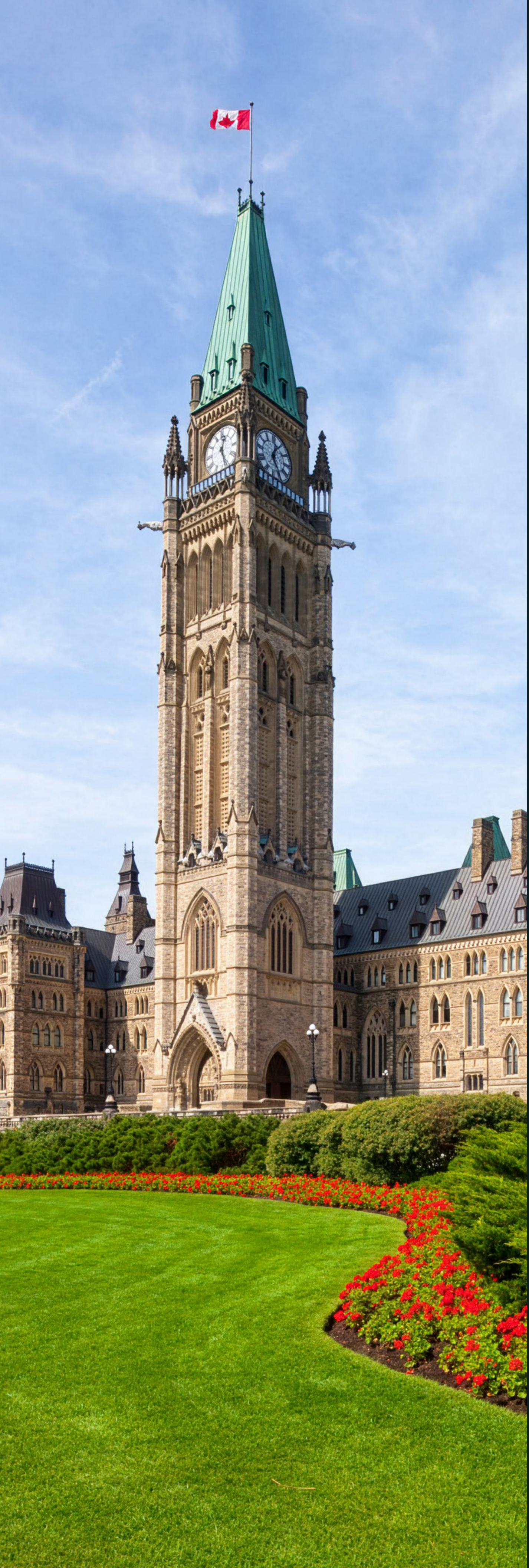


LEVEL5™ STRATEGY + CONDUCTOR® BY SENSEI LABS®

Orchestrating Strategies that Stick

A Practical Guide

At a time when policies threaten partnerships, tariff uncertainties complicate planning, and Canadian companies face skepticism in cross-border deals, strategic execution has gone from being a competitive advantage to a critical, existential capability.

Right now, Canadian organizations can't afford strategic drift. Scale and market access aren't enough. Getting better at turning strategy into results is imperative. This guide, with a proven framework from two proudly Canadian companies, helps organizations navigate strategy development, align and commit to priorities, and build engines that make strategies stick.

November 2025

INTRODUCTION

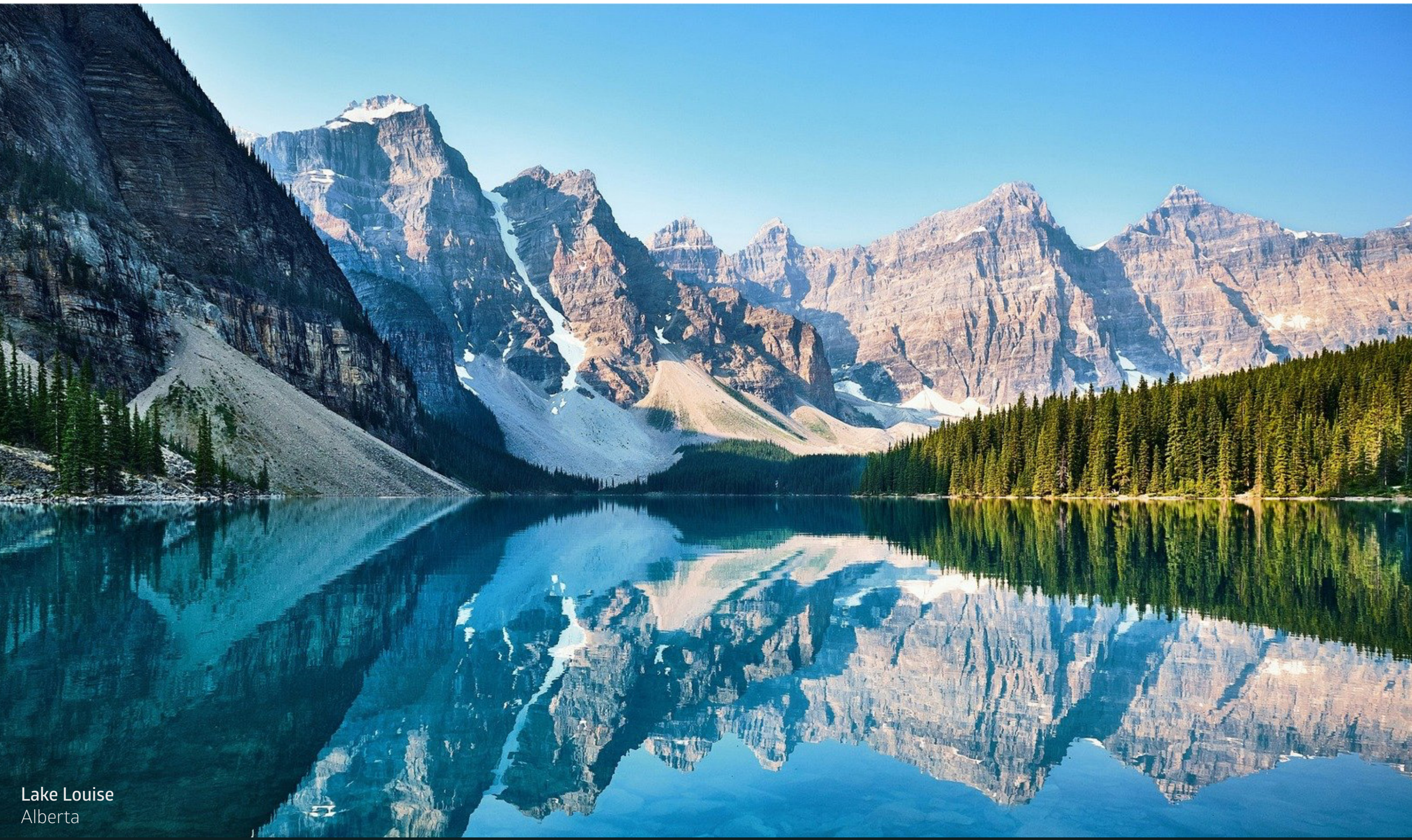
For Canadian companies wanting a strategic edge

This collaboration is brought to you by **Level5 Strategy** and **Conductor**, who've helped hundreds of organizations, from Canadian mid-market companies to global enterprises, orchestrate strategies that stick.

Together, we've combined our strategic advisory expertise with our orchestration platform capabilities to develop and execute strategies of all types and scales: multi-year transformations, brand repositionings, go-to-market plans, operational excellence initiatives, and more.

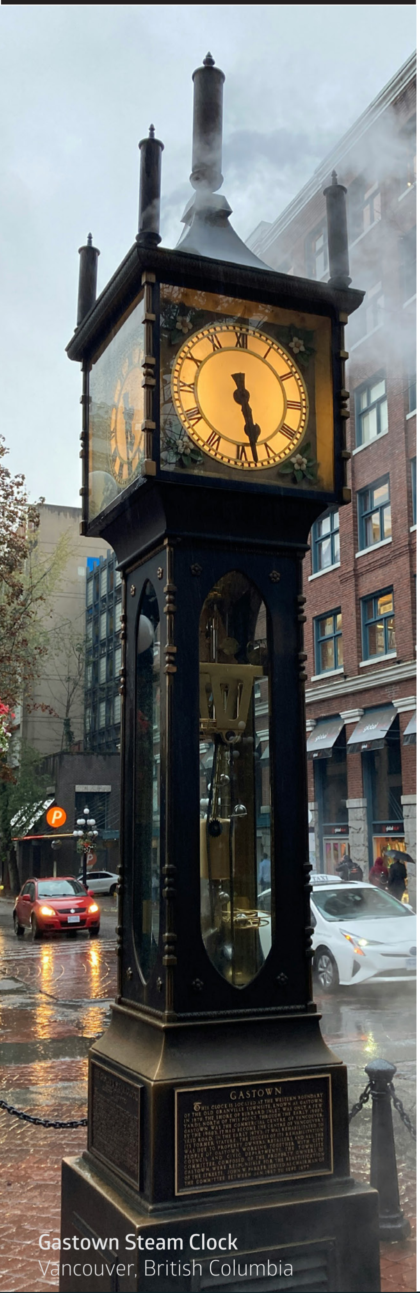
We also understand what many outsiders miss: Canada isn't one market. Organizations competing nationally need frameworks that are sophisticated enough for global markets yet adaptable enough for regional realities. For example, what unlocks success in Alberta differs from what works in Quebec, Ontario, or Atlantic Canada, each with its own varied regulatory environments, economic drivers, cultural contexts, and interprovincial trade considerations.

This guide is designed for Canadian organizations seeking to establish a systematic, predictable, and sustainable competitive advantage. To do so, we'll introduce you to a three-pillar framework that draws on proprietary research with over 1,000 business leaders and delivery experience with organizations worldwide undergoing complex transformation.



Lake Louise
Alberta

Having an execution advantage is critical for Canadian organizations that have less flexibility for strategic drift than competitors in larger economies.



Gastown Steam Clock
Vancouver, British Columbia

The problems facing Canadian companies

As access to markets becomes more uncertain and procurement decisions increasingly favour domestic suppliers, building the ‘right’ strategy and the execution capability to deliver it become the differentiators.

When geopolitical pressures push organizations to work closer to home, it reveals a persistent gap between strategy knowledge and strategy execution. Most leaders understand the principles of good strategy, so the challenge isn’t flawed thinking but creating the conditions for consistent execution.

Despite large investments into strategy, **80% don’t stick.**

80% of executives admit their strategies failed to deliver on their intended goals[1], regardless of scale or ambition. Companies worldwide pour enormous resources into crafting business strategies with terrible ROI. The annual global market for strategy consulting is valued at $87 billion[2], with Canada representing approximately $1.9 billion[3], reflecting the significant investment that Canadian organizations make in strategic planning and execution.

Yet, research shows that as many as **88% of business transformations fail to achieve their original ambitions[4]**, and even successful strategic initiatives leave significant value on the table, with roughly a third of potential benefit unrealized[5]. This challenge affects strategies of all types and scales, from multi-year enterprise transformations to standalone initiatives. This level of value leakage is a vulnerability that Canadian organizations competing with larger U.S./foreign counterparts, while managing the complexities of a bilingual, regionally diverse market, can’t afford.

The largest share of value leakage, 35% on average[6], occurs during implementation. It’s not because the ideas or teams are wrong; it’s that the systems required to make the strategy real aren’t built to deliver.

Some strategies face uphill battles from the beginning when built without sufficient input, or with overstretched ambitions and unclear priorities. Others begin well but lose momentum through weak accountability, progress tracking, and leadership energy. Most struggle with challenges in both design and execution, not because they lack knowledge, but because they lack systems that turn insight into action.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Organizations that consistently deliver on strategy don’t just plan better — they execute better. They integrate execution into design from the start, creating conditions where strategy becomes embedded in how work gets done rather than layered on top of it. This execution capability is harder to replicate than strategic content and creates stakeholder confidence that enables bigger bets that deliver better results and compound their advantage over time.

ASSESSMENT

Are your strategies built to 'stick'?

Before diving into the **Strategies That Stick Framework**, reflect on a strategy you've delivered, whether a long-range strategic plan or something more focused (e.g., brand strategy, pricing, etc.), with this tool developed by Level5 Strategy. Working through this with a partner who was involved in the program can help highlight different perspectives and patterns.

Spectrum of success

First, rate the overall success of that plan on a scale of 1-10:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Abysmal Failure									Wildly Successful

Spectrum of struggling strategy

Now, if your answer was less than stellar, consider why it fell short:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wrong Strategy									Bad Execution

Finally, dig deeper into the root causes. Complete the quick worksheet on the following page to identify the underlying patterns.

	Statement	Score (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
1	Our leadership team was fully aligned and committed to the strategy.	
2	We set clear accountabilities for actions and outcomes outlined in the plan.	
3	We were rigorous in our use of facts and data to inform our thinking and decision-making.	
4	We communicated the strategy effectively to ensure collective understanding and buy-in across relevant stakeholder groups.	
5	We defined the right number of priorities and did not bite off more than we could chew.	
6	We established an effective governance system with milestones and KPIs to track and manage progress.	
7	We engaged a broad cross-section of stakeholders and considered a variety of perspectives.	
8	We allocated sufficient budget and human capital to achieve the targeted outcomes.	
9	We had a clear understanding of what success looked like.	
10	We adapted well to changing market conditions and new business realities, adjusting priorities and efforts as needed.	

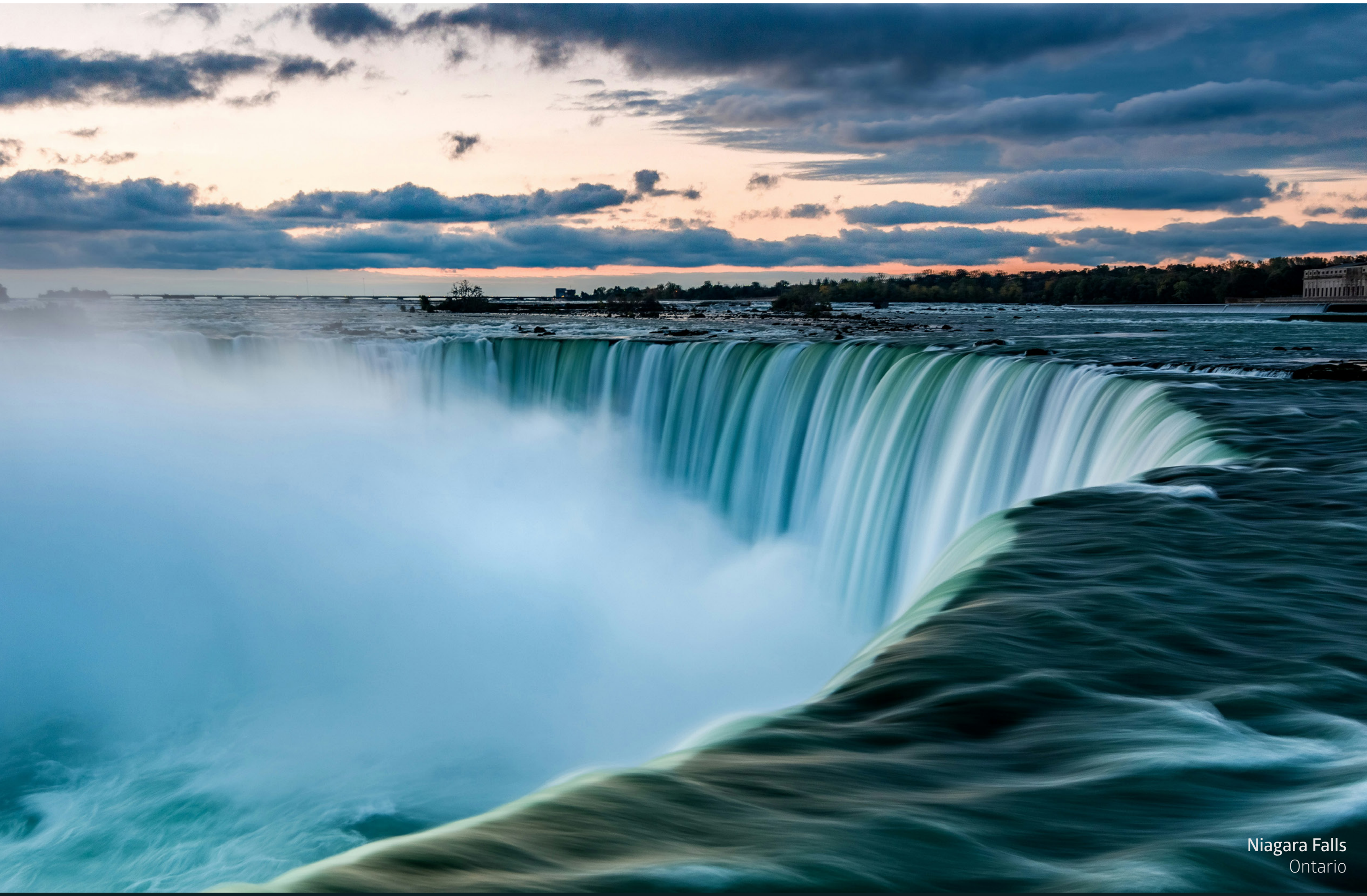
Finally, add up your scores for the even statements separately from the odd statements.

Odd numbered statement total	Even numbered statement total
______________ /25	______________ /25

Your overall score matters less than the pattern it reveals.

What matters is that most executives instinctively blame struggling strategies on poor execution (your even number score), assuming that the plan was sound, but implementation failed. The reality is often the opposite. When strategies fail to stick, the roots of that failure were frequently planted during development itself: insufficient input, unrealistic ambitions, or unclear priorities that made execution nearly impossible from the start (your odd number score).

This diagnostic reveals where your strategy's foundation is weakest. If your score was lower on strategy development, pay more attention to pillars one and two. If your score was lower in strategy execution, pay more attention to pillars two and three.



Niagara Falls
Ontario

FRAMEWORK

Introducing the Strategies that Stick Framework

The foundation for orchestrating strategies that stick is built on three interconnected pillars. When all three are in place, they create the conditions for sustained strategic momentum and help to mitigate common pitfalls throughout the strategy lifecycle.

1

The 'Right' Strategy

Strategy alone isn't the answer; the process of developing strategy is just as critical.

How you build strategy — who's involved, what evidence informs it, and how you prioritize — determines whether it's 'right' for your specific context and capabilities, and whether it can succeed.

2

Enduring Commitment

Surface-level agreement kills strategies; getting full buy-in propels them.

Genuine commitment requires leadership alignment on hard trade-offs and systems that make strategic choices consequential, not optional.

3

Orchestration Engine

Execution isn't follow-through; it needs to be built as infrastructure.

The best strategies create systems that make work transparent, accountable, and adaptive — embedding strategic intent and oversight into daily operations.

For each pillar, we'll reveal common pitfalls that undermine success, with real-world research and examples, and help diagnose your exposure and provide immediate actions to take.

The 'Right' Strategy

The seeds of a strategy's ultimate fate are sown as early as its development process. Too often, strategy processes are closed-door exercises. A small team, usually senior executives, builds the plan on a shaky foundation of opinions and internal discussions, then pushes it out to the organization, assuming the rest will follow. In reality, people struggle to connect their day-to-day work to the plan — or worse, don't see it as relevant.

Common pitfall: the input gap

Only 28% of organizations fully incorporate fact-based insights into their strategy[7].

Strategies developed in isolation rarely survive contact with reality. When key perspectives that inform the strategy development are missing, implementation reveals gaps that feel like surprises but were predictable. Teams discover that critical stakeholders weren't consulted, market realities weren't understood, or operational constraints weren't considered.

Problem: Strategies that seem brilliant in boardrooms struggle in practice.

Warning sign: Your strategy was primarily developed by senior leaders and is informed/defended more by internal assumptions and opinions than by transparent, external market data and customer insights.

Solution: Include all vital perspectives, market/customer insights, and facts. Get input from a broad group at various levels.

Common pitfall: the ambition trap

71% said: "Our plans may have been too ambitious".

Bold visions inspire, but unrealistic ambitions kill momentum. When strategies demand more than organizations can ever see themselves delivering, teams begin making unauthorized adjustments, scope gets quietly reduced, and energy dissipates. Suddenly, "stretch goals" become acknowledged impossibilities.

Problem: Overly ambitious strategies are ineffectual. They don't inspire higher performance throughout the organization and risk getting watered down.

Warning sign: Your people seem confused or unenthusiastic about the direction.

Solution: Be visionary yet still realistic. Ensure your ambition and objectives are clear and manageable.

Common pitfall: the priority paradox

76% say: "We have too much to do, and we're not prioritizing effectively".

Strategy is just as much about choosing what not to do as it is about choosing what to do. When everything is strategic, nothing is. Strategies established without prioritization risk launching multiple initiatives that overwhelm teams and burn out resources. Teams struggle to determine what matters most when competing demands all carry "strategic" labels.

Problem: Without trade-offs or prioritization, strategies become wish lists that drive siloed thinking, forcing teams to compete for resources rather than collaborating.

Warning sign: Timelines and resource assumptions are unrealistic in practice.

Solution: Focus only on a few great ideas that work with the scale of your company.

The 'right' strategy in action

LEVEL5 STRATEGY CASE STUDY

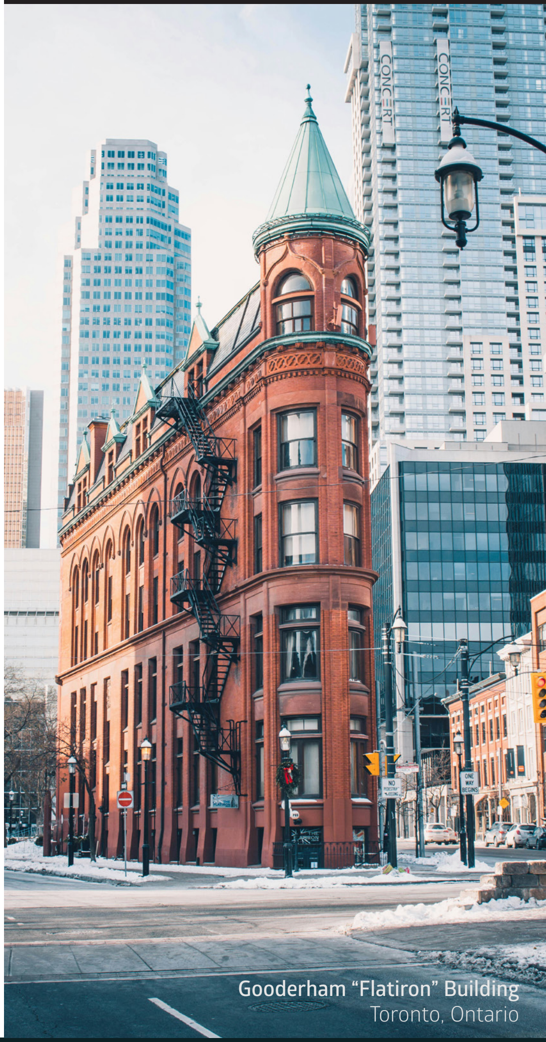
One Level5 Strategy client, a Cold Storage and 3PL provider, avoided these common pitfalls by building its strategy with the right foundation. They were experiencing rapid expansion, but leadership recognized that its traditional approach to managing operations couldn't scale with the pace of growth. Historically, a small group made most decisions based on operational instinct. As the organization evolved, adding new facilities, expanding service lines, and entering new markets, it needed a more structured, shared approach to strategy.

Level5 partnered with the founders and a cross-functional group of operations, finance, sales, and customer service leaders to define a focused set of ambitions grounded in their collective insight. The process began by synthesizing existing data and validating assumptions about growth opportunities and operational constraints, rather than relying solely on executive intuition. By involving operational leaders who understood warehousing realities, finance leaders who knew capital constraints, and sales teams who knew customer demands early in the planning process, the strategy avoided the isolation that typically undermines buy-in — it felt relevant and real from the start.

Together, they considered capacity limitations and capital availability to identify which strategic priorities were realistic and which represented overreach — forcing explicit trade-offs rather than pursuing everything at once. The resulting strategy translated those evidence-based priorities into a clear, actionable roadmap with specific facility upgrades, technology investments, and service expansions that the entire organization could understand and deliver.

You may not have the right strategy if you hear:

- "We have too many priorities."
- "Everything feels urgent and important."
- "We've bitten off more than we can chew."
- "I'm not sure who's actually responsible for this."
- "We didn't have input into this."
- "We're running hard, but I'm not sure we're running in the right direction."



Gooderham "Flatiron" Building
Toronto, Ontario

Take action: stabilize your strategy

There are three steps to strengthening your strategy:

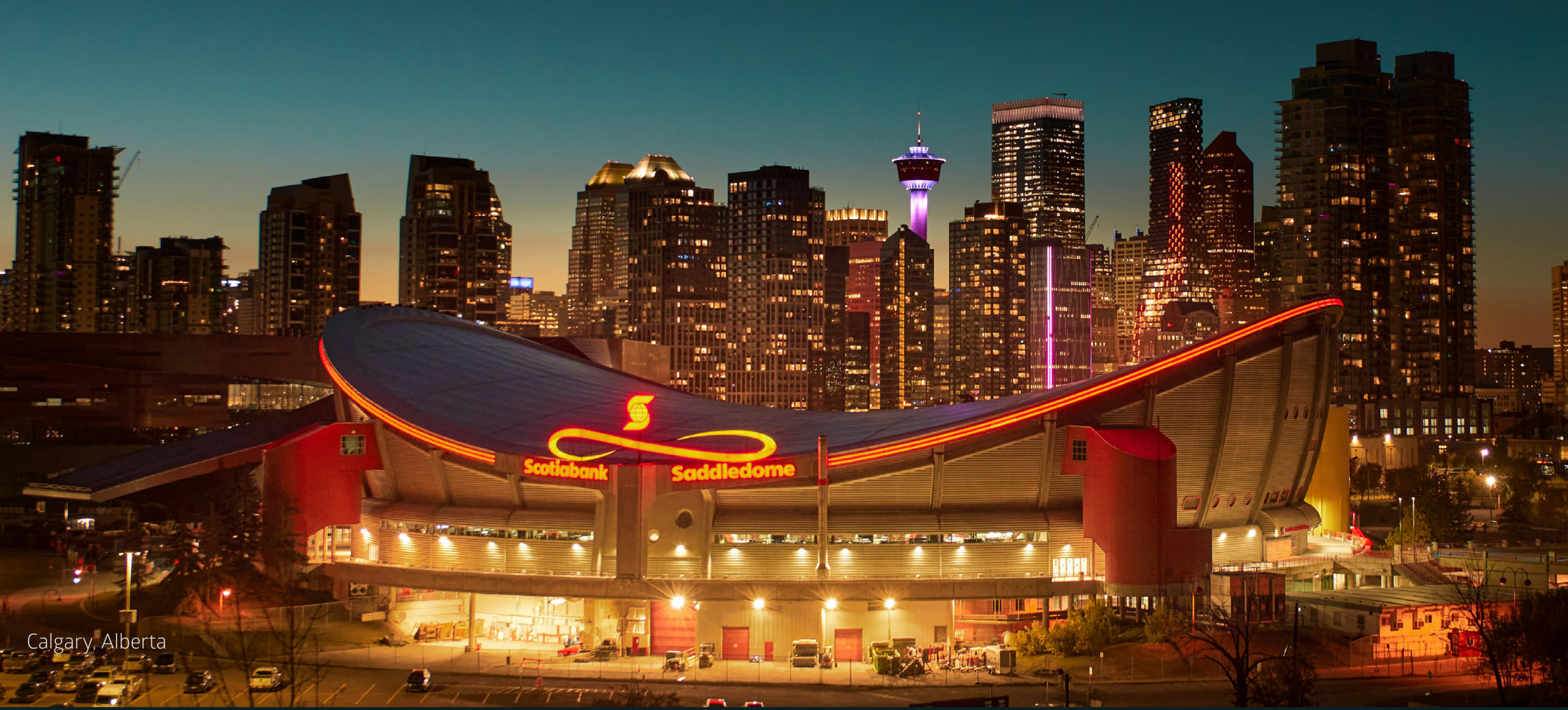
- **Create an inclusive and evidence-based process:** Engage the relevant stakeholders while grounding decisions in market data, customer insights, and competitive intelligence. If you're mid-journey, bring missing stakeholders to the table through structured feedback sessions that identify gaps in your data foundation. Then, empower them to validate assumptions.

- **Set a realistic ambition:** Balance bold vision with pragmatic timelines and resource constraints. Stretch goals should energize teams, not exhaust them. Identify wins your team can achieve in the first 100 days to build trust and velocity. If resetting an existing strategy, use current progress to re-evaluate targets and find short-term wins that inject new energy into the organization.

- **Clarify decisions and trade-offs:** Make explicit choices about what matters most and what gets deprioritized. Use exercises like "even over" to force choices between competing ideas (e.g., "prioritize revenue growth even over cost reduction"), and agree on how leading and lagging metrics will be calculated. If resetting, secure buy-in through 1:1 conversations that show how your solutions solve the "everything is a priority" problem.

When you've built realistic ambitions on an inclusive, evidence-based 'right' strategy that's clear on trade-offs, you're positioned to build enduring commitment.

> If everything feels urgent and important, you have a to do list, not a strategy.



Calgary, Alberta

Enduring Commitment

Successfully executing a strategy over multiple years requires real buy-in from leadership and teams. As market conditions shift, competitors will adapt and technology will evolve. Only an enduring commitment to the overarching ambition can survive these changes and keep that ambition alive.

This doesn't mean rigidity — you still have to adapt. It means remaining committed to the core ambition and to each other, even when aspects of the plan need to change. Without this commitment, teams suffer from poor leadership alignment, accountability gaps, and loss of momentum.

Common pitfall: the leadership fracture

67% say leadership could have been more aligned.

Surface-level consensus masks underlying disagreement about direction, priorities, and/or approach. Leaders endorse strategies in meetings but interpret them differently in practice. For Canadian organizations operating across provinces or managing cross-border operations, this fracture is often amplified by jurisdictional complexity. What leadership agrees to nationally may require different execution approaches regionally, creating natural tension that demands even stronger alignment mechanisms. When competing priorities emerge or difficult trade-offs arise, these hidden fractures become visible, undermining team confidence and execution momentum.

Problem: Without genuine leadership alignment, strategies become suggestions.

Warning sign: Leaders consistently prioritize other work over strategic initiatives.

Solution: Surface real disagreements and resolve them in the room so the team leaves with a shared understanding of, and commitment to, next steps.

Common pitfall: the accountability void

28% of organizations don't assign initiative owners and 72% say there could have been clearer accountabilities.

When ownership is unclear or diffused across multiple parties, strategic initiatives drift. Without clear accountability structures, busy work happens, but impact doesn't. It becomes too focused on outputs or optics vs outcomes. Teams assume someone else is handling critical elements, or multiple groups duplicate efforts while gaps remain unaddressed.

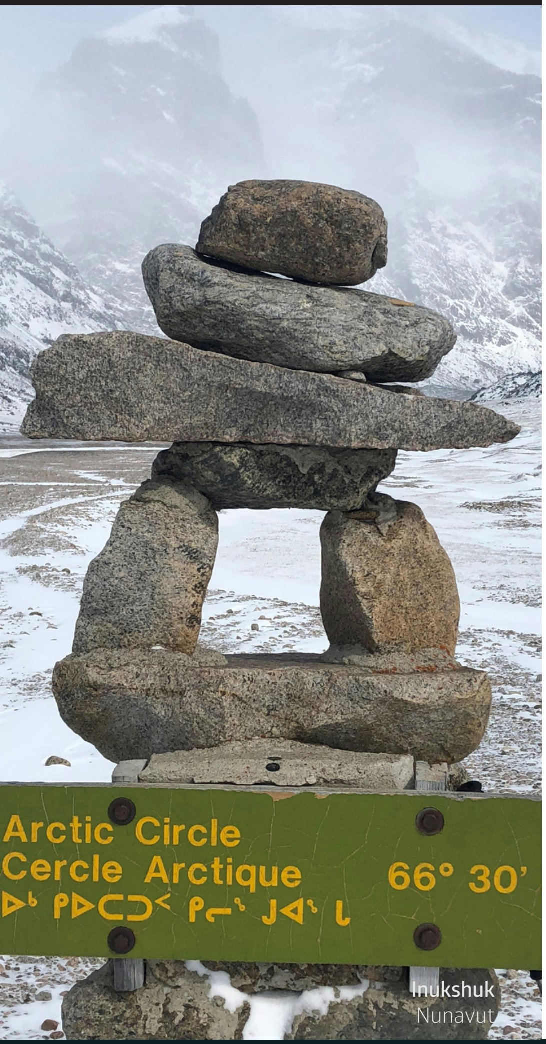
Problem: Shared responsibility often becomes no responsibility.

Warning sign: Diminished energy around strategic initiatives.

Solution: Ensure resource allocation and priority decision-making happen at large, not in silos.

Your team may lack an enduring commitment if you hear:

- "I never agreed to this."
- "That's not my job."
- "We're all too busy with other priorities."
- "Let's use my spreadsheet instead."
- "I'm out of the loop on that."
- "I don't know who's responsible."
- "We disagree on where we're going."



Inukshuk
Nunavut

Enduring commitment in action

LEVEL5 STRATEGY CASE STUDY

A Crown Corporation needed to build the necessary commitment structures to sustain strategy across multiple cycles, addressing the fractures and voids that had undermined previous efforts. When they engaged Level5 Strategy, the organization was emerging from a bold but disruptive strategic horizon that had left teams fatigued and employee engagement low. Previous strategies had launched with enthusiasm but lost momentum as competing priorities emerged and accountability blurred.

Level5 partnered with the corporation to develop their strategic plan and, critically, build the commitment structures to sustain it. Leaders moved through structured decision-making sessions that forced explicit trade-offs rather than allowing everything to remain a priority. These weren't rubber-stamp meetings; they were forums where disagreements were encouraged until decisions were made, after which collective commitment was expected. Each initiative was assigned clear ownership with defined success metrics and review cadences. Implementation plans clearly mapped out what would be achieved and how, with timelines, dependencies, and decision rights.

The corporation also developed internal change management capabilities, training hundreds of employees to carry the strategy forward and embed it into daily operations. This wasn't strategy as an announcement; it was strategy as shared commitment cascaded throughout the organization.

Across three successive strategic cycles (2017-20, 2021-24, 2025-28), execution improved from 65% to 90% in the initial cycle and sustained at 85% in the most recent. Manager support for change increased by more than 20%, and strategic clarity rose by nearly 30%. By building genuine alignment and clear accountability into governance structures, the strategy didn't just launch — it stuck.

CONDUCTOR CASE STUDY

UWM, the largest mortgage lender in the US, has been a Conductor customer for a decade. Their version of Conductor, known internally as UZone, is used every day by their 6,500+ team members to ensure their high execution standards continue to be met.

UWM's CEO, Mat Ishbia, published a book about how his college basketball experience shaped his approach to running the company (*Running the Corporate Offense: Lessons in Effective Leadership from* *the Bench to the Board Room*). Mat discusses their approach to accountability, driven by Conductor. Working closely with the Sensei Labs team, Mat pioneered a feature known as the *97% Report*, which calculates the accountability achievement for every team member every day. The report looks at all the tasks each user has due on a given day and ranks their performance on completing as close to 97% of them as possible. The objective had less to do with ensuring the actual closure rate of tasks and more with building a system of accountability for team members to honour their commitments to each other. Achievements on the *97% Report* became a central pillar of team members' performance reviews and bonus structures, leading to proactive conversations around timelines, development of alternate plans, and team members supporting each other.

This type of gamification, unlocked by orchestration engines like Conductor, can become a critical component in ensuring your right strategy converts into an enduring commitment that makes it stick.

Take action: get commitment

There are four steps to building commitment regardless of where you are in your journey:

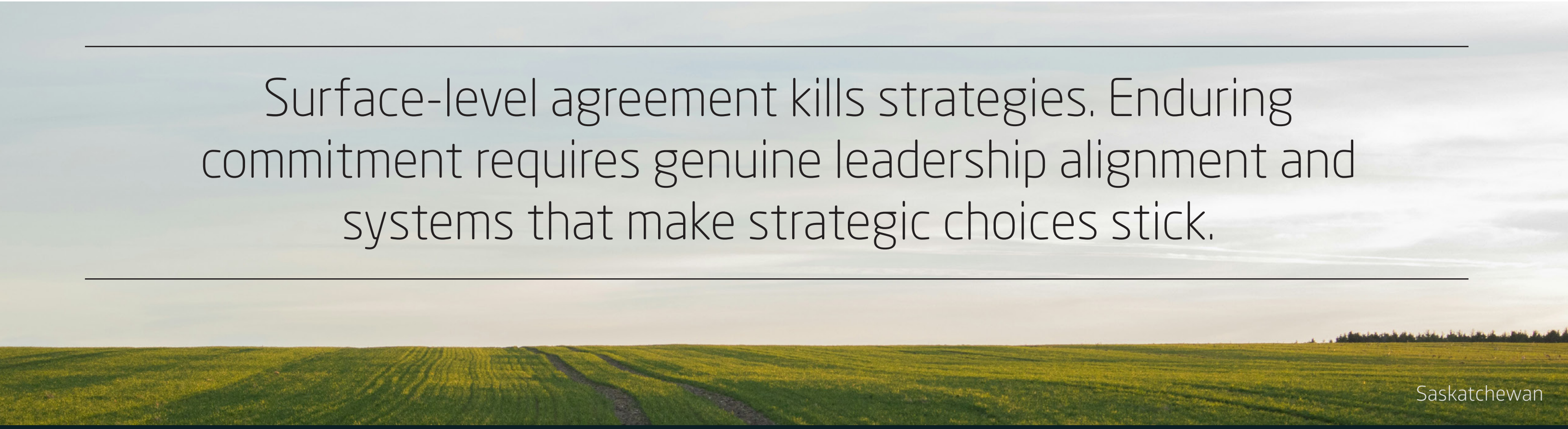
- **Get genuine leadership alignment:** Move beyond consensus to shared conviction about direction and trade-offs. Disagree until a decision must be made, then commit collectively to that decision. When leaders disagree about established priorities, teams feel it immediately.

- **Define clear accountability structures:** Communicate who owns which decisions, which outcomes, and how success gets measured. When leaders know their credibility depends on strategic delivery, commitment becomes authentic.

- **Create outcome-focused systems:** KPIs, review cycles, and decision-making processes reinforce strategic priorities over competing demands. Ensure your governance model keeps decision-making lightweight and rapid while allocating resources to the highest-value outcomes. What gets measured and rewarded determines where energy flows.

- **Maintain organizational engagement and momentum:** Transparent and consistent communication about ambitions, progress, and challenges keeps teams connected to your strategic purpose. A regular drumbeat of updates, wins, and course corrections rallies the organization through the journey.

Enduring commitment isn't achieved through workshops alone; it's built through organizational design that makes strategic choices consequential. Once you have the right strategy and your team's genuine commitment, you need the systems that turn that commitment into results.



Surface-level agreement kills strategies. Enduring commitment requires genuine leadership alignment and systems that make strategic choices stick.

Saskatchewan

Orchestration Engine

Engineering a strategy execution ecosystem means being as intentional about building your execution systems as you are about building bridges and skyscrapers. This principle, which Conductor's CEO, Jay Goldman, called 'Engineered Ecosystems' in *The Decoded Company* (see the Appendix), means designing and implementing the engine that makes your strategy stick through the long winter of implementation, ensuring predictable results with low risk.

Common pitfall: the execution planning gap

Only 30% of organizations develop clear implementation roadmaps for their strategies.

That means only 30% translate their goals and priorities into systems that monitor how they'll be executed: from sequencing, to dependencies, ownership, and coordination.

Even when strategies are well-conceived, the bridge to execution is often missing. Organizations invest significant time in strategic thinking but fail to translate that thinking into concrete implementation plans. Without roadmaps, strategies become abstract aspirations rather than executable plans. Teams are left to figure out sequencing, dependencies, and coordination on their own.

Problem: Strategies look complete on paper but lack the operational clarity needed for effective execution.

Warning sign: Lack of real-time visibility between formal review cycles leads to few risks and issues clearly identified and tracked.

Solution: Run executive/steering committee meetings on real-time dashboards.

Common pitfall: the measurement blind spot

74% say: "We don't know how we're doing — we're not measuring or managing what matters".

Course correction is impossible without clear visibility into progress. Teams work on activities that feel strategic but can't demonstrate impact, convinced that movement equals progress. Progress gets measured through proxy metrics disconnected from strategic outcomes, or misaligned KPIs that no one agrees on how to calculate. Complex attribution models double-count achievements to make every team look stronger. By the time problems surface, momentum has stalled and credibility has eroded.

Problem: What doesn't get measured, doesn't get managed, and ultimately, doesn't get delivered.

Warning sign: Lack of clarity on who owns what leads to complicated and long timelines to adjust your approach.

Solution: Identify coordination problems or conflicting initiatives that are causing delays.

Orchestration engine in action: focus on transformation

Not all strategies, big or small, result in the need for a large-scale transformation program. That said, transformation provides a highly relevant example of orchestration in practice at the highest and most consequential levels — where the execution planning gaps and measurement blind spots become most visible and most costly.

Chief Transformation Officers (CTOs) increasingly have seats at decision-making tables, and Transformation Management Offices (TMOs) are becoming established fixtures in large enterprises globally. These teams are an acknowledgment that, to paraphrase Einstein, "we cannot solve today's problems with the same thinking that created them." TMOs take strategic plans and execute their visions to deliver real results on highly compressed timelines. Billions of dollars will be spent on these teams and the transformations they're empowered to lead. They're often mandated with the result of strategy planning exercises far upstream from the execution, with the hope that they'll lead to billions in results. This is the ultimate test of whether those strategies stick.

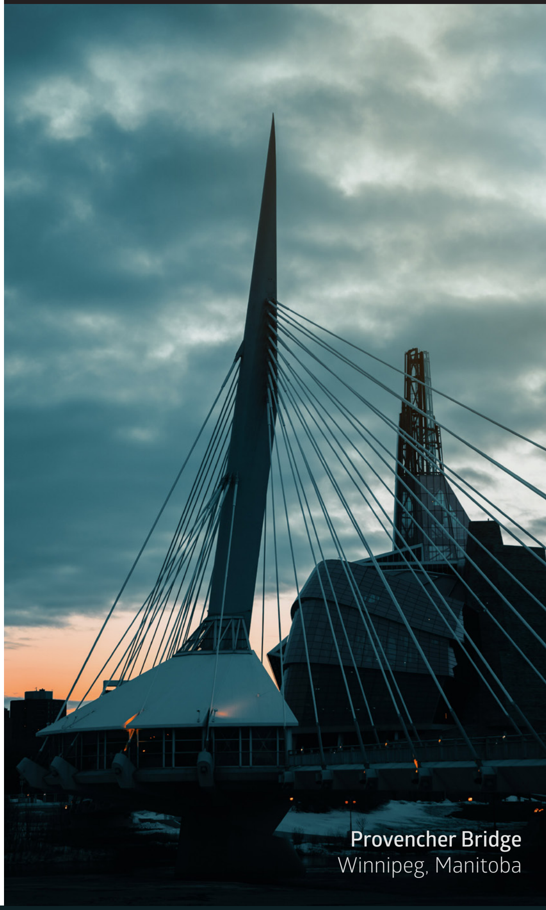
Conductor's 2024 State of Transformation Survey (see Appendix) collected data from 150+ large enterprises across virtually every global industry. The research revealed that TMOs are overloaded, managing not just their initial transformation mandates but also the downstream impact of strategies not sticking. That overload clearly manifests in the data:

- Teams are spending 25% of their work effort on low-value status tracking—hundreds of thousands of budget dollars consumed by administrative overhead rather than strategic delivery.
- Over 60% of respondents were simultaneously running four different types of transformation, with almost a quarter managing more than seven types.
- 63% of TMOs have evolved or are evolving into Strategic Program Offices, suggesting that orchestration capabilities should become permanent fixtures rather than temporary transformation functions.
- The top concerns include inconsistent planning, lack of benefits tracking, and ineffective collaboration—precisely the orchestration gaps this pillar addresses.

Unsurprisingly, strategies aren't sticking in these high-stakes, VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environments. These

You may not have an orchestration engine if you hear:

- "I didn't know that team was working on something similar."
- "We keep running into the same roadblocks."
- "I can't get a straight answer on where we stand."
- "We're months in and I have no idea if we'll deliver on time, on budget, or with desired results."
- "Is anyone working on this?"
- "Why didn't we know about this earlier?"
- "It takes so much time to get these status reports ready."



Provencher Bridge
Winnipeg, Manitoba

challenges reflect what happens when execution planning and real-time measurement systems are missing. Organizations must adapt their ways of working, from strategy development through execution, to make programs stable, certain, simple, and clear.

That leads to the critical question: How can we balance this overload with the need for an orchestration engine that delivers results? Constellation Research, a leading industry analyst firm, found that implementing a modern, purpose-built orchestration platform like Sensei Labs' Conductor can drive three times the results over traditional methods. They discovered that transformation platforms produce significantly higher success rates and improved business outcomes precisely because they provide the execution clarity and real-time visibility that traditional approaches can't deliver.

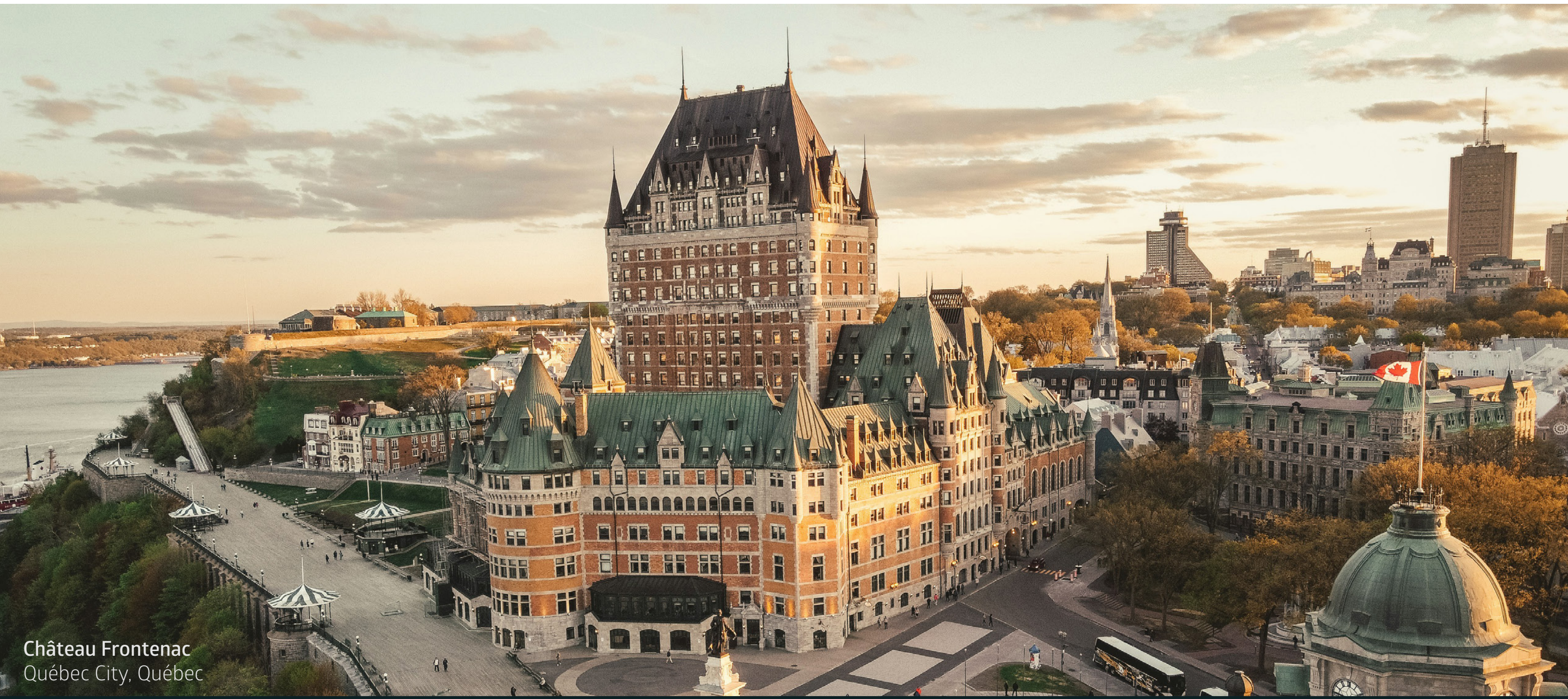
CONDUCTOR CASE STUDY

In 2019, Calsonic Kansei, a leading Japanese automotive company owned by KKR, acquired Magneti Marelli, a high-tech components manufacturer, from Fiat Chrysler for €5.8 billion. The merger created a combined entity with €14.6 billion in revenue, making it the world's seventh-largest independent automotive supplier.

Viewed as a catalyst for Marelli's future growth, the merger swiftly brought distinct challenges. Beyond navigating the cultural differences between Italian and Japanese companies, the new partnership also had to identify and implement $1 billion in cost improvements and $900 million in sustainable cash savings.

KKR onboarded Conductor as a single source of truth to complete all necessary interdependent projects. These included plant closures and line transfers, R&D and engineering location changes to reduce costs, onboarding new ESG projects, HR transformation, the rollout of a new Performance Management platform, and other finance transformation initiatives. Conductor also enabled a three-stage transition from an external management consulting firm to a large internal transformation team equipped with Conductor to a small, highly agile team prepared for future initiatives.

The transformation was and continues to be a massive success, with Marelli orchestrating programs on Conductor



Château Frontenac
Québec City, Québec

to this day. KKR used this program and case study to introduce Conductor across more of their portfolio companies as their value creation and orchestration engine.

Take action: build your orchestration engine

There are four steps to building a high-performance orchestration engine:

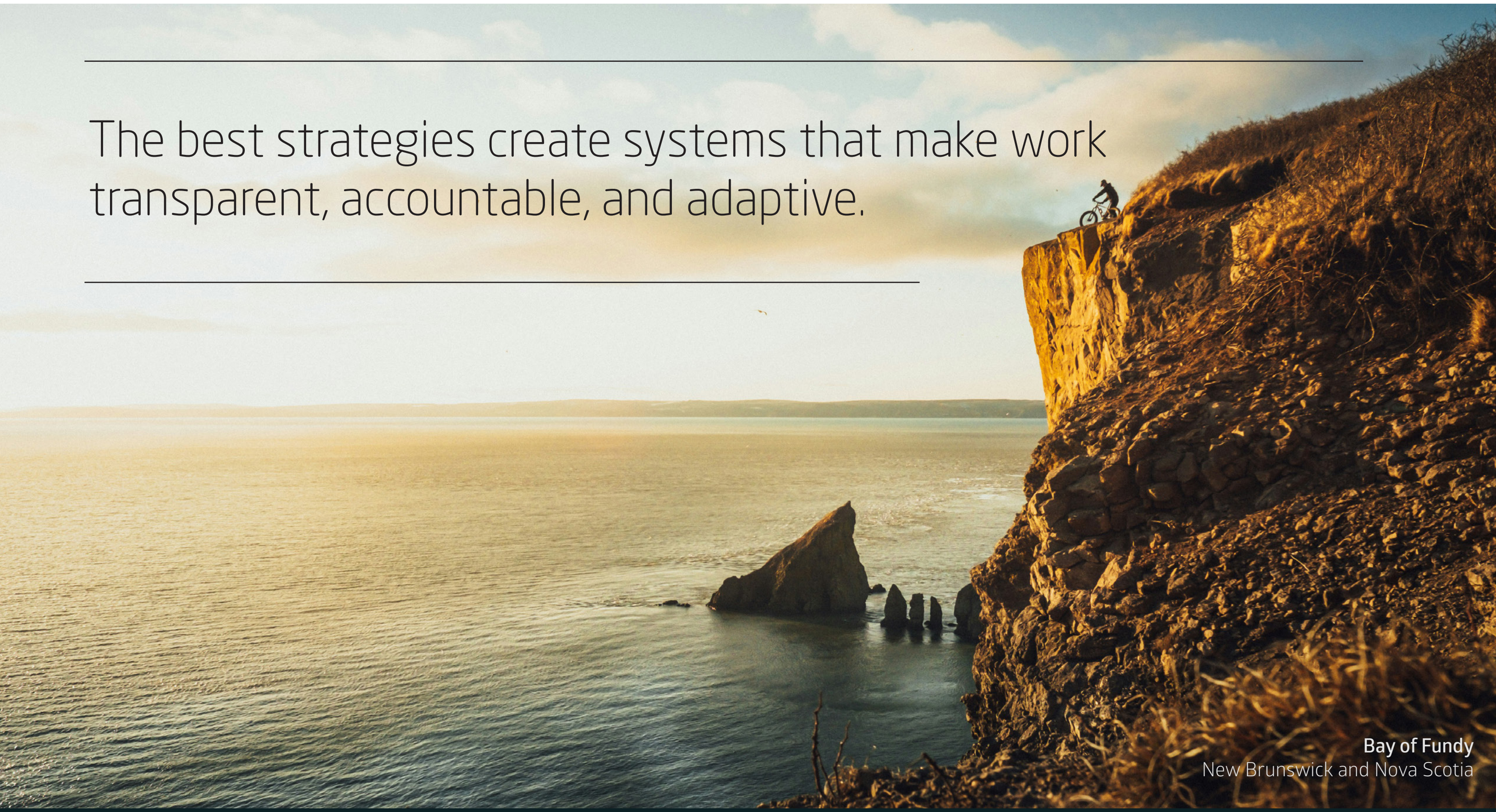
- **Develop an integrated execution plan:** Connect strategic goals to specific initiatives, timelines, and dependencies with clear ownership to prevent work happening in isolation.

- **Establish cross-functional coordination and seamless workflows:** Create systems that allow work to move efficiently between stakeholders, with centralized visibility that ensures handoffs happen smoothly and nothing falls through the cracks. Teams actively collaborate rather than operating in silos, and interdependencies are tracked so no one is left waiting for upstream work.

- **Create real-time visibility systems:** Get insight into what's moving, what's stuck, and why. Shift from reactive status tracking to proactive exception handling. Proactive problem-solving beats reactive crisis management every time.

- **Build adaptive governance and response capability:** Systems that maintain strategic direction while enabling rapid pivots through light-touch guardrails rather than rigid processes help you adjust without losing momentum despite changes of circumstance, governance, and execution.

An orchestration engine transforms strategy from a document to a daily operating system that guides decisions and drives results.



The best strategies create systems that make work transparent, accountable, and adaptive.

Bay of Fundy
New Brunswick and Nova Scotia

SUMMARY

Stay competitive by combining the right strategy with commitment and an orchestration engine

The patterns that derail strategy are predictable. The gaps between knowing and doing persist across industries and organizational types. The silver lining? Predictable problems yield systematic solutions.

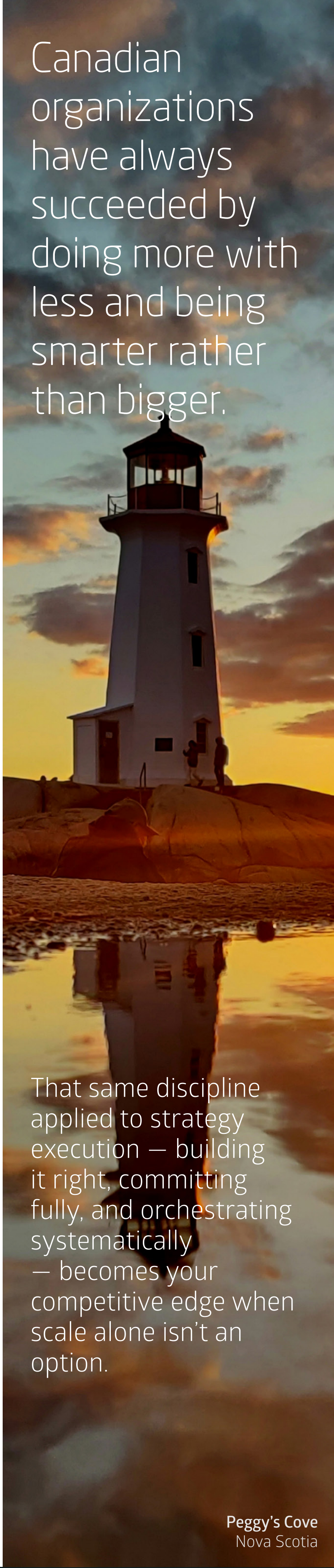
Most organizations excel at one or two pillars but rarely all three. They may develop robust strategies but lack commitment mechanisms. They may achieve leadership alignment but struggle with orchestration. They may build sophisticated tracking systems without ruthless prioritization. Excellence in individual pillars doesn't guarantee strategic success — it's excellence in all three and their integration that delivers results and strategic stickiness.

Organizations that consistently deliver don't just have better strategies; they build better systems to make strategy happen. They create conditions where the 'right' strategy emerges from inclusive, realistic processes, where enduring commitment sustains energy through difficulty, and where robust enterprise orchestration makes progress visible and adaptive.

A 'sticky' strategy creates a reinforcing cycle. Teams that experience successful strategy execution develop institutional confidence — they believe ambitious plans can happen. This confidence enables leaders to set bolder targets and tackle more complex challenges, knowing their organization can deliver. Stakeholders begin to trust strategic commitments, making resource allocation and partnership decisions easier. Top talent gravitates toward organizations known for following through, creating stronger execution capacity. Market credibility grows as promises consistently become results, opening doors to bigger opportunities.

Perhaps most importantly, the organization develops muscle memory for strategic execution. Teams know how to surface problems early, leaders know how to make trade-offs quickly, and systems know how to adapt without losing momentum. What started as conscious competence becomes unconscious capability. Teams that began as special-purpose transformation management offices often evolve into ongoing strategy management offices. The same skills that made them exceptional at transforming the organization make them equally exceptional at business-as-usual in a highly volatile, rapidly changing environment.

Your next strategy will face these challenges, amplified by today's uncertain trade environment and cross-border pressures. The question is: will you build the systems that make it stick?



Peggy's Cove
Nova Scotia

Level5 Strategy is a leading Canadian boutique firm that helps organizations build 'strategies that stick'. Our cross-sector clients — from mid-market to large enterprise — turn to us when they're looking to expand their reach, enhance their execution, and evolve their organization. They come for the 'right' strategy, and the assurance that in working with us they are building the commitment needed to deliver it.

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Conductor® empowers the world's largest companies, government agencies, professional service firms, and private equity funds to 3x their most strategic programs. Conductor is an AI-powered operating system that enables enterprise teams to plan, proritize, execute, and realize their most critical strategic programs across the full orchestration lifecycle.

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Research sources and methodology

The statistics and insights throughout this guide are grounded in extensive original research and cross-sector client experience. Level5 Strategy and Sensei Labs have partnered with hundreds of organizations—from mid-market companies to global enterprises—helping them develop strategies and build the execution systems that make those strategies stick.

Unless otherwise cited in footnotes, the data and figures in this guide are sourced from:

- Level5 Strategy Omnibus research with 1,000+ business leaders
- Conductor's State of Transformation surveys
- Jay Goldman's (Conductor CEO) published work in Forbes and *The Decoded Company*

Below are details on our primary research sources and related publications.

Level5 Strategy Omnibus

Level5 Strategy conducts ongoing research through The Harris Poll's BizPulse syndicated study, a quarterly survey of 500+ business leaders across North America. The statistics cited throughout this guide draw from November 2024 and June 2025 research waves, which surveyed leaders from organizations ranging in size and across multiple sectors.

The research explores common patterns in strategy development and execution, including:

- Leadership alignment and decision-making processes
- Resource allocation and prioritization challenges
- Accountability structures and governance effectiveness
- Evidence-based strategy development practices
- Factors contributing to strategy success and failure

This multi-wave approach allows Level5 to track evolving trends in how organizations approach strategic planning and execution, providing the empirical foundation for the frameworks presented in this guide.

Conductor State of Transformation

The 2024 edition of our industry survey was completed in partnership with the OPEX Week Business Transformation World Summit and was covered in Forbes — Navigating Change: Transformation Trends In 2024. The survey includes input from 150+ global transformation executives on topics including:

- **AI Adoption:** Over 85% of surveyed organizations incorporate AI into their transformation strategies, with more than 50% having formal policies.

- **Leadership Involvement:** Nearly 60% of respondents hold VP-level or higher positions, emphasizing the importance of leadership in driving transformation, and 70% of programs have direct oversight from CEOs.

- **Multiple Initiatives:** About 30% of organizations manage ten or more concurrent transformation initiatives, often in early stages and struggling to achieve financial targets.

- **Inefficiencies in Transformation Offices:** About 25% of Transformation Management Offices' time is spent on low-value status-tracking activities, highlighting the need for better tools and processes.

- **Reliance on Traditional Tools:** Despite the availability of modern tools like our Conductor platform, many organizations still depend on Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, and Power BI for managing and tracking.

The full results of the survey are available from the Conductor website.

Forbes on Transformation

Jay Goldman, has authored four Forbes articles on enterprise transformation and value creation:

- **Transformation Transformed: Welcome To the Enterprise Orchestration Era.** Progressing from reactive to predictive can be daunting, but it is truly a journey of a thousand steps that you can easily start.

- **Portfolio Orchestration: Private Equity's New Superpower to Improve Value Creation.** Enterprise orchestration isn't a panacea for all the challenges faced by PE, but it can deliver rapid ROI against the most common ones.

- **Navigating Change: Transformation Trends In 2024.** Global enterprises are reshaping their strategies to thrive amid continuous change.

- **Mastering The Six Most Disruptive Enterprise Transformation Challenges.** Enterprise transformation has never been more urgent—or more difficult.

The Decoded Company

Jay co-authored the New York Times bestseller *The Decoded Company* (Penguin Portfolio). A powerful guide to building a data-centric corporate culture that unleashes talent and improves engagement.

Amazon delights customers with recommendations that are spot on. Google amazes us by generating answers before we've even finished asking a question. These companies know who we are and what we want. The key to their magic is Big Data. Personalizing the consumer experience by collecting and analyzing consumer data is widely recognized as one of the most significant business opportunities of the 21st century. But there is a flip side to this that has largely been missed: what if we could use data about employees to personalize and customize their experience - to increase their engagement and help them learn faster on the job?

Decoded outlines the six principles we've used to decode work and unlock the maximum potential of our talent, and shares success stories from other organizations that have embraced this approach. The book is an actionable blueprint for any company that wants the best from its people and isn't afraid of radical approaches to get it.

Endnotes

1 · Level5 Strategy: Why Do So Many Strategies Fail, and What You Can Actually Do About It https://go.getconductor.com/l5-why-strategies-fail

2 · Intelmarket Research: Strategy Consulting Services & Solutions Market Growth Analysis, Dynamics, Key Players and Innovations, Outlook and Forecast 2025-2032 https://go.getconductor.com/consulting-outlook-2025

3 · Cognitive Market Research: Strategy Consulting Market Report 2024 https://go.getconductor.com/consulting-market

4 · Bain: 88% of business transformations fail to achieve their original ambitions; those that succeed avoid overloading top talent https://go.getconductor.com/bain-88-percent

5 · McKinsey: The science behind transformations: Maximizing value during implementation https://go.getconductor.com/transformation-70-percent

6 · Level5 Strategy Omnibus Research 2024-2025 - stats throughout the pillar common cracks come from ongoing primary research with over 1,000 cross-sector leaders. See the Our Research section for more information on our original sources.

7 · McKinsey: The science behind transformations: Maximizing value during implementation https://go.getconductor.com/transformation-70-percent