

Strategic Planning using a Change Management Lifecycle Framework



Framework to build and implement strategy using a change management lifecycle methodology

Foreword

This framework is reverse-engineered from the implicit methodologies that I have used successfully in many diverse and complex technical and political environments.

At this point in time, there are not many references. In subsequent versions I hope to change this. Until that point, please consider this a draft of a hypothesis.

Regards,

Rowland Mosbergen

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Who contributes to strategy?

- In the worst-case scenario, the Macro level makes the decisions without any feedback from the Meso or the Micro.
- In the more refined approach, the Meso level is interviewed. Sometimes they are the proxy for the Micro level.
- The Micro level is only interviewed in small numbers and in rare cases due to time and budget constraints.

Client Level	Client example roles
Macro	Senior Management
Meso	Middle Managers, Team Leaders
Micro	Others

Strategy frameworks you may have seen before

I have provided this as a table to demonstrate a simplified framework of how strategies are developed.

The crosses indicate who has been consulted or is driving each stage in a typical strategy initiative.

Stage #	Typical Strategy	Macro Level	Meso Level	Micro Level
1	Requirements Gathering	X	X	
2	Synthesise Information		X	
3	Create a Strategy	X		
4	Implement		X	X
5	Operate		X	X

Strategy frameworks you may have seen before

Stage #	Typical Strategy	Macro Level	Meso Level	Micro Level
1	Requirements Gathering	X	X	
2	Synthesise Information		X	
3	Create a Strategy	X		
4	Implement		X	X
5	Operate		X	X

In the highlighted area, it can be easily seen that the micro level may not have the opportunities to contribute.

Strategy frameworks you may have seen before

Stage #	Typical Strategy	Macro Level	Meso Level	Micro Level
1	Requirements Gathering	X	X	
2	Synthesise Information		X	
3	Create a Strategy	X		
4	Implement		X	X
5	Operate		X	X

Yet the micro level will be expected to implement and operate the changes.

Lack of Micro level information

- Typical strategy gathers requirements (interviewer) at the Meso level.
- Even if they interview at the Micro level they don't give anything back to the people they are interviewing (client).
- The interviewer is getting help to do their job from the client. The client is only potentially getting a benefit "if" multiple conditions are met.
- The client usually never hears of what ever happened to their feedback and what came of it.
- This can be an issue even at the Meso level.

Stage #	Typical Strategy
1	Requirements Gathering
2	Synthesise Information
3	Create a Strategy
4	Implement
5	Operate

Disconnect between Strategy & Implementation

- Strategy is not set to make it easy to implement the change. There is typically no indication from the interviews how certain options will be more amenable to be changed and what the power dynamics are.
- Usually the synthesise information stage unearths other questions that the interviewer cannot answer because they only asked questions specific to the original review.
- Clients at the Meso and Micro levels have no ownership of the strategy as there is no co-design.

Stage #	Typical Strategy
1	Requirements Gathering
2	Synthesise Information
3	Create a Strategy
4	Implement
5	Operate

Lack of relationship building before implementation

- Typical strategy does not focus on change management and relationship building until implementation (Stage number 4).
- This can reduce the chance of success as the change management process has to be designed with the strategy already in place, and the power dynamics are not well understood.
- This can increase the time a project needs to be successful.
- Usually the people that design the strategy don't implement the strategy. This can lead to a disconnect.

Stage #	Typical Strategy
1	Requirements Gathering
2	Synthesise Information
3	Create a Strategy
4	Implement
5	Operate

Typical strategy is not iterative

- Typical strategy is usually linear and not iterative.
- Continuous improvement theory states that iteratively improving is a sign of a healthy organisation.
- As more information is available from implementation and operation, the strategy should be updated as appropriate.

Stage #	Typical Strategy
1	Requirements Gathering
2	Synthesise Information
3	Create a Strategy
4	Implement
5	Operate

Typical strategy is not systematised

- Typical strategy is usually a document or a series of documents that is a combination of multiple sources of information.
- Interviewing is one source of information, but the clients and lower level details of this information is not readily available for re-use or transparency.
- The strategist who synthesises the interviews manually can add unconscious bias into the strategy that cannot be easily reviewed.

Stage #	Typical Strategy
1	Requirements Gathering
2	Synthesise Information
3	Create a Strategy
4	Implement
5	Operate

**So how can we improve our strategy
framework?**

**Think of strategy as
part of a change
management
lifecycle**

Changes to improve the typical strategy lifecycle

1. Focus on advocacy, relationship building, and future change management as opposed to just gathering requirements.
2. Iterative co-design of strategy across all levels as opposed to strategy design at the Macro level.
3. Increase the involvement of the Meso and the Micro level at certain parts of the strategy stages.
4. Systematise the strategy process.

Benefits of building trust through advocacy

- There is a better understanding of the holistic needs of the client.
- There is more scope to come back to the client for more information if we have already built trusted relationships with them.
- When we implement changes, the trust and insight we have with the clients will smooth out the change management process.
- We would be more likely to identify and create a network of champions.
- We can potentially identify more opportunities as we are focusing on improving their needs in a more holistic manner.
- We can leverage these trusted relationships for other programs of work.
- Please note that for maximum benefit, the continuity of personnel through the program (and after) is important to aim for.

The stages of advocacy

Stage of Advocacy	Underpinning Discourse
Immature relationship	How can I help advocate for you?
Testing understanding	I have found an opportunity that I think will help you - is that right?
Demonstrating benefits	I have found an opportunity that I know will help you!
Agency	I have created an opportunity especially for you!

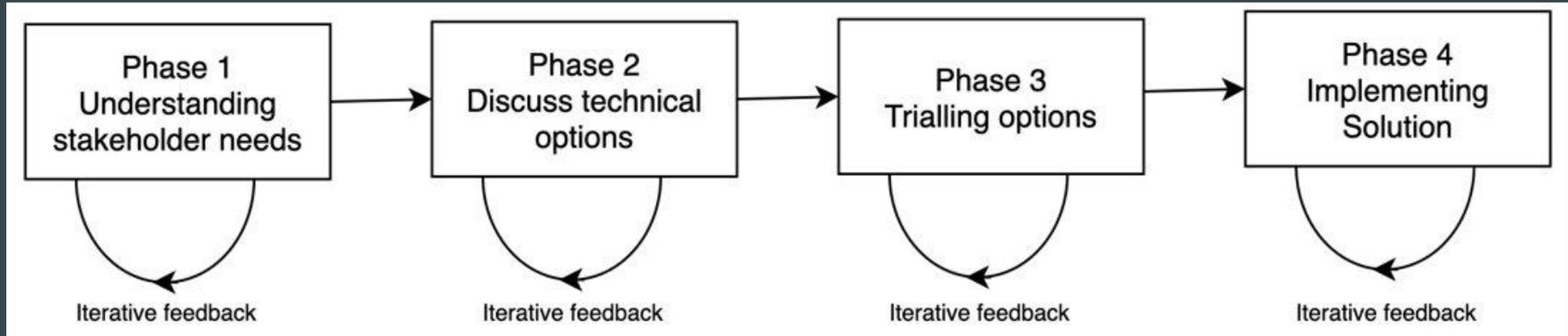
Comparison of advocacy to requirements gathering

Compare that to gathering requirements:

- Your feedback may or may not be used in the strategy.
- The strategy implementation may not help you personally.
- You may not ever hear again from the person gathering requirements.

Benefits of iterative co-design of strategy

- Better ability to share ideas and have them tested in a timely manner.
- Increased ownership across the three levels.
- Increased understanding at the macro level of the power dynamics at the meso and micro levels.
- It is important to have the weight of the community behind the strategy.



Benefits of increasing involvement at Micro and Meso levels

- Better ownership of the strategy.
- Build relationships and identify champions.
- Can re-use these relationships for leveraging other programs of work.
- It ensures that you have the weight of the community behind you.

Benefits of systematising

- Clearer understanding of bias.
- Clearer understanding of the frequency / weight of the needs are.
- Using a semi-qualitative approach, can provide granularity to uncover strategic insights.
- Can then share these strategic insights with the wider community in a safe manner.
- This can increase the trust and the transparency of the process to the Meso and Micro levels.

Improved Strategy Framework



If this seems obvious to you....

- Remember that this is already done implicitly in some strategies, or it is already done implicitly by some strategic advisors or strategic managers.
- The idea for this framework is to make this explicit, so that people who do not do this implicitly can make an informed choice on whether to use specific parts of this framework for their own strategic planning.

Improved strategy framework

This is the updated strategy framework that takes into account the improvements and increases the focus on change management and advocacy.

The crosses indicate who has been consulted or is driving each stage in this new framework.

Stage #	Improved Strategy	Macro Level	Meso Level	Micro Level
1	Advocacy	X	X	X
2	Synthesise Information		X	
3	Co-design a Strategy	X	X	X
4	Implement		X	X
5	Operate		X	X

Comparison of frameworks side by side

The biggest changes that can be seen at this high level is at stages 1 and 3.

Stage #	Improved Strategy	Typical Strategy
1	Advocacy	Requirements Gathering
2	Synthesise Information	Synthesise Information
3	Co-design a Strategy	Create a Strategy
4	Implement	Implement
5	Operate	Operate

How to implement this framework?

Suggestions for advocacy at the Meso and Micro level

So how can we do this?

- Sampling from a diverse pool of stakeholders
- Proof of Concept to inform strategy (IT focused)
- Acting as an intelligence agency
- Official vs Unofficial communication

Sampling from a diverse pool of stakeholders

- When sampling, it is easy to introduce biases, so having a broad spread is important.
- Keeping track of the metadata of the people being sampled is also crucial. Eg. How many from department X?
- Providing strategic insights from this data needs coding in a semi-qualitative research methodological way.
- Think of how the Morgan Gallup poll works. It's one part of the puzzle, not the full puzzle.
- This information should be captured systematically (will get to this later).

Proof of Concept to help inform strategy (IT focused)

- Asks vendors and products to prove that they work the way described.
- Equivalent of a cut down prototype, the absolute minimum to prove that a small representative part of the goal can be done.
- Highlights potential showstoppers early in the phase.
- Lessons learned can help scope the real project.
- Examples include:
 - Wireframes for web design (link)
 - Simple test if a current environment can share information with new application via the API.

Acting like an intelligence agency

- To be able to build trust through advocacy, we need to use the information about the Meso and Micro levels to help them. That way we can slowly go up through the stages of advocacy (from slide 18).
- One option is to gather opportunities from within the environment and share them appropriately. This is the equivalent of an intelligence agency getting information from various sources, curating and validating the information, and then sending it to the most appropriate people.
- Ideally it would be best to systematise this, but it does end up being a manual process.

Official vs Unofficial communication

- Official communication is very powerful but in a political environment can take a long time to approve across the organisation. Eg. An official document that defines a strategy can cause problems if not widely consulted enough.
- Therefore sometimes you might need to share information "unofficially" via draft or strawman documents, or via oral information sharing that cannot be traced.
- This can help to improve the openness and transparency, and provide robust feedback while discussions and negotiations about official documents are waiting to be finalised.

Iterative Co-design strategy at the Meso and Micro levels

1. Advocacy of the Meso and Micro levels by semi-qualitative coding of interviews and feedback.
2. Addition of external feedback and best practices from outside the organisation.
3. Feedback from the Macro level.
4. This is then synthesised at the Macro level to provide a potential vision.
5. Then this vision should be shared with the participants at the Meso and Micro levels in a way that highlights the feedback given by the participants. A further question about challenges to implement should be provided.
6. Feedback from the Meso and Micro levels about the vision are then synthesised as per step 4.
7. This is repeated until the Macro level is satisfied with the vision and that there is enough "sample" engagement with the Meso and Micro level.
8. This can then be officially turned into Strategy.

Suggestions for systematisation

Being able to sample the Meso and Micro levels is important as is the ability to store this systematically to code the feedback and provide strategic insights. These include:

- the ability to store the raw feedback,
- the ability to store the metadata about person who provided the feedback,
- the ability to code the raw feedback into generic comments (tagging),
- the ability to code the generic comments into categories (tagging),
- the ability to know who did the coding and the quality of the coding,
- the ability to pre-register and show bias,
- the ability to ask for dynamic consent to release raw feedback, and
- the ability to have this as a web framework to share data appropriately.

Examples

How to best engage with digital humanities research in Victoria?

A previous example of this methodology being used was the “How to best engage with digital humanities research in Victoria?” project run by the Federation for the Advancement of Victorian eResearch (FAVeR). This methodology resulted in a preliminary report of needs for digital humanities research in Victoria. This report was then used to encourage researchers and funders to see the opportunities in the digital humanities community.

<http://www.faver.edu.au/projects/how-to-best-engage-with-digital-humanities-research-in-victoria/>

How to best engage with digital humanities research in Victoria? (cont)

- Internally across UoM HASS faculties and across universities as part of FAVeR.
- Used the semi-qualitative process to document needs and frequencies in an anonymised way.
- Shared document to internal and external stakeholders to help set expectations and draw interest.
- Created enough goodwill to move from advocacy to agency for a high profile organisation.

Frequency	Generic Comment
7	Research Data Management services should be prioritised
7	Repository as nexus for sharing data should be prioritised
7	Need a clear go-to digital skills representative for the faculty
5	Public facing presentation layer should be prioritised
4	Develop common training and support packages across universities
4	Create an event to showcase research support opportunities from across the University
4	Maintenance of existing databases and projects should be prioritised
4	Video analysis, text analysis, and analytical approaches related to big data are important

Thank You!

