

# The Future of Strategy 2025

# Foreword



**Simon Crowther**  
CEO, i-nexus

*Strategy, at its core, is about aligning intent with execution. Yet, our latest research—drawing insights from hundreds of strategy professionals—highlights a persistent challenge: while 85% of organizations feel confident in their strategy, 44% struggle to connect their day-to-day work to it. This disconnect causes inefficiencies, delays decision-making, and restricts strategic impact.*

*At the heart of this issue lies democratization—or more specifically, its lack. Our evidence points to strategy formulation remaining top-down, often steered by a small cabal of executives or external consultants, with the wider organization disengaged. With regard to its implementation, 55% of organizations remain content to cascade strategy without ongoing feedback mechanisms like catchball, embracing instead a formal, directive mode. The result? Slow response, weak ownership, and three months or longer delay in strategic change for the majority of organizations.*

*Despite the advancement of AI and digital technologies, strategy remains highly manual. 79% of the respondents still rely on Excel for strategy planning, which indicates the absence of an end-to-end integrated strategy platform. The shift towards continuous planning and real-time strategy management is in its nascent stages.*

*But the terrain is shifting. The organizations that will succeed are those that are receptive to democratization, digitalization, and agility—transforming strategy from a static, top-down process into a living, interactive one.*

*By connecting formulation and implementation, and by empowering employees at all levels, we can develop a more adaptive, high-impact strategy.*

## Overview

### Key Findings

1. Whilst AI has made major strides in “entering the boardroom”, especially around strategy creation, the trust isn’t there yet to completely hand over the reins. GenAI is mostly being used to drive efficiency in the strategy process, as opposed to creating the strategy itself.
2. The digitization of strategy is a slow process, with the majority of the work still being done in spreadsheets and PowerPoints and no single tool emerging as the “victor” for the end-to-end strategy process, despite a growing need for one.
3. Delays in strategic decision-making are detracting from work on strategic initiatives, with the cost of failed projects costing organizations millions of dollars and months of lost time.
4. While sentiment indicates that teams are generally feeling positive with how strategy is communicated throughout the organization, a common top-down approach to strategy setting is resulting in many “shopfloor” employees being disconnected from how their work plays into the strategic plan, resulting in lower achievement across strategic initiatives.

# Introduction

As we embarked on this exploration of strategy creation and execution, one striking theme emerged: a disconnect between people and strategy is holding organizations back. Despite advancements in tools, frameworks, and processes, strategy remains a top-down exercise in many organizations. This approach isolates it from the day-to-day realities of the people tasked with executing it, creating a gap between intent and action. Yet, this challenge also represents an opportunity—a call to democratize strategy.

Our findings paint a complex picture of the current state of strategy in organizations. While 85% of respondents feel they are focused on the right initiatives and 83% express confidence in their overall strategy, a significant 44% struggle to see how their day-to-day projects connect to broader strategic goals. This misalignment is exacerbated by outdated tools and practices. For instance, a staggering 79% of respondents still rely on Excel for strategy creation, highlighting the slow adoption of modern, integrated platforms.

A significant insight from the data is the predominance of a top-down approach to strategy creation. More than half of respondents describe their strategies as being set at the executive level, leaving employees on the shopfloor and in mid-level management disconnected from the process. This approach risks disengagement, inefficiencies, and misaligned priorities.

This report explores the state of strategy creation and execution with each section offering actionable insights and real-world examples to help organizations rethink their approach to strategy. Whether you're an executive, strategist, or team leader, this report provides a roadmap to enhance strategic alignment and execution in your organization.

## As you navigate this report, several key takeaways will become apparent:

- **Bridging the Gap:** Addressing the disconnect between strategy and execution starts with better communication, collaboration, and alignment across all levels of the organization. Strategy cannot remain the sole domain of senior leadership; it must be a shared responsibility.

- **Leveraging Technology:** While tools like Excel and PowerPoint remain dominant, they are no longer sufficient for the demands of modern strategy. The report emphasizes the need for integrated platforms that offer real-time insights, streamline processes, and foster collaboration.
- **Balancing Innovation and Judgment:** The rise of technologies like GenAI presents new opportunities to automate routine tasks and enhance data-driven decision-making. However, human intuition and creativity remain irreplaceable, particularly in high-stakes strategic scenarios.
- **The Power of Democratization:** By democratizing strategy, organizations can create a dynamic process that adapts in real-time. This not only improves strategic outcomes but also engages and empowers employees, driving a sense of shared purpose and accountability.

In an era defined by rapid change, globalization, and technological disruption, the ability to align strategy with execution has never been more critical. The organizations that succeed will be those that empower their people, embrace innovation, and make strategy a living, collaborative process.

This report invites you to join the movement toward a more inclusive, dynamic, and effective approach to strategy. By the end, you'll not only understand the challenges facing today's organizations but also gain the tools and insights needed to overcome them.

The future of strategy is not just about frameworks or tools—it's about people. Let's bridge the gap and democratize strategy together.

# Contents

## **Part One – The State of Strategy Creation**

- 1.1: Foundational Data
- 1.2: Key Findings
- 1.3: Strategy Creation Tools
- 1.4: The Role of GenAI
- 1.5: Creating the Strategy

## **Part Two – The State of Strategy Execution**

- 2.1: Foundational Data
- 2.2: Key Findings
- 2.3: Strategy Execution Tools
- 2.4: The Role of GenAI
- 2.5: Executing the Strategy

## **Part Three – The Future of Strategy**

- 3.1: The Democratization of Strategy
- 3.2: The Role of Management Consultants
- 3.3: AI in the Boardroom
- 3.4: Tomorrow's Strategy

## PART ONE

# The State of Strategy Creation

In this section, we surveyed 300 business professionals across the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom to uncover how organizations approach strategy creation today. Our findings reveal that while tools like Excel and PowerPoint remain dominant, they fall short of meeting the demands of modern strategy processes. Despite the growing use of Generative AI (GenAI) to streamline tasks like data aggregation and coaching, the majority of respondents still rely on traditional, manual methods, highlighting a significant gap in the adoption of integrated, digital platforms.

We also uncovered a critical challenge: a top-down approach to strategy creation leaves many employees disconnected from the process, risking misalignment and missed opportunities. This section explores these insights in depth, shedding light on the tools, frameworks, and cultural dynamics shaping strategy creation in today's organizations. It lays the groundwork for understanding the need for democratization, where strategy creation becomes more inclusive and agile to meet the complexities of the modern business landscape.

# Foundational Data

We surveyed 300 respondents across the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom, with 100 participants from each region. Conducted in August and September 2024, our survey focused on full-time employed professionals across key industries, including manufacturing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and chemicals.

Participants held roles in various job functions: management, strategy, operations, transformation, and revenue generation. Focusing on individuals in leadership and decision-making roles gave us meaningful insights into the unique perspectives and challenges faced across these industries.



**Operational Professionals**

**44%**

132 responses



**Strategic Planning Professionals**

**35%**

104 responses



**Transformation Professionals**

**17%**

52 responses



**Revenue Professionals**

**4%**

12 responses



- 100 respondents
- Strategy / Planning Function
- Management Level



- 100 respondents
- Strategy / Planning Function
- Management Level



- 100 respondents
- Leadership
- Exec. Leadership / Manager Level

Primary Function			
Operational	56%	47%	29%
Strategic Planning	23%	35%	46%
Transformation	14%	16%	22%
Revenue	7%	2%	3%

## Key Findings

**84%** of respondents are currently or planning to use GenAI for strategy creation

**70%** of respondents are using consultants to build their strategies

**56%** of respondents use strategy creation tools quarterly or annually

**79%** of respondents are reliant on Excel when using strategy creation tools

**48%** of respondents go to LinkedIn for information to help with their strategy

**94%** of respondents rank podcasts, video content and webinars as one of their top three ways to learn

Significantly, 84% of respondents are either currently using or planning to use Generative AI (GenAI) for strategy creation, reflecting its growing influence in the strategy setting.

Yet, 70% continue to rely on consultants to help shape their strategies, which may indicate a need for external expertise and fresh perspectives, especially as organizations seek to remain competitive and innovative. This reliance on consultants could also reflect a desire to access specialized knowledge and industry best practices that in-house teams may not possess. However, a key takeaway for organizations, should be to involve people at all levels of the organization to help formulate and direct strategy. Top-down approaches means that organizations can be unable to pivot when needed and often struggle to adopt continuous planning models - leading to many strategies faltering.

Over half (56%) use strategy creation tools on a quarterly or annual basis, with a notable 79% still heavily dependent on Excel, suggesting room for more advanced tools. When seeking strategic insights, 48% turn to LinkedIn, and 94% rank podcasts, video content, and webinars as their top learning resources—highlighting a preference for accessible, engaging formats over traditional methods.

**“In an uncertain and changing world, the single most important competency that individuals and organizations need nowadays is strategic competency. They need to be able grasp, shape, move, deliver, and adapt to constantly re-align themselves with the world around them.”**

- Jeroen Kraaijenbrink,  
Author of The Strategic Leadership Playbook

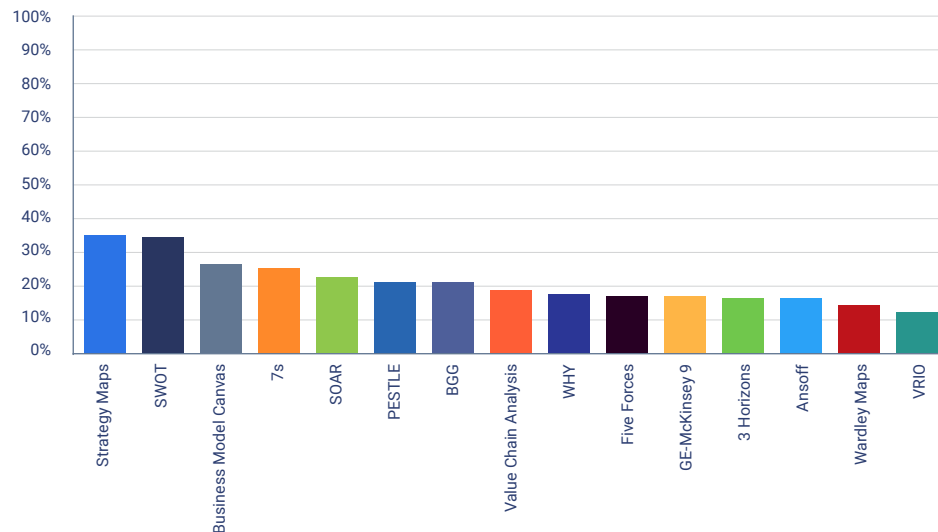
# Strategy Creation Tools

We asked our respondents which strategy tools they'd heard of, and two well-established tools—Strategy Maps (35.67%) and SWOT (35.33%)—emerged as the most recognized, with less-known tools such as SOAR, an execution-focussed variation on the SWOT situational analysis tool, featuring prominently as well. Their dominance can be attributed to simplicity and widespread use across industries. Strategy Maps offer a clear visual representation of organizational goals and the steps needed to achieve them, making them a go-to tool for aligning teams around a common strategy. Similarly, SWOT analysis remains popular due to its straightforward framework for assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, making it adaptable to various business contexts.

Other tools like the Business Model Canvas (27%) and the 7S Framework (26%) follow closely, likely due to their emphasis on organizational structure and value proposition. Familiar tools like PESTLE (21.67%) highlight a growing belief in thorough situational analysis exposing future opportunities based on external and internal factors. Tools such as Value Chain Analysis (19.67%) and Five Forces (17.33%) are still important but may require more specialized knowledge to implement effectively, explaining their lower recognition. The broader range of strategy tools suggests that while traditional methods hold strong, organizations are exploring a mix of frameworks to enable greater collaboration, depth and democratization of the strategy creation process.

**“When it comes to decision making in an evolving technology landscape then many rely on stories, magic frameworks, graphs that pretend to be maps and gut-feel. Claude / ChatGPT can do just as well as any human at making things up and they are considerably cheaper as well.”**

Simon Wardley  
Creator of Wardley Mapping



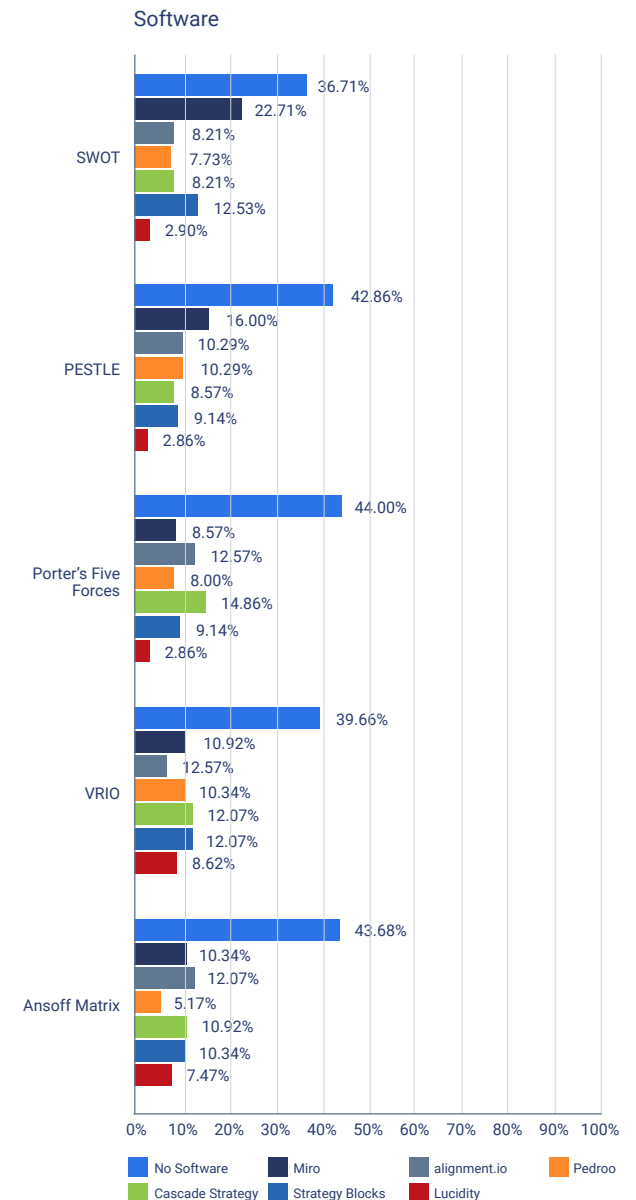
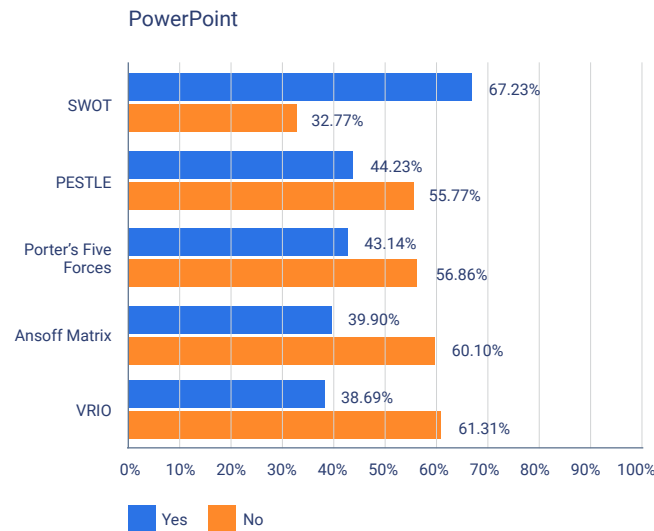
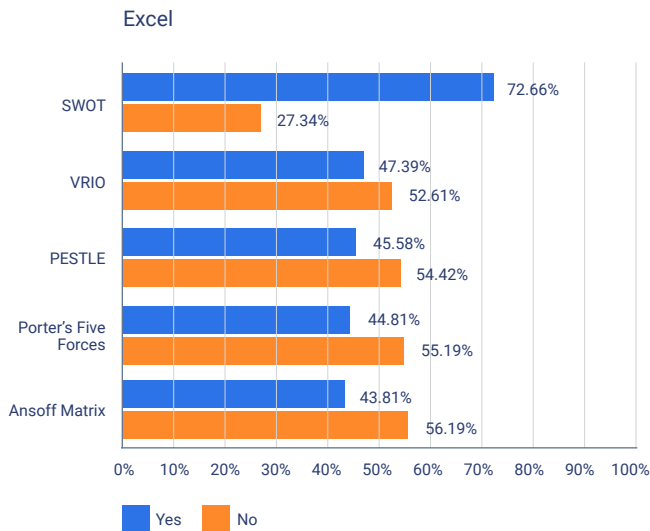


# Strategy Creation Tools

We also asked our respondents what technologies they use to manage their strategy creation tools, and the findings reveal a significant challenge in the digitization of strategy creation. An overwhelming 79% of respondents still rely on Excel, highlighting the lack of a robust, centralized platform capable of evolving organizations beyond basic software. This reflects the immaturity of the technology space for strategy management, where no single platform has emerged as dominant.

The use of more advanced or specialized software remains fragmented. For example, no single software tool dominates across various strategy frameworks like SWOT, PESTLE, or Porter’s Five Forces. This underscores the early stages of digitization in this space, where vendors have yet to deliver a high-quality end-to-end solution for organizations.

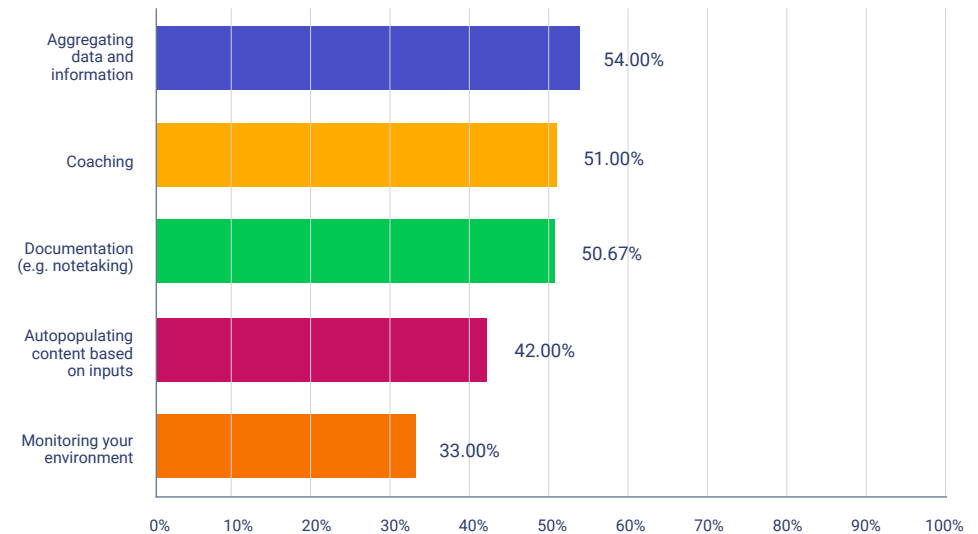
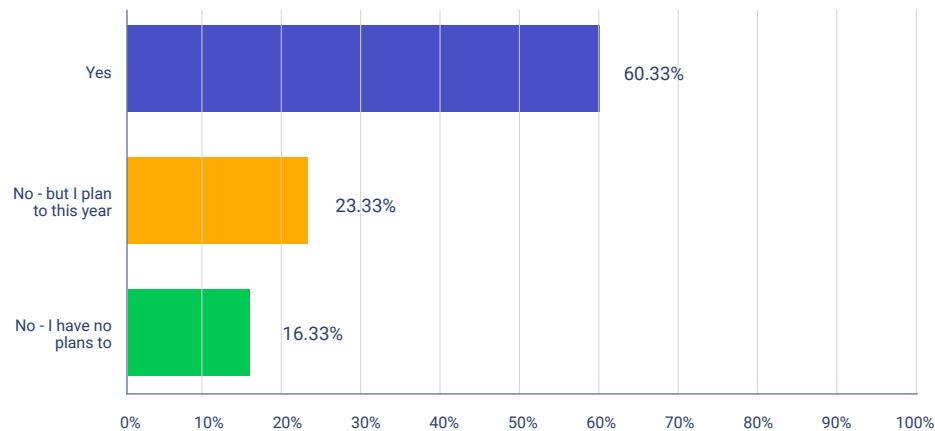
This gap suggests that while organizations are beginning to experiment, they continue to fall back on familiar, albeit less sophisticated, platforms like Excel and PowerPoint. The market is still maturing, and the need for more integrated, advanced solutions is evident.



# The Role of GenAI

The data indicates that a substantial 83.66% of respondents are either currently utilizing GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT and Claude, in their strategy-setting work or plan to incorporate them within the year. This reflects a growing acceptance of AI in strategy, as organizations recognize their potential to enhance decision-making and efficiency.

When asked how AI could support strategy creation, 54.00% of respondents identified aggregating data and information as a key area, demonstrating a recognition of the challenges posed by vast amounts of available data. Additionally, 51.00% saw AI as valuable for coaching, helping to identify errors and inconsistencies in their strategic plans. However, there is a cautious approach toward more complex tasks, as many professionals are wary of “handing over the reins” to AI in high-value decision-making scenarios.



Overall, while respondents are eager to leverage AI for data aggregation and coaching, they still require control over more the intellect-heavy aspects of strategy development, illustrating a balanced approach to integrating AI into their workflows.

# Creating the Strategy

Across different planning periods, professionals in operations, strategy, transformation, and revenue roles regularly use a variety of strategy tools like SWOT, Strategy Maps, and the Business Model Canvas to assess strengths, set functional strategies, and align operations. Quarterly and annual planning cycles often focus on assessing internal resources, connecting strategy to execution, and exploring opportunities like partnerships and M&A. The consistent use of SWOT for assessing strengths and weaknesses highlights its broad appeal, while tools like PESTLE and the Ansoff Matrix serve more specialized purposes, such as competitive intelligence and market expansion.



## Operational Professionals

Planning Period: Jan-Mar

They use Strategy Maps, SWOT, and SOAR once a year in the strategy planning process for:

Assessing strengths and weaknesses (SWOT) **53%**

Setting functional strategies **42%**

Assessing internal skills and resources **42%**



## Strategic Planning Professionals

Planning Period: Apr-Sep

They use SWOT, 7s, and the Business Model Canvas quarterly in a strategy planning process for:

Assessing strengths and weaknesses (SWOT) **49%**

Connecting strategy to operational delivery **47%**

Assessing internal skills and resources **45%**



## Transformation Professionals

Planning Period Apr-Sep

They use SWOT, Strategy Maps, and the Ansoff Matrix every 1-3 years in a strategy creation process for:

Connecting strategy to operational delivery **47%**

Exploring partnership opportunities **40%**

Scanning for M&A opportunities **39%**



## Revenue Professionals

Planning Period Jul-Sep

July-Sept, they use SWOT, PESTLE, and the Business Model Canvas once a year in a strategy planning process for:

Setting functional strategies **46%**

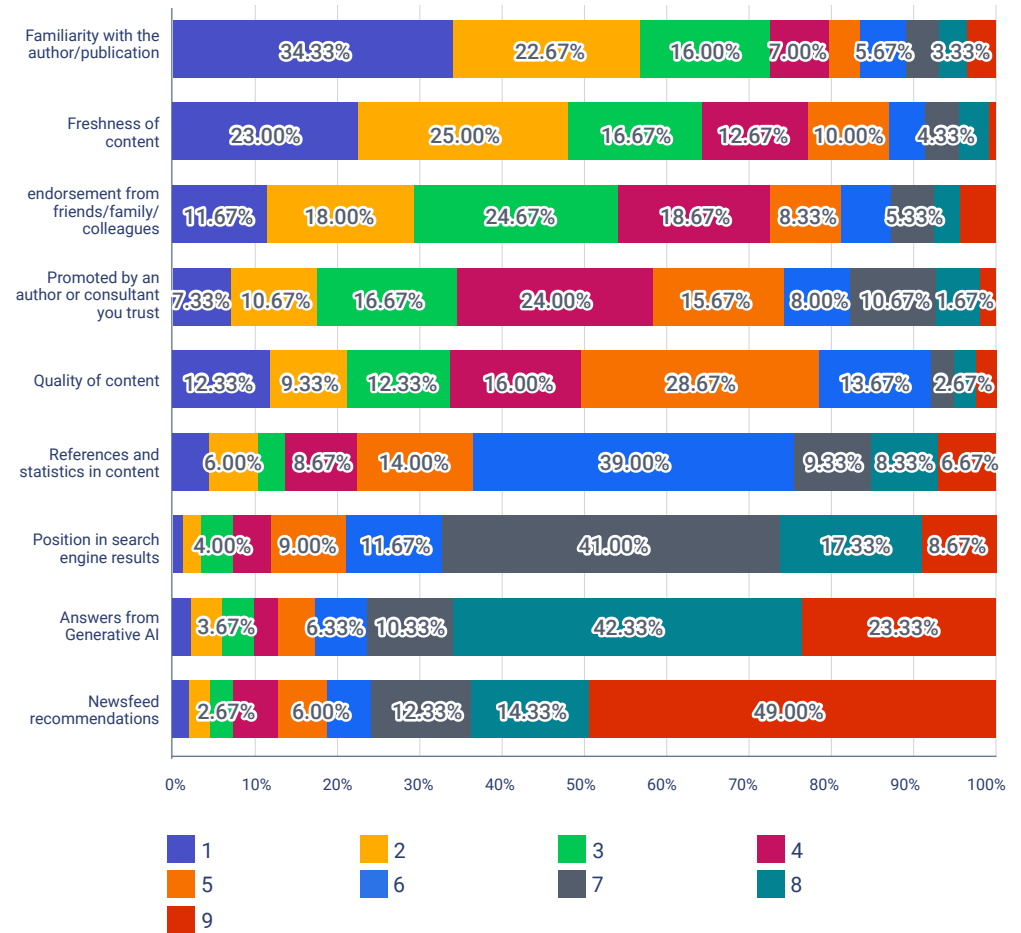
Assessing strengths and weaknesses (SWOT) **46%**

Conducting competitive intelligence **31%**



Learning and development is core to any profession, none more so than those tasked with creating strategy. That’s why we asked our respondents where they go for information to help them with strategy work. The results show that **LinkedIn** is the top choice, with **48%** turning to it for insights, likely due to its vast network of professionals and industry thought leaders. Traditional media also plays a key role, with the **New York Times (27.67%)**, **Forbes (26%)**, and **Bloomberg (24.67%)** being popular sources for market trends and business analysis. Social media platforms like **Facebook (23%)** and **X (formerly Twitter) (18%)** are used less frequently, while consultancy-driven sources, such as **McKinsey (12.33%)** and **Gartner (6.33%)**, rank lower, suggesting that respondents may prioritize more accessible and diverse content over specialized reports. Under an appropriate obligation of confidentiality and more generally a suite of security, intrusion, detection and vulnerability tests.

But when asked to rank the factors that increase their trust in the information they use for strategy work, familiarity with the author or publication ranked highest at 34.33%, while freshness of content followed closely behind. Interestingly, despite many respondents turning to social media platforms like LinkedIn for strategy-related information, newsfeed recommendations were the least trusted source, with only 2.59% of respondents rating it highly.



This contradiction suggests that while social media is widely used to access information, professionals still view it with scepticism, prioritizing known and reputable sources over algorithm-driven content.

## Summary

From our perspective, the survey results highlight the growing enthusiasm for GenAI in strategy work, with 83.66% of respondents already using or planning to incorporate tools like ChatGPT this year. This reflects a clear shift in how organizations are approaching the future of strategy creation. But do note that, while AI is trusted for junior-associate level tasks like data aggregation (54%) and coaching (51%), there remains a hesitation to hand over more complex, high-value decision-making jobs. Professionals want AI to assist, but not to take full control, which demonstrates a cautious approach to adopting this technology, in line with the co-pilot concept that GenAI has been positioned in elsewhere in business.

When it comes to the frameworks used, tools like SWOT, Strategy Maps, and the Business Model Canvas dominate. What stands out to us is the heavy reliance on Excel and PowerPoint, which suggests there is still a significant gap in an end-to-end strategy platform. Despite advancements in technology, no single tool fully addresses the needs of businesses here. This reflects an immaturity in the market for strategy creation tools, presenting both challenges and opportunities for innovation.

We also found it interesting that while 48% of respondents turn to LinkedIn for strategy-related information, there is a noticeable disconnect between the use of and trust in social platforms. Newsfeed recommendations, for example, were rated very low in terms of trust, with only 2.59% of respondents ranking them highly. This suggests that while professionals use social media for convenience, they still prioritize more familiar and reputable sources when it comes to making important strategic decisions.

Overall, while there is growing excitement about GenAI and technology's, professionals continue to place control, trust, and familiarity in their strategic processes, above all. Businesses are carefully balancing innovation with tried-and-true methods to ensure they remain in control of their decision-making.



## PART TWO

# The State of Strategy Execution

In this section, we surveyed a new audience of 380 business professionals across Canada, Germany, and the United States to understand how organizations are executing their strategies in practice. Our findings highlight both progress and persistent challenges. While 79% of respondents reported centrally tracking actions and projects, and 70% ensured consistent KPI tracking across their organizations, the reliance on traditional tools like Excel and PowerPoint underscores the slow adoption of more advanced, integrated strategy execution platforms.

Notably, 55% of respondents described their strategies as being set “top-down,” indicating a lack of multi-level engagement and buy-in from employees. This approach, combined with inconsistent processes for pivoting strategies mid-execution, limits organizational agility in a fast-changing business environment. Despite these challenges, there is growing enthusiasm for technologies like Generative AI (GenAI), which is being used to streamline documentation and automate routine tasks, though organizations remain cautious about relying on AI for high-stakes decision-making.

This section examines these dynamics, offering insights into how organizations can better align their execution processes with strategic goals and adapt more effectively to evolving circumstances.

# Foundational Data

We surveyed a total of 380 respondents based in three key countries: Canada, Germany, and the United States. The surveys, conducted in September 2024, gathered insights from full-time employed professionals across industries such as manufacturing, healthcare, retail and FMCG.

The respondents included a broad range of professionals in management and strategic planning, stretching from management to C-Suite and SMBs to large enterprises. The responses to this survey did not participate in Part One of this report.



**Operational Professionals**

**65%**  
246 responses



**Strategic Planning Professionals**

**25%**  
93 responses



**Transformation Professionals**

**6%**  
24 responses



**Revenue Professionals**

**4%**  
17 responses



- 157 respondents
- Strategy / Planning Function
- Management Level



- 55 respondents
- Leadership / Project Management
- Senior Manager / Exec Leadership



- 168 respondents
- Operations
- Senior Manager / Exec Leadership

Primary Function			
Operational	71%	29%	70%
Strategic Planning	17%	47%	24%
Transformation	7%	18%	4%
Revenue	5%	6%	2%

Seniority			
Manager	59%	45%	56%
Director	14%	18%	12%
VP	6%	6%	2%
President/GM	5%	2%	7%
C-Suite	16%	29%	23%

Employee Count			
Manager	28%	16%	32%
Director	17%	25%	22%
VP	30%	51%	35%
President/GM	2%	1%	0%
C-Suite	23%	7%	11%

## Key Findings



A significant 66% of respondents are either currently using or planning to use Generative AI (GenAI) for strategy execution, demonstrating its growing influence in organizational processes. Notably, 55% describe their strategies as being set “top-down,” which suggests a lack of multi-level engagement in the strategy-making process.

This lack of real dialogue between leadership and teams risks limiting buy-in and clarity around strategic goals across different levels of the organization. Additionally, 59% are using consultants to support strategy execution—while consultants remain heavily involved, they primarily advise and support, rather than lead the process.

Regarding tools, 58% of respondents use Balanced Scorecards and KPI Scorecards, and 51% have implemented custom business systems to execute their strategies. These figures highlight the emerging trend of tailored methods for executing strategy.

**“Established business systems, such as Lean/OpEx, provide excellent foundations, but they often lack the flexibility and versatility to meet broader organizational needs. Organizations striving for Growth need to embrace innovative, digital methods to ensure prosperity & relevance in this new world.”**

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**Pascal Dennis**  
President of Lean Pathways



# Strategy Execution Tools

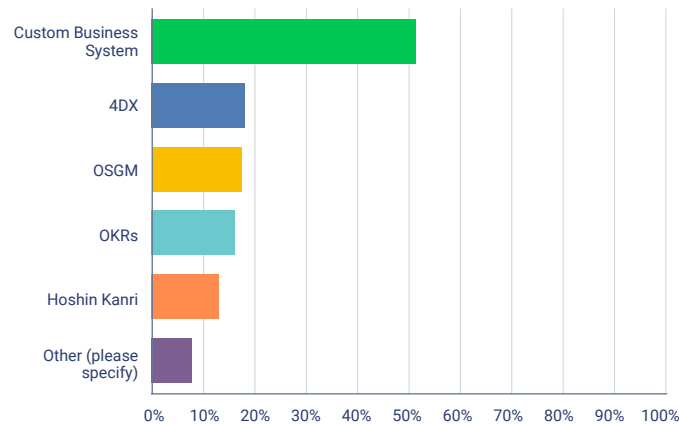
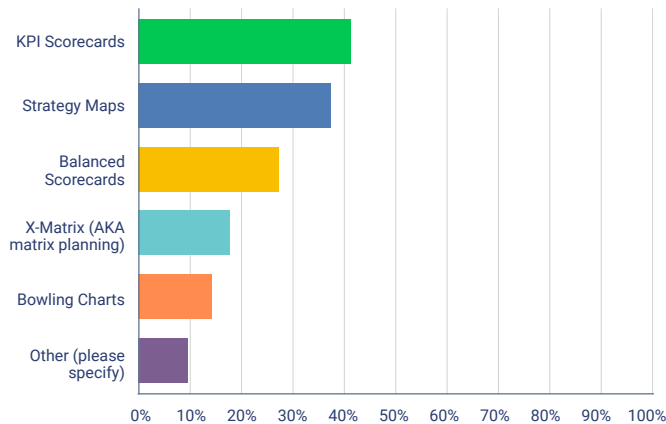
When asked what which strategy execution tools our respondents use, the responses show that more general tools like KPI scorecards (41%) and strategy maps (37%) are popular, with balanced scorecards following at 27%. These widely-used tools suggest that organizations favour flexible, versatile frameworks that can be applied across various industries and functions.

When taken into consideration alongside the prevalence of custom business systems (51%), it would indicate that organizations want to cherry pick the best frameworks and tools that suit their needs.

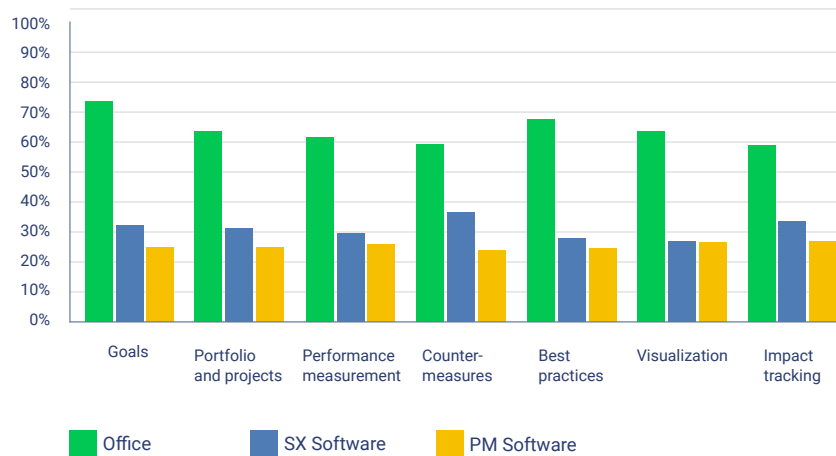
In contrast, more specialized tools such as the X-Matrix (18%) and Bowling Charts (15%), which are commonly aligned with the Hoshin Kanri method, see lower adoption, likely due to the lack of awareness and expertise with these robust tools.

**“Successful strategy execution isn’t about forcing a one-size-fits-all solution onto an organization. Systems work best when they reflect your unique culture—making them more likely to be adopted, sustained, and deliver real value. At the same time, proven tools like OKRs and the Balanced Scorecard provide frameworks that have stood the test of time. The real magic happens when you thoughtfully integrate these proven methods into a tailored system, balancing structure with flexibility. Done with care and precision, this approach creates clarity, alignment, and measurable results.”**

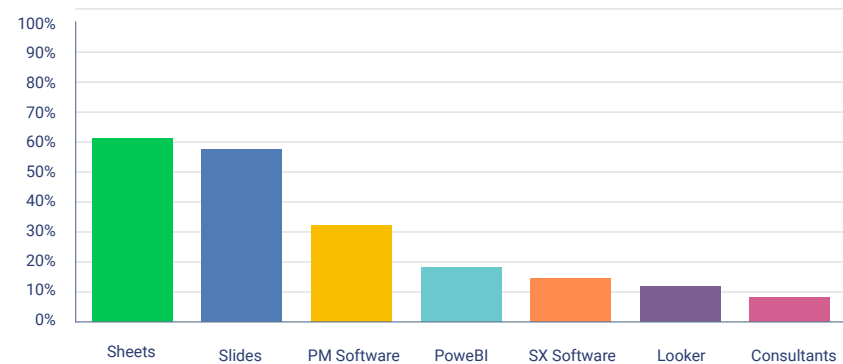
Paul Niven,  
Author of “Objectives and Key Results” and “OKRs For Dummies”



When asked about the tools used for different stages of the strategy execution process, the majority of respondents continue to rely on traditional office software. That is seen particularly for setting goals (74%), managing portfolios and projects (64%), and tracking performance (62%). While specialized strategy execution (SX) software is gaining traction—used by roughly a third of respondents for countermeasures (37%), impact tracking (34%), and other execution elements—it still lags behind more general solutions. Project management (PM) software is the least favoured overall, with usage ranging between 24% and 28% across categories, reflecting the hesitance to use ill-fitting tools for strategy execution.



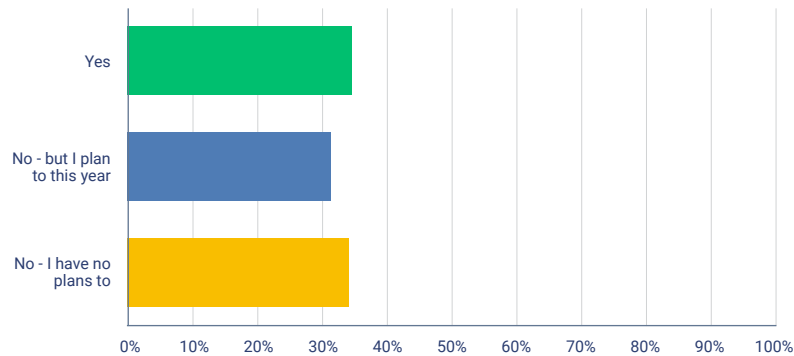
When it comes to reporting on the progress and success of strategy execution, traditional tools still dominate. Excel spreadsheets (62%) and PowerPoint slides (59%) are the primary methods used by respondents, highlighting the reliance on familiar, accessible formats. Project management (PM) software, though more specialized, is used by just under a third (33%), indicating that while there’s some movement towards more robust tools, many organizations are yet to fully embrace them. Tools like PowerBI (19%) and SX software (15%) remain less commonly used, suggesting that advanced analytics and dedicated strategy execution platforms have yet to gain widespread adoption.



When it comes to reporting on the progress and success of strategy execution, traditional tools still dominate, which can often lead to disjointed and siloed strategy execution. Excel spreadsheets (62%) and PowerPoint slides (59%) are the primary methods used by respondents, highlighting the reliance on familiar, accessible formats. Project management (PM) software, though more specialized, is used by just under a third (33%), indicating that while there’s some movement towards more robust tools, many organizations are yet to fully embrace them. Tools like PowerBI (19%) and SX software (15%) remain less commonly used, suggesting that advanced analytics and dedicated strategy execution platforms have yet to gain widespread adoption.

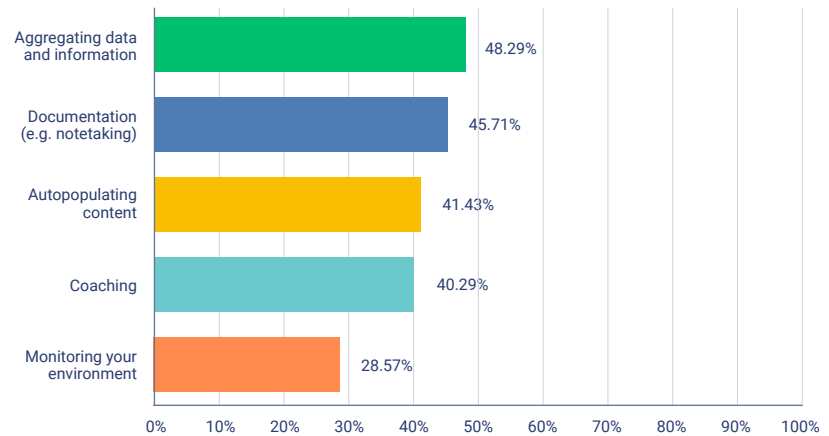
# The Role of GenAI

The data indicates that 66% of respondents are either currently utilizing GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT and Claude, in their strategic planning or plan to incorporate them within the year. So, whilst this is lower than those using GenAI to support in early strategy creation (83.66%), this does reflect the growing shift towards using GenAI is moving into the strategy execution phase.



When asked how AI could support their strategy execution efforts, 48% of respondents highlighted aggregating data and information, emphasizing the need to manage vast amounts of data more effectively. Another 46% saw AI's value in streamlining documentation, such as automating notetaking during meetings. Similarly, 41% were open to AI auto-populating content like project charters or Gantt charts based on their inputs, reflecting interest in automation for routine tasks. However, there is more caution around more complex AI functions like coaching (40%) and environmental monitoring (e.g., scenario

simulation), as professionals remain wary of relying on AI for higher-stakes, nuanced decision-making. This follows the pattern seen with strategy creation, indicating a need to support in-house teams by freeing up time for intellect-heavy workload.



Overall, respondents view GenAI as a valuable tool for handling data, documentation, and automating routine tasks in strategy execution, but remain cautious about relying on it for more complex, high-stakes decisions, reflecting a balance between enthusiasm for efficiency and concern over control in critical areas.

## Executing the Strategy

We tested our respondents' strategy execution maturity and found that 79% centrally track actions and projects, while 70% ensure KPI tracking is consistent across their business, highlighting robust organizational alignment. A solid 67% have established processes for executing strategy, and 61% are prepared to pivot mid-execution when necessary, showcasing adaptability.

Interestingly, while remote working shifts to hybrid working, 57% still conduct management reviews in person, suggesting a preference for face-to-face interactions during critical discussions. Half of the respondents review their strategic plans quarterly, with a further 34% conducting them monthly, so organizations are embracing a more agile approach to execution.

Despite these structured processes, the reliance on in-person management reviews and quarterly strategy evaluations does limit real-time responsiveness, slowing down decision-making in fast-paced environments where more frequent, agile adjustments could offer a competitive advantage. This continues to be an opportunity that the majority of organizations have either been unable to capitalize on, or are unwilling to adapt.



# Executing the Strategy

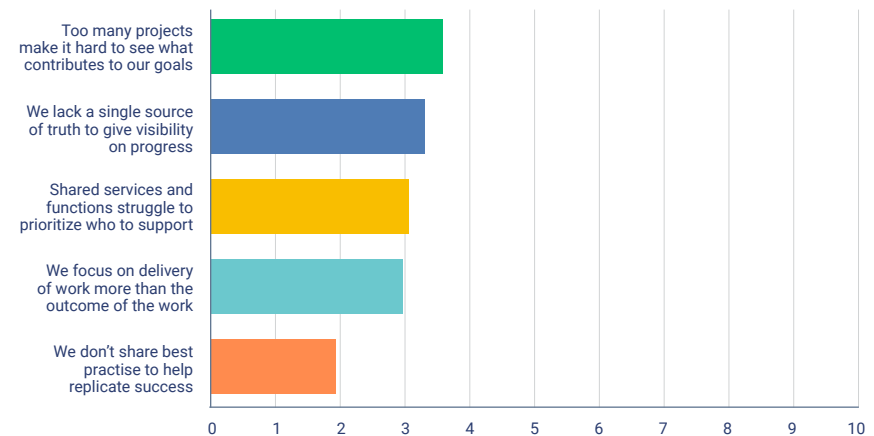
An overwhelming 85% of respondents feel they are focused on the right initiatives, and 83% express confidence in their overall strategy. Equally, 83% report clarity on the cause-and-effect relationship between their initiatives and the outcomes they achieve.

However, a notable 44% struggle to connect individual projects to their broader strategic plans, highlighting a potential gap between day-to-day activities and long-term objectives that could undermine alignment and execution.

- 85%** of respondents feel they are working on the right things based on their strategy
- 83%** of respondents track KPIs the same way across their business
- 83%** of respondents see the cause and effect between initiatives and results
- 44%** of respondents struggle to see how projects connect to strategic plans
- 49%** Is the average estimated amount of resources organizations spend on non-strategic work

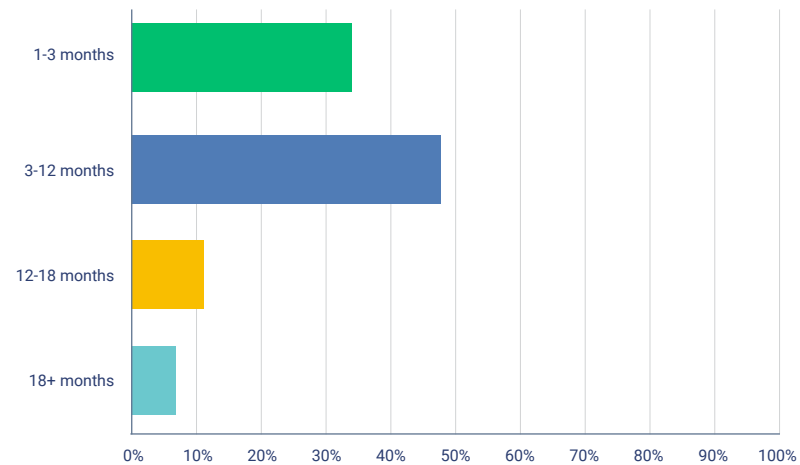
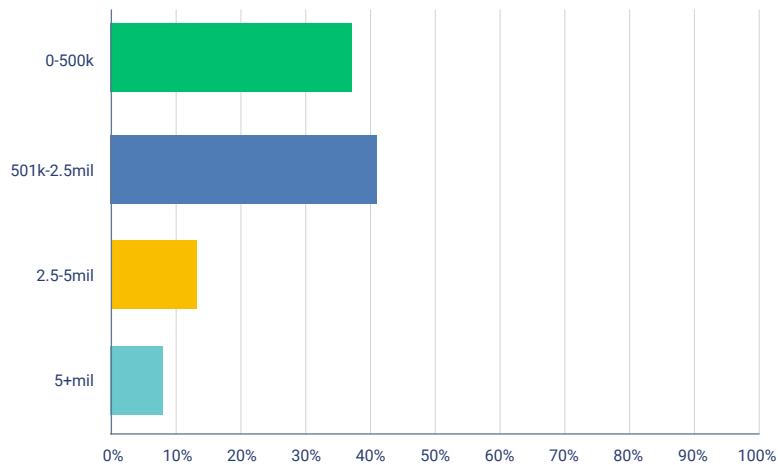
Despite the remarkably positive sentiment towards strategy in different organizations, the data reveals significant concerns about organizational alignment and transparency in strategy execution. Over 58% of respondents believe that managing too many projects makes it difficult to identify which ones directly contribute to strategic goals. Furthermore, 51% highlight the lack of a single source of truth as a major challenge, complicating efforts to track progress and maintain visibility across initiatives.

Shared services struggle with prioritization, with nearly 52% indicating this as an issue, potentially leading to inefficiencies and conflicting priorities. There's also a tendency to focus on work delivery over outcomes, as noted by 39% of respondents. Finally, 72% see a failure to share best practices as a barrier to scaling success across the organization, underscoring a need for better knowledge-sharing mechanisms.



When asked to estimate the financial impact of missing their goals, most respondents anticipated significant losses, with 41.23% estimating costs between \$501k and \$2.5 million, and 37.43% placing the impact in the \$0–\$500k range. Additionally, 13.16% projected losses between \$2.5 million and \$5 million, highlighting the serious financial consequences of failing to successfully deliver strategy.

Compounding these concerns, delays in making strategic decisions due to access to data were prevalent. 47.66% of respondents reported delays of 3–12 months, while 34.21% experienced 1–3 month delays, both of which can significantly hinder progress and compound financial risks. A smaller group, 11.40%, faced delays of 12–18 months, with 6.73% encountering even longer delays, underscoring the critical need for better data accessibility to maintain agility in strategy execution



## Summary

From our perspective, the results of the second part of the survey highlight both the progress and ongoing challenges in strategy execution. A significant 79% of respondents centrally track their actions and projects, demonstrating a strong commitment to staying organized. Additionally, 70% track KPIs in a standardized manner across their businesses, reflecting a clear focus on performance measurement. However, the data also reveals room for improvement: while 67% have a set process for executing strategy, only 61% have a mechanism to pivot mid-execution, which is vital in the 2020s.

In terms of strategy execution reviews, 57% conduct management reviews in person, underscoring the importance of human interaction in assessing progress. At the same time, only 50% review their plans quarterly, suggesting that while many businesses are organized, there's still an opportunity to increase the frequency of strategic evaluations to stay agile. This careful balance between structure and adaptability seems to define the current state of strategy execution maturity.

But do note that these results also reveal potential risks. Although most respondents are tracking and executing their strategies consistently, the relatively lower frequency of review and adaptation processes will leave businesses vulnerable to unexpected changes or misaligned goals as the market evolves. Maintaining a more flexible approach remains key to sustaining long-term success.

If organizations are going to move towards a more collaborative world of strategy execution, where teams and individuals are not only empowered to deliver change, but to be part of the decision making process, then organizations need to find ways to equip themselves with the tools and resources they need. The Catchball process is one example of democratization in practice, but it is often under utilized and doesn't go beyond the initial planning process.

## PART THREE

# The Future of Strategy

Across the two surveys we conducted, some common themes were found that give an insight into the future of strategy. One of the most prominent is the growing recognition of the need to democratize strategy, transforming it from a top-down exercise into a collaborative, agile process that engages all levels of an organization. This shift is driven by the limitations of traditional tools and methods, which often leave employees disconnected from strategic objectives, and the opportunities presented by emerging technologies like Generative AI (GenAI).

The future of strategy lies in embracing digitization and collaboration. While many organizations still rely on manual tools like Excel and PowerPoint, the need for integrated, real-time platforms is clear. These tools promise not only greater efficiency but also enhanced visibility and alignment across teams. At the same time, businesses must balance technological advancements with the human elements of strategy—creativity, judgment, and leadership—that remain essential for success.

In this section, we explore how organizations can navigate this transformation. From leveraging digital platforms to adopting continuous planning models, we outline the steps required to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective approach to strategy. The future of strategy demands both innovation and inclusion—an evolution that empowers everyone in the organization to contribute to success.



# The Democratization of Strategy

In an era where digital transformation has become commonplace, the future of strategy must be built around digitization and democratization. As the complexities of business environments increase, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and shifting market dynamics, companies are rethinking how they approach strategy creation, execution, and monitoring. The traditional methods - manual reporting, disconnected tools, and static frameworks -, combined with top-down management and communication, are ill suited. The answer lies in making strategy a collaborative, living process, underpinned by consultants and digital, end-to-end strategy platforms.

## But no clear technology has emerged.

There is a clear need for an end-to-end solution that offers real-time insights, faster decision-making, and data-driven execution to push organizations to digitize their strategy process. Businesses today face an overwhelming influx of data. With 79% of respondents in our survey centrally tracking actions and projects, the importance of having a unified view of strategic progress is undeniable. Yet, nearly 44% of respondents still struggle to see how projects connect to strategic goals, highlighting a significant gap in alignment and visibility. Digitization addresses these challenges by centralizing data, integrating platforms, and providing real-time analytics that offer clearer views of performance and progress.

Moreover, the complexity of executing a modern strategy often requires coordination across multiple departments, geographies, and business units. This level of complexity demands tools that can facilitate collaboration, maintain consistency, and ensure transparency. 70% of respondents in our survey track KPIs the same way across their business, but without a fully digital system in place, they run the risk of data silos and inconsistent reporting. Digital strategy platforms must automate KPI tracking and provide a single source of truth, ensuring that every stakeholder has access to the same, accurate information at any given time.

One of the most significant shifts enabled by digitization is the move from static, annual strategy cycles to dynamic, continuous processes. Traditionally, companies would set a strategy once a year, based on forecasts and assumptions that might quickly become outdated. Today, businesses need the flexibility to pivot mid-execution – and that means empowering the entire organization to contribute to re-shaping strategy and the plans that result. 61% of respondents in our survey already have a process for adjusting their strategy mid-execution, which reflects a growing recognition of the need for agility.

Digitized strategy platforms enhance collaboration and support hybrid working by providing centralized access to real-time data and insights, which are critical in today's dispersed work environments. With teams spread across different locations, these platforms facilitate seamless communication and collaboration, allowing stakeholders to engage with strategy development and execution regardless of where they are. By leveraging tools that enable leaders to frequently review their strategy based on their environmental analyses and the input of key stakeholders at an execution level, organizations will be better placed to paint over their strategy canvas and re-mobilize plans, with clarity throughout every layer as to why this is happening. This approach fosters a sense of shared purpose and empowers teams to readily adapt and recalibrate their strategies, avoiding costly delays and keeping their objectives front and center.

The current landscape of strategy tools is varied, with many organizations still relying on legacy software like Excel, PowerPoint, and bespoke systems to manage their strategy process. This simply isn't good enough, and organizations have spoken – vendors must do better.

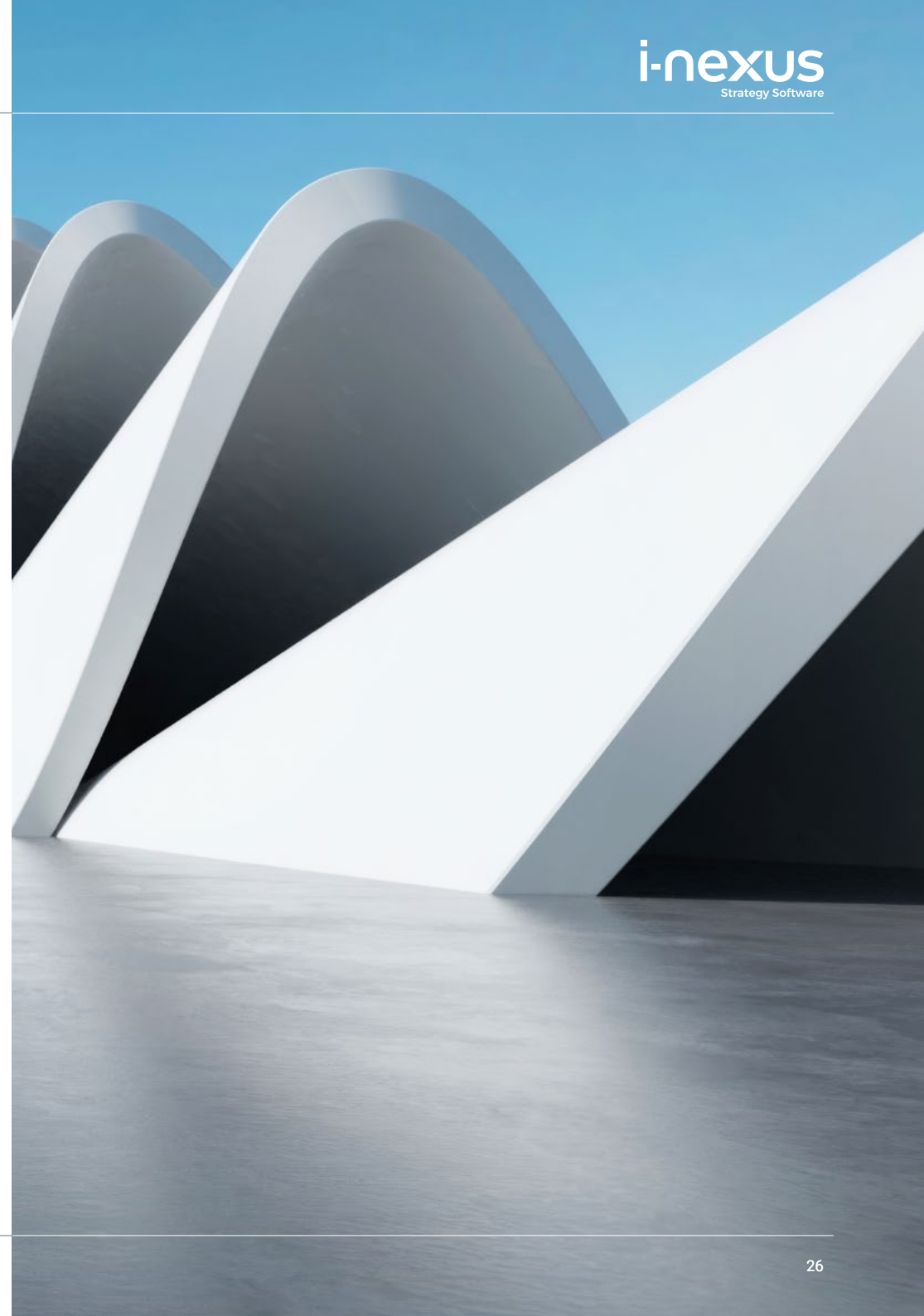
While 57% of respondents conduct their management reviews in person, the rising demand for continuous reviews and real-time performance tracking is creating a clear need for more advanced solutions that add value to their workflows. These platforms should not only integrate all aspects of strategy—creation, planning, execution, monitoring, and reporting—but also enable cross-functional collaboration and decision-making in a seamless, intuitive environment.

The frameworks and tools in use for strategy remain the same. Whether it's PESTLE and SWOT to shape our understanding of our environment, frameworks like OKRs and Hoshin Kanri to deploy strategy, or tools like scorecards to keep track, little has changed in management practice. But the technology supporting this hasn't. Collaboration is the name of the game, and until strategy solutions can displace basics like Excel, PowerPoint, and even Miro, the space will continue to meet modern demands.

While the democratization of strategy brings benefits a plenty - such as speed, transparency, and data-driven insights - its success still depends on the human element. Leadership will continue to play a crucial role in guiding strategy, ensuring that digital tools are used to enhance decision-making rather than replace it. In fact, 83% of respondents expressed confidence in their strategy, demonstrating that the trust people place in their own judgment is still paramount.

This shift isn't optional—it's imperative. Those who embrace this shift will be better equipped to navigate uncertainties, stay ahead of the competition, and execute their strategies with precision and agility. In the future, we foresee digital platforms becoming the cornerstone of strategic management, combining Generative AI (GenAI), real-time data, and human insight to create a more responsive, dynamic approach to strategy.

Ultimately, the democratization of strategy is about empowering organizations to act quickly, make informed decisions, and adapt to an ever-changing environment, ensuring long-term success and sustainability in a complex global market.



# The Role of Management Consultants

The role of management consultants in strategy has evolved significantly in recent years, particularly as businesses face increasingly complex challenges in a rapidly changing environment. Traditionally, consultants were seen as external experts who brought in fresh perspectives, industry best practices, and specialized knowledge that in-house teams may lack. While this role remains critical, the expectations and engagement models for consultants are shifting as organizations strive to integrate their expertise more seamlessly into everyday operations.

Today, consultants are playing a more collaborative and advisory role rather than leading strategy. Many organizations now expect consultants to complement their internal teams rather than replace or overshadow them. As our survey indicated, 59% of respondents still rely on consultants to support their strategy, but this support tends to focus more on providing external validation, offering niche expertise, or helping refine strategic execution, rather than dictating the entire process. Consultants are often called upon to help businesses stay competitive by ensuring they are using the most up-to-date tools and approaches, particularly as new technologies—such as generative AI—transform how strategy is created and executed.

The democratization of strategy relies on consultants continuing their presence in the strategy process, but organizations giving their people the know-how to monitor and update strategies mid-flight.

One of the most valuable contributions consultants can make is their ability to introduce objectivity and facilitate alignment among leadership teams. Those leadership teams must then introduce learning and development in strategy to keep momentum and agility.

When strategy execution stalls or initiatives lose momentum, consultants are often the ones who can pinpoint why and help realign efforts with the company's overall goals. They offer frameworks for decision-making, ensuring that projects are evaluated with the appropriate metrics, and they provide insights that in-house teams may not see due to internal biases or blind spots. Consultants will continue to be vital here, but perform coaching for mid-execution decision-taking.

Furthermore, consultants play a vital role in bridging the gap between traditional strategy tools and the latest technological advancements. As more organizations embrace digital transformation, consultants are increasingly involved in helping businesses adopt new platforms for strategic planning, execution, and performance measurement. Whether it's integrating AI into decision-making processes or leveraging sophisticated data analytics tools to track progress, consultants are pivotal in guiding companies through these transitions, ensuring that digital adoption enhances, rather than disrupts, strategic execution.

The future is about closer integration with internal teams. As companies become more digitally mature and build internal capacities, the traditional consultancy model will likely give way to more collaborative partnerships, where consultants act as strategic enablers rather than external authorities. Consultants will need to offer more than just advice—they will need to bring tools, methodologies, and platforms that empower organizations to act beyond their engagements.

# AI in the Boardroom

GenAI is rapidly shaping strategy creation and execution, fundamentally altering how organizations approach traditionally human-driven processes. As businesses increasingly adopt AI-powered tools, the role of GenAI in strategic planning and reporting is evolving to encompass everything from data aggregation to performance measurement. The insights from our survey highlight that while companies are eager to incorporate AI, there remains a careful balance between harnessing its capabilities and maintaining control over high-level decision-making.

GenAI's potential in the creation of business strategies is already gaining traction, with 66% of respondents either currently using or planning to incorporate AI in their strategy efforts. One of the most immediate ways GenAI can assist in strategy creation is by automating the process of data aggregation and analysis. With the vast amounts of data available today—spanning market trends, customer behaviour, competitive intelligence, and internal performance metrics—AI tools are uniquely positioned to sift through this data quickly, delivering insights that would take human teams far longer to generate. In our survey, 48% of respondents saw AI's role in aggregating data and information as key to overcoming the challenge of managing such volumes.

Beyond data aggregation, GenAI can also contribute by auto-populating strategic documents, such as project charters or strategy maps, based on predefined inputs. Nearly 41% of respondents identified this feature as a valuable use of AI, as it reduces the time spent on manual tasks and ensures consistency in documentation. GenAI's ability to identify gaps, flag inconsistencies, and provide data-backed recommendations further enhances its value as a tool for strategy creation. While 40% saw the potential for AI to act as a "coach" in identifying errors, businesses are still hesitant to rely entirely on AI for high-stakes decision-making, preferring instead to use it as a supplementary tool.

The adoption of AI in strategy creation also signals a shift towards more dynamic, real-time planning. AI's ability to continuously monitor the external environment and simulate scenarios allows for quicker pivots in strategy—a capability that is increasingly essential today. However, many organizations still express caution when it comes to handing over full control to AI for critical strategic decisions, signaling a measured approach to its adoption.

One area where GenAI shows particular promise is in the realm of performance reporting. Many businesses struggle with the sheer volume of data they need to process and present in a way that drives actionable insights. By automating the reporting process, GenAI enables organizations to focus on decision-making rather than data wrangling. Nearly 50% of respondents indicated that they review their strategic plans quarterly, and AI's ability to generate real-time reports would significantly enhance the accuracy and relevance of these reviews.

The integration of GenAI into strategic processes will only deepen. As AI becomes more sophisticated, we can expect to see it play a larger role in not just supporting strategy creation and execution but also in driving innovation. GenAI could evolve from a tool that aggregates data and flags inconsistencies to one that actively proposes new strategic directions based on complex simulations, market patterns, and predictive models.

However, the challenge will lie in finding the right balance between leveraging AI's capabilities and maintaining human oversight. The strategic process, by its nature, involves not only data and logic but also intuition, creativity, and a deep understanding of organizational culture; areas where AI, at least for now, still relies heavily on human input.

Ultimately, GenAI has the potential to revolutionize how strategies are conceived, executed, and reported, driving greater efficiency, insight, and agility. Yet, its success will depend on how well businesses can integrate these tools into their existing workflows and maintain the human elements of strategy that are essential for long-term success.

# Tomorrow's Strategy

Looking ahead, the future of strategy is poised for transformation as businesses navigate an increasingly complex and dynamic landscape. The insights from our survey suggest that organizations are beginning to embrace the democratization of strategy. That's a new paradigm that combines traditional strategic thinking with emerging technology like Generative AI (GenAI), digitized platforms, and enhanced collaboration tools. As companies seek to remain competitive and agile, several trends will shape the future of strategy creation, execution, and reporting.

The shift is already well underway, as businesses recognize the need for real-time adaptability and visibility into their strategic processes. – harnessing technology, consulting, and learning and development to prepare for tomorrow's challenges. Technology now will allow for seamless collaboration across teams, particularly in an era where remote and hybrid working models are becoming the norm. With features like scenario simulation, performance tracking, and dynamic reporting, digitized tools offer organizations the ability to respond faster to changes in the market, customer demands, and internal priorities. We can expect this trend to accelerate, with more businesses moving away from static, manual methods toward flexible, cloud-based systems that enhance communication, transparency, and strategic alignment.

As organizations continue to adapt to more dispersed workforces, the need for integrated, collaborative strategy tools will grow. The future of strategy will increasingly rely on cross-functional alignment, where teams from different parts of the business can work together in real-time, regardless of location. End-to-end strategy platforms that facilitate seamless communication, visibility into strategic objectives, and shared access to performance data will be critical to create a feedback loop from the moment a strategy is created to its monitoring and inevitable adaptation. Moreover, the emphasis on collaboration will extend beyond internal teams to include external consultants, partners, and even customers, who will play a role in shaping and executing strategy.

The need for agility will only increase in the years ahead. Organizations will increasingly adopt continuous planning models, where strategies are regularly reviewed and adjusted based on real-time data and performance insights. This iterative approach, supported by AI and digital tools, will allow businesses to pivot quickly when necessary, reduce inefficiencies, and stay ahead of competitors. Moreover, the emphasis will shift toward measuring outcomes rather than outputs, with a focus on the long-term impact of strategic initiatives.

The future of strategy is both exciting and challenging – but that is the reality of a democracy. As organizations integrate digital tools, AI, and collaborative platforms, they will increase the knowledge and participation in strategy setting. While this can create challenges, it will help leaders fully realize an environment where everyone – from the shopfloor upwards and back down, can contribute to the success of their organization.

That means organizations must balance technological advancements with the human elements of strategy—creativity, intuition, and leadership. The companies that can master this blend will be the success stories we're talking about in a decade's time, and that's a future worth celebrating.