



WHITEPAPER

Strategy without execution is a hallucination

Jonas Mortensen



A step-by-step guide to prioritising B2B marketing execution that aligns with your business strategy — with real examples and practical tips you can apply today.



Introduction

Most strategies don't fail because they're wrong. They fail because they're unfinished or disconnected from the rest of the business.

Across functions – from marketing and product to HR and finance – strategies often live in isolation. Each team defines its own focus areas, launches initiatives and tracks success differently. But when those strategies aren't anchored in a shared foundation, even well-intentioned plans can become misaligned and pull the organisation in different directions.

That's why structure matters.

While each function might own its own playbook – a product strategy, marketing strategy, people strategy or go-to-market strategy – they all need to ladder up to the same purpose:

Why are we here?

What will we do to win?

How will we make it happen?

This is where a model like the Strategy Pyramid brings clarity. Originally introduced by Wendy McGuinness in 2012, it helps leaders connect purpose, strategy and execution. It ensures every functional plan reflects the same mission, vision and values – so strategies across the business reinforce one another rather than compete.

In marketing, this alignment is especially important. It's tempting to dive headfirst into channels and campaigns, especially when targets are pressing and stakeholders are impatient. But execution without strategy is blind. And strategy without execution is just theory.

At Azide, we use the Strategy Pyramid to help our clients connect the dots. It's a simple but powerful framework that ensures the marketing strategy is not only clear and structured, but also directly supports the broader business direction.

This whitepaper breaks down the model and shows how we apply it in practice – with each step illustrated by a realistic example from a B2B consultancy.



About the author

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Why we need a better structure for (marketing) strategy

The need for a clear, shared direction across the business is non-negotiable. Without it, even the best marketing plans risk becoming disconnected efforts – aligned with functional goals, but out of sync with the bigger picture.

The reasons are familiar:

- Silos between teams
- Too much focus on tactics, not enough on shared direction
- Vague or shifting goals
- Unclear ownership and limited follow-up

This is where the Strategy Pyramid stands out. It gives every team a shared structure – from purpose to priorities to performance – so strategy moves beyond slides and into execution. By linking the “why”, “what” and “how”, it ensures that every initiative is grounded in purpose and aligned with the strategic direction.

It's more than a model. It's a practical tool for turning strategy into action – and action into strategic learning.

In the next section, we break down each part of the Strategy Pyramid and show how to put it into action.

And the consequences are real:

- Only 35% of CMOs say their success metrics are aligned with the CEO's expectations

[\(McKinsey\)](#)

- 70–90% of strategies fail in execution, according to multiple consulting firm surveys

[\(Harvard Business Review\)](#)



The Strategy Pyramid: From purpose to performance

The model is divided into three layers:

Purpose

Mission

Why do we exist?

Values

What is important to us?

Vision

What do we want to be?

Strategy

Strategic Intent

How will we get there?

Drivers

What will we focus on?

Enablers

What frameworks, resources and skills will we use?

Execution

Targets and Initiatives

What will we need to do?

Performance Indicators

How will we know we are successful?

Strategy Map

How will we test and communicate the strategy?



Layer 1: Purpose

Why are we here?

Strong marketing doesn't start with channels. It starts with clarity of purpose.

1.1 Mission

What's our core purpose?

The mission articulates why your company exists beyond profit. It answers:

- What fundamental value do we deliver to customers or society?
- What problem are we here to solve – and for whom?

A clear mission anchors decision-making and helps marketing teams filter messages and priorities through a shared lens.

Example for a B2B consultancy

"To help senior decision-makers turn complex strategy into clear action – through trusted advisory, analytical depth and collaborative execution."

1.2 Values

What do we stand for?

Values define the behaviours and principles that shape how you operate – both internally and externally. They influence tone of voice, brand expression, and what kind of marketing feels authentic to your business. In B2B, values also show up in the customer experience.

Example for a B2B consultancy

"Clarity over jargon. Accountability over activity. Collaboration over ego."

1.3 Vision

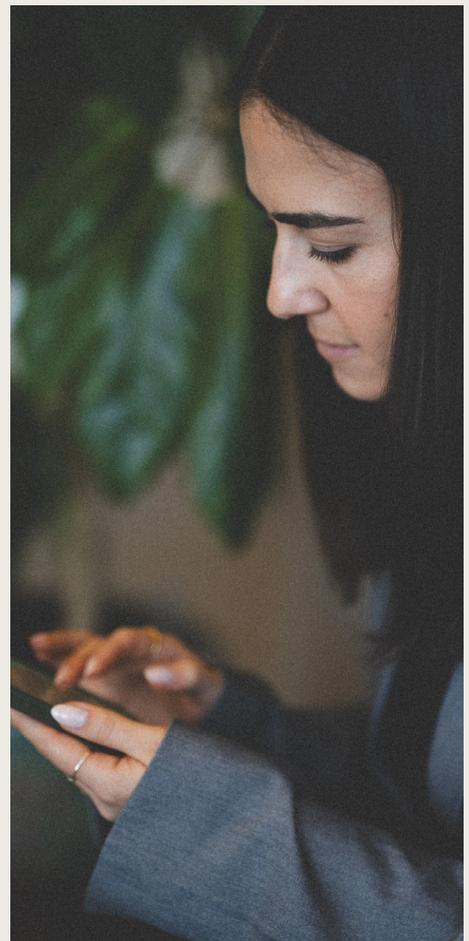
Where do we want to be in the future?

The vision creates direction and ambition – your north star. It paints a picture of what success looks like in 3–5 years – for the business, the brand and the customer impact you aspire to create.

Example for a B2B consultancy

"To be the most respected strategy partner for companies navigating digital transformation in Northern Europe."

Many companies have mission, values and vision written down – but rarely use them actively in marketing. Start your next strategy session by stress-testing whether your campaigns actually reflect your purpose.





Layer 2: Strategy

What outcomes are we aiming for?

Once you've defined your purpose, strategy becomes the bridge to execution – a plan that turns direction into focused priorities.

2.1 Strategic Intent

What outcomes are we aiming for?

Strategic intent sets the high-level goals that guide the entire marketing and business plan. These are directional and linked directly to the vision.

Example for a B2B consultancy

“Grow revenue by 30% over three years through deeper industry specialisation, brand positioning and expansion into Norway.”

2.2 Strategic Drivers

Where must we focus to make that happen?

Drivers are critical focus areas that shape investment, priorities and messaging. They guide your route to success – not tactics, but strategic levers. They define where you need to win for your strategy to work.

Example for a B2B consultancy

- Deepen positioning within ESG and sustainability strategy
- Build brand authority through original content and keynote visibility
- Strengthen lead quality through ABM and partner referrals

2.3 Enablers

What do we need to make it work?

Even the best strategy fails without the right capabilities.

Enablers cover everything from resources/talent, tech, budget, decision-making authority and internal support structures. Strategy without enablers is wishful thinking.

Example for a B2B consultancy

- Recruit two new senior consultants with ESG expertise
- Build a scalable CRM and automation setup
- Secure budget of x DKK and executive sponsorship for international branding initiatives

Before setting marketing targets, define the business shifts you're here to support. Marketing can't win on its own – it needs to be connected to the company's strategic bets.





Layer 3: Execution

A brilliant strategy on paper means nothing if it isn't backed by clear execution.

3.1 Targets and Initiatives

What exactly are we doing – and how do we know if we're progressing?

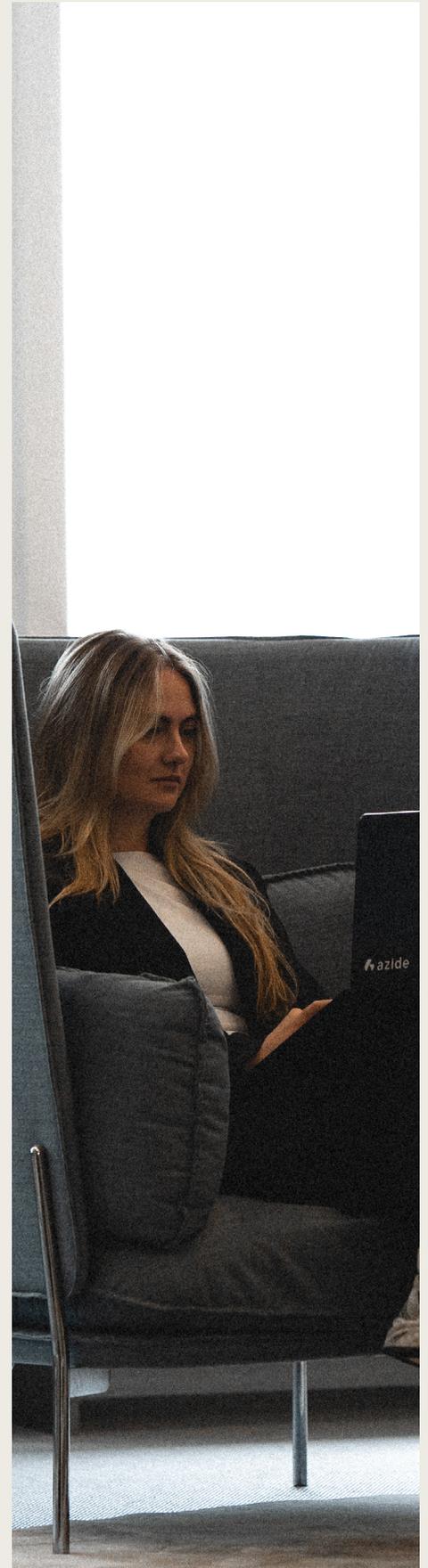
This is where strategy becomes action. You translate your strategic drivers into concrete initiatives – time-bound, measurable and owned. These aren't just activities – they are coordinated efforts that move the business forward.

A good initiative answers:

- What are we doing?
- Why does it matter (driver)?
- How will we measure success (KPI)?
- Who owns it?

Example for a B2B consultancy

- Launch a 3-part webinar series for sustainability officers in Q1
Driver: Build thought leadership in ESG
KPI: # of attendees, % from key industries
Owner: Marketing and Consulting Lead, ESG
- Publish one sustainability insight report per quarter in 2026
Driver: Build brand authority in the ESG space
KPI: # of downloads, # of MQLs
Owner: Head of Marketing
- Pilot an ABM program targeting 50 key accounts by November
Driver: Improve lead quality and commercial focus
KPI: # of qualified opportunities, SQL rate
Owner: Commercial Director





3.2 Performance Indicators

How do we measure if we're making an impact?

Execution without measurement is guesswork. Performance indicators help you track progress toward your goals – not just activity levels. Strong KPIs connect marketing results to real business outcomes and enable continuous learning.

Use a mix of:

- Leading indicators – early signals of success (e.g. engagement rates, MQLs)
- Lagging indicators – impact metrics tied to growth and revenue (e.g. pipeline velocity, win rate)

And choose indicators that align with your strategic drivers and create clear feedback loops for optimisation. Avoid vanity metrics. Measure what matters.

Example for a B2B consultancy

- 50% of SQLs sourced from content-led campaigns
→ Leading indicator
Driver: Thought leadership and inbound lead quality
Tracks how well your content drives qualified interest that converts.
- 60% of pipeline from top 3 target sectors
→ Lagging indicator
Driver: Strategic focus on high-potential industries
Measures whether your commercial strategy is resonating where it matters most.
- +10% lift in brand awareness year on year (measured via quarterly surveys)
→ Leading/lagging hybrid
Driver: Strengthen category presence and visibility
Captures perception shifts and early signal of brand momentum.
- 35% MQL-to-SQL conversion rate across ABM programs
→ Leading indicator
Driver: Commercial focus and tighter sales alignment
Validates quality of leads and marketing/sales integration.
- 25% win rate across key account opportunities
→ Lagging indicator
Driver: Message clarity, positioning and solution fit
Reflects the real business impact of upstream strategy and execution.





3.3 Strategy Map

How do we communicate and connect the full picture?

The strategy map is the glue that links purpose, strategy and execution. It distils your entire plan into a single, scannable view – so everyone understands how day-to-day efforts ladder up to strategic goals.

It's not just for leadership. A good strategy map helps every team member see:

- What we're trying to achieve
- Why it matters
- How success is measured

Structure

At its core, the strategy map connects four layers:

1. Purpose – Mission, vision and values
2. Strategic Drivers – Where we need to win
3. Initiatives – What we're doing
4. KPIs – How we'll know it's working

Done right, the strategy map is both a communication tool and an execution dashboard.

Example for a B2B consultancy

Purpose	Driver	Initiative	KPI
Be the trusted advisor in sustainable transformation	Build thought leadership in ESG	Launch 3-part webinar series for sustainability officers (Q1)	# of attendees, % from key sectors
	Build brand authority in ESG space	Publish 1 sustainability insight report per quarter (2026)	# of downloads, # of MQLs
Lead ESG advisory across top 3 sectors	Improve lead quality and commercial focus	Pilot ABM program targeting 50 key accounts (by Nov)	# of qualified opportunities, SQL rate
	Strengthen brand visibility in new markets	Localize website and messaging for 2 strategic regions	+10% brand awareness YoY, web engagement metrics
Deliver commercial impact in key accounts	Drive better sales-marketing alignment	Align campaign calendar with sales and co-define lead stages	MQL-to-SQL conversion rate, pipeline contribution

Execution isn't about doing more – it's about doing what matters. Prioritise relentlessly, revisit your strategy quarterly and track what truly drives progress. A clear scorecard beats a long to-do list every time.



How we use the Strategy Pyramid at Azide

We use the Strategy Pyramid in almost every client engagement – from rebranding a SaaS company post-acquisition to helping a regional insurer turn marketing into a performance function.

Here's how we typically apply it:

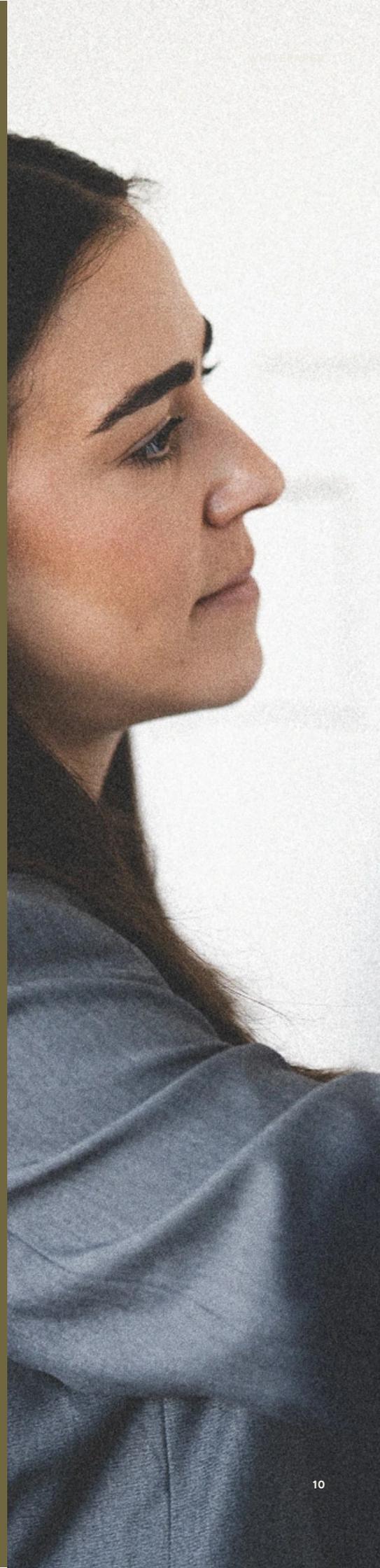
- We start with clarity: What shift is the business aiming for?
- We identify enablers and constraints: What's needed for marketing to deliver?
- We build execution frameworks: So campaigns, content and sales support don't just look good – they ladder up to the strategy.

And we keep asking the hard questions most companies skip:

- What does success look like 12 months from now?
- Who owns what – and what's missing?
- How will we learn and adapt as we go?

As we move from strategy to execution, we zoom in on the “who” – defining ideal customer profiles (ICPs), personas and messaging maps that ensure relevance and commercial focus. These techniques bring the strategy to life across campaigns, content and customer touchpoints – making sure we're not just doing the work but reaching the right people with the right message.

We'll explore these tools in a future article, but they're essential for turning strategy into results.





Simplicity beats complexity

The Strategy Pyramid might seem basic. But that's the point. It cuts through noise and helps leaders refocus on what really matters – and in what order.

If your strategy feels scattered, overcomplicated or stuck in PowerPoint: Don't add more slides. Bring more clarity.

As widely attributed to Thomas Edison:

***“Strategy without execution
is a hallucination.”***

