A SNEAK PEEK - CHAPTER 1

UNF*CKING WORK

STRATEGY AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

SONJA ALLEN



ON FINDING, NURTURING & SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE

SWIPE →

BOARDROOM STRATEGY

1 IN 10

Widely cited research associated with Kaplan and Norton suggests that as few as one in ten organisations successfully deploys strategy as designed.

That's not a failure of intellect - it's a failure of connection.

AND YET, WE KEEP REPEATING THE SAME PATTERNS

PICTURE IT:

Leadership off-site? **Check.**

Workshop? **Check.**

Consultants flown in? **Probably.**

Enough Post-its to deforest a small country.

"Let's table this."

"Circle back."

"Create dynamic synergies of alignment."

And when you really look around the room, you can see what most people already know, deep down: **"When we get back to the real world, nothing is going to change."**

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH

STRATEGY LIVES IN PEOPLE.

It's social. It's emotional. It's non-linear. And it's only ever as strong as the conversations that shape it.

Strategy, when done in a vacuum, becomes doctrine.
And who wants to follow doctrine in 2026?

MYTHS THAT

KEEP US STUCK

1 *"Strategy lives in the boardroom"*

A private game of chess played by the C-suite keeps it disconnected from the people who actually make it happen.

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2 *"A great strategy is a perfect plan"*

In reality, strategy is a living conversation. Perfect plans are just fragile guesses with a glossy cover.

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3 *"Purpose is a slogan"*

Purpose isn't a tagline on the annual report - it's the shared future people can see themselves building together.

BETTER LOOKS LIKE

PLAYING TO WIN - TOGETHER

The Playing to Win framework by A.G. Lafley & Roger Martin asks five deceptively simple questions:

01 What is our winning aspiration?

02 Where will we play?

03 How will we win?

04 What capabilities must be in place?

05 What management systems are required?

But here's the thing: These questions only unlock value when they're asked with people - not at them.

CASE STUDIES IN EXCELLENCE

HOW SOME DO IT DIFFERENTLY

HAIER

4,000+

autonomous micro-enterprises, each owning its own P&L, customers and strategy

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BUURTZORG

~8%

overhead vs. an industry average closer to 25% - 15,000 nurses in self-managing teams of ten to twelve

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VALE, SOUTH WALES

From the "chopping list" to the UK's first Shingo Silver Medallion.

MAKING STRATEGY HUMAN

MAKE IT DAILY

- embed strategy into everyday work, not an annual event

ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

- invite dialogue, not compliance

MAKE IT VISIBLE

- boards, forums and shared spaces anyone can see and update

EMPOWER AUTONOMY

- let teams define their own plays within shared purpose

CONNECT TO MEANING

- people don't get out of bed to "hit a KPI"

THREE QUESTIONS TO

PULL THE THREAD

Who is shaping your strategy - and who is left out?

How are you making meaning together, not just decisions?

What would change if your strategy felt more like a movement than a mandate?

"Strategy as a shared future isn't a slogan - it's a design choice."

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