

Strategic Decision-making Suite.

Strategic

Prioritisation.

By Performance Frontiers



Once an organisation has committed to a strategic focus, then comes the need for strategic prioritisation. We find ourselves asking, which - from our array of initiatives - should receive the most attention and why?

Prioritise Alignment

A simple answer is: The one which is most closely aligned to the strategy.¹

It's important to ensure that this alignment is well communicated and accepted across teams and functions. In the words of Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez writing for Harvard Business Review, "At best, prioritising enhances the strategic dialogue and the alignment at the top of the organization, from where it is then cascaded to the rest of the organization."² Knowing the objectives of our strategic plan puts us in a much better position to answer the curious questions³ that will come our way:

“How will this project serve us?”

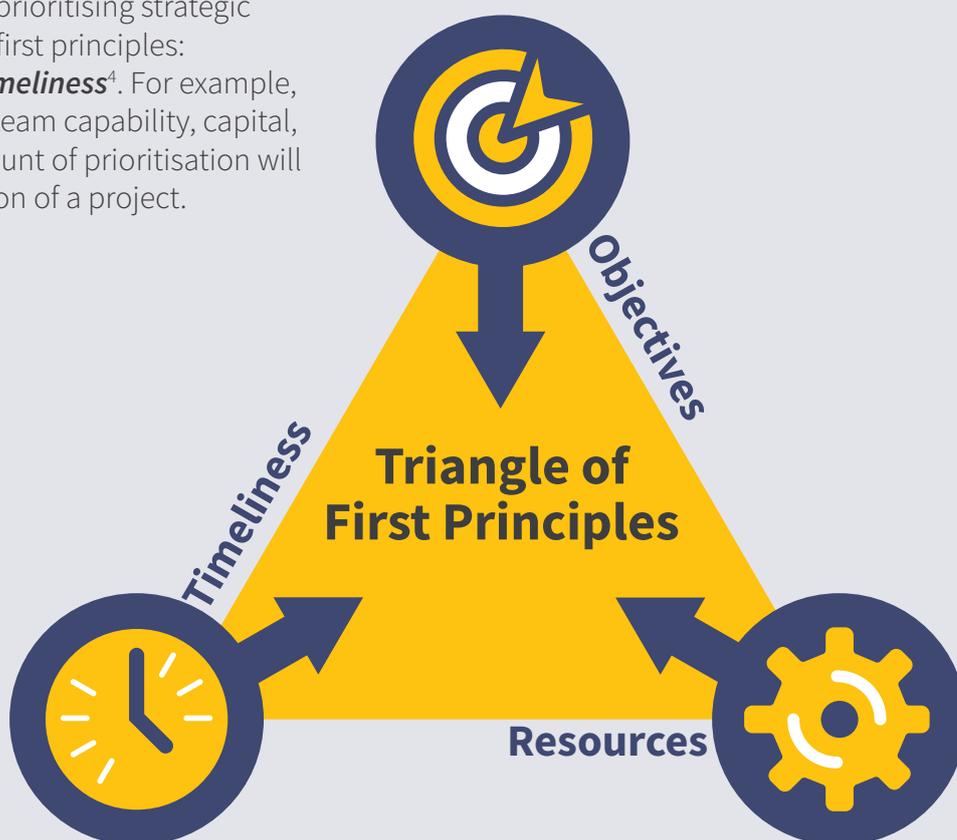
“Why are we making changes to the original plan?”

“How do I know if I am making the right decisions about the project?”

Strategies are developed to advance the business as a whole in service of our overarching vision and higher sense of purpose: the positive impact we want to make in the world. They are easier to implement when the entire system buys-in. Also, change in one corner of the organisation will inevitably impact the rest of the ecosystem, and without strategic alignment there may be significant disruption.

Prioritise According to First Principles

Key determining and interdependent factors that should be considered when prioritising strategic initiatives are the triangle of first principles: **objectives**, **resources** and **timeliness**⁴. For example, without enough resources - team capability, capital, dedicated time etc. - no amount of prioritisation will accelerate the implementation of a project.



Once these foundational principles are considered, projects can be divided into three broad categories.⁴

- 1 Critical Priorities** – are imperatives that are often time sensitive and require an immediate diversion of resources. If we revisit our strategy, these should be the priorities most closely aligned, but with a ticking clock.
- 2 Important Priorities** – usually have available, fixed resources but the objective or timeliness may change.

- 3 Desirable Priorities** – are attractive “nice to haves”, but both the resources and timeliness fluctuate.

By allocating initiatives a priority level rather than using a ranking system, and maintaining transparency around resources, team members are more likely to respond with a positive mindset to the decisions made.⁴

Map Your Interdependencies

Some strategists advocate the creation of a map to determine the interdependencies of the project. “Strategic objectives define where you want your business to go. More than a list of destinations, your strategic objectives need to form a kind of map, including dependencies and relationships.”⁵ An ecosystem view allows us to see at a glance how our capabilities match our objectives and where the pinch points may be.

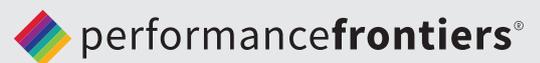
Ask Yourself These 5 Questions, Regularly

Lastly, it is of critical importance that we regularly review our strategic priorities as our landscape shifts and our horizons change. To ensure we are working on the right things at the right time for the right purpose, we can ask ourselves:

- 1** What is most important to our customers and team right now?
- 2** What have we committed to delivering in our strategic plan that will have the greatest impact?
- 3** As our horizon changes: What makes sense to carry forward? What do we need to let go of?
- 4** What do we have the capability to move on now?
- 5** Can we expand our capacity by partnering to co-create value?

References

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