

# THE ONE-PAGE PLAN

SUPERCHARGE  
YOUR STRATEGY

with the

K-PLANT  
GROWTH FRAMEWORK™

In association with

**russam.**  
Interim • Search • Worldwide

Dr ALAN O'NEILL

FROM THE K.I.S.S. INSIGHTS SERIES

## About the Author



Dr. Alan O'Neill is a consultant, author and keynote speaker specialising in change management, organisational culture, strategy and customer experience. For over 30 years, he has worked with some of the top companies around the world. He has supported iconic brands like Airbus, Toyota, Getty Images, Harrods of London, the United Nations, Dubai Duty Free, Primark, Intel, Moët Chandon and others with his '7-Steps to Profit™' and as a safe pair of hands in facilitating change.

Alan has lots of no-nonsense expertise with plenty to say. With tailored keynotes on the *7-Steps to Profit™*, *change management*, *culture* and *customer experience*, Alan has a reputation for making the complex simple... being down-to-earth and practical... with a commercial focus that brings everything back to the customer.

Alan is a regular contributor to several publications in Ireland, UK and Middle East. He is also the author of:

- ***Premium is the New Black***: *In a world of dynamic change put Customer Experience at the heart of your decision-making* (Orpen Press, 2018)
- ***Culture Matters***: *the Four Must-have Values to Supercharge your Business* (Orpen Press, 2021)
- ***The Kiss Insights Series***, a range of publications that are designed to be *KISS* (keep it short and simple), i.e. '*read in one sitting, but kept forever*'.
  - ***Show me the Lid on the Box***: *How to Manage Change with Least Resistance* (Orpen Press, 2023)
  - ***The Leader's Six-Pack***: *How to Balance Grit and Grace* (Orpen Press, 2024)
  - ***Unleash your Potential***: *The 7-Steps to Profit* (Self-published eBook, 2025)
  - ***This is So Selfridges***: *How Culture Transformed an Icon using the Kara Playbook* (2025)

Alan is a proud Irishman, living between Dublin and Dubai, and working all over the world.

Contact Alan at [alanoneill.biz](http://alanoneill.biz) to engage him to support your culture business or to speak at your event.

**alanoneill.biz**

# Introduction

## Dr. Alan O’Neill’s 7-Steps to Profit™

What makes global organizations so powerful and successful in their fields? What are their secrets to sustained excellence?

They all share three key characteristics:

1. They follow a structured path to excellence, such as Alan’s **7-Steps to Profit™** framework.
2. They have a strong strategic growth plan where hearts and minds of all key people are engaged.
3. They execute their strategy effectively, with clear accountabilities and effective governance... leading to timely corrective actions when necessary.



For instance, Selfridges, voted the world’s best department store multiple times, grew its profits from £45 million to £200 million in just a few years with Alan’s 7-Steps to Profit. The framework was pivotal in aligning its culture, strategy and execution, leading to outstanding success.

But this isn’t just for retail. From financial services to FMCG, hospitality, IT, manufacturing, and more, the **7-Steps** can apply to any organization with the ambition to be the best in its field.

Wouldn’t you like to know how your organization measures up against the **7-Steps**?

Alan’s **7+ Index™** (a groundbreaking *Organizational Health Assessment*) helps you benchmark your business across these critical criteria. The self-assessment survey reveals strengths and opportunities for improvement, coupled with a detailed report and optional workshop. This makes planning for sustained profitability a focused, strategic process.

To get started, visit [7plusindex.com](http://7plusindex.com).

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Chapter 1, What Strategy Is and Isn't</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 2, Common Failings in Strategy</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 3, The K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 4, The One-page Plan</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 5, What It Means for Your Organisation</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Chapter 6, Call to Action</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter 7, Options for Your Next Steps</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Sample Questions from 7+ Index™</b>	<b>29</b>

# Chapter 1

In every boardroom, in every industry, there is a word that gets used more than almost any other: **strategy**. Yet, if you ask ten executives to define it, you will likely hear ten very different answers. Some will say strategy is about “being the best.” Others will talk about “hitting the numbers.” A few might equate strategy with innovation. And quite often, leaders will confuse strategy with operations, or even with budgeting.

It’s no wonder that so many organisations struggle to achieve sustained results. When you begin with confusion, you are almost certain to end with disappointment. Yet the evidence from doctoral research and 30+ years of consulting is that financial results don’t fail because of poor execution. The cause is more upstream from that... strategy is more likely the cause. Too often organisations believe that they have a strategy, but in reality what they have is a set of wishes.

## The Compass vs. the Steps

Let’s start with the simplest way to think about strategy. **Strategy is the compass, operations are the steps.**

Imagine you’re climbing a mountain. Operations are the individual steps you take, one foot in front of the other. They matter. You can’t reach the summit without them. But unless you know which direction the summit lies, you could be climbing quickly and efficiently, only to find yourself scaling the wrong mountain.

That’s what happens in countless companies. Teams work hard, executing tasks, hitting activity metrics, delivering projects. But when financial results fall short or customer metrics stall, executives blame “poor execution.” The reality is usually harsher: they were climbing the wrong mountain.

## A Simple Definition

So, let’s put it in plain terms.

- **Strategy is about where to play and how to win.**
- **Operations are about how to run the machine.**

This isn’t just semantics. The difference is fundamental.

- A **strategy** sets direction. It answers the big questions: Which markets will we enter? Which customers will we prioritise? What distinctive value will we bring?
- **Operations** execute the choices. They ensure the supply chain delivers, sales teams sell, and customer service responds.

Both matter, deeply. But one without the other is like having a beautifully engineered car with no steering wheel.

## Why Strategy is Essential

Without strategy, companies drift. They mistake motion for progress. I've seen this across industries:

- **In retail**, a company rolled out dozens of promotional campaigns every month. The marketing team was working 70-hour weeks. Yet sales and margins declined. Why? Because the strategy wasn't clear. They hadn't answered whether they wanted to be the premium brand with fewer discounts, or the volume player competing on price. The result was confusion for customers and fatigue for staff.
- **In financial services**, a bank invested heavily in digital tools, proudly announcing "we're going digital." But they hadn't defined their strategic intent: were they building for customer convenience, cost reduction, or new revenue streams? The digital tools became expensive add-ons, with no measurable improvement in customer retention.
- **In manufacturing**, a global supplier of industrial components spent years chasing "innovation." They launched product after product. But they hadn't set a strategy for where innovation should focus, which markets, which technologies, which customer segments. R&D budgets ballooned, but profitability lagged.

In each case, the absence of a clear strategy meant that operations, however energetic, could not deliver meaningful results.

## The Strategy–Budget Confusion

One of the most common errors I encounter is the belief that **a budget is a strategy**.

It's not.

A budget is an allocation of resources. It tells you where the money will be spent. But it doesn't tell you why you're spending it there, or how those choices link to winning in the market.

Think of it this way: if you gave me your household budget, I could tell how much you spend on groceries, rent, and entertainment. But it wouldn't tell me what kind of life you're trying to live. Are you saving for a house? Preparing to travel the world? Trying to retire early? That's strategy.

Yet in too many boardrooms, the "strategy day" ends with a spreadsheet of numbers and line items. Leaders convince themselves that allocating more budget to marketing or trimming costs in operations is a strategy. It isn't.

This confusion explains why so many organisations fall into the trap of **doing more of the same** when results falter, rather than stepping back and asking the hard strategic questions.

## Why Good Strategies Win

A good strategy is like a well-designed bridge. It connects **where you are now** with **where you want to be**, and it accounts for the terrain in between.

Selfridges, the iconic London department store, provides a vivid example. When I first worked with them, profits were around £45 million. Within a few years, that figure had grown to over £200

million. The turnaround wasn't because staff suddenly became more efficient at folding clothes or stocking shelves. It was because the leadership embraced a coherent strategy.

They defined their **North Star** (to be more than a store: to be a cultural destination). They invested in bold experiences that made shopping theatre. They chose deliberately not to compete on price but to compete on inspiration. Operations then flowed from that strategic compass, from staff training to supplier partnerships, from marketing campaigns to store design.

The key lesson: strategy gave the direction. Operations made it real. Without the former, the latter would have been wasted motion.

## What Strategy is Not

To make it absolutely clear, let's bust some myths. **Strategy is not:**

- A budget.
- A list of projects.
- A collection of slogans ("be customer-centric," "go digital").
- A 200-slide deck of initiatives.
- A once-a-year event.

All of these can play a role in execution, but none are strategy. They are the tools and tactics you use once you know where you're going and how you intend to win.

## A Litmus Test for Strategy

When I facilitate strategy workshops, I sometimes begin with a provocative question:

"If I stopped ten of your frontline staff tomorrow and asked them to describe your strategy in one sentence, what would they say?"

In most cases, the answer is silence, or a nervous laugh. That silence is telling. It means the so-called strategy is living in binders, boardrooms, or PowerPoint slides, not in the daily decisions of the organisation.

The litmus test of a true strategy is whether it can be understood, remembered, and acted upon at every level of the business.

## Simplicity as a Virtue

Complexity is the enemy of execution. Too many organisations create 80-page strategy documents that no one reads. They cover every possibility, every market, every initiative. But a strategy that tries to do everything ends up achieving nothing.

The most powerful strategies are simple. They answer a small number of crucial questions:

- Where will we compete?
- How will we win?
- What must we do differently to succeed?

Everything else follows.

That's why I often talk about the **one-page plan**. It forces clarity. If you can't summarise your strategy on a single page, chances are it's not a strategy, it's a wish list.

## A Story of Contrast: Two Tech Firms

Consider two mid-sized technology companies I observed.

- **Company A** had a 120-page strategy document. It detailed every possible product feature, every market segment, every potential partnership. Meetings often became arguments over which of the dozens of initiatives deserved attention. Staff on the ground admitted they hadn't even read the plan. After three years, revenue was stagnant.
- **Company B** had a one-page strategy. It was brutally simple: focus on mid-sized manufacturing clients, deliver world-class cybersecurity solutions, and partner with three specific industry leaders. Everyone from the CEO to the customer service team could recite it. Within three years, Company B tripled its revenue.

The difference wasn't effort. Both companies were filled with hardworking people. The difference was clarity of strategy.

## Why This Matters Now

The pace of change has never been greater. Technology cycles shorten, consumer behaviours shift rapidly, and geopolitical risks ripple across markets. In this environment, operations alone cannot save you. You can't "execute harder" to win. You must choose better.

That is why strategy is not optional. It is the difference between companies that merely survive and those that thrive.

## Looking Ahead

In the chapters that follow, we will examine **why growth plans so often fail**, and how to address those failings systematically. Drawing on my doctoral research and decades of consulting practice, I'll show how organisations, from small teams to global giants, repeatedly stumble over the same pitfalls.

Then I will introduce the **K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™**, a practical, step-by-step system designed to help you:

- Know your context.

- Prioritise intelligently.
- Align leaders and win hearts and minds.
- Create clear accountabilities.
- Translate strategy to the frontline.
- Track relentlessly.

Together, these disciplines culminate in the one-page plan: a tool that transforms strategy from a theoretical exercise into a living, breathing roadmap for results.

But before we get there, it's vital to pause and accept this truth: if you are confusing operations with strategy, or budgets with plans, you are already climbing the wrong mountain. The sooner you adjust your compass, the sooner every step your people take will bring you closer to the summit.

## Chapter 2

Every organisation claims to have a plan. Whether it's formalised in a thick binder, sketched on a whiteboard, or living in the CEO's head, leaders rarely admit to "not having a plan." Yet when you look at performance data across industries, geographies, and company sizes, the truth is stark. Most growth plans fall short.

A global study by Harvard Business Review found that only **8% of leaders believe their strategy process is effective**. McKinsey's long-running survey suggests that **70% of change programmes fail to deliver their intended results**. If that figure were applied to aviation or medicine, we'd consider it scandalous. But in strategy? It's become almost expected.

The question, then, is **why?**

From my 30+ years of practice, working with brands from Selfridges to Toyota, from Moët Chandon to Intel, and from my doctoral research into strategy, culture, and execution, I can tell you this... organisations don't fail because people aren't working hard enough. They fail because their growth plans fall into **five recurring traps**.

### The Five Common Failings

#### 1. Poor Macro Scanning → Weak Prioritisation

Many plans begin with optimism but not with analysis. Leaders gather in a room, list ideas on a flipchart, and can quickly gravitate to what excites them or what feels politically safe. What they often skip is a disciplined **scan of the external environment**.

The result? They prioritise the wrong things.

- A consumer goods company invested heavily in "sustainability packaging", a worthy ambition, but failed to notice that its core demographic was rapidly shifting online. Competitors who focused on digital channels stole market share while the company congratulated itself on its eco-friendly packaging.
- A professional services firm doubled down on expansion into Western Europe, missing signals that its fastest growth potential lay in Asia. By the time they adjusted course, global rivals had seized the opportunity.

Without **rigorous scanning of trends, competitors, regulation, technology, and customer behaviour**, plans are blind. You can't prioritise intelligently if you don't first understand the terrain.

#### 2. Weak Leadership Alignment → Absence of Hearts and Minds

Even when leaders agree on the broad strokes of a plan, they often fail to achieve **true alignment**. In many cases, each executive leaves the room with a different interpretation of what was decided. Weeks later, this shows up in divergent priorities, conflicting messages, and diluted execution.

I call this the "illusion of alignment."

- At a retail organisation, the CEO proudly declared that the new strategy was about “premiumisation.” Yet the COO thought this meant cutting costs to improve margins, while the CMO assumed it meant rebranding as luxury. Teams down the line received mixed signals, and customers were confused.
- In a multinational bank, the top team agreed to “digitise customer experience.” But the head of operations prioritised automation for efficiency, while the head of retail banking invested in customer-facing apps. Both projects moved forward, but neither connected.
- In another organisation, the strategy was presented to the team by an external consultant, who was commissioned to help shape the strategy. This was done with less than sufficient consultation with the functional owners, resulting in cynicism about the plan. When it came to execution failure, executives abdicated responsibility and blamed the ‘consultant’s plan’.

Alignment isn’t just intellectual; it’s emotional. Leaders must not only agree on what the plan is but also believe in it enough to advocate consistently. Without hearts and minds secured at the top, execution fragments.

### 3. No Clear Accountabilities → Ownership Gaps

Even the best-designed plan will collapse if ownership is fuzzy. Far too many growth plans assign responsibility to “the team” or “the business unit.” The problem is that when everyone owns an initiative, no one does.

- In a technology firm, a critical initiative was labelled “owned by sales and marketing.” After six months, nothing had moved. Sales assumed marketing was driving it; marketing assumed sales were. The initiative died quietly.
- In a global NGO, a major transformation programme listed over a dozen “joint owners.” When donors asked for progress updates, no one could provide a clear answer.

Accountability requires two elements: a **named owner** and a **clear metric**. Without these, organisations fall into what I call the “**accountability gap**”, where initiatives drift until they become invisible.

### 4. No Translation to the Frontline → Strategy Stalls

One of the starkest findings from my doctoral research was the **disconnect between strategy and the frontline**. Leaders often believe that once they’ve agreed on a plan, it somehow filters down through layers of management. In reality, the message is either not localised to each department and/or it gets diluted at every step.

By the time it reaches the “truck driver” or the call centre agent, the strategy has been reduced to vague slogans. Execution stalls not because people resist, but because they don’t know what it means for them.

- In a logistics company, the strategic priority was “customer intimacy.” For frontline drivers, this translated to “work longer shifts”, which bred resentment rather than engagement.

- In a healthcare group, leadership rolled out a strategy of “digital-first service.” Nurses at clinics interpreted this as more paperwork, not better patient outcomes.

The **hearts and minds gap** is real. If strategy doesn’t speak to the daily reality of employees, it will never come alive.

## 5. Poor Tracking & Governance → No Corrective Actions

Even when a plan starts well, many organisations fail to sustain it. They launch with energy, but without rigorous governance the strategy drifts. Meetings focus on urgent operational issues, while strategic priorities slide quietly down the agenda.

By the time leaders realise that KPIs are off track, it’s often too late.

- A manufacturing company launched a bold growth plan with six strategic pillars. Within nine months, only one pillar was on track. The others had been neglected in favour of firefighting daily issues.
- A retail chain introduced quarterly review meetings, but without structured metrics or accountability. Each session became a “storytelling contest” of anecdotes rather than a disciplined review.

Good governance isn’t bureaucracy. It is the **feedback loop** that allows leaders to make mid-course corrections before drift turns into failure. Without it, even strong strategies eventually decay.

## Why Leaders Keep Falling into These Traps

You might ask: if these failings are so common, why don’t leaders learn? The answer lies in human behaviour and organisational psychology:

- **Optimism bias:** Leaders want to believe their current trajectory is sound. Rigorous external scanning feels like bad news.
- **Political comfort:** It’s easier to nod along in the boardroom than to confront misalignment directly.
- **Ambiguity tolerance:** Many leaders think it’s acceptable to leave accountabilities vague, until results demand otherwise.
- **Communication gaps:** Leaders overestimate how well messages cascade. “We told them once” is assumed to mean “they understood.”
- **Urgency addiction:** The daily firefight always feels more urgent than the quarterly strategy review.

Recognising these traps is the first step to avoiding them.

## The Cost of Failure

The impact of these failings is not abstract. They translate directly into stalled growth, declining profits, and frustrated teams.

- Missed KPIs.
- Staff burnout from chasing conflicting priorities.
- Opportunities lost to more agile competitors.
- Reputational damage from inconsistent delivery.

One CEO described it bluntly to me:

“We don’t have a bad business. We just have a bad plan.”

## Setting the Stage for K-PLANT

The good news is that these failings are avoidable. They are not acts of fate, they are choices. And they can be corrected with a disciplined, structured approach.

That’s why I created the **K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™**. It is designed specifically to address these five failings head-on:

- **Poor scanning?** → *Know your context.*
- **Misaligned leaders?** → *Prioritise and align hearts and minds.*
- **Accountability gaps?** → *Assign owners and metrics.*
- **Frontline disconnect?** → *Translate and cascade clearly.*
- **Governance drift?** → *Track relentlessly and correct quickly.*

In the next chapter, we will unpack the framework itself. For now, it’s enough to say this: if your organisation has ever launched a growth plan that didn’t deliver, you are not alone. But you don’t have to repeat the cycle.

# Chapter 3

## The K-PLANT Growth Framework™: From Failure Patterns to Focused Growth

Every leader knows the feeling. The organisation is busy, projects are multiplying, yet results don't match the effort. Teams are working hard, but progress feels scattered. This is the symptom of a growth plan that has become blurred, reactive, or disconnected.

That is why I built the **K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™**, a practical, step-by-step method that ensures strategy is grounded in reality, aligned at the top, understood at the frontline, and tracked with discipline. Unlike bulky plans that gather dust, K-PLANT produces clarity, ownership, and resilience in one coherent system.

### Why K-PLANT?

In Chapter 2, we examined the five recurring failings that cause growth plans to unravel:

1. Poor scanning of the external environment → weak prioritisation
2. Weak leadership alignment → no hearts and minds
3. Fuzzy accountabilities → ownership gaps
4. No translation to the frontline → strategy stalls
5. Poor tracking and governance → no corrective action

These are not isolated mistakes, they form a pattern. The power of K-PLANT is that it was built deliberately to close each of these gaps. Every step is a direct antidote, turning organisational blind spots into strengths.

Failing	K-PLANT Step	Fix
Poor scanning	Know Your Context	Ground decisions in the real world
Weak alignment	Prioritise & Align	Create focus and shared commitment
Fuzzy ownership	Accountability	Convert intent into ownership
No translation	Next-Tier Execution	Make strategy real for the frontline
Poor tracking	Track Relentlessly	Keep strategy alive through rhythm

### Step 1: Know Your Context – From Myopia to Market Awareness

Strategy doesn't begin in the boardroom. It begins in the world outside your company walls. Leaders who plan inwardly, based only on internal data, inevitably miss the bigger picture.

K-PLANT starts with structured external scanning:

- **PEST analysis** (Political, Economic, Social, Technological)
- **Competitor and substitute mapping**
- **Customer behaviour and unmet needs**

**Case example:** A logistics company initially prioritised cost reduction. After scanning external trends, they realised that same-day delivery expectations were the true disruptor. Their focus shifted from cutting costs to building speed, a shift that defined the next decade of growth.

**The fix:** Before you choose what matters, you must see what others miss.

## **Step 2: Prioritise and Align – From Too Many Goals to One Voice**

Most organisations fail not because they lack ideas, but because they chase too many. Leaders leave workshops with long lists of ambitions, each vying for attention. The result is diluted effort and confused execution.

K-PLANT enforces ruthless prioritisation:

- Which **3–5 choices** will make the biggest difference?
- Which opportunities are we brave enough to **say no to**?
- What assumptions need testing before we commit?

Once priorities are clear, alignment must follow. Alignment is not just intellectual agreement; it is emotional commitment. It means surfacing scepticism, testing shared understanding, and crafting one common narrative leaders can communicate with confidence.

**Case example:** A professional services firm began with 24 initiatives. After a K-PLANT prioritisation workshop, they cut to four strategic pillars. Two years later, profit per partner had risen by 30%. Focus made execution possible.

**The fix:** Prioritisation creates focus; alignment creates coherence. Together, they give the strategy a single voice.

## **Step 3: Accountability – From Ambiguity to Ownership**

A plan without owners is a plan destined for drift. “The business” is not an owner. K-PLANT insists that every initiative has a **named owner** and a **clear metric**. Tools like the **RACI matrix** (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) close gaps and prevent duplication.

**Case example:** In one multinational, a “digital transformation” project was “jointly owned” by IT and marketing for a year — and went nowhere. When ownership was reassigned through K-PLANT (the CMO accountable, IT responsible), progress accelerated immediately.

**The fix:** Accountability transforms good intentions into action. It’s not about blame; it’s about clarity.

## **Step 4: Next-Tier Execution – From Boardroom Slides to Frontline Action**

Even with alignment and accountability, many strategies stall because they're not translated into frontline reality. K-PLANT insists on a cascade: initiatives broken down into actions and communicated in plain language that makes sense to every role.

Leaders must answer a simple question: **"What does this strategy mean for me?"**

**Case example:** A logistics firm's strategy of "customer intimacy" meant nothing to drivers, until it was translated into practical behaviours... shorter delivery windows, real-time tracking, and permission to resolve issues on the spot. Within weeks, satisfaction scores rose.

**The fix:** Translation bridges the hearts-and-minds gap. Strategy must live in daily actions, not on PowerPoint slides.

### **Step 5: Track Relentlessly – From Drift to Discipline**

Even great strategies lose momentum without rhythm. Reviews become storytelling sessions, crises steal attention, and drift sets in. K-PLANT builds discipline through structured governance:

- **Monthly progress reviews**
- **Quarterly resets and recalibrations**
- **Simple dashboards and escalation rules**

**Case example:** A global FMCG company once reviewed strategy annually which turned out to be too late to correct course. After adopting K-PLANT, they introduced monthly scorecards and quarterly alignment sessions. Issues were spotted early, decisions were faster, and results steadied.

**The fix:** Governance isn't bureaucracy — it's the heartbeat that keeps strategy alive.

### **What Makes K-PLANT Different**

Many frameworks exist, but few are both comprehensive and simple. K-PLANT stands apart because it:

- **Closes the real gaps** that derail execution.
- **Combines strategy and culture**, ensuring hearts and minds are aligned.
- **Fits on one page**, yet captures the essentials.
- **Works for any organisation**, from SMEs to global corporations.

It's not designed to impress with complexity, but to empower with clarity.

### **The Psychological Shift**

K-PLANT also rewires leadership mindset:

- From **optimism bias** to confronting uncomfortable truths.
- From **collective ownership** to named accountability.

- From **annual events** to living governance.
- From **boardroom language** to frontline relevance.

These shifts distinguish organisations that adapt and thrive from those that stagnate.

## The One-Page Plan

The practical output of K-PLANT is the **One-Page Plan**, a single, disciplined summary that captures everything that matters:

- The **North Star** (purpose, vision, mission)
- The **3–5 strategic pillars**
- **Initiatives, metrics, and owners**
- The **governance cadence**

Leaders often resist the constraint at first, until they experience the clarity it brings. A One-Page Plan doesn't oversimplify. It focuses. It becomes the shared anchor for alignment and action across the organisation.

## Case Snapshot: From Chaos to Clarity

A mid-sized FMCG company was drowning in “initiative overload.” Using K-PLANT, they:

1. Scanned external trends and spotted an overlooked demographic shift.
2. Prioritised three strategic pillars instead of nine.
3. Aligned leaders around a shared customer-growth narrative.
4. Assigned clear ownership of each pillar.
5. Introduced monthly governance reviews.

Within 18 months, revenue grew 22% and engagement rose sharply. Leaders admitted the breakthrough wasn't harder work — it was **focused, aligned work**.

## Looking Ahead

K-PLANT is not theory, it's practice. It gives leaders a **compass** (Know, Prioritise), secures **buy-in** (Align), ensures **ownership** (Accountability), and locks in **execution** (Next-Tier + Tracking).

The result is a plan that is clear, lived, and resilient. One that replaces drift with direction, confusion with clarity, and hope with discipline.

In the next chapter, we'll explore the **One-Page Plan** in detail... how to design it, embed it, and use it as a living instrument of focus and momentum.

## Chapter 4

For decades, companies have been producing strategy documents that run into dozens, even hundreds, of pages. They are glossy, thorough and almost without exception, forgotten. Employees rarely read them, managers struggle to explain them, and leaders quietly admit that the binder sits on a shelf, untouched.

That's why the **one-page plan** has become such a powerful discipline. It forces leaders to cut through noise, strip away jargon, and articulate the essence of their strategy in a form that can be understood, remembered, and acted upon.

### Why One Page?

The discipline of a single page is brutal. It forces clarity. If you cannot explain your strategy concisely, it's not really a strategy, it's a wish list.

There are three main advantages to one-page planning:

1. **Visibility.** Everyone, from executives to frontline staff, can see the plan in its entirety. There's no excuse that "I didn't have time to read the document."
2. **Memorability.** A concise plan can be communicated in town halls, team meetings, and even informal conversations. It becomes a shared language across the organisation.
3. **Accountability.** By showing pillars, initiatives, metrics, and owners in one place, it becomes clear who is responsible for what. Drift is harder to hide.

### What the One-Page Plan Includes

A one-page plan is not a summary. It is the strategy. Every line matters.

The structure we use in K-PLANT includes:

- **North Star.** A clear statement of purpose, vision, and mission. This anchors decisions and provides context for choices.
- **Strategic Pillars.** Typically three to five themes that define where the organisation will focus. Each pillar should address a major challenge or opportunity.
- **Initiatives.** Key actions under each pillar, not a laundry list, but the critical few.
- **Metrics.** How success will be measured. Metrics must be specific, time-bound, and linked to business outcomes.
- **Owners.** Named leaders accountable for each pillar or initiative. Accountability is non-negotiable.
- **Governance Rhythm.** How often progress will be reviewed, and by whom. This ensures the plan remains alive throughout the year.

## Case Example: From Binder to Page

A global FMCG company once had a 120-page strategic plan. It was comprehensive, with detailed analysis, financial forecasts, and dozens of initiatives. But when we asked middle managers to describe the strategy, they offered wildly different answers.

Through K-PLANT, we distilled the entire strategy into one page. The company retained its analysis, but it no longer confused the analysis with the plan. The one-page version was printed, pinned on walls, and shared across offices. Within six months, employees reported a significant increase in clarity about the company's direction.

Performance followed. With clearer priorities and visible accountability, the company delivered its best growth in years.

## The Balance: Comprehensive Yet Simple

Critics sometimes argue that one page oversimplifies reality. After all, business is complex. Markets shift. Competitors adapt. Can one page really capture everything?

The answer is yes, if you understand the difference between **the plan** and **the supporting detail**.

Think of a one-page plan as the headline. The supporting documents (financial models, risk assessments, project plans) are important, but they are not strategy. They are evidence and tools. The plan is the story.

By keeping the story to one page, leaders force themselves to distinguish between what is essential and what is supplementary.

## The Role of Storytelling

The one-page plan is not just a framework. It is a story. People remember stories far more than they remember bullet points.

That's why we encourage leaders to use plain language, not jargon. For example:

- Instead of "optimise multi-channel distribution platforms," say "make it easier for customers to buy from us."
- Instead of "leverage human capital assets," say "develop our people."

A plan written in human language travels further and faster through an organisation.

## The Emotional Anchor

Remember... strategy isn't just rational. It's emotional. Leaders must inspire belief as well as set direction. That's why the one-page plan doesn't just list initiatives, it links them to the **North Star**.

When employees can see how their daily work connects to a bigger mission, motivation rises. When they can see the logic behind priorities, resistance drops. When they know who owns what, trust builds. The one-page plan becomes not just a management tool, but a cultural anchor.

## One-Page vs. OKRs

Some organisations ask, “If we already use OKRs, do we need a one-page plan?” The answer is yes, because they serve different purposes.

- **OKRs** (Objectives and Key Results) are about execution. They cascade targets and track progress.
- **The One-Page Plan** is about direction. It ensures OKRs are aligned to the right choices in the first place.

Without a one-page plan, OKRs risk becoming a collection of operational goals with no strategic coherence.

## Practical Tips for Creating a One-Page Plan

1. **Limit to 3–5 strategic pillars.** More than five is too many.
2. **Assign names.** Every pillar and initiative must have a clear owner.
3. **Be specific.** “Improve customer service” is vague. “Achieve NPS of 70+ by Q4” is measurable.
4. **Use plain English.** If your frontline can’t explain it, rewrite it.
5. **Set a rhythm.** Decide upfront how often the plan will be reviewed and updated.

## Why It Works

I’ve seen companies across industries transform with this approach. Selfridges condensed its strategy into a simple, compelling narrative, and multiplied profits. A manufacturing firm aligned global teams with one page pinned in every office. A professional services firm shifted from fragmented projects to coherent growth.

In each case, the breakthrough was not more work, but more focus. The one-page plan concentrated energy on what mattered most.

## Looking Ahead

The one-page plan is the visible output of the K-PLANT system. It turns abstract choices into a practical guide for execution. But clarity on paper isn’t enough. What truly matters is what happens next, embedding the plan into culture, governance, and daily decision-making.

In the next chapter, we’ll explore what this means for your business: how a one-page plan, rooted in K-PLANT, improves not just profit, but people and planet outcomes too.

## Chapter 5

By now, you've seen how strategy too often fails, and how the **K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™**, distilled into a one-page plan, can turn failure into focus. But what does this really mean for your organisation? What difference does it make to your people, your results, and your wider responsibilities?

The truth is, strategy is not just a management exercise. Done well, it reshapes how your entire business thinks, acts, and succeeds. It drives the triple bottom line: **Profit, People, and Planet.**

### Profit: The Hard Edge

Let's begin with the obvious. A clear strategy improves results. When you know your context, prioritise effectively, align leaders, assign accountability, and track relentlessly, you waste less effort and capture more opportunity.

- **Financial performance improves.** Companies that adopt one-page planning often see faster revenue growth and healthier margins because resources flow into fewer, higher-impact initiatives.
- **Risk reduces.** With better scanning and tracking, surprises are fewer. Leaders anticipate shifts instead of reacting late.
- **Investor confidence rises.** Boards and shareholders respond positively to clarity. A concise, credible plan inspires more trust than a vague ambition buried in a thick report.

**Case snapshot:** A niche financial institution applied K-PLANT, focusing on three pillars: digital service, SME lending, and risk management. Within 18 months, loan growth rose by 20% and cost-to-income ratio improved. Profit wasn't the product of harder work, but smarter alignment.

### People: The Human Engine

Profit alone is never enough. The real test of a strategy is whether people understand it, believe in it, and act on it. That's where K-PLANT creates a breakthrough.

1. **Clarity reduces frustration.** Employees hate mixed messages. When the plan is visible and consistent, confusion drops and morale rises.
2. **Alignment fuels engagement.** People are more likely to commit when they see how their work connects to the bigger story.
3. **Accountability builds trust.** When ownership is clear, teams know who to turn to, and politics decline.

At one logistics company, frontline staff admitted they had never understood "the strategy." After a one-page plan was rolled out, drivers could describe exactly what "customer intimacy" meant in practice. Engagement scores rose, and voluntary turnover fell by 15%.

**The message:** Strategy isn't just a plan for the business. It's a signal to your people about whether leadership knows where it's going.

## **Planet: The Wider Responsibility**

In today's world, no organisation can afford to ignore its broader impact. Customers, regulators, and employees increasingly expect businesses to demonstrate environmental and social responsibility.

A strong strategy doesn't treat ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) as a bolt-on. Instead, it integrates purpose into choices:

- How do our growth plans align with sustainability goals?
- How do our values shape decisions on suppliers, products, and markets?
- How do we balance short-term profit with long-term resilience?

The K-PLANT system embeds these questions at the **Know Your Context** and **Prioritise** stages. By looking outside-in, organisations are forced to consider societal and environmental shifts, not just commercial ones.

**Example:** A food manufacturer initially planned for rapid expansion in developing markets. Context scanning revealed rising regulatory pressure on packaging waste. By embedding sustainability into its pillars, the company not only avoided fines but built brand equity as a responsible leader.

**The result:** When strategy accounts for Planet as well as Profit, reputational strength grows, risks fall, and future opportunities expand.

## **Resilience: The Hidden Payoff**

Beyond profit, people, and planet, there is another benefit that often goes unnoticed... **resilience**. Organisations that adopt K-PLANT and the one-page plan are better equipped to withstand shocks. They've already done the hard thinking. They've scanned for external risks, built rhythms of review that catch drift early, and created consistency in communication so employees trust leadership even when the future feels uncertain.

During the COVID-19 crisis, this difference became stark. Companies with simple, visible strategies adapted faster. They could pivot resources and redeploy teams because everyone already knew what mattered most. Their priorities acted as a compass when the map suddenly changed. By contrast, businesses weighed down by complex or outdated plans froze in confusion, uncertain what to protect and what to let go. Resilience, it turned out, wasn't luck, it was structure.

## **A Culture of Discipline**

Adopting K-PLANT doesn't just produce a new document; it transforms the very rhythm of how a business operates. Leaders stop treating strategy as an annual event and begin to see it as a continuous discipline. The mindset shifts from long wish lists to a handful of tight, deliberate priorities. Ownership ceases to be vague, every initiative has a name beside it. And the language of strategy moves out of the boardroom and onto the frontline, where it guides daily action.

Over time, this steady cadence builds a culture of discipline. Strategy becomes less about the fanfare of launch and more about the quiet consistency of follow-through. It's not something done once a year in an off-site retreat; it becomes the heartbeat of daily decisions.

## What It Looks Like Day to Day

So what does this actually look like in practice? Picture a workplace where a frontline employee can clearly describe how their task contributes to one of the organisation's three strategic pillars. A manager arrives at the monthly review armed not with anecdotes or excuses, but with tangible metrics that tell the story of progress. The executive team spends its meeting time debating external shifts in technology or regulation, not merely firefighting the latest crisis. And when the board meets, the strategy fits on a single page, each pillar tied directly to financial, cultural, and ESG outcomes.

That's what it means to **live** strategy rather than merely **design** it. The organisation hums with alignment; every layer knows what success looks like and how to measure it.

## The Long-Term Impact

Businesses that embrace K-PLANT don't just improve their next quarter, they change their long-term trajectory. Growth becomes focused rather than chaotic, scaling amplifies what works instead of multiplying complexity. Talented people gravitate towards these organisations because clarity and purpose are magnetic. Customers and partners, too, develop trust in a company that acts consistently and communicates transparently.

And perhaps most importantly, momentum sustains itself. Instead of fading after the initial push, plans evolve, refresh, and strengthen year after year. The framework becomes self-reinforcing, a living system that grows with the business rather than constraining it.

## Bringing It Back to You

So, what does all this mean for your organisation, right now? It calls for three honest questions.

1. Do you truly understand your external context, or are you still planning inwardly, based only on what's inside your four walls?
2. Can every leader in your business explain your strategy in one sentence and is it the same sentence?
3. Does every initiative have a clear owner, a measurable outcome, and a review rhythm that keeps it alive?

If the answer to any of these is "no," then your organisation is already vulnerable to the five failings that K-PLANT was built to close. The encouraging truth is that you can fix them, systematically, predictably, and quickly... by embedding this way of working.

## Looking Ahead

In the final chapter, we'll explore exactly how to get started, how to move from theory to practice, from the comfort of saying "we already have a plan" to the discipline of operating a strategy that truly works.

Because ultimately, what this means for your business is simple... less wasted effort, more clarity and alignment, and stronger results across profit, people, and planet.

That isn't a theoretical promise... it's the lived experience of organisations that have chosen to climb the right mountain with the right compass.

## Chapter 6

By now, you've seen how strategy fails, why the K-PLANT Growth Framework™ exists, and how the one-page plan can transform clarity into action. But knowledge without action is wasted. The question that matters most is... how do you get started? The good news is you don't need to wait for the "perfect time" or the "big annual offsite." Getting started with K-PLANT is about taking the first disciplined steps today, with the resources you already have.

### **Step 1: Revisit Your North Star**

Every strategy begins with purpose, yet many organisations can't articulate theirs clearly. Vision and mission statements often sit unchanged for years, vague or generic. Before you build any plan, ask the simple, grounding questions... why do we exist beyond making money; where are we trying to go in the long run; what do we stand for that is distinctive? Your North Star doesn't need poetry, it needs truth. At Selfridges, for instance, the North Star was to be more than a store. It was to be a cultural destination. That clarity guided bold decisions, from fashion theatre to art installations, in ways competitors couldn't match. If your North Star is outdated or unclear, that's where to start.

### **Step 2: Scan Your Context**

Resist the urge to jump straight into initiatives. First, look outward. Spend a focused week gathering insights on the political and regulatory shifts shaping your sector, the economic indicators influencing customer behaviour, the social and cultural changes redefining expectations, and the technology trends disrupting business models. Don't forget competitor moves and substitute offerings. This doesn't need to become a consulting tome. Even a half-day cross-functional workshop structured around PESTLE can surface blind spots. The aim is to anchor your plan in reality, not assumption.

### **Step 3: Write Three to Five Strategic Questions**

Pause before proposing solutions and craft the questions that will focus attention. Ask how you will win in markets where digital is now the default; how you can reduce carbon footprint without eroding margins; which customer segment will generate most of your profit in five years. These questions prevent the scatter of chasing too many ideas at once and set the stage for disciplined prioritisation, the heart of the one-page plan.

### **Step 4: Gather the Right People**

Strategy can't be designed by one person nor delegated to a faceless committee. It requires a thoughtful mix... the executive team, key functional leaders, and voices that bring the customer and frontline into the room. At AB Vista, for example, we convened both the SLT and the newly formed LUT, ensuring that global perspectives and day-to-day execution shaped the plan together. The result was richer, more practical, and more inclusive. Ask yourself whether you have the right balance of big-picture thinkers and execution pragmatists in the room.

### **Step 5: Draft Your First One-Page Plan**

Begin but don't overthink. Put your North Star at the top, articulate three to five strategic pillars, outline the key initiatives beneath each, name the owners and the metrics, and define the governance cadence. You will refine later. The act of distilling strategy onto one page is

transformative in itself, it forces hard choices, surfaces disagreement, and exposes where accountability is missing. Treat the draft as a working tool, not a finished product.

### **Step 6: Test It With the Frontline**

Once you have a draft, take it out of the boardroom. Share it with a cross-section of employees and ask two simple questions, do you understand it, and can you see what it means for your role? If either answer is “no,” rewrite. Strategy that cannot be translated to the frontline is not strategy, it’s aspiration.

### **Step 7: Set Your Governance Rhythm**

Finally, establish the rhythm that keeps the plan alive. Decide how often you will review progress, who owns the task of updating metrics, and how you will adjust course when assumptions change. Governance isn’t bureaucracy, it’s the feedback loop that lets you adapt quickly and stay on track.

## **Common Pitfalls to Avoid**

Don’t wait for perfect data, strategy is about choices under uncertainty. Don’t write too much, resist the comfort of a 40-page deck and keep to the one-page discipline. Don’t ignore emotions, alignment isn’t purely rational... leaders must believe in the plan enough to champion it. And don’t overload the agenda. Three to five pillars is plenty, because anything more dilutes execution.

## **The Trojan Horse Effect**

One of the hidden strengths of starting with K-PLANT is what I call the Trojan Horse effect. Leaders come for a strategy plan, and along the way deeper issues reveal themselves such as cultural misalignment, weak leadership behaviours, outdated processes. That isn’t failure, it’s the point. A disciplined planning process exposes what needs fixing across people, processes, and culture, and that’s where real transformation begins.

## **The Payoff**

When you take these steps, teams stop being busy for the sake of being busy. Initiatives line up behind clear priorities. Employees can see the connection between their work and the strategy. KPIs begin to improve because execution finally rests on a solid foundation, and governance ensures progress doesn’t drift. The payoff is not merely a better plan, it’s a better business.

## **A Call to Action**

Here’s your simple checklist for tomorrow:

1. Revisit your North Star.
2. Scan your external context.
3. Write three to five strategic questions.
4. Convene the right people.
5. Draft your one-page plan.
6. Test it with the frontline.
7. Lock in governance.

Seven steps. Not complicated—but game-changing if you commit.

## **Looking Ahead**

This e-book isn't the full journey. It's a playbook, a primer, a first step. To truly embed strategy that works, most organisations benefit from facilitation, structured workshops, and external challenge. That's where Kara comes in, through in-person sessions, online programmes, or ongoing support. But you don't have to wait. Begin now. Write the first draft of your one-page plan and see where it takes you. The real cost isn't trying and refining; the real cost is drifting without clarity while competitors climb the right mountain faster than you.

## Chapter 7

If you've read this far, you already know that strategy isn't an issue for "other companies," nor a nice-to-have, nor a once-a-year ritual. It is the engine that determines whether your business thrives, drifts, or declines. The question isn't whether you have a plan, as every organisation has one, even if it's implicit. The real question is whether your plan is clear, aligned, accountable, lived by your people, and reviewed with discipline. If your answer is "not fully," you've already identified your next step.

### **Option 1: Benchmark with the 7+ Index™**

Before you redesign anything, know where you stand. The 7+ Index™, Kara's organisational health survey built around the seven steps to profit... benchmarks strengths and weaknesses across North Star, Culture, Strategy, People, Customer, Proposition, and Execution. The resulting report highlights gaps you may not see and provides evidence on where to focus. Many clients begin here because it creates a shared language and a neutral starting point, turning opinion into data.

### **Option 2: Run a K-PLANT Workshop**

If you need focus quickly, a K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™ workshop is the most powerful entry point. In one or two days, your leadership team revisits the North Star, scans the external context with structured tools, identifies three to five strategic pillars, drafts a one-page plan with owners and metrics, and agrees the governance rhythm. Workshops can be in-person or virtual, with preparation materials in advance. Many teams report achieving more clarity in a single workshop than in years of prior planning cycles.

### **Option 3: Facilitation and Ongoing Support**

For some organisations, starting isn't the hard part... sustaining is. That's why Kara offers ongoing facilitation of leadership team meetings. The role blends coach, challenger, and facilitator to keep the agenda strategic, ensure trade-offs are debated openly, and make sure governance is respected. Think of it as a safe pair of hands for discipline, while you stay focused on leading.

### **Option 4: Online Learning & Playbooks**

Not every company is ready for a full consulting engagement. An online learning programme built around K-PLANT and the one-page plan provides video lessons, interactive exercises, and workbooks so smaller companies can build strategy at their own pace. It's affordable, scalable, and ideal when you want guidance without a heavy consultancy footprint.

### **Which Path Is Right for You?**

- If you want diagnostics to know what is really going on in your business, start with the 7+ Index™.
- Follow this with focus and alignment, facilitate a K-PLANT workshop.
- To get discipline and objectivity, engage a facilitator for governance and support.
- If you want to learn more, explore online learning and playbooks.

Whatever route you choose, the principles remain the same: clarity, alignment, accountability, translation, and tracking.

## A Final Word

Across three decades working with companies from Selfridges to Toyota, from Moët Chandon to Harrods, from Dubai Duty Free to Airbus, the same truth repeats. Companies rarely fail for lack of talent or effort or resources. They fail because they drift without clarity, without alignment, without discipline. When leaders take strategy seriously, strip away the noise, and focus on what matters, transformation follows. Profits rise while people engage and culture strengthens. And organisations become resilient in a world that refuses to stand still.

## Your Call to Action

Turn this e-book into forward motion.

1. Take the 7+ Index™ to benchmark where you stand.
2. Book a K-PLANT workshop to build your one-page plan.
3. Explore ongoing support to keep strategy alive.
4. Sign up for updates on Kara's online playbooks and training.

The choice is yours—but the time to choose is now. Strategy isn't about writing documents; it's about creating results.

### Contact

Dr. Alan O'Neill  
Consultant, Author, Keynote Speaker

 [alan.oneill@kara.ie](mailto:alan.oneill@kara.ie)

 [Kara.ie](https://kara.ie)

# Self-Assessment Starter Questions:

## Is Your Strategy Really Working?

For each question, ask yourself: *to what extent is this true in my organisation?*

Score of **1** = never; **10** = always.

### External Scanning & Prioritisation

1. We systematically scan external trends (political, economic, social, technological) before making strategic choices.
2. We use hard evidence not just gut instinct to decide what to prioritise.
3. When new opportunities appear, we deliberately stop or drop something else to stay focused.

### Leadership Alignment

4. Every leader can describe our strategy in the same succinct way.
5. Executives genuinely believe in and champion the strategy, not just nod in meetings.
6. Our strategic priorities cut across silos and are interpreted consistently across functions.

### Accountability

7. Each initiative in our plan has a single named owner (not a committee).
8. Owners have clear, measurable metrics for success.
9. When progress stalls, it's clear who is responsible and they act quickly.

### Translation to the Frontline

10. Frontline employees can explain what the strategy means for their role.
11. Managers consistently cascade the *why* behind strategic decisions, not just the *what*.
12. Staff feel they have a voice in shaping how the strategy is delivered.

### Governance & Tracking

13. We follow a structured rhythm (e.g., monthly, quarterly) for reviewing strategic progress.
14. Reviews focus on evidence and metrics, not just anecdotes and updates.
15. We regularly adapt or adjust the plan when assumptions change.

### The Budget Trap

16. Our strategic plan clearly goes beyond budgets and financial targets, showing where and how we will win.

## Your Next Move

Weak scores don't mean you have bad people or poor execution. They mean your planning system is flawed. That's exactly what the **K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™** was built to fix.

Here are your options:

- **Download more free resources** at [7StepstoProfit.com](https://7StepstoProfit.com).
- **Book a discovery call** to discuss your challenges and see if a one-page plan could help.
- **Explore the K-PLANT GROWTH FRAMEWORK™** online training and workbook to build your own one-page plan.

Don't leave strategy to chance. Take the first step now, and turn your plan into real results.