

*For Executive Leaders Seeking
a Strategy Execution Platform That Aligns
Business Growth, Employee Performance,
and Organizational Success in One Solution.*

The 6 Steps to a Winning Strategy



Acknowledgments

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Executive Overview

Most executive leaders don't fail because they lack vision — they fail because their organizations lack a process and a system to turn that vision into action with clarity, consistency, and accountability.

Despite bold plans and ambitious goals, companies still fall short on delivering what their strategy promises. According to the *Harvard Business Review*, **90% of strategies fail to produce desired results, and 67% of executive turnover** is directly attributed to the poor implementation of strategy.

Inspire Software's global Strategy Assessment, conducted with hundreds of leaders across various industries worldwide, reveals that only **32% of leaders rate themselves highly in terms of execution readiness**—the remaining **68% fall into low or moderate categories**, confirming a widespread execution gap.

Do you have an effective system in place to execute your organizational strategy effectively?

Inspire Software's Strategy Assessment, completed by hundreds of leaders across industries around the world, confirms a critical reality:

There is a persistent gap between setting strategy and executing strategy.

Inspire Software Strategy Assessment Key Insights

- Only **32%** of respondents reported high performance in executing strategy.
- Over **64%** of leaders reported lower confidence in using AI to create, align, or review strategy.
- Over **70%** of leaders surveyed report that their current dashboards and performance tracking systems fail to provide timely and actionable insights into the state of the strategy.
- Only **19%** of leaders surveyed are highly confident in how their data visualization tools support decision-making.

Most leaders are confident in setting strategy, but data shows gaps in operationalizing it. This underscores the need for a scalable platform that aligns processes and best practices. Your journey to effective strategy begins with **The 6 Steps to a Winning Strategy!**



You Don't Have a Strategy Problem; You Have an Execution Problem

For many organizations, failure doesn't come from poor planning — it results from a lack of consistent execution practices and systems. Strategic goals are set, but without a straightforward way to integrate them into daily operations, they often get lost in everyday tasks.

The breakdown occurs in the middle:

- Between **strategic intent** and **operational action**
- Between **goal setting** and **measurable outcomes**
- Between **performance check-ins** and **timely feedback**
- Between **“cold” numbers** and **“warm” people data**

Why Numbers Alone Aren't Enough for Effective Strategy Execution: Cold vs. Warm Data

Tracking performance isn't just about checking boxes — it's about understanding the story behind the results.

Cold Data includes quantitative metrics, such as OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). These help you measure what is happening — the progress against goals, success rates, and operational outcomes.

But **Warm Data tells the rest of the story**. To truly understand why performance is trending up or down, **warm data** is needed — qualitative insights derived from human interactions.

- **Performance Narratives:** Weekly goal check-ins, 1:1s, feedback, and team conversations that provide the emotional, behavioral, and situational context behind progress.
- **Strategy Narratives:** Summaries that distill themes from performance data to explain strategic outcomes at scale — surfacing patterns, blockers, wins, and momentum.

When combined, cold and warm data create a complete picture of execution. Cold data provides the metrics, while warm data supplies the meaning. Without both, leaders risk making decisions in a vacuum, missing the root

causes behind performance trends.

Inspire unifies cold and warm data into a single, real-time platform, enabling leaders to interpret performance holistically, adjust in the moment, and drive smarter, faster decisions.



The Cost of Strategy Failure

When strategy fails, the cost isn't just missed goals — it's missed opportunities, disengaged employees, lost momentum, and in many cases, lost leadership. Many organizations still rely on disconnected goal-tracking tools or spreadsheets. The result? Strategy becomes stagnant, performance data is outdated, and leaders struggle to adapt quickly to sudden market shifts.

This is where the real damage occurs. As noted in the overview, **67% of executive turnover stems from failed execution.** (*HBR, 2017*) Business growth suffers. Market windows close. Top talent disengages. Millions of dollars are lost and jobs are at risk due to poor strategy execution.

How to Avoid Being the Next Strategy Failure

While the risks of poor execution are real, the solution is within reach. Inspire Software moves beyond fragmented tools and outdated performance models with a unified system built for the modern organization.

Rooted in behavioral science and real-time insights, **The 6 Steps to a Winning Strategy** offers a proven framework to transform your strategic vision into measurable results. This isn't just another performance tool — it's a holistic operating model that empowers your leaders, engages your people, and aligns every level of your organization. With Inspire, strategy execution becomes clear, consistent, and achievable — every quarter, every goal, every conversation.

The 6 Steps to a Winning Strategy

Inspire's **6 Steps to a Winning Strategy** provides this framework for executing strategy across the entire organization.

- **Strategy Planning** establishes a shared vision and measurable objectives
- **Strategy Communication** ensures priorities are understood across all levels
- **Strategy Alignment** cascades goals so every individual knows their impact
- **Strategy Accountability** embeds ownership through leader-led conversations
- **Strategy Performance** creates continuous check-ins and feedback loops to adapt in real time
- **Strategy Analytics** combines quantitative and qualitative insights to guide better decisions

These proven steps help organizations close the execution gap, foster engagement, and achieve measurable, sustainable business success.



Step 1: Strategy Planning

Strategic planning is the foundation of organizational success. It provides a clear roadmap for where the company is headed and how it will achieve its goals. Without a well-defined strategy, even high-performing teams risk working on disconnected priorities that fail to produce meaningful results for the organization.

Expert Insight

Daniel Montgomery, author of *Start Less, Finish More*, emphasizes that strategy should be treated as a **living hypothesis**—not a fixed 3–5-year plan that quickly becomes outdated.

“Rather than a detailed plan, Minimum Viable Strategy™ is a short, high-level statement of strategic intent. ... Rather than setting out goals, metrics, or initiatives for a multiyear planning

horizon, these are set, reviewed, and reset much more frequently.”

— Daniel Montgomery, Founder & Managing Director of Agile Strategies



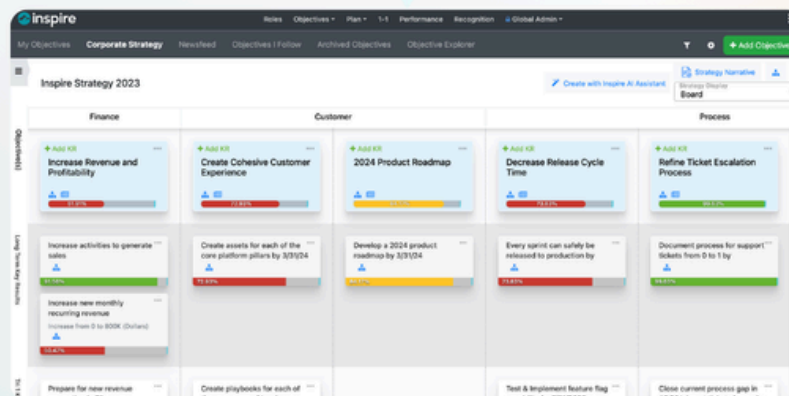
Effective strategic planning is **not a one-time event**. It is a **continuous process** that aligns departments, teams, and individuals around a shared vision, sets measurable objectives, and creates a decision-making framework that keeps everyone focused on what matters most.

Technology Solutions

Even the best strategies fail without being translated into action. Today's leaders are turning to AI and digital strategy platforms to make planning agile, data-driven, and adaptive to constant market changes. Yet Inspire's research shows that **65% of leaders lack confidence in using AI to generate strategic objectives.**

Inspire addresses this gap by combining **AI-powered OKR management** tools with leadership applications that engage every level of the organization. This approach enhances buy-in, fosters alignment, and creates a scalable ecosystem for sustainable business growth.

Strong strategic planning is the launchpad for success—especially when paired with **technology-supported execution discipline that keeps strategy active, adaptive, and measurable.**



Step 2: Strategy Communication


Clear and consistent communication is essential to successful strategy execution. Our research reveals that **61%** of employees don't understand how they contribute to the company's strategy. When employees are unclear about how their daily work contributes to company goals, it leads to misalignment and lost productivity. Effective communication ensures that strategic priorities are understood at every level, enabling employees to make decisions that support the organization's objectives.

strategic ambiguity when a strategy is implemented. Best practices in strategy execution emphasize **transparent communication**, where leaders reinforce the mission through frequent, multi-level messaging and by integrating strategy into department and team goals across the organization. A strategy not communicated is a strategy destined to fail.

Technology Solutions

Inspire enables **frequent, multi-level strategy messaging** that keeps everyone aligned to the mission (*HBR 2022*).

Transparent communication tools foster **leadership development** and provide every employee with visibility into how their work contributes to company goals. Consistent messaging across an organization's tech stack fosters clarity, trust, and momentum, aligning **strategy and objectives** across the entire organization.



“Only 29% of the people surveyed in the Inspire Strategy Assessment believe that employees align their day-to-day work with strategy.”

**Inspire's The State of Strategy Report*

Expert Insight

Communication breakdowns can lead to

Step 3: Strategy Alignment

Aligning strategy across every level of the organization is critical for turning plans into results. Research reveals a significant gap between strategy planning, communication, and execution: less than half of the leaders surveyed believe they align individual and team goals to company strategy, and only a small fraction of employees feel that their performance reviews are aligned with the company's strategy.



“Only 16% of employees believe that their performance reviews accurately reflect an alignment with their company’s strategy.”

**Inspire’s The State of Strategy Report*

Expert Insight

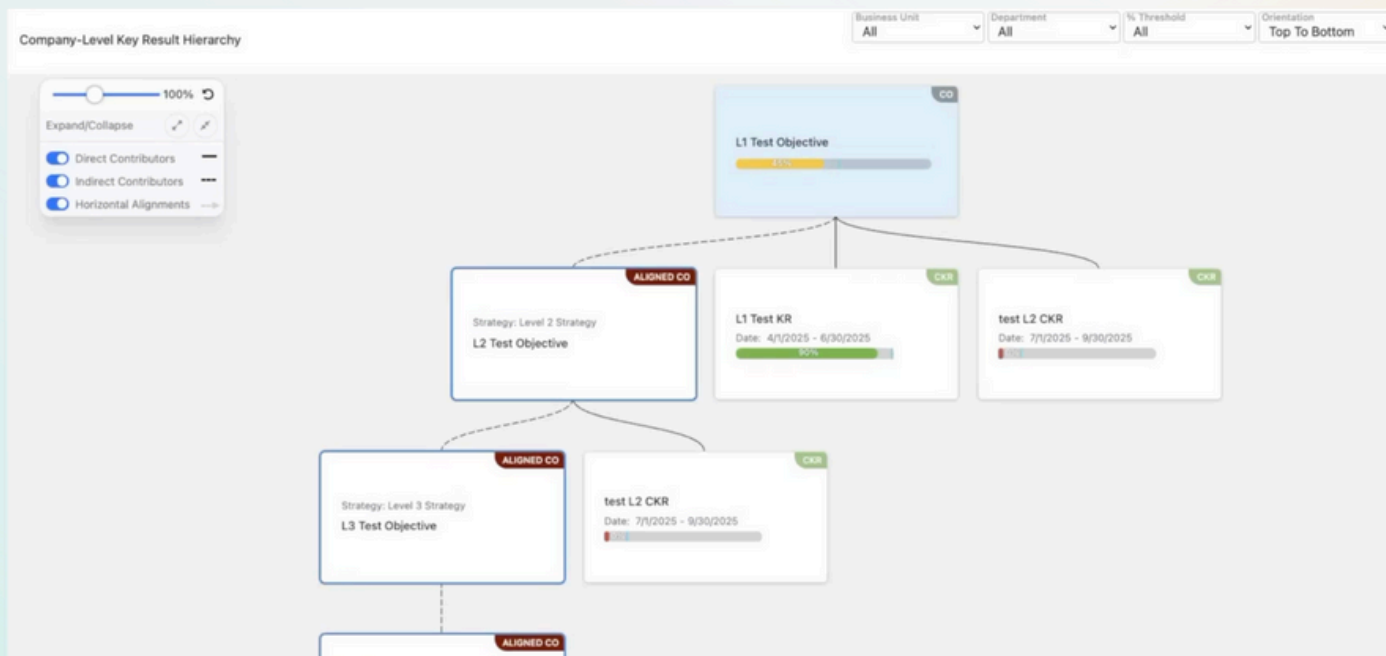
Leaders often believe they align strategy, but actual performance conversations don’t support this perception. Without alignment, even the best plans fall apart.

Best practices in strategy execution emphasize **goal alignment**—ensuring that organizational objectives translate into meaningful team and individual goals. Inspire’s OKR management platform operationalizes this approach, creating transparency and line of sight so every employee understands how their work contributes to corporate success. This alignment builds engagement, accountability, and purpose—key drivers of organizational performance.

Technology Solutions

Inspire has designed a **goal (OKR) management platform** that enables department and team goals to cascade down from, or align with, corporate objectives, helping teams and individual team members to understand how they contribute to business outcomes that matter both personally and corporately.

This creates the line of sight needed to drive **employee performance**, boost engagement, and foster accountability. When **strategy and goals are aligned**, people are enabled to act with purpose — a critical factor in **organizational success** (*HBR 2008, 2022*).




Step 4: Strategy Accountability

Accountability is the engine that keeps strategy execution moving. Inspire's research shows that while many organizations collect performance data, too few leaders communicate performance concerns effectively or foster absolute ownership of results. **68%** of those surveyed don't feel confident that leaders communicate performance concerns well.

trying to hold the organization accountable to the strategy.

"Executive leaders can close the execution gap by following the following leadership best practices:

- *Encourage weekly planning aligned with OKRs, similar to Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*
- *Implement daily execution, similar to Robin Sharma's 5 AM Club.*
- *Conduct regular one-on-one meetings with quality conversations around OKRs, like Ken Blanchard's SLII.*



"Only 32% say leaders are using meaningful performance data."

**Inspire's The State of Strategy Report*

Expert Insight

Chris Wollerman, CEO of Inspire Software, has decades of experience working with executive teams to help organizations execute strategy more effectively. Here is advice he offers to executive leaders

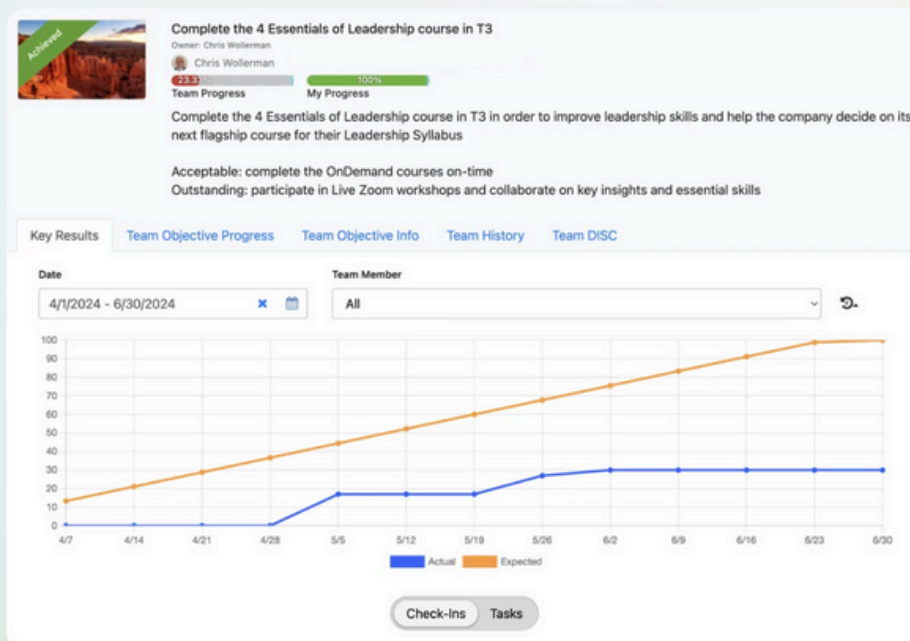
The world's top companies have adopted these methods and are now integrated into a single application with extensive use of AI to assure maximum performance and effectiveness."

—Chris Wollerman, CEO, Inspire Software

The best strategy execution relies on leader-led accountability, where people engage in regular planning, feedback, and coaching linked to strategic goals. Without these habits, good strategies won't translate into action. Inspire addresses this gap by integrating accountability into daily workflows, empowering leaders to ensure consistent execution and meaningful performance discussions that support organizational progress.

Technology Solutions

Inspire embeds accountability into the workflow with a performance management system that enables managers — not HR — to lead discussions, coach, and act. This enhances leadership development, employee performance, and accountability for strategy execution (*HBR, 2008*).



Step 5: Strategy Performance

High-performing organizations know that strategy execution isn't a one-time event but an ongoing process that needs regular feedback, alignment, and flexibility. Research shows that traditional annual or quarterly reviews don't effectively influence performance, leaving teams unable to respond quickly to changing market conditions. That's why many forward-thinking organizations are shifting away from traditional performance management and adopting Continuous Performance practices.

"83% of respondents believe performance reviews fail to have a meaningful impact on actual performance."

**Inspire's The State of Strategy Report*

Expert Insight

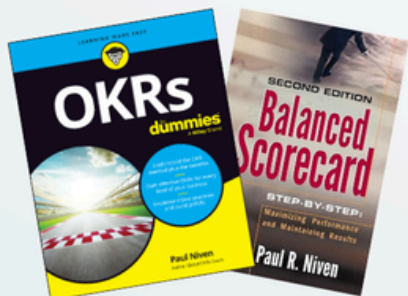
According to **Paul Niven**, author of *OKRs*

for Dummies and Balanced Scorecard: Step by Step, "OKRs won't magically make you agile - but they can create the conditions for agility if you're rigorous in your use of the framework. Treating OKRs as a continuous performance habit, rather than a quarterly task, will make your organization more effective in executing your business strategy."

Best practices in strategy execution emphasize **continuous performance management**—building regular rhythms of goal check-ins, real-time course correction, and meaningful 1:1 and team conversations around progress related to strategic goals.

"Agility isn't just speed; it's the ability to learn quickly and respond with focus," Niven says. "OKRs can foster that advantage, but only if you cultivate a culture of honesty and transparency, not perfection." He concludes, "Because when done right, OKRs don't just

track goals; they drive more intelligent conversations, faster feedback loops, and strategies that evolve as quickly as your market does."



Technology Solutions

Inspire transforms performance reviews into an **agile strategy** rhythm, featuring weekly OKR check-ins and bi-weekly 1:1s aligned with strategy (*Doerr, Ch. 15; McKinsey, 2023*). Managers become strategy coaches, adapting goals in real time and providing feedback that sustains momentum. This continuous cadence enables **data-driven execution**, fueling both **employee performance** and **business growth**.

Check In Check In Close

Improve Client Experience

Progress: 0% Flag: No Flag Selected

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Suggestions Less check-in options

Phase: Phase of Performance Not Set Motivation: Identify Motivation Confidence Level (Override): - Not Sure

| Progress | Confidence Level | Tag KR |
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| 0 % | Increase Net Promoter Score from 7 to 9 | - Not Sure |
| 0 % | Reduce time to onboard new clients from 2 weeks to 1 week | - Not Sure |
| 0 % | Increase customer support satisfaction ratings from 4.5 to 4.8 | - Not Sure |
| 0 % | Achieve 95% retention rate from existing clients | - Not Sure |
| 0 % | Improve product effectiveness by achieving a 10% increase in customer usage | - Not Sure |

Select person Status Priority

Search

- Direct Reports
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Kip Gil Assess DiSC

View 1-1 DISC Job Aid

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Step 6: Strategy Analytics

Effective strategy execution depends on more than just setting goals within a performance process—it requires the ability to measure progress and understand the story behind the numbers. Yet Inspire’s research shows that most leaders lack confidence in their data tools and fail to analyze people data effectively, leaving them blind to the factors influencing success or failure.

that show us which goals or objectives are in “the green” or “the red” according to the “cold numbers” of dashboard. Still, many leaders fail to create or analyze the “warm people data” produced by performance conversations that reveal why the numbers are what they are.



“Only 29% feel confident in their data visualization tools.”

**Inspire’s The State of Strategy Report*

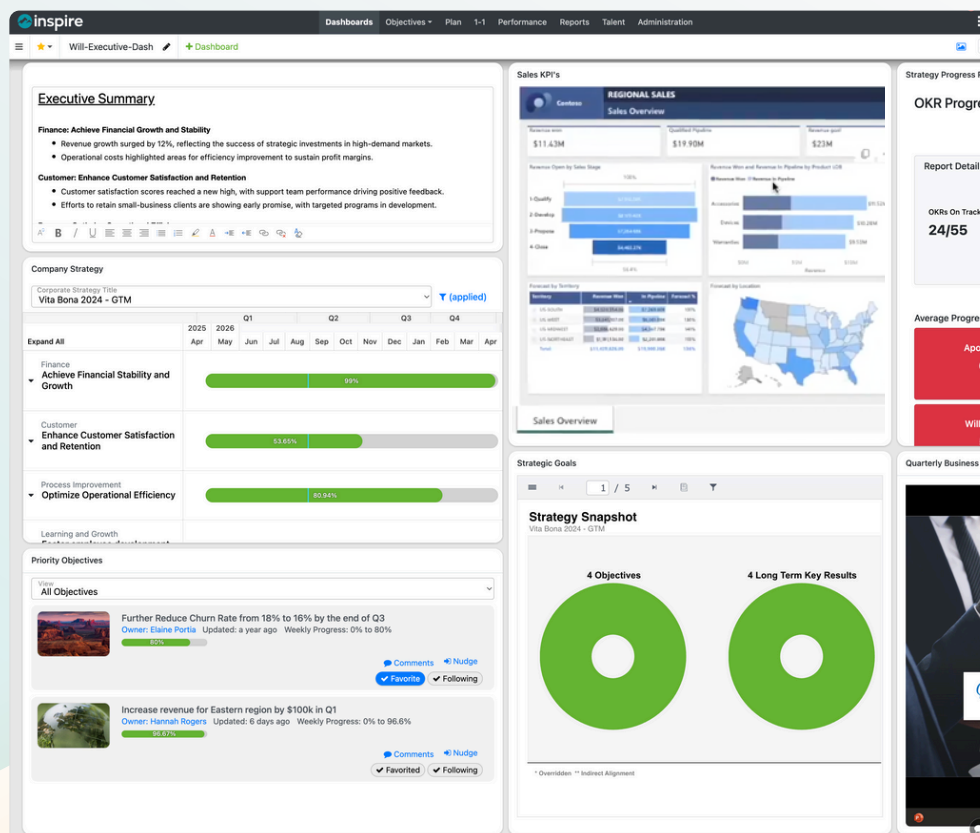
Expert Insight

Best practices in strategy execution emphasize using **real-time, meaningful analytics** that combine quantitative metrics with qualitative insights to guide decision-making. We all love dashboards

Technology Solutions

Inspire's platform delivers this by integrating performance data with behavioral insights, giving leaders the visibility they need to act quickly, address risks, and continuously improve execution outcomes.

[\[Take the Strategy Assessment\]](#) to evaluate how ready your organization is to execute The 6 Steps to a Winning Strategy.



The Inspire Advantage

Inspire is the only fully **integrated strategy execution platform** that combines:

- **Strategic planning and execution**
- **OKR management**
- **Continuous performance management**
- **Strategy analytics**
- **World-Class Leadership Theory Applications**
- **Employee engagement and performance accountability**
- **Access to an ongoing professional coaching and Support Team second-to-none**



By unifying strategy and performance within the flow of work, Inspire empowers your leadership team and your people to execute faster, smarter, and more consistently — protecting the value of your strategy and transforming a winning strategy into a winning formula for success.

Are You Ready to Take the First Step in the Journey to Successfully Turning Your Strategy into Action?

You've built the strategy — now let Inspire facilitate its execution! Even the most well-designed plans lose value without a system for execution. Most organizations lose **30-40% of their strategic impact** due to weak follow-through, poor accountability, or slow performance feedback loops.

It's time to find out where your organization stands!

Get Your Strategy Execution Score

The **Inspire Strategy Assessment** is a 12-question diagnostic designed for executive leaders, Chiefs of Staff, HR Directors, and strategy operators. It evaluates your performance across the six critical pillars of execution:

1. **Strategy Planning**
2. **Strategy Communication**
3. **Strategy Alignment**
4. **Strategy Accountability**
5. **Strategy Performance**
6. **Strategy Analytics**

With just a few minutes of reflection, you'll receive a clear, data-backed **Execution Readiness Score** that shows your strengths, your blind spots, and how to close the gap between vision and performance. If you need help building a good strategy, we can help there too!

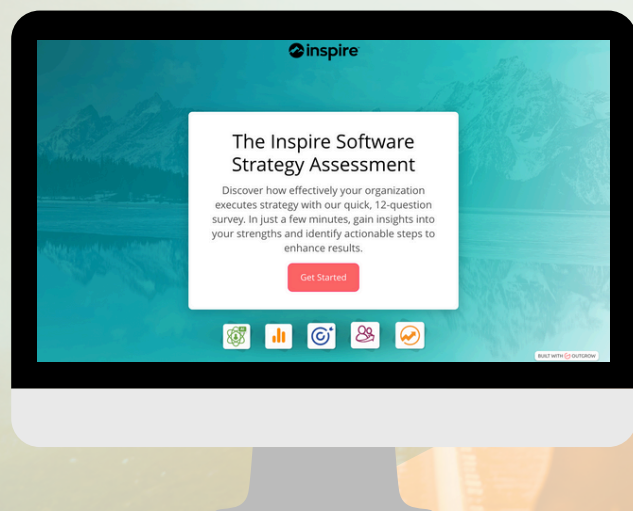


Ready to Begin the Journey to Better Strategy Execution?

[\[Take the Inspire Strategy Assessment\]](#)

[\[Download The State of Strategy Execution Whitepaper\]](#)

[\[Request a Demo of Inspire's Strategy Execution Platform\]](#)





Appendix A: Research and Strategy Execution Insights

This eBook is supported by a collection of industry-leading research that validates Inspire Software's 6-Step Strategy Execution Framework. These sources offer a comprehensive view of why most strategies fail — and how organizations can close the execution gap by investing in systems that foster:

- Strategic Planning and Execution
- OKR Management
- Agile Strategy (Continuous Performance Management)
- Leadership Development
- Employee Performance Accountability
- Data-Driven Strategy Analytics

Each reference aligns with one or more steps in the Inspire model, demonstrating the critical role of communication, cross-level alignment, manager-led accountability, and real-time data in organizational success.

Appendix B: Works Cited

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