



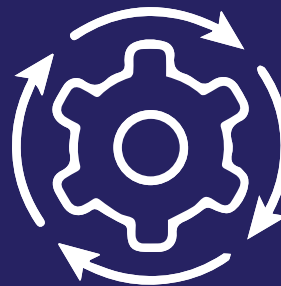
The Flywheel

Turning Direction into Momentum



How collaborative participation can accelerate the journey from strategy to execution.

By Blair Severn



Direction to Movement

Whether you're implementing a new strategy, scaling the business, resetting competitive advantage, transforming the culture, or integrating an acquisition, leadership can establish the direction—but leadership alone can't create the movement required to get the organization there.

That movement becomes particularly difficult when collaboration is weak, functions operate in silos, or the people closest to execution aren't meaningfully involved in shaping the solution.

That's where the **Organizational Flywheel** can make a difference.

Why a “Flywheel”?

A flywheel doesn't move because someone pushes it once. It gains momentum because each turn contributes to the next. That's the principle behind this approach.

Whatever the ambition, the organization needs more than a plan.

It needs motion.

- Strategy requires motion, not another document sitting on a shelf.
- Culture change requires motion, not just purpose and values statements.
- Scaling requires motion, not simply more investment and resources.
- Resetting competitive advantage requires motion, not simply a new strategy.
- M&A requires motion, not simply aligning the pieces.

The Organizational Flywheel creates a continuous cycle of:

Direction → Solution → Evaluation → Refinement → Action

And importantly, it **brings increasingly deeper levels of the organization into the process.**

How the Flywheel Works

The Flywheel keeps turning as insights flow back through the system—refining solutions, updating priorities, and driving the next cycle forward.

1: Executive Direction

At the top of the Flywheel is the source of enterprise direction. That may come from: **The Board, A Global Head Office, The CEO.**



This establishes the strategic intent, the outcomes required and the boundaries within which the organization needs to operate. But executive direction isn't the solution. It's a starting point.

2: The Steering Committee

Executive Direction then moves into a Steering Committee, generally comprising **most or all of the Leadership Team**.

Its role isn't simply to approve a plan. It is to collaboratively:

- establish direction
- prioritize the work
- align the organization
- establish guardrails
- remove barriers
- sponsor the change
- make enterprise-level decisions

This creates something critical:

leadership alignment before organizational activation

The Steering Committee becomes collectively accountable for the direction. But the Steering Committee shouldn't be expected to design every solution. That's where the next turn of the Flywheel comes in.

3: The Champions Group

The next turn goes deeper into the organization. This is where I recommend establishing a Champions Group. And there is an important distinction here. Don't simply populate it with the next level of management.

Select people from **across functions and through organizational levels** who have the mindset of change agents. They're the people who see the opportunity and think: "Finally. It's about time." They also see something the executive team often can't:

How the organization actually works between the boxes on the organization chart.

They see:

- The handoffs.
- The dependencies.
- The workarounds.
- The friction between functions and departments.
- The unintended consequences.

Their role is to design the solutions. They explore the issues, develop recommendations and test them.

And most critically, solve for the frictions that inevitably appears when strategic direction meets operational reality.

Then Bring the Work Back Into the Organization

4: Department and Functional Teams

The third turn of the Flywheel engages the individual department and functional teams. Their role is different again. They bring the solutions developed by the Champions Group back into the operating environment.

They ask:

Will this actually work here?

They identify internal issues and opportunities within their area, act quickly on reversible decisions, and feed their insights back into the Flywheel.

- What are we missing?
- What unintended consequences might this create?
- What needs to change?
- What can we act on immediately?

**The organization isn't simply receiving the change.
It is helping build it.**

Direction. Solution. Evaluation. Refinement.

And then:

The cycle continues.

- Executive Direction establishes the what and why.
- The Steering Committee creates alignment, priorities and guardrails.
- The Champions Group develops and tests the how.
- Department teams evaluate the solution against operational reality.

Their feedback moves back through the system. Solutions are refined. New priorities enter the Flywheel.

And the cycle begins again.

That's where the momentum comes from.

This Isn't Another Committee Structure

This distinction matters. The Flywheel isn't another discussion committee. It isn't another project team. And it isn't a series of meetings designed to make everyone feel involved.

It is a working system.

For it to work, each group needs:

- A clear purpose and operating role.
- Defined information flows between groups.
- Clear decision rights and escalation paths.
- A set activation cadence and priorities.

I generally recommend putting a manageable number of priorities through the Flywheel on a monthly cadence. Not everything at once. Enough to create movement. Then the next priorities enter.

The Flywheel turns again.

Why Participation Changes the Success Equation

There is an important human dimension to this.

People are more committed to what they help create.

When change is designed exclusively at the top and handed downward, the organization is the receiver of change. When people participate in understanding the problem, designing the solution and testing its consequences, they become participants in the change.

That creates something more valuable than communication. **Commitment.**

But there is another benefit that is often overlooked.

The Flywheel can also become a powerful people development mechanism.

Traditional approaches to training and development—sending someone on a course, attending a workshop, participating in a coaching session, completing an online program or sitting through a leadership seminar—can build knowledge and capability. But they also have a cost. They take people out of the work. The organization temporarily stops moving forward on the real priorities while employees step away to learn how to do the work better.

The Flywheel takes a different approach.

It develops people through the work itself.

People learn by participating in real strategic priorities—working through real organizational problems, collaborating across functions, making decisions, testing solutions and experiencing the consequences of their choices.

That's experiential learning in the flow of work.

And because the development is embedded in the process of moving something important forward, you're not necessarily trading organizational momentum for employee development.

The work moves forward—and people develop while moving it forward.

This can be particularly powerful for developing the next generation of leaders and change agents. Rather than teaching people how to collaborate, solve problems, influence across boundaries or lead change in a classroom, the Flywheel gives them the opportunity to practice those capabilities in the real organization.

**People aren't just learning about how to be better at change.
They're learning by changing something.**

The Real Advantage of the Flywheel ●

The greatest value isn't simply that more people become involved. It's that the organization becomes better at moving from strategic direction to action.

- The Steering Committee learns from the organization.
- The Champions learn from the friction they encounter.
- Department teams learn from testing solutions.
- Leadership gets better information.
- Solutions get better.
- People develop new capabilities.

And each cycle makes the next cycle more effective. The people get better at change.

That's the Flywheel effect.

The organization starts generating its own forward momentum.

A Final Thought

Strategy doesn't become execution simply because people understand it. It becomes execution when people participate in making it real.

The Organizational Flywheel is one of the mechanisms we use to operationalize strategic direction—particularly when an organization needs broader participation, stronger collaboration and continuous feedback between leadership and execution.

It doesn't replace strategy.

It helps make strategy executable.

About the Author

Blair Severn is Co-founder and Managing Partner of **enabling ideas**[®] and creator of The Strategic Blueprint[™]. He advises CEOs and Boards, held corporate leadership roles, and built entrepreneurial ventures. He is recognized for translating complex challenges into clear, actionable direction that enables organizations to navigate critical inflection points with clarity, leadership alignment, and sustained momentum.

About enabling ideas[®]

enabling ideas[®] is a boutique strategy and business design consultancy that helps Legacy Enterprises reset competitive advantage and Next Generation Challengers displace incumbents and scale profitably. Anchored by its signature method, **The Strategic Blueprint**[™], the firm translates strategy into coordinated, executable action at critical inflection points where clarity and alignment determine growth and long-term success.