

# Organizational Physics

**Strategic Alignment Workshop  
Facilitator Guide**



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# Introduction

There is a famous saying in management circles that “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Though catchy, this is not entirely true. Culture is an important part of execution, but the primary responsibility of leaders and executive teams is to establish and execute the right strategy. This takes precedence over culture and everything else.

Why? In essence, strategy is about adapting to—and thriving in—a changing environment. Setting and executing the right strategy enables a business to achieve its vision, energize its culture, satisfy its customers, stay agile, and generate profits. If a company fails at its strategy, it won’t survive for long.

This guide you’re currently reading is the foundation for doing all of this. Its purpose is to assist facilitators in guiding a diverse team of leaders from across a company to identify, commit to, and execute on the right strategy. It is your ultimate guide to herding *big* cats—and doing it well.

This guide is a unique and practical tool. It is a combination of Organizational Physics principles—a systems thinking approach to managing and scaling organizations—and over a decade of hands-on experience in facilitating strategic alignment workshops for hundreds of expansion-stage companies and leadership teams worldwide. It merges solid theory with real-world expertise. It also provides you with a clear and practical roadmap for facilitating strategic planning.

Last and not least, this guide allows you to achieve the equivalent of two to three months of strategic planning and alignment in just two days.

## Who Should Read This Guide

Two people in your company should read this guide: (1) the head of the company or business unit (CEO), who is the client of this workshop, and (2) you, the designated workshop Facilitator, for whom this guide is written. The CEO should not also be the Facilitator. The Facilitator and the CEO are two distinct roles that should be played by two people.

Note that the Facilitator may or may not be a part of the Leadership Team. If you are part of the Leadership Team, you will naturally be holding a dual role throughout this process.

The CEO should read this guide to become familiar with the overall process. You as Facilitator should read this guide and then actually use it as a roadmap and checklist to run a successful Strategic Alignment Workshop for the CEO and Leadership Team.

## What Is the Strategic Alignment Workshop

The Strategic Alignment Workshop is a process that aims to provide the CEO and Leadership Team with vivid clarity on the right three-year Top-Level Strategic Objectives and the short-range Key Results needed to achieve them.

Before the workshop, a SWOT analysis is performed via team surveys, and participants become familiar with a framework and language for discussing strategy.

During the workshop, the results of the team surveys are used to generate shared insights and alignment on: (1) areas of entropy in the company; (2) the company's lifecycle stage; (3) the company's strategic execution risks; and (4) the go-forward strategy.

At the end of the workshop, you will have generated a clear, concrete, and actionable roadmap for strategic execution.

## Who Should Attend the Workshop

The workshop participants should be the CEO and the Leadership Team. If there are other key high-level influencers in the company, the CEO should consider whether they should be present as well. Each core function in the company should be represented by one participant.

The number of participants is usually 12 to 15.

The basic idea behind this mix of participants is simple. If this cross-functional group of leaders goes through a well-designed process together, they can more easily recognize and agree on the best course of action for the whole company. Additionally, because of their shared participation and insights, they can also now articulate to their teams *why* that course of action is the right one. In essence, when the heads are clear and committed, the rest of the organizational body will follow.

## In-Person Versus Virtual Settings

I recommend holding this workshop in person at an off-site location away from the regular office environment. However, if you need to facilitate a virtual workshop, you can replicate my instructions for a virtual setting.

## How To Use This Guide

This is a guide, not a book, so you should use it as one. You should view this guide as your roadmap for preparing for the workshop and for ensuring proper follow up afterward. Print it out. Make sure you follow the steps in order. Check them off as you go.

## The Benefits of This Approach

Following the steps I have outlined in sequence will help you facilitate a very productive session that leads to both short-term and long-term breakthroughs.

This process is both highly efficient and effective. After having facilitated this workshop several hundred times, I can say that following this process is the equivalent of two to three months' worth of strategic planning and alignment compressed into two days. It also significantly improves the quality of decision making and the team's alignment around implementing those decisions.

Now let's get after it.

# Pre-Workshop Checklist

## Six Weeks Prior to the Workshop

The first steps include arranging workshop logistics and meeting with the CEO to align on the workshop objectives and process. Here are your key tasks at this stage:

**Set Dates.** Schedule the workshop over two days, or approximately 12 hours not including lunches and travel time. If you need to hold this as a virtual session, you can split the workshop into three 4-hour sessions in order to minimize Zoom fatigue.

**Clarify Purpose & Objectives.** Privately ask the CEO to describe the purpose or the need for this workshop. Ask them what are the top 1 to 2 things that must happen, or that must be improved in the company as a result of this workshop. Write their answers down so that you can track the workshop results to those objectives.

**Identify Attendees.** The CEO selects 7 to 13 influential leaders who will attend the workshop along with you and the CEO. As I mentioned earlier, you'll want to have leaders representing all key functions of the business.

**Delegate Logistics.** The CEO should assign an internal company resource, usually their administrative assistant, to:

- Find and reserve a suitable off-site location

- Coordinate group travel, lodging, and meals

- Order copies of the book [Organizational Physics](#) by Lex Sisney for all attendees, to be distributed no less than one month before the workshop

- See [Workshop Schedule and Room Setup Requirements](#) for additional details and send the room setup requirements to the venue.

**Send Invitation.** The CEO should send an invitation to the attendees to reserve the dates and explain the purpose and objectives of the workshop. The CEO should also inform attendees that they will be asked to complete some homework before

the workshop, including reading Parts I through III of *Organizational Physics*, which they will receive shortly.

**Create an Organizational Physics Membership Account.** Go to <https://organizationalphysics.com/membership-levels/> to create a free or paid Organizational Physics membership account. You will need this account in order to prepare your tools for the workshop.

**Read to Teach.** You and the CEO should read all of [\*Organizational Physics\*](#) and watch the [OP 101 tutorials](#) with sufficient focus to be able to teach the concepts of entropy, PSIU, lifecycle strategy, and the physics of fast execution.

**Prepare Your Tools.** In preparation for the workshop, you prepare, but do not yet send to the group, one or more surveys and assessment tools based on the purpose and objectives of the workshop.

**Prepare to send to all participants:**

[\*\*PSIU Assessment.\*\*](#) Participants should take the PSIU Individual Assessment and read their report in order to understand the basics of the PSIU model before attending the workshop.

[\*\*Entropy Survey.\*\*](#) This survey determines the internal friction points of the company and provides key information that you will use to structure the workshop.

[\*\*Top-Level OKRs Survey.\*\*](#) This survey assesses the company's current lifecycle stage and its strategic execution risks and provides key information that you will also use to structure the workshop.

**If needed, prepare to send the following to the CEO and their right hand:**

[\*\*Company Core Survey.\*\*](#) The CEO and his or her right hand should complete this survey if the team is unclear on the company's vision, values, or core identity.

[\*\*Targets & KPIs Survey.\*\*](#) The CEO and CFO should complete this survey if the team is unclear about numerical targets and milestones for the next 1 to 3 years.



## How to Prepare Your Tools

To prepare a given tool, log into your Organizational Physics Members Area. At the top, click on the appropriate tab (for example, “Entropy Survey”), and then click on “Add New Survey.” Follow the steps from there.



## Three Weeks Prior to the Workshop

**Send the Homework Assignments.** Attendees receive their homework assignments from you via email. Space out the assignments so that attendees can complete one or two items per week. Stress the importance of getting high-quality input from the team. Make the final deadline 72 hours before the workshop starts so that you and the CEO have time to read the results and prepare for the workshop.

## Seventy-Two Hours Prior to the Workshop

**Close all surveys.** In order to generate a PDF report of a survey, you must first close that survey. Before closing a survey, ensure that all responses have been collected.

**Email CEO.** Send the CEO a PDF copy of the reports.

**Print Reports.** Print two copies of each survey report. One is for you to read and make notes. The other is to use for handouts during the workshop.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Staple each category of the Entropy Survey separately. For example, staple the Brand Awareness/Clout sheets together, the Sales/Repeat Sales sheets together, etc. In total, you will have 12 handouts, one for each category of the Entropy Survey.

**Read the Reports.** You and the CEO should read and digest the survey reports separately. You can optionally send the reports to the attendees to also read and digest.

**Summarize the Reports.** Using the survey data, create your draft of what seems to be the key theme and key questions. This is a summary of what the data appears to be telling you and it will guide the workshop agenda. See [Key Themes and Key Questions](#) examples.

**Prepare Your Working Doc.** Make a copy of the [Strategic Alignment Working Doc](#) and use this to prepare your own working doc for the workshop. The entire workshop runs off of this doc so it is important to familiarize yourself with it and to be well prepared.

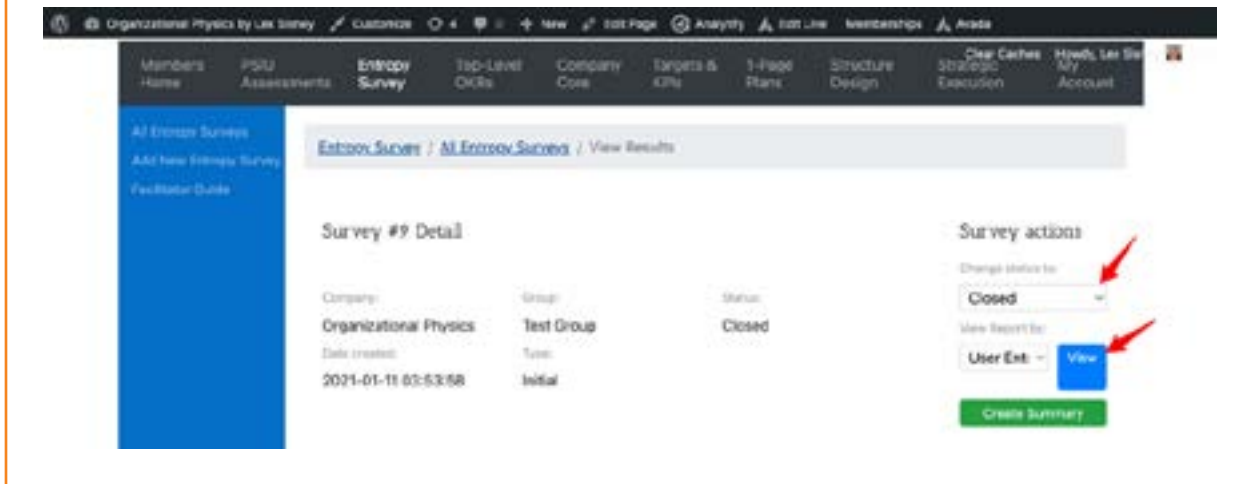
**Prepare with the CEO.** After the working doc is created, review the key theme and key questions that you have identified and the overall agenda with the CEO. The CEO should also prepare his or her welcome remarks and familiarize themselves with the 3Ps, which will be the workshop ground rules.

**Prepare Your Slides.** As you view the [OP 101 slides](#), determine which ones will be helpful for you to present during the workshop in order to communicate key concepts.

**Prepare Your Materials.** Procure the recommended materials listed in the [Workshop Schedule and Room Setup Requirements](#).

## How to Create a PDF Survey Report

To close a given survey and read the report, log into your Organizational Physics Members Area, click on the appropriate tool tab (for example, “Entropy Survey”), change the survey status to “Closed,” then click “View” to view, and download the report.



## Twelve Hours Prior to the Workshop

**Set Up the Room.** If this is an in-person workshop, there is a particular room configuration that I strongly recommend, which can be found in Workshop Schedule and Room Setup Requirements. The evening before the workshop, you should ensure that the room is set up appropriately.

# During the Workshop

Using your prepared working doc, you will guide the group through the following six steps in sequence:

1. Set the stage 70% of time
2. Gather data
3. Generate **\*\*shared\*\*** insights
- .....
4. Decide what to do 30% of time
5. Create action plan
6. Reinforce

## Recommended Time Allocation

As you can see in the image above, the majority of your workshop time is spent in steps 1 to 3. Why is this? Because if you do steps 1 to 3 well, steps 4 to 6 are easy to accomplish. If, on the other hand, you short-change steps 1 to 3, you will find that steps 4 to 6 are very hard to accomplish.

Basically, it is quite easy to align on the right decisions if you can ensure that the group has done an adequate job at generating shared insights before attempting to make the decisions. In other words, you need to slow down to go fast.

With years of experience, I am able to run this workshop in 1.5 days. You may want to give yourself more time at first, so I am suggesting that you budget 2 days for the workshop.

At a minimum, I recommend that you run 75-minute sessions with 15-minute breaks and a 45-minute lunch.

A detailed workshop schedule and room set up requirements can be accessed in the Workshop Schedule and Room Setup Requirements document.

## Run Your Working Doc

As Facilitator, you are going to run the entire workshop using your prepared working doc. Follow each step in sequence and you should facilitate a great outcome.

# Post-Workshop Checklist

After the workshop, you should take the following steps:

## **Debrief with the CEO.**

Hear from the CEO on what they felt went well and what can be improved for the following year's strategic alignment session.

Share any additional observations that you, as the Facilitator, have made about the team dynamics, process, and outcomes.

Clarify next steps from the workshop Action Plan.

**Follow Up with Attendees.** Send the attendees the confirmed Action Plan and OKRs created during the workshop. You may also include a summary of the workshop.

Congratulations! Your job as Facilitator is done. It is now up to the CEO and the Leadership Team to communicate the results of this process with the rest of the company and drive the strategy forward.

Onward, upward!