



# HOW TO LEAD EFFECTIVE STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS

*ClearPoint Strategy*

# HOW TO LEAD EFFECTIVE STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS

A Guide To Making Strategy Come To Life



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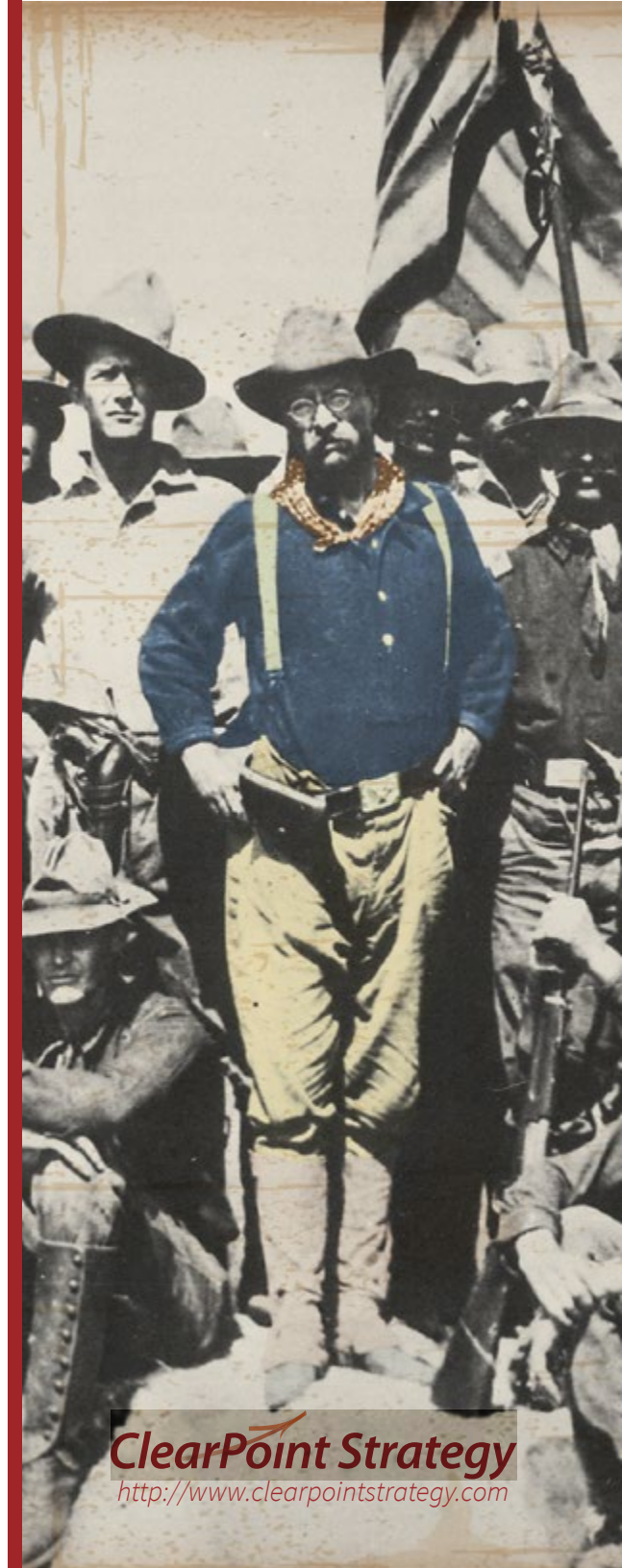
# AN INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS

## SUMMARY

If you want to improve performance in your organization, **it all starts with strategy.** Strategic objectives are vital to the success of your organization's future. But, unfortunately, many organizations (nine out of 10 by some estimates) hold strategy review meetings and then fail to execute.

If you want to ensure the success and productivity of these meetings, you need leadership buy-in, and you'll need to practice some specific steps. This guide delves into the five stages of holding an effective strategy review meeting:

1. Defining The Process
2. Meeting Preparation
3. The Meeting
4. Follow-Up
5. Maintaining Momentum



## WHAT ARE STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS?

A strategy review meeting is exactly what it sounds like: a meeting focused entirely on strategy. It doesn't matter what you call it (a business performance review, a data-driven review, a strategic review, a stat session, quarterly reporting, or even just a meeting with your organization's leadership), there are factors that all strategy review meetings have in common—they are regularly-scheduled meetings that focus on using data to assess and improve progress on a number of priorities within an organization.

These meetings are all about strategic objectives (or goals). What is your organization trying to accomplish? Are you making progress toward these goals? What are you doing to improve your performance?

## WHAT NOT TO DO AT A STRATEGY REVIEW MEETING.

A strategy meeting does not involve any discussion about operations. In strategy meetings, you should be asking questions like, “Are we showing results? Are we making an impact?” Save questions like, “What have you done this month? Are you on target to finish this project?” for an operations meeting.

In short, operations meetings measure, “Are we doing things right?” while strategy meetings measure, “Are we doing the right things?”



*Strategy meetings measure, “Are we doing the right things?”*

# WHY SHOULD I HOLD STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS?

Did you know that leadership teams spend less than three hours a month on strategy, and nine out of 10 fail to execute? You need to beat the odds. It'll require work, but it's work that is well worth it.

Pre-scheduled, regular strategy review meetings (where all other topics of discussion are off-limits) can help your top management team avoid these common roadblocks. Do any of these sound like your organization?

- Top management teams spend relatively little time together.
- Agenda-setting is unfocused and undisciplined in upper management meetings.
- Top management meetings are not decision-oriented.
- Strategy and operations are usually combined into one meeting, but operations fire-fighting always crowds out strategy.

Both strategy review meetings and operations review meetings give you an opportunity to stop and look at data, but strategy review meetings take things a step further, allowing you to analyze what the data is telling you and make decisions about course-correction and adjustments. Because it's so easy to get caught up in day-to-day operations, strategy review meetings serve to keep strategic objectives at the center of the management process.

With strategy "at the center," your measures reflect your strategic priorities, not just the common measures of the industry you are in. It also ensures that you fully execute on projects rather than just concentrating on your budget (without concern about whether or not projects get completed).

Typically, leadership teams and strategy offices spend one to two days a year developing strategic



*Leadership teams spend less than three hours a month on strategy. And 9 out of 10 fail to execute.*

goals, but then go back to their jobs, where daily operations squeeze out strategy. The binder with all the strategic thinking and planning just gathers dust on the shelf. At the end of the year, organizations look back on their strategy and try to guess what they did well and what they didn't. They report on what they did, not what they said they would do. And by doing that, they're missing something huge.

Let's look at an example. An upper-management team of a New England convenience store chain came up with a new strategy—"surprise and delight the customer." They thought the shopping experience of their typical store was boring and that they needed to "mix things up." So, every few days, they would reorganize their stores, thinking they were surprising and delighting their customers.

However, by looking at mystery shopper information in strategy review meetings, they learned very quickly that people hated it. Feedback they'd received indicated that the typical convenience store shopper visited that store because it was convenient—it was small and they could get in and out quickly because they knew exactly where to go. Without regular strategy reviews, the management team would not have realized the negative impact of executing this particular strategy. It proves the old adage, "the only thing worse than bad news is bad news late."

This story shows how important it is to check in on your strategic efforts. Of course, the realization that "our strategy isn't the right strategy" isn't the only reason you need to review your objectives. You may need to consider any of these possibilities: a changing environment, a new technology, budget cuts/increases, as well as a variety of other factors.

The ultimate goal is to implement your strategy. And the first step to making that happen is taking the time to review it. You know what they say—"what gets measured gets done." But it's not going to get measured unless it gets looked at. That's why it's absolutely necessary to schedule time to look at your strategy and review it. Only then can you start having an impact.



*The ultimate goal is to implement your strategy. And the first step to making that happen is taking the time to review it.*

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Your organization has so much to gain through carrying out strategy review meetings. Here are just a few of the benefits:

- **Facilitating the identification and subsequent adoption of opportunities for improvement.** There are a lot of good ideas that come from discussing key issues more broadly across the organization. For example, an oil and gas corporation communicated their strategy to all of their employees, and part of that strategy identified a target customer segment (middle- to upper-class women who wanted a clean, well-lit filling station and to feel safe while making purchases). The IT department had already been innovating some near-field communication technology and developed a “speed purchase” tool to help this customer segment meet their needs by not having to pull out a wallet, which increased the speed of their purchase. It was wildly successful, and when it was implemented inside the convenience stores, it made for bigger purchases.
- **Providing a focused forum to identify winning and struggling areas or departments within your organization.** When winning areas have been identified, best practices can be shared and implemented throughout the organization. Conversely, once struggling areas are brought to attention, you can decide if they need additional resources (either financial or human) to alter or invest in their strategy. You can also pair similar departments to share best practices and support struggling areas.
- **Helping departments work collaboratively. Strategy meetings force departments to talk about key issues/thematic areas that they need to collaborate on.** For example, take a soda company who has decided that by altering the look of their soda cans, they can become more efficient and save money. Senior leadership thinks it’s a great idea and they move forward. However, the marketing department, who has no knowledge of this change, continues with their previous branding and marketing campaigns. When the error was recognized,



*Once you discover the benefits of strategy review meetings, you’ll be amazed at how much it impacts your organization.*



the manufacturing changes cause the company to lose money. A strategy review meeting could've helped the company avoid this mess.

- **Improving transparency and accountability.** Strategy review meetings keep leadership informed of what is going on within every level of the organization. They cut through the inevitable force fields so leadership can engage and help mitigate those problems. In addition, strategy review meetings help reinforce goals for the organization—they help departments feel accountable for progress toward those goals and encourage the work it takes to accomplish them.
- **Aligning resources and making informed budget decisions.** Strategy review meetings highlight departments or programs that may need additional funding to be successful. They are also a good place to see if you are putting your money where your strategy is.



*Strategy review meetings keep leadership informed of what is going on within every level of the organization.*

# ARE THERE PREREQUISITES FOR STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS?

Absolutely. You can't move forward with strategy review meetings unless these things are in place:

- **Dedicated time on the calendar.**
- **Willingness to learn a new process and approach.**
- **Resources.** Strategy review meetings are not just another staff meeting. They take preparation and follow-up. You will need people and time to make them successful.
- Most importantly, **engaged leadership.** We know of a 200-million-dollar operation that decided at the senior executive level that they wanted to develop a balanced scorecard and hold strategy review meetings. They hired consultants to come in and set up the process—everything was set up for success. However, during the first three meetings, the chief executive would kick-off the meeting, but then leave. In doing this, he signaled to the rest of the organization that there were more important things than their strategy review meetings. As a result of this, the process failed within six months. Leadership in the organization sets the standards for what is acceptable and needs to lead by example. Those in leadership positions in your company need to understand “what’s in it for me” and “what’s in it for us,” and commit to spending time and engaging in the meetings.

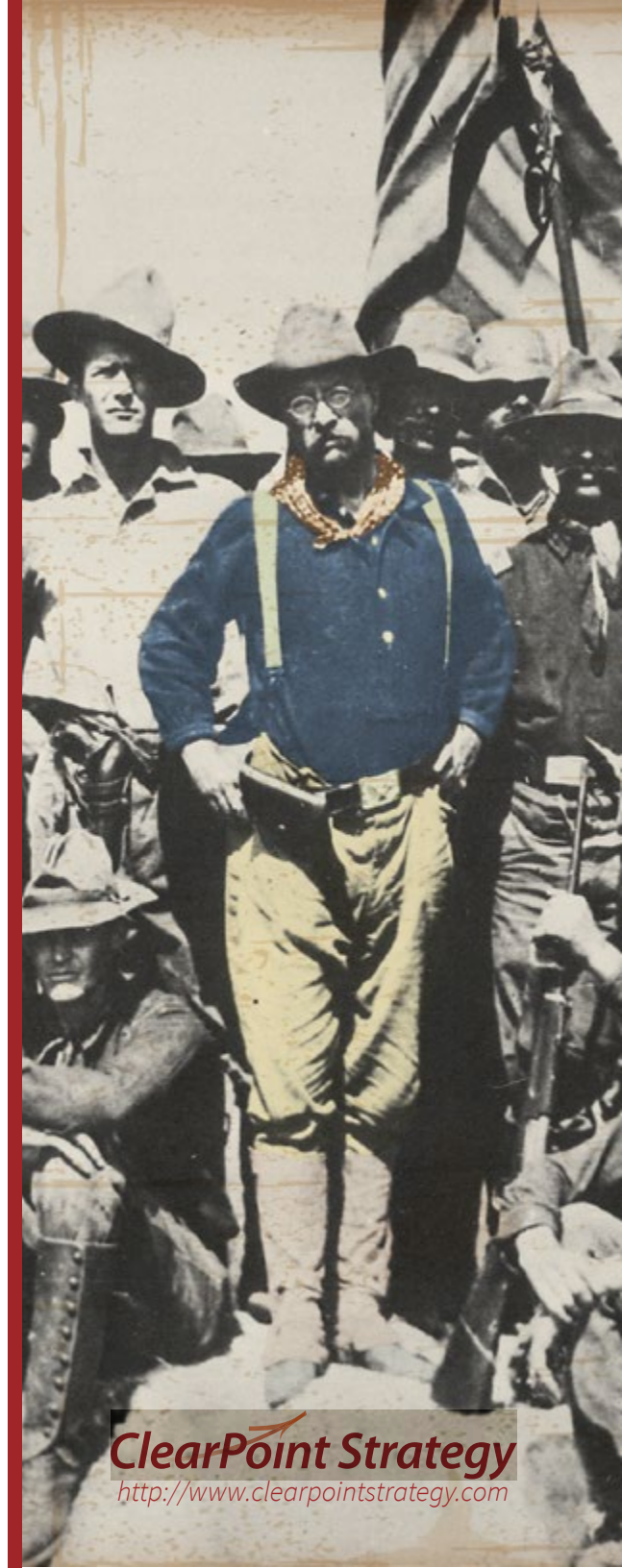


*Leadership in the organization sets the standards for what is acceptable and needs to lead by example.*

# DEFINING THE PROCESS

## SUMMARY

To ensure successful strategy review meetings, you'll need to make sure you clearly define the process. This means determining the right meeting attendees and creating a good information-gathering process. Make sure your meetings are timely based on your organization's goals. Get the team to buy in to the agenda and the outcomes of the meeting. Because these meetings take time and effort, reduce the burden of the leadership team as much as possible so they're sustainable.



## WHO SHOULD ATTEND STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS?

Getting the right team in place is extremely important to the success of your strategy review meetings—you need people who understand the organization, can speak with authority, and get approvals. Continuity in attendance is also critical.

This team will more than likely include the CEO (Managing Director, Executive Director, City Manager, etc.), and her direct reports. If you are discussing a particular project, then the project manager should be in attendance. If you are looking at new data, the data collector should be there. If there is poor or exemplary performance in a particular department, then have the director of that department attend. Just make sure you have the appropriate people for the agenda being discussed.

In most cases, you should include staff-level participants. After all, they have the subject matter expertise, and staff are often the parties truly doing the work—they can provide more context for discussions. But think of the staff members as “special teams”—they’re not in the room all the time, but are there to cover specific items as necessary.

### **What happens if the right people aren’t in the room?**

One school district was grappling with recruiting teachers. At their strategy review meeting, they were attempting to delve into the issues surrounding this challenge—in particular, how do they develop a more substantial pipeline of qualified teachers? The people who could have answered that question, however, weren’t there. The talent management chief and HR representative were both absent, so they couldn’t shed light on what they had tried that didn’t work or what partic-



*Make sure you have  
the appropriate  
people for the agenda  
being discussed.*

ular challenges they needed help overcoming. Without these people in the room, the discussion around this challenge proved useless, frustrating for all involved, and no decisions could be made.

## WHO SHOULD NOT ATTEND STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS?

There are a few reasons why someone shouldn't be invited to these meetings. Here's a list of criteria you should run through to make sure you aren't choosing the wrong people:

- Don't invite someone at the wrong level of your organization that might misconstrue the discussion, or that wouldn't be a good representative.
- Don't invite someone who wouldn't know what to divulge to others and what to keep to themselves.
- Don't invite someone who can't see the big picture outside of their project, or one who wants to discuss the details of their project ad nauseam. At a strategy review meeting, participants do not need to know strategy specifics (like the next topic of your marketing department's ebook). They just need to know if a particular strategy is on track and on budget. If there are problems, then they should be discussed, but the meeting participants shouldn't get entangled in the details.



*Not everyone should attend a strategy review meeting.*

## WHEN SHOULD STRATEGY REVIEW MEETINGS BE HELD?

As a basic rule, you should always make sure your meetings are timely. When scheduling, ask yourself, “When is new data available?”

If the meeting focuses on your fall strategy, then it should be held quarterly. If your meeting is thematic or department-focused, then it should be held more frequently—monthly or every six weeks.

In general, quarterly meetings should be held within 30 days of the end of the quarter, and monthly meetings should be held within 10 days of the end of the month.

For example, a line manufacturing organization has their meetings on the tenth day after the end of each monthly close. Data is due on day seven, a review document is sent on day eight, and the information is discussed on day 10. The meeting isn’t focused on how many widgets have been produced—it’s more about adjusting to more profitable widgets and customers, improving the forecasting process, planning for raw material costs, and developing new partnerships in appropriate niches.



*When scheduling, ask yourself, “When is new data available?”*

## HOW DO I GET THESE MEETINGS STARTED?

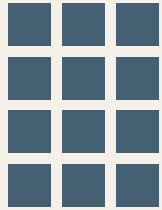
Since these meetings take time and require team buy-in, here are some tips to help get things started:

- Check out the current executive meeting calendar. See what meetings can be modified or replaced. Try your best not to add to meeting time—instead, try to make better use of the meeting time you already have. If the leadership team already meets weekly, see if you can adjust one of the meetings each month to be more focused on strategy. If the team already meets monthly, see if you can adjust one meeting each quarter for strategy.
- Ensure that the top executive is engaged in and supports the process. They need to be able to take on a leadership role during the meeting. They may need to be engaged in the preparation depending on the subject being discussed.
- Create a set of common objectives and benefits for each of the team members invited.
- Include departments in meeting design. This will ensure that it is a collaborative process and will help with organizational buy-in. The success of these meetings hinges not only on leadership engagement, but also getting an organization to work together in providing timely data reporting. Departments should feel like willing participants and see these meetings as a useful tool to improve program performance.
- Be realistic when you start. At first, these meetings will seem like a lot of work. That's because they are. They're both a different way of reporting and a different way of managing. But, over time, with commitment, the meetings will get better and more effective. It's not unusual for meetings to shrink as much as 75% in length as the participants get used to the format.



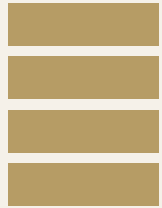
*Be realistic as you start with strategy review meetings. They are a lot of work.*

# HOW SHOULD THE MEETINGS BE STRUCTURED?



## MONTHLY MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

*Analyze Performance  
Adjust Initiatives*



## QUARTERLY REVIEW MEETINGS

*Refine Strategic Issues  
Align Resources*



## ANNUAL STRATEGY REFRESH

*Update Strategy Map  
Revise Measures/Targets  
Propose Initiatives and Budget*



*Different types of meetings need their own frequency.*



## HOW CAN I REDUCE THE BURDEN?

These meetings are a lot of work. So, to the extent possible, put standardization processes in place. Determine a set calendar for meeting dates and reporting deadlines, and then stick to it. Standardize forms for collecting data or invest in online reporting tools that can greatly reduce staff burden and free up time for them to do a more substantial data analysis. This will generate better discussion at your meetings.

Standardized processes can include the following:

- **Data-collecting forms.**
- **A timeline**—from sending out the data call, to the meeting invitations, to sending a follow-up note and so forth.
- **Invite lists**—have consistent invite lists for each meeting.
- **Key contact lists**—know who to contact for what in each department. Is there a contact within the department who can coordinate data collection, notify you of staffing changes if someone else should now be attending the meeting, and answer any clarification questions you have around the data or program specifics?
- **A process for capturing and monitoring action items**—if this follows a set model every time, you are less likely to get pushback.
- **A process for data collection and report generation**—after you conduct two or more meetings, this will be easier to work on automating.

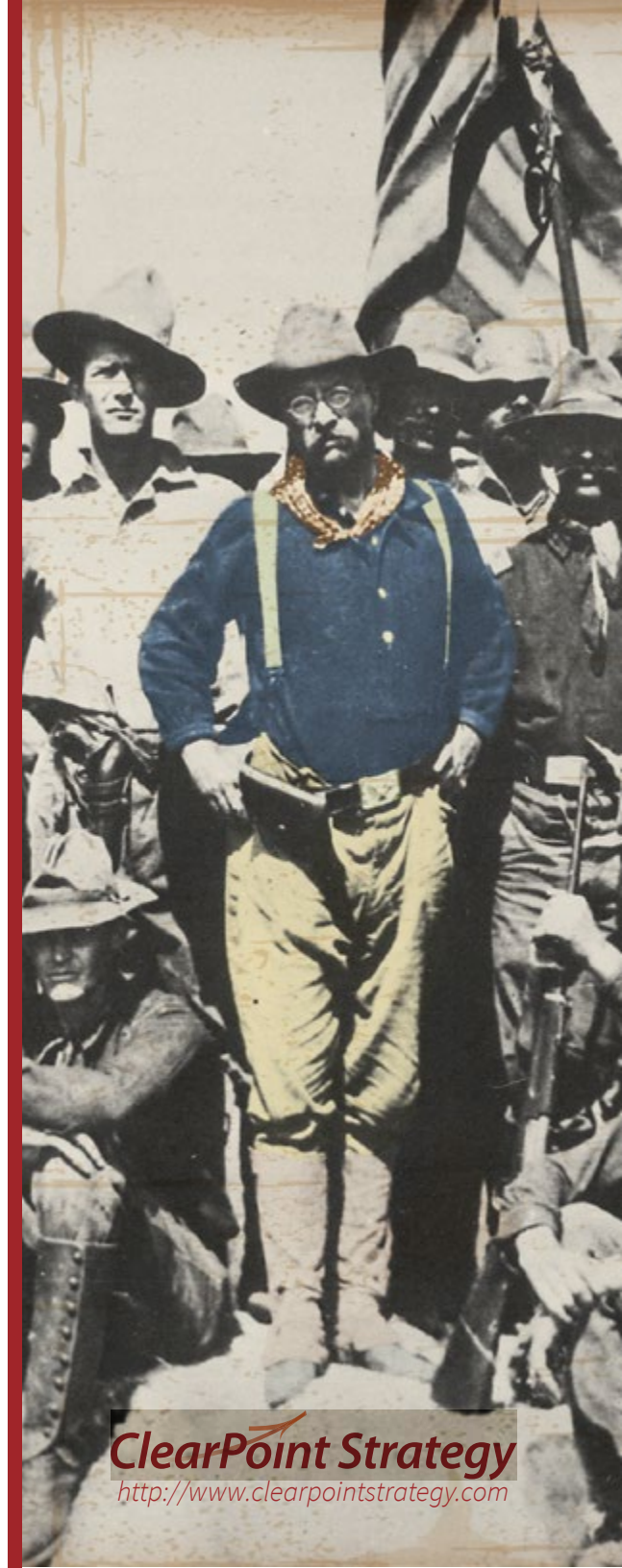


*Put standardization in place to make these meetings sustainable.*

# MEETING PREPARATION

## SUMMARY

Schedule a meeting time and collect the necessary data. Make sure you receive all the data in enough time to analyze it and write a report. Then, create an agenda and send it (along with the data analysis report) to meeting attendees in advance so they can prepare. It's important to pave a path of success starting with the first meeting—teach meeting participants exactly what strategy review meetings are, establish a tone of trust and collaboration, and adopt a decision-making process.



# SCHEDULE A MEETING TIME AND PREPARE DATA

Once you put your meeting on the calendar, it's time to begin collecting data. Here are some things to think through and action steps to take as you begin the preparation process.

- **Make attendance mandatory.** When necessary, draft emails for leadership to send to ensure that everyone who needs to be in the meeting is there. This is where leadership commitment comes into play. A strategy review meeting without the right people in the room is an expensive waste of time.
- **Limit the number of participants.** Conversely, too many people can detract from the conversation. Make sure the people in the room are people who might be called on to actively participate in the meeting.
- **Request accurate data in a timely manner.** Inevitably, some departments will be late providing this information, or out on vacation when you need it, so make sure the meeting is scheduled out far enough in advance that there is ample time to gather the data. (Do not reward late behavior—if you don't have the data necessary, just skip the review and force those with the missing data to lead the discussion the second time.)
- **Review data.** Go through the most recent data and write an analysis about trends or emerging issues. Keeping consistent charts for presenting data is really helpful and will speed up your meeting.
- **Update status indicators.** Update green/yellow/red status indicators for each measure and initiative.

Make a report. Include data, your data analysis, and status indicator updates. Remember to keep your report format consistent from one meeting to the next.



## Status Indicators

### GREEN



*On or above plan*

### YELLOW



*Off plan. But doesn't need additional help, just an explanation and action plan*

### RED



*Needs help, will not come back on track naturally, needs more resources or an intervention*

# CREATE AN AGENDA

## What To Cover

To ensure that you'll be using your meeting time wisely, think through these questions as you begin to develop your agenda.

1. The focus of the meeting should be on making decisions, not having discussions.
2. Operations meetings should be separate from strategy meetings.
3. Before you add an item to the agenda, measure its real value.

To help you as you're choosing topics of discussion, ask yourself questions like:

- Why are we having this meeting?
- What do we need to have accomplished when we are done?
- What are the key issues we should cover?

Keep in mind that a strategy review meeting agenda may just look like a review of goals, measures, and initiatives, a validation of strategy, and a continuation of current strategic projects and direction. Every meeting does not have to include “bet the company” decisions.



*Every meeting does not have to include “bet the company” decisions.*

## An Example Agenda

### ACTION ITEM REVIEW

- *Review short term action item status from previous meeting.*

### OVERVIEW OF THEME OBJECTIVES/MEASURES

- *Check color status of all objectives in the theme*
- *Review key metrics and problem areas (yellow or red)*

### REVIEW OF INITIATIVE PROGRESS

- *Review status of all initiatives and milestones*
- *Review budget and discuss alignment*

### DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES

- *Outline any decisions that need to be made*
- *Understand options and make decisions*

### REVIEW ACTION ITEMS

- *Capture action items for short and long term issues*
- *Assign accountability for items*



*Make this example agenda your own.*

## GET PEOPLE READY

You'll need to prep the leadership and attendees effectively if you want your strategy review meeting to be a success. Provide materials ahead of time so they can familiarize themselves with the content and formulate their own questions.

This means once you've finished writing the report of your data analysis and created an agenda, you should send them to both leadership and participants immediately. The data should be presented with recommended decisions in advance of the meeting. If everyone comes to the meeting prepared, it will allow for a more efficient use of time.

Sending recommendations before the meeting doesn't mean a decision has taken place—it just allows the leadership team to prepare appropriately. To ensure that this is successful, consider pre-presenting and talking through the materials with leadership.

Feel free to be open about what will be discussed so that everyone is prepared and feels that the process is transparent. (This will also help to make sure that the right people are in the room.)

## MAKE THE FIRST MEETING A SUCCESS

### Training

- Provide training on why you're doing these meetings and how they should be run. (For example, share this ebook with the team.)
- Give an overview of the language and provide a tutorial session on performance measures because not everyone speaks that language.
- Teach or brief all participants on what strategy review meetings are and what they are not. Make sure people understand the difference between strategy and operations, and ownership vs. accountability.



*Consider pre-presenting and talking through the materials with the leadership.*



- **Strategy:** A strategy is a long-term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. Strategy is differentiated from tactics or immediate actions with resources at hand by its nature of being extensively premeditated, and often practically rehearsed. Strategies are used to make the problem or problems easier to understand and solve. Organization strategy typically describes a future state, as well as the process of getting to that place. Some people describe it as a destination, as well as a description of the road to take in order to get to the destination.
- **Operations:** The daily and weekly job of ensuring that your standard procedures are operating as expected.
- **Ownership:** In regard to strategy review meetings, this is the person that is responsible for knowing and understanding particular objectives or goals. They would be responsible for reporting about the progress being made to achieve the objectives and the actions being taking to close gaps.
- **Accountability:** This term usually goes hand-in-hand with “ownership,” and implies that a person is not only responsible for knowing and understanding particular objectives or goals, but is also responsible for the achievement of key measures. This is not always the case in a strategy review meeting because many of the goals require multiple people and teams across the organization to work well together to achieve the goals.
- Consider scripting the first meeting, or having an outside facilitator sit in the first few meetings to ensure the process works (even if decisions aren’t made or the discussion is not high quality yet).

### Tone

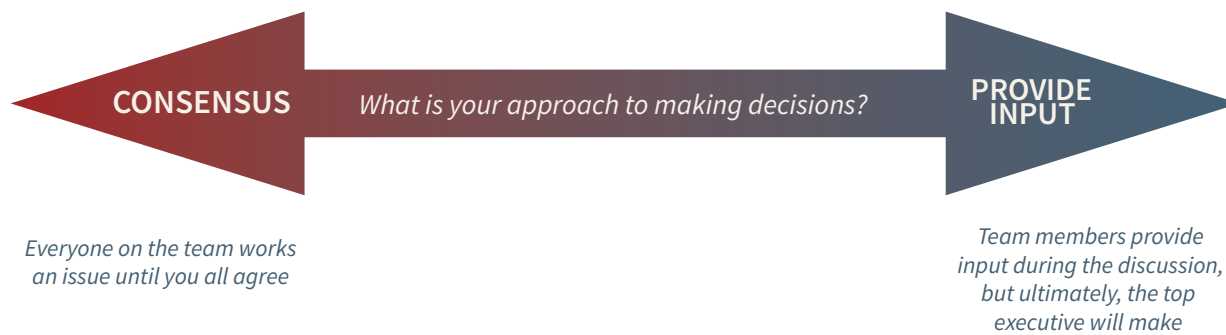
Setting the right tone is extremely important—it should be one of trust and collaboration. Establish principles to build that trust. For example, trust can be built by providing a framework for the review process and collaboratively agreeing on the principles by which the review would operate.

*There are important distinctions between strategy and operations, ownership and accountability.*

## Decision-Making

There are two extremes in a decision-making process. One is when those on a leadership team talk, come to a consensus on the issue, and then move forward. The other is when a CEO or director makes a decision—he or she might use input from the leadership team to inform the decision, but the final decision is made by an individual.

What is your decision making process? Would everyone in your organization agree or is the process unclear?



Whatever the case, make sure you adopt a common decision-making process. Below is an example of one that could be held in your organization. Be especially cognizant of how step four works (making a decision).



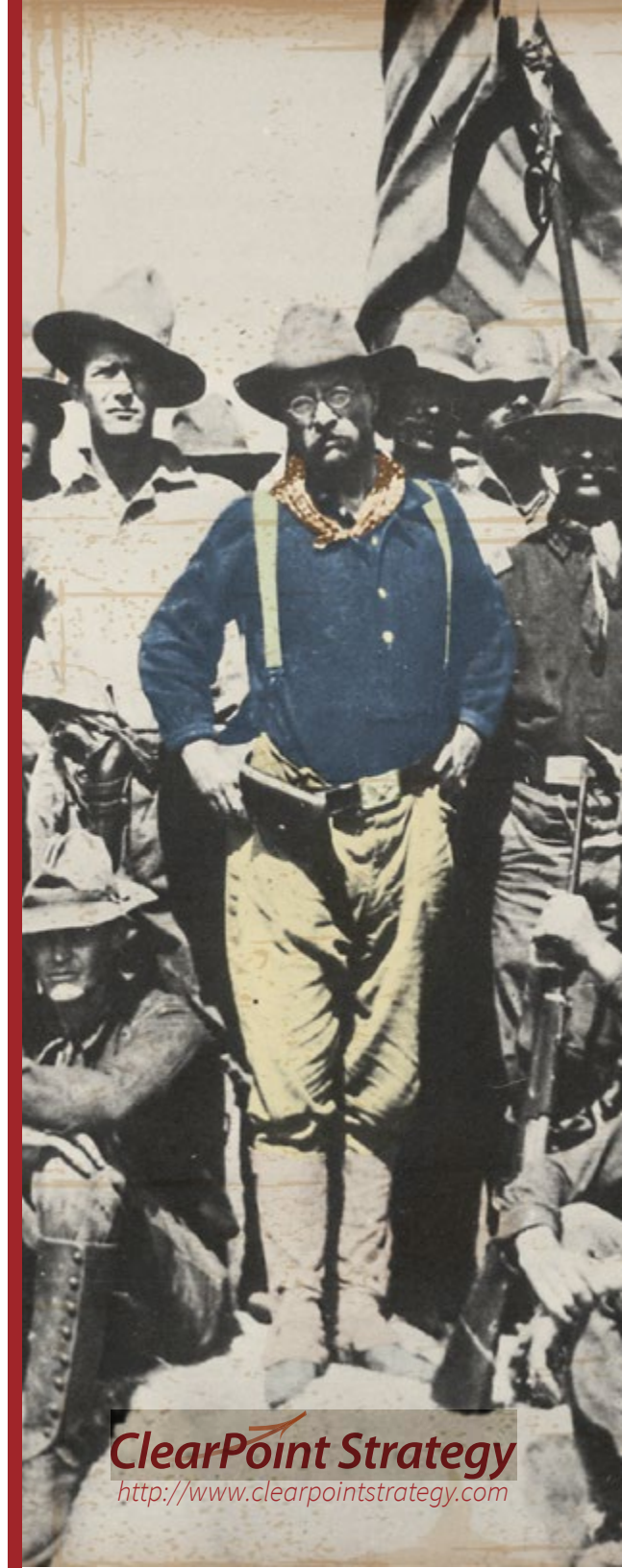
*What kind of decision-making process do you have in place?*



# THE MEETING

## SUMMARY

Encourage candid dialogue and critique in the meeting itself—people tend to want to focus on the positives, but discussing the negatives is critical. Take notes about everything discussed, including action items, so that the meeting is productive. It's important to use your participants' time wisely, so don't be afraid to keep everyone task-oriented. (Use that agenda you created!) In order to stay on track, do a “pulse check” every so often—if your conversation has gotten off-topic or more in-depth than you thought it would, consider saving it for another meeting and moving on.



## MEETING TIPS

- Look at yourself critically. People want to put a positive spin on things. Don't. If there is negative information, it should be included and even a focus of the meeting.
- Use participants' time wisely. Keep meetings to an appropriate length. Use "bullet formatting" instead of narrative to elucidate important points.
- Use facilitation techniques. Don't let the meeting agenda get derailed.
- Have a "parking lot" for issues that arise that may warrant further discussion but are not appropriate for this meeting.
- Stick to the agenda at all times if possible. Try to adjust for a future meeting, but not the current meeting. Remember, you are changing behavior and teaching people to use time effectively.
- Promote candid dialogue. Encourage people to speak up. Make sure they know that this is not meant to be punitive, but a collaborative process driving a continuous dialogue. This may need to be prompted in the first few meetings.

## TAKE NOTES

Someone should always be jotting things down. You need to be capturing action items, recommendations, and decisions during the meeting.

There are two types of action items—those that are already approved by the leadership, and those which are potential action items that will be identified for the future. The potential actions need to go to leadership for approval, which takes time and planning. Those action items might be relevant for discussion and consideration at future review meetings.



*Someone should always be jotting things down during every meeting.*

Once the meeting is through, review action items as a whole to ensure consensus and assign responsibility and due dates. Make sure you have accountability for every action item before leaving.

## STAY ON TRACK

What do you do if your meeting derails? Try scheduling breaks and determine if the content you are working on is appropriate for this particular meeting.

Do a “pulse check” every so often. Are we going to make a decision now, or should we have a separate meeting? Is this something we should table or ask a smaller team to make more progress on before it comes back to this team of people? Some difficult decisions could be worth sending your agenda off track. However, if you think you have an additional half hour of discussion left and you don’t think you’re going to make progress, then it’s not worth it to keep discussing it.

If you know your leadership team gets distracted regularly, try starting the first meeting with two questions: “What typically derails these meetings? How can we prevent that during this meeting?” This will give the facilitator permission to keep the meeting on track.

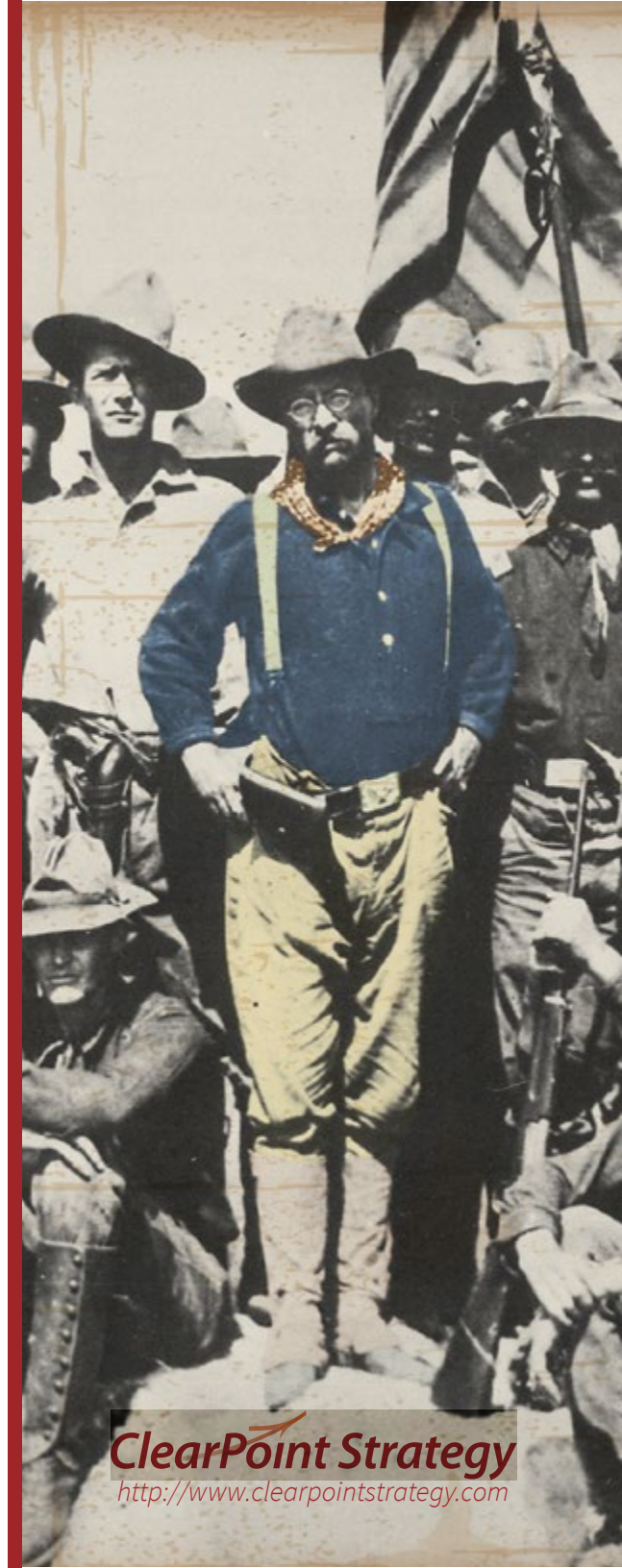


*Some difficult decisions could be worth sending your agenda off track. Know the difference.*

# FOLLOW-UP

## SUMMARY

The meeting can't be a success without following up afterward to make sure action is taken on the decisions that were made. Distribute the notes you took during the meeting to both the meeting participants and anyone else in the organization who needs them. And set up a process for tracking action items and due dates so things don't slip through the cracks. Throughout the process, think critically about your measures.



## YOU AREN'T DONE YET.

- In order for strategy review meetings to be a success, you can't just walk away when the meeting is over. There are several follow-up steps you need to take.
- It's important to distribute notes to meeting attendees within 24 hours of the meeting—this is when decisions are fresh and enthusiasm is high. Don't miss this window of opportunity! Actions happen most often after meeting minutes are released.
- Make sure you're communicating with everyone necessary. Depending on the meeting and the content, you may want to send a second set of meeting notes to the rest of the organization to ensure that key decisions have been communicated.
- Next, set up a process for tracking action items and due dates. Reach out to responsible parties to do a status-check on action items or send reminders a week or two before they're due.
- Finally, at start of the subsequent review meeting, review and recap each of the action items.

## THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT YOUR MEASURES.

- Remember to use your meeting to re-assess your performance measures. Which measures are working well and should be kept? Which performance measure should be dropped or replaced because they aren't really telling us how the objective is doing?
- Manage any changing of measures to be proposed outside of the meeting and run future meetings with the current and the proposed to get consensus that the proposed is providing better information than the current, not just a rosier picture for the person accountable for the measure.
- Try to make sure targets are not constantly changing during the year, but do note under-performance or major shifts in the assumptions around the initial target setting process. (If targets are constantly changing, then the organization loses focus and any sense of urgency or realism to a strategic planning process.)



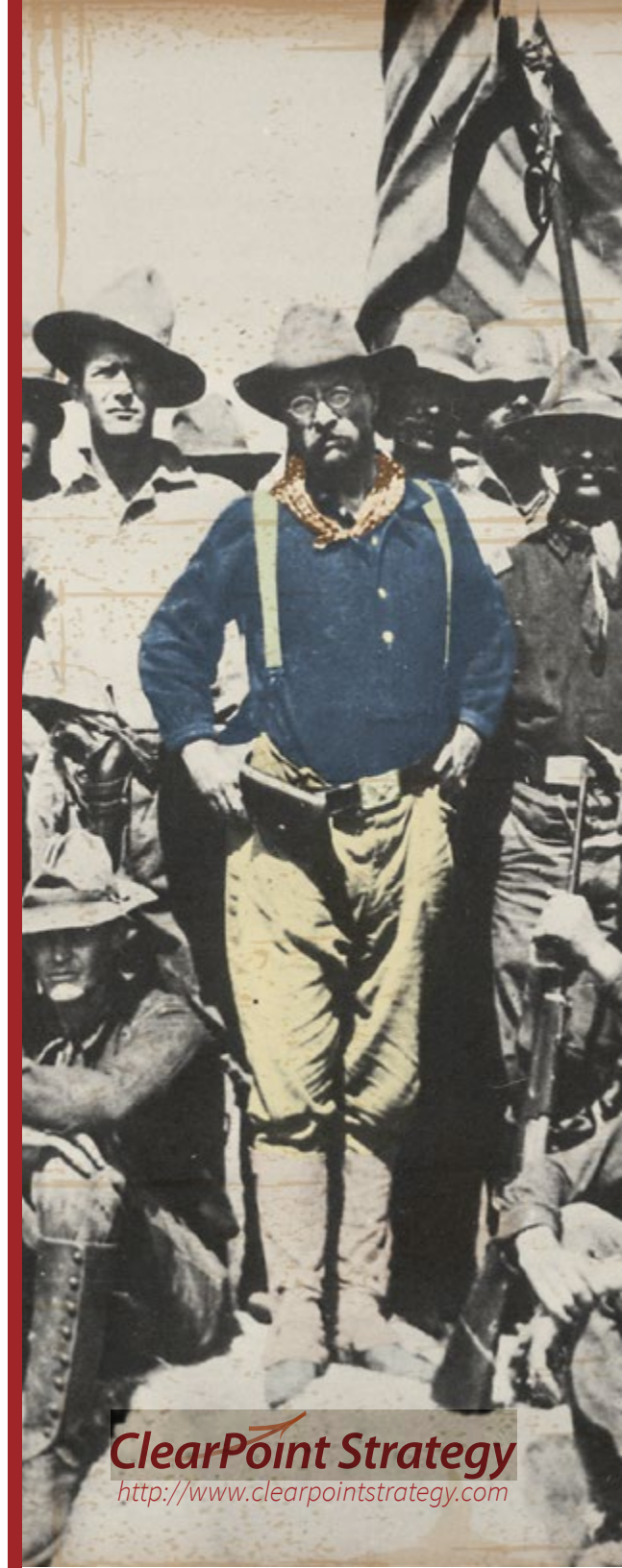
*You can't just walk away when a strategy review meeting is over. You must follow-up.*

## CHAPTER 6

# MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

### SUMMARY

Sustainability is about culture change. You need to generate an understanding of the process and get buy-in—make sure everyone involved understands what the process is and why you're doing it. (Especially leadership.) Work on continually improving and streamlining your processes in order to reduce the burden on everyone involved; make the procedure for each meeting repeatable.



## SUSTAINABILITY IS ABOUT CULTURE CHANGE.

Your goal should be making the strategy review process a part of your company’s “business as usual.” Keep the meetings relevant and leadership engaged.

How do you ensure that senior leadership engagement? First and foremost, make sure decisions get made in your meetings. The meetings need to be focused solely on strategy with active and candid dialogue in order to get things accomplished. Other than the meeting itself, leadership involvement isn’t particularly time-intensive, so capitalize on the time that they are involved. Then, make sure results happen based on the decisions you make so leadership can see that it is making a difference.

Identify lessons learned and how to improve the process going forward. Again, make sure your meetings stay relevant. Rate the quality of each meeting after it’s finished—what would you change? How could you do it better? Listen and react quickly as a meeting facilitator. Work carefully with the top executive to ensure you are delivering value.

You also need to generate an understanding of the process and get buy-in—make sure everyone involved understands what the process is and why you’re doing it. Allow them the opportunity to give feedback/make recommendations. This process is meant to be helpful for everyone, so make sure to work with each department to ensure that the process will also meet their needs.

## MAKE THE PROCESS REPEATABLE.

In order to make strategy review meetings sustainable, they can’t be a burden. So make sure they aren’t! A great analyst and reporting staff can make this seamless. Giving access to information on mobile products, sending automated emails, and pre-reading of the highlights are critical.



*Make sure your strategy review meetings don’t become a burden.*

Follow these steps to streamline your meeting process.

1. Ensure a timeline.
2. Automate data requests.
3. Use technology to standardize the format of your data. A consistent set of charts means that time in meetings will be spent wisely.
4. Allow visibility between meetings.
5. Don't allow leadership to miss meetings—make these strategy meetings the most important review meeting each month.
6. Ensure you have a clean history of meeting actions and that there is follow-through.
7. Constantly check on the value of the meetings. (You may even want to give a simple survey about the meetings after they're through—have attendees rate the meeting on a scale of 1-5. Ask them what they would change.)



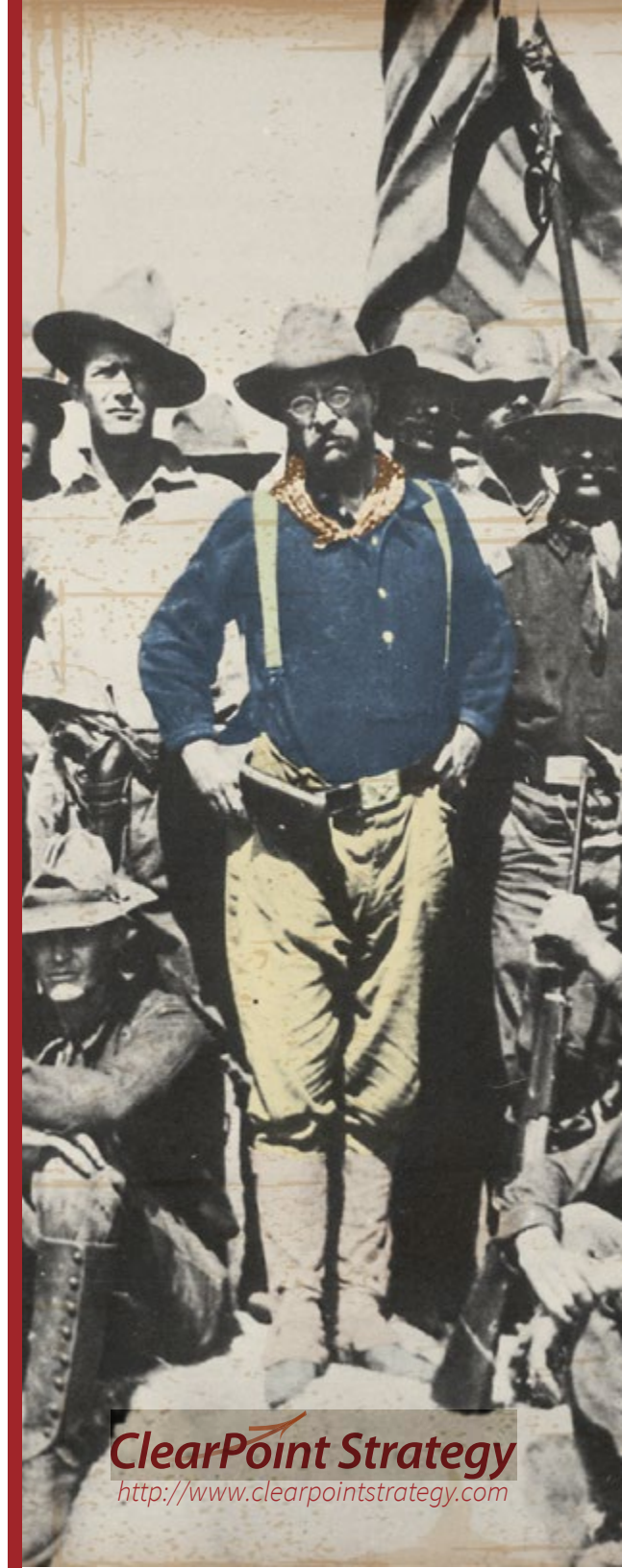
*Employ the 7 simple ways to streamline your meeting process.*



# MISTAKES TO AVOID

## SUMMARY

To ensure the success of your strategy review meetings, avoid having the wrong people in the room and unengaged leadership. Stay away from time-consuming prep, but make sure that everyone is prepared enough for the meeting to be effective. It's easy to get wrapped up in "the big picture," so remember that you also need action items and measures you can manage as takeaways from your meetings. And, of course, always follow up. Follow-through on action items is critical to these strategy meetings making a difference in your organization.



## COMMON ROADBLOCKS TO AVOID

- **Unengaged leadership:** We can't mention this one enough. If your leadership isn't engaged, then your attendees won't be either. The future success of your meetings depends on leadership buy-in.
- **Poor data quality or poor response to data call:** The data won't be perfect at first—just make sure it evolves. You may have to push departments to provide data at first. It's okay if participants feel that they don't have sufficient data—use these meetings as a forcing mechanism for them to start collecting it.
- **An improper balance between intermediate outcome measures and output measures:** You need to be looking at outcomes and “the big picture,” but you also need action items and measures you can manage.
- **Time-consuming prep:** Streamlining every process and making things repeatable is crucial.
- **The wrong people in the room:** Remember, meeting attendees need to understand the organization, be able to speak with authority, and get approvals.
- **No follow-up:** If there isn't any follow-up, you've just wasted everyone's time! Follow-through on action items is critical to these strategy meetings making a difference in your organization.
- **No valuable discussion:** This meeting is not a “show and tell” for everything a department is doing. It is meant to have targeted discussions around key success or problem areas.



*If you're leadership isn't engaged, then your attendees won't be either.*

# BEHAVIORS THAT WILL DERAIL YOUR MEETING

People can be as challenging as the process. Don't allow these few behaviors to get in the way of meeting progress.

- **Complexity**—don't allow presenters to get entangled in the details. Keep the conversation at the right level by limiting the agenda and having a facilitator manage what is presented.
- **“Siloed”**—only present information that is relevant to the strategy for the people in the room. There is no need for a business unit to present information that is not connected to the enterprise strategy.
- **Doubting numbers**—do not allow any fighting about the numbers. They are what they are. Make it a point to clean up the source for the next meeting, but do not waste time during your current meeting fighting the data. Your meeting isn't about details—it's about strategy.
- **Forgetfulness**—do not tolerate executives ignoring their prep work. Show it as blank and let the CEO or equivalent manage the non-performer. Heap praise on those that are doing great work and contributing. Do everything you can to reward good behavior.



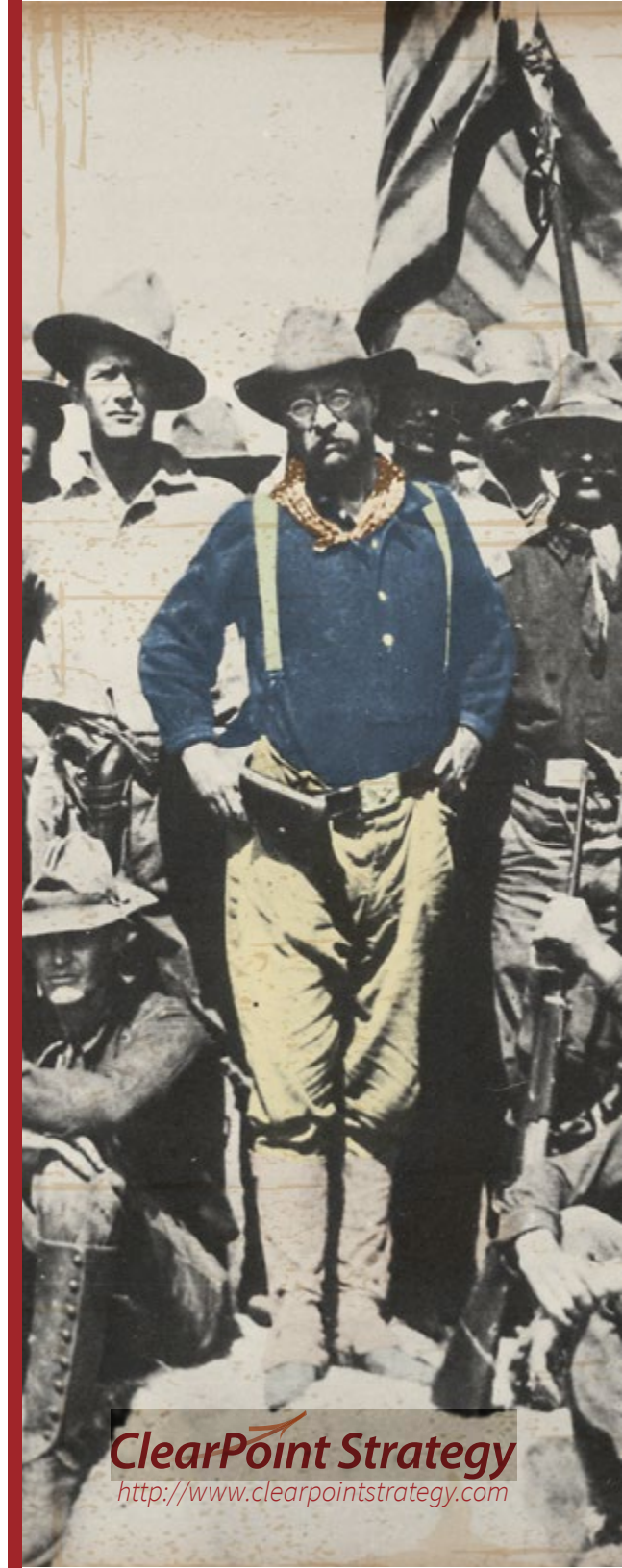
*Anticipating and preparing for certain behaviors can keep your meeting from derailing.*

# SUMMARY

## SUMMARY

If you want to improve performance in your organization, it all starts with strategy. Strategic objectives are vital to the success of your organization's future. But, unfortunately, many organizations (nine out of 10 by some estimates) set bold strategic goals and fail to execute.

If you want to increase the odds of success, then you need to have effective and regular strategy review meetings. You'll need leadership buy-in, and you'll need to practice some specific steps. There are five stages of holding an effective strategy review meeting: defining the process, meeting preparation, the meeting itself, follow-up, and maintaining momentum.



## 1. DEFINING THE PROCESS

To ensure successful strategy review meetings, you'll need to make sure you clearly define the process. This means determining the right meeting attendees and creating a good information-gathering process. Make sure your meetings are timely based on your organization's goals. Get the team to buy in to the agenda and the outcomes of the meeting. Because these meetings take time and effort, reduce the burden of the leadership team as much as possible so they're sustainable.

## 2. MEETING PREPARATION

Schedule a meeting time and collect the necessary data. Make sure you receive all the data in enough time to analyze it and write a report. Then, create an agenda and send it (along with the data analysis report) to meeting attendees in advance so they can prepare. It's important to pave a path of success starting with the first meeting—teach meeting participants exactly what strategy review meetings are, establish a tone of trust and collaboration, and adopt a decision-making process.

## 3. THE MEETING

Encourage candid dialogue and critique in the meeting itself—people tend to want to focus on the positives, but discussing the negatives is critical. Take notes about everything discussed, including action items, so that the meeting is productive. It's important to use your participants' time wisely, so don't be afraid to keep everyone task-oriented. (Use that agenda you created!) In order to stay on track, do a “pulse check” every so often—if your conversation has gotten off-topic or more in-depth than you thought it would, consider saving it for another meeting and moving on.



## 4. FOLLOW-UP

The meeting can't be a success without following up afterward to make sure action is taken on the decisions that were made. Distribute the notes you took during the meeting to both the meeting participants and anyone else in the organization who needs them. And set up a process for tracking action items and due dates so things don't slip through the cracks. Throughout the process, think critically about your measures.

## 5. MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

Sustainability is about culture change. You need to generate an understanding of the process and get buy-in—make sure everyone involved understands what the process is and why you're doing it. (Especially leadership.) Work on continually improving and streamlining your processes in order to reduce the burden on everyone involved; make the procedure for each meeting repeatable.

To ensure the success of your strategy review meetings, avoid having the wrong people in the room and unengaged leadership. Stay away from time-consuming prep, but make sure that everyone is prepared enough for the meeting to be effective. It's easy to get wrapped up in “the big picture,” so remember that you also need action items and measures you can manage as takeaways from your meetings. And, of course, always follow up. Follow-through on action items is critical to these strategy meetings making a difference in your organization.

It is possible to have regularly-scheduled, productive strategy review meetings within your organization. Follow the steps outlined in this guide, and you'll see what a huge impact it can have on the success of your company!



# HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

ClearPoint Strategy reporting software can help you create dynamic management reports, strategy reviews, and Balanced Scorecard reports quickly and easily, to help streamline your strategy review meeting process.

[CLICK HERE TO REQUEST A FREE DEMO](#)