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How consultants create heroes

A story about the co-creation of value, through change management with external support

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Co-creating true heroes.

Good conduct beats methods.

[In another Medium story of mine \(link\)](#), I described a case study of an extensive problem-solving investigation that focused on the loss of cost control for a business-

critical product, resulting in significant changes to the company's management principles.

In this story, I share my perspective on how strategy and management agencies contribute to creating heroes within client organizations, as well as the value they bring, of course. And why this is important and the right thing to do.

Background & Context.

Let's start with the basics. Strategy and management firms typically operate as consultants, offering advice and solving business problems — not as staffing providers.

Here is how it goes. A senior manager at a company, corporation, or government agency usually initiates change because a problem has been identified. Changes in information systems and technology are often involved, though not always. Sometimes the trigger is an opportunity or a challenge, but these can typically be reframed as problems.

If the change is significant and long-term, it is usually considered strategic; if not, it may be classified as tactical or operational. Corporate strategy is a special area that can also fall within scope.

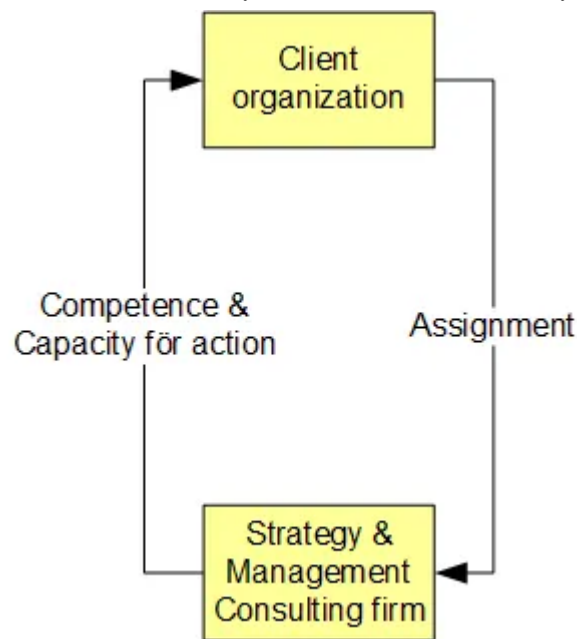
Somehow, a strategy and management firm is assigned the task of helping to solve the problem, but how this happens is not the focus of this particular story.

Consulting assignment success factors.

The problem and the objective are often only vaguely defined. Your first task, as a consultant representing the strategy and management firm, is therefore to clarify them.

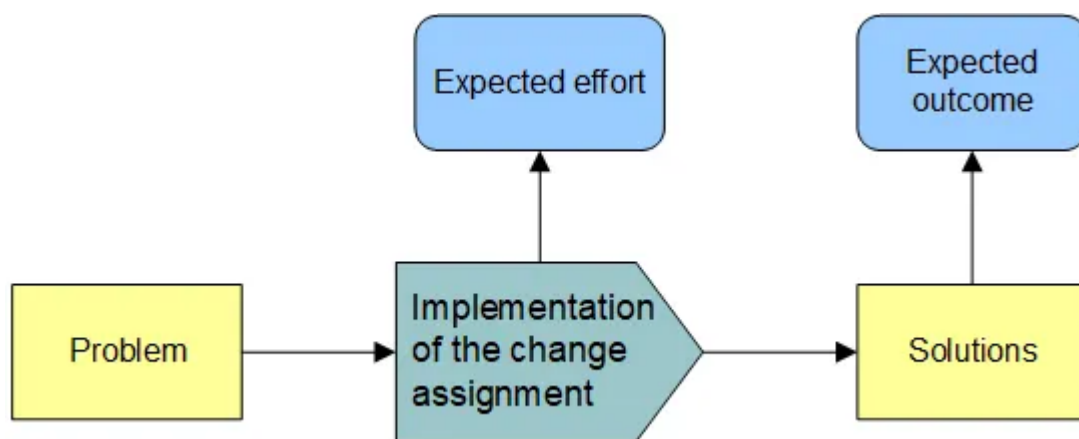
The key to success in any assignment is the ability to apply well-chosen methods, models, tools, and illustrations. They need to be used at the right time, in the right way, and with the right people. Management consulting involves striking a balance between logic and structure and practical psychology, utilizing this combination to inform decision-making.

Let us illustrate this.



Organization in need of external support.

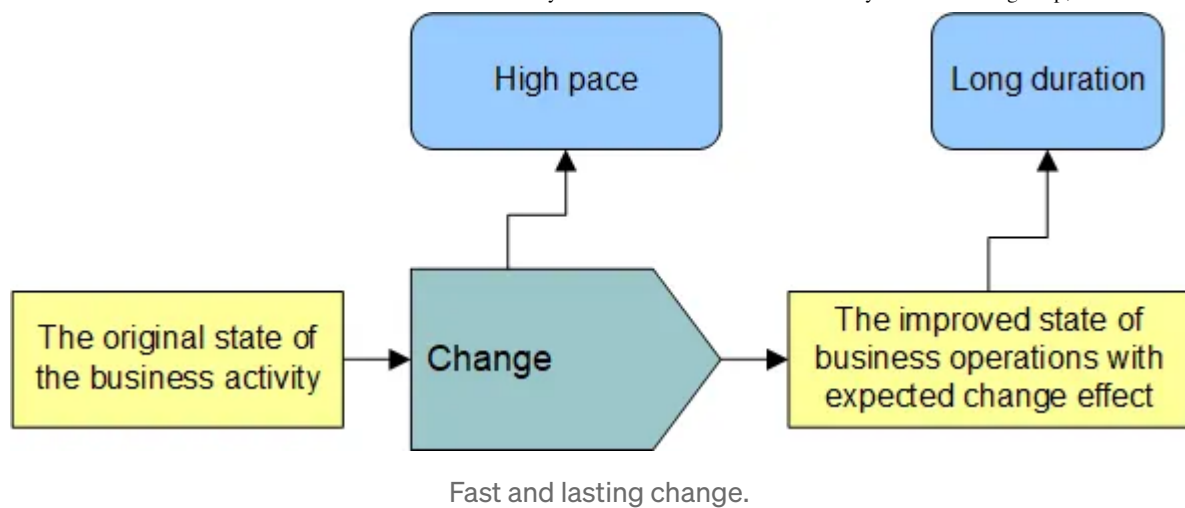
We also have a problem — or, if you prefer, a challenge or an opportunity — that needs to be solved.



Consulting assignment with expected effort and outcome.

The resulting solutions of the assignment should produce an expected outcome. The strategy and management firm naturally aims to exceed that expectation. The expected contribution includes competence and leadership, generating decisiveness, energy, and enthusiasm.

At the same time, the change — or transformation, journey, or whatever the current jargon may call it — should move the organization from its current state to a new state that produces the desired effect. The change should build momentum while avoiding adverse side effects. The effect should be lasting, and all stakeholders, including employees, coworkers, management, owners, customers, suppliers, and authorities, should be satisfied.



The strategy and management firm often wants to support leading the change and assume responsibility for achieving the desired effect, but that is not always included in the assignment. Sometimes, instead, the firm's role is to train the client's employees to deliver the effect themselves, using the results provided.

The implementation is characterized by a set of values that enhance the quality of the results. Likewise, the solutions are defined by values that contribute to intermediate goals, which in turn support and reinforce the overall objectives.

Key values and sub-goals that ensure high-quality, effective outcomes can be grouped as follows:

Clarity and problem-solving

- Establish clear expectations for the outcome
- Address all types of problem areas effectively

Structure and capability building

- Create order and structure, increasing the value of structural capital
- Work in a way that develops competence among all participants

Collaboration and communication

- Improve communication and teamwork across the organization
- Share results that are complete, easy to use, and require no external interpretation

Efficiency and momentum

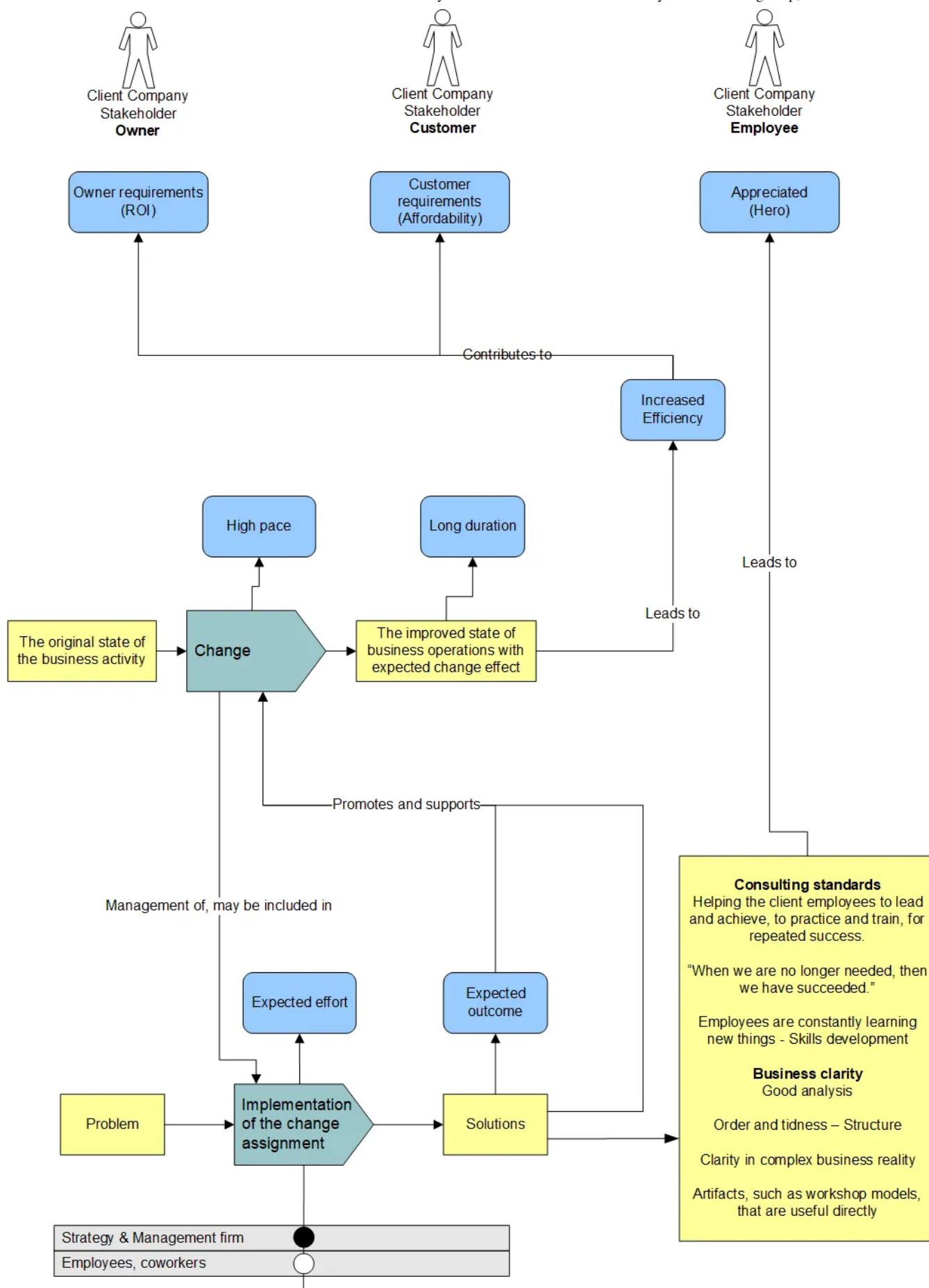
- Allocate resources where they have the most significant impact
- Initiate the change process early to make the implementation smoother and faster
- Foster a positive attitude toward the next step in the change journey — creating momentum

Consultant mindset and added value

- Embrace the philosophy: *“When we are no longer needed, that is when we have succeeded.”*
- Contribute wholeheartedly as mentors and coaches, sharing expertise openly
- Introduce new perspectives, draw on experience from other relevant industries, and anchor the work in research

Visual models drive understanding.

Consider a private company as an example. In simplified terms, the situation could then be illustrated as follows.



Strategy & Management consulting creating value and heroes.

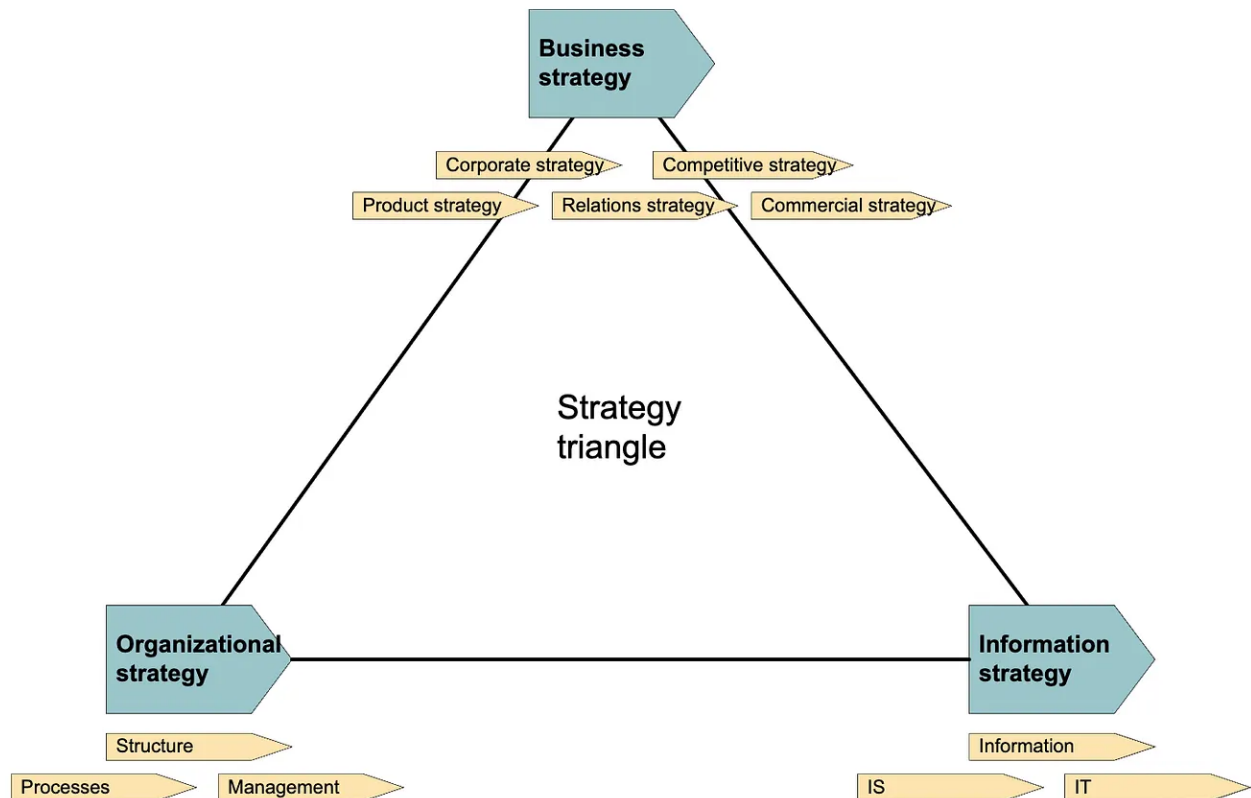
Developing and refining visual models of the kind shown above is a vital part of business development, organizational design, and strategy work. It is just as

essential as architectural and engineering drawings when constructing a house. Experts in this field are sometimes referred to as *business architects*. Business modeling is paramount.

However, capturing and creating these models typically requires collaboration among workshop facilitators, business analysts, enterprise architects, and project managers. Strategy and management firms bring together all these roles — and often combine them in the same person, drawing on experience from multiple specialties.

Well-crafted models foster participation, build shared understanding, align stakeholders, and provide a foundation for change. They are also effective in addressing softer issues, like improving collaboration within teams.

Strategic visioning methods can be used in strategy work and for creating action plans that people actually follow. Models such as the **strategy triangle** can also provide valuable guidance in the strategy process.



The classical strategy triangle.

Modeling processes, stakeholders, concepts (including objects, information, knowledge, and resources), rules, and goals — brought together into a logical whole — is central to setting requirements for information systems and managing IS/IT change, digitalization, and digital transformation.

Facilitation and visualization skills are underestimated.

One of the most critical skills for a strategy and management consultant is workshop facilitation. In this format, participants actively create the content themselves while guided by the facilitator. This ensures anchoring, clarity, and learning, while decisions are taken collectively. This approach delivers advice implicitly. A skilled facilitator ensures that all uncertainties are resolved, allowing every participant to sign off on the final model. Special critical review sessions are used for management acceptance.

In my work as a management consultant, where I develop and implement strategies in large companies, I have often relied on visual storytelling methods — sometimes enhanced with metaphors.

In workshop settings with large groups, we would create wall-sized images together. The process begins with exploring the past to establish shared understanding or a common ground, then moves on to envisioning the future, defining strategies, developing systems, and describing what it would mean to live with that vision.

While the detailed strategy work continues separately, the co-created collective visual storytelling narrative offers an effective way to communicate, align, and anchor the strategy across the organization.

This combination of facilitation, modeling, and trust-based client work is my primary area of expertise — and one I continually seek to refine. Personally, as an engineer, I am seeking the most challenging and complex environments, as well as technologically innovative projects. But there are strategy and management consultants in all spheres of interest.

Creating heroes

In summing up how strategy and management consultants create heroes, we return to the benefits of change, as well as the process of conducting the change assignment.

Employees and coworkers are actively participating in workshops and other meetings as subject matter experts and are, in fact, creating all results under the

guidance and leadership of the consultants. They are knowledgeable about their business and make all the decisions. As the work methods generate artifacts signed off by all participants and reviewers, results are anchored and accepted. It is the employees and coworkers who bring about and share the results throughout the organization, and take and receive the credit.

Consultants ensure the right quality artifacts are provided in the right way, at the right time, and to the right people. Employees continually learn by collaborating with external strategy and management consultants, particularly by refining their leadership skills. They become the heroes. The consultants complete their tasks and leave as soon as they are finished with the assignment.

Text and Visio diagrams by me. Corrected English by Grammarly. Story illustration by Gemini. Last check before publishing, Claude.

About the Author



Gunnar Östberg, Business Transformation Architect, CEO, Business Clarity.

Gunnar is an M.Sc. computer engineer with 40 years of experience in **business and IT-driven transformation**. He has worked with global giants like Ericsson and Scania, as well as nimble high-tech firms. Passionate about sound architectural principles and systems thinking, Gunnar writes to expand perspectives and deepen insight. Through his consultancy, Business Clarity, Gunnar helps organizations evolve ideas into sustainable systems and products, and transform the business through structured, principle-based innovation. His focus areas include pragmatic architecture, business modeling, and delivering real impact.

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Written by Gunnar Östberg

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