

THE VSEM (VISION, STRATEGY, EXECUTION, AND METRICS) FRAMEWORK EXPLAINED



Strategy. No matter what industry you are in or your organization's size, strategic planning is what drives operations and ultimately makes any given business grow. Having a good strategy for deployment of anything from new tech code to hiring employees ultimately leads to efficient operations on all levels.

However, one of the hardest parts of deployment is not choosing a strategy to use. In fact, issues surrounding deployment often come down to proper execution and explanation with clarity to your team on how to use a chosen strategy. Often blocked by information clutter, many organizations in all sorts of industries have found that teams get stuck when it comes to understanding exact end goals.

So, once you and your organization chose a strategy that works for your unique business, how do you properly execute it with all of your team members on the same page? In the following article, we will discuss the VSEM strategy framework and how to successfully manage the deployment of any strategy.

Vision, Strategy, Execution, and Metrics

Leading business manager, [Bob Muscat](#), explains VSEM as “four words to easily organize what to do, when to achieve a desired outcome.” Essentially this framework or tool embodies four steps that harmonize the strategy process between everyone who is involved. Using full sentences along with

time frames for each step, in the end, you have a very well defined path for the future.

1. **Vision**

The first step is to identify where you want to end up. This is the long term goal that everyone needs to clearly understand.

2. **Strategy**

The second step is to define how you will achieve the above goal or goals. This can be the name of the strategy you are deploying as well as an outline of where resources will be used.

3. **Execution**

The third step is to clearly state the way in which you will deploy your strategy. Identify and describe critical initiatives, programs, and actions to take that will support your strategy.

4. **Metrics**

The fourth step is to acknowledge results and details into who is accountable for the execution of each step of the outlined plan. Measuring the outcome will keep you and your team on track.

One Common Language And Process

Seemingly a very straight forward framework that encourages collaboration, instead of the old multi-page briefs, with VSEM, all you need is one page with four sections. However, there is one thing that glues collaboration practices together. As explained in the book [*World Class IT Strategy*](#), "a common vocabulary and process for setting and measuring goals and objectives throughout the organization . The clearer our plans the more we can mobilize all of IT to accomplish our goals." As we are using this framework with the intent to remove clutter and confusion throughout any deployment, the use of words that everyone understands and clearly knows works to create a simplified, unwavering commitment to a shared defined goal.

Organizations are often unsure of when they have achieved a common language that all company levels understand. However, [management members from Cisco](#)--the leading worldwide IT, networking, and [cybersecurity](#) solutions organizations as well as a leader in VSEM use--state that you know when the following three things happen.

- You can identify a clear purpose, a compelling direction, and a picture of what success will look like.
- You can identify the unique value of a team as a whole, not just in terms of individual contributions.
- Team members understand what ability or role each member brings to the endeavor and the value of these interdependencies.

Cisco And VSEM

As a result of adopting the VSEM framework, Cisco has been able to achieve a full company-wide understanding of decision-making procedures, visions, and goals. Working to allow employees to execute their work with confidence according to an accountability process, leadership based on VSEM promotes strategic collaboration that drives the company through consistency. [Cisco](#)

[management experts](#) note that “teams more clearly see the decision paths in their collaborative projects and can determine decision-making rights along those paths. They also gain a clear understanding of who is accountable for the outcomes of the decisions. It is important that your common vocabulary be woven into your accountability system to ensure teams move from vision to metrics-led execution.”

A VSEM Framework Example From Cisco Used For Career Path Planning

A strong example used by a Cisco employee to outline her goals in terms of how, what, and why she wants to improve over the course of the next five years can be [seen here](#). Using the tool to create a very manageable plan, you will see that the employee defines the direction she wants to go, what she wants to learn, what she has already achieved, and key areas she wants to focus on. A very simple use of the framework on a personal level, to see a use of the framework in an IT example view [here](#).

[Cisco Global Marketing Communications VSEM](#) from [Cisco - Strategic Marketing + Communications Team](#)

Incorporating This Framework Into Your Strategic Planning

At the end of the day, planning for success starts with always being ready and looking ahead. When implementing agile projects that are constantly being deployed, the act of planning and strategically defining goals will greatly decrease the chances of “lost-in-communication” or unnecessary error. Starting with a quality “mapped out” framework that everyone in your entire organization can read and understand will become invaluable no matter the project you are deploying.

We suggest first trying the framework with one team and one project. See how it works for your business. Before expanding the method, assess what areas were weak or needed more explanation from your team and look at your use of common language. Always remember that, through simplicity, your teams will learn to collaborate and see endpoints with clarity.