

**Enabling leaders to align culture to strategy  
for successful strategy implementations**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Gaining competitive advantages are key drivers for organizations, and implementing strategy is a key enabler for gaining competitive advantages. The rate of strategy implemented successfully in larger organizations is only 33.3%, which is far too low given the importance of getting this executed right. One key factor that is seen to have positive relationship with successfully implementing strategy is the alignment of an organization's culture to its strategy.

The purpose of this research is to identify key factors that can equip and enable leaders to effectively align an organization culture to its strategy. A qualitative approach was used to find the main reasons for leaders in organizations not aligning culture to strategy, and to identify the skills and capabilities needed by leaders to align culture to strategy.

The study was able to develop a model that will enable leaders to align an organizations culture to it strategy. This can be used to build further theory on this topic, and to assist leader in practice

## **KEYWORDS**

Strategy, culture, strategy implementation, communication, leader

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorization and consent to carry out this research.

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1 December 2020

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The focal point of this research is to enable leaders to align the organization's culture to their organization's strategy. To achieve this, the aim is to identify the main reasons organization's do not align culture to its strategy, identify the critical skills and capabilities needed by leaders to align culture and strategy, and provide leaders with key tips to be proactive and equip themselves with needed capabilities, competencies, and skills to achieve this. There is a little information available in literature around knowing what the key skills and capabilities are to enable leaders to align culture to its strategy. A literature gap is also seen around why organization's and its leaders do not place more focus on aligning its culture and strategy.

### **1.2 Research Problem**

This research will help understand why so many organizations ignore the importance of building and aligning their organization's culture to the strategy that is being implemented. A consequence of failing to align its culture to its strategy is a higher rate of strategy implementation failures (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). In understanding the actions of the organization's leaders, and its people, the following three outcomes will provide key insights into how leaders can equip themselves to better align an organization's culture and its strategy. This will in turn improve the rate of implementing strategies successfully.

The three outcomes will be to find the main reasons that organization's do not align its culture to it strategy effectively, identifying the key skills and capabilities needed by leaders to align culture to strategy, and identify how leaders can be more proactive and equip themselves to align an organizations culture to the organizations strategy, to ultimately increase the success rate of strategy implementations. The focus of the research is an important topic as it may be a fundamental root cause of strategy implementation failures. This research will also show a meaningful relationship between successfully leading and aligning culture to strategy and successful strategy implementations (Maika, 2020). This relationship is vital because the inability to successfully implement strategy can directly impact an organization's competitive advantages and, ultimately, its success.

Engert & Baumgartner (2015) emphasize how the implementation of an organization's strategy has fast become a greater area of focus, and this is vastly due to the high failure rate of strategy implementations, compared to the strategies formulated. They further confirm that

as important as a strategy is to an organization's success, an amazing strategy without the proper tools and processes to implement it, will add no value and end in failure (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). There have been studies that show when it comes to larger organizations, more than two-thirds of them are not able to successfully implement their strategies, which indicates only a thirty three percent success rate (Sull et al., 2015).

Hickman & Silva (2018) look at many companies that cannot implement the strategies that they design for competitive advantage. A common trend that can be seen is that all companies have strategies that they develop, and they all work with some form of culture; however, they do not commit to making these work together.

"We can have all the bold ambitions. We can have all the bold goals. We can aspire to our new mission. But it's only going to happen if we live our culture, if we teach our culture" (Microsoft, 2017, p. 4). These are words echoed by Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft while discussing the change needed when an organization is going through the implementation of new strategies, more especially the shift in culture. Organizational culture is a critical component when speaking about strategy and successful strategy implementations (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). It can be seen in Satya Nadella's approach that living and teaching culture is core to successful strategy implementation and ultimately, competitive advantage and success for an organization.

Hemerling et al. (2018) have raised strongly that in their strategic transformation journey, the biggest challenge that they have experienced is the clash with culture. Hemerling et al. (2018) have also come to realize that with any significant strategy change in organizations, the culture needs to be instilled to support the strategy, and as much as this task is achievable, it is not an easy activity to achieve. There must be clear plans, processes, and methodologies in place, together with each employee being disciplined and committed enough to be able to change their behaviors and the way they work together with one another (Hemerling et al., 2018). This reinforces Hickman & Silva's (2018) statement, which confirms that developing and implementing strategy and building culture in an organization need to work together. However, with that said, reiterating Hemerling et al. (2018), aligning culture to support its strategy is not a simple task, this will need specific skills and capabilities from leaders in an organization to align culture and strategy successfully.

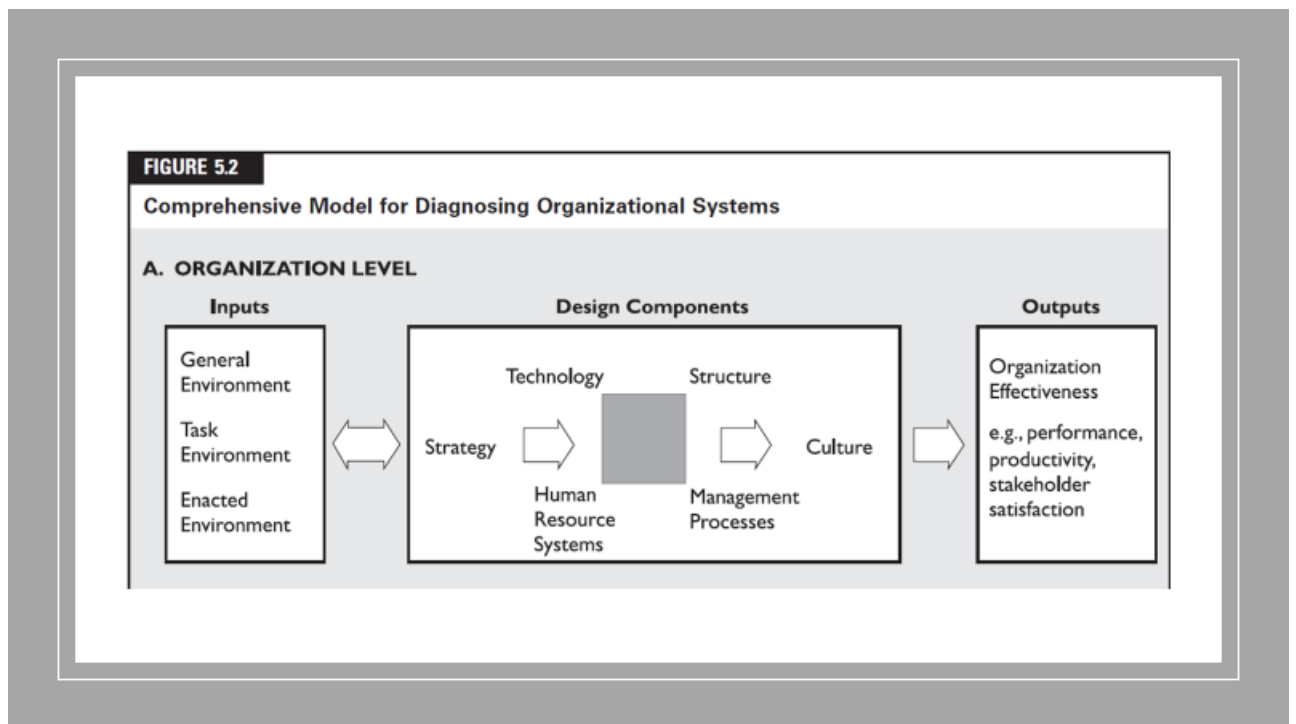
The challenges faced during culture change can be diverse and may relate to people's understanding of the culture change required, fear of the change in culture, or even bad leadership (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017) . Aslam et al. (2018) exhibit various feedback from

employees that are resistant to organizational changes in strategy and culture. Often the blame is shown toward the leader, where employees feel that they cannot trust leaders in their organizations (Aslam et al., 2018). Another reason for resistance is that employees sometimes perceive that there is no benefit to them to conform to the culture alignment, and many times the issue of resistance comes in simply due to the lack of effective communication that needs to be performed within the organization (Aslam et al., 2018). Some of the characteristics of organizational culture is based on having a standard belief system or behaviors . To change current behaviors and beliefs of employees in an organization requires leaders to equip themselves with competencies and skills that will enable them to transition and align their staff to a culture which supports the organization's strategy and in turn, their competitive advantage (Onyebuchi, 2018).

Sull et al. (2015) mentions that poor execution of strategy could also be attributed to the topic of strategy being documented extensively, and the means to execute strategy not having as much direction and exposure. In addition to this Sull et al. (2015) talks about executives who link poor execution of strategy to failures in the alignment of organizational culture. This again shows that whilst leadership are aware of the impact of various forms and types of culture, they do not have the capabilities to align culture to strategy, which will enable the successful implementation of their strategy and overall organizational success and competitive advantage (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017).

Hoffmann (2019) raises how too many organizations run into challenges when implementing new strategies and innovation because they try to exploit and use their current skills and capabilities instead of realizing the need for new competencies and abilities and learning these to increase their likelihood of success. It is can be seen how the need to acknowledge and learn new skills and capabilities are essential to lead culture alignment to strategy effectively. Culture change and alignment also emphasizes the need to learning soft skills, due to culture alignment dealing with people and behaviors (Hurrell, 2016).

The Cummings and Worley comprehensive model for diagnosing organizational systems presents that the levers and components that can be used to assist in implementing the organizations strategy and reaching organizational effectiveness are technology, the human resource systems, management processes, the organizational structure, and culture (Cummings & Worley, 2015).



**Figure 1: Comprehensive model for diagnosing organizational systems  
 (Cummings & Worley, 2015)**

In this model, culture is seen both as a component to assist in implementing strategy and an output from the other design components. The reason for this is because any changes in strategy or any of the other components will affect the alignment of culture, which can result in the culture being negatively influencing or blocking the needed organizational change (Cummings & Worley, 2015).

Therefore, culture cannot be ignored when implementing strategic change. It is the link between strategy, the many other design components that assist strategy, and the successful implementation of the strategy. Organizations and leaders need to understand their culture when looking to lead and align culture and ensure they know their current culture and what it needs to be. To be successful in implementing strategy, organizations and their leaders need to be positioned to lead and align its culture to its strategy successfully.

The major problem is that leaders in an organization do not equip themselves with capabilities, competencies, and skills to lead and align their organization's culture to its strategy. In most instances, they would prefer not to invest in equipping themselves or are unaware that it is needed and attempt to use their existing capabilities which are not effective (Hoffmann, 2019). To successfully align culture to strategy, organizations and leaders need to at least know the main reasons organization's do not align culture to strategy, the key skills needed, and how

to equip themselves proactively to be successful in aligning culture to strategy. Understanding the main reasons for leaders failing to align culture to strategy will assist in knowing what skills are needed and how to proactively be equipped to successfully align culture to strategy.

### **1.3 Research Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative research is to achieve the following.

1. Assess and identify the key reasons that leaders in organizations fail to lead and align an organizations culture and people, to its strategy
2. To identify the key skills and capabilities needed by leaders in an organization, to be able lead and align culture to strategy, to improve the rate of successful strategy implementations.
3. To identify key steps and tips for leaders in organizations to include as part of the strategy management process, to assist in successfully leading and aligning culture to the strategy.

### **1.4 Research Scope**

The aim of this research is to draw on literature and theory to understand why organizations and leaders do not successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy, especially given the relationship of successful strategy implementations and an aligned culture and strategy (Maika, 2020). The scope of the research has been narrowed to focus on how leaders can be enabled to successfully align an organizations culture to its strategy, to ultimately achieve successful strategy implementations. To enable leaders, this research study will investigate the main reasons that organizations and leaders do not successfully align culture to strategy, which should provide feedback on whether the reason is around organizational restrictions, or the leader's skills and capabilities. The scope will also include findings on what the key skills and capabilities are that drive culture alignment to strategy. Finally, the scope will include looking for important tips and recommendations to enable leaders to proactively prepare to align culture to strategy successfully.

### **1.5 The Intended Contribution**

The intended contribution of this research is to develop an addition to theory showing attributes to enable a leader to lead and align their culture to strategy. The new insights will be made up of the main reasons culture and strategy alignment fails today, the identification of key skills and capabilities needed to drive effective alignment between culture and strategy, and development of a toolkit that will enable leaders to be proactive in aligning their organizations

culture to their strategy. A business need will also be met, as these findings and toolkit will be able to assist leaders in aligning culture to strategy and improving the rate of successful strategy implementations.

### **1.6 Research Questions to be Answered Through the Research**

There are three research questions that have been formed that will drive the design of this research. The below research questions will be discussed in further detail in chapter three.

1. What are the main reasons for organization's and its leaders not aligning culture to its strategy and implementation, given the positive relationship between an aligned culture and successful strategy implementations?
2. What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?
3. What can leaders proactively do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?

### **1.7 Structure of the Research Report**

The research report is made up of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem, and the need to focus on this topic from an academic and business view. It further discusses the purpose of this study, the scope to be covered and the intended contribution from the research.

Chapter 2 covers the literature review showing the importance of aligning culture to strategy, the competencies needed to achieve this, and the challenges associated with this. Chapter 3 presents the research questions developed to meet the research objectives. The researcher will aim to answer these research questions as part of this research study. Chapter 4 will explain the methodology that will be used to approach this research study.

In chapter 5, the key results from the interview will be presented and the results will be analyzed and discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 will also reference and contrast against information in chapter 2's literature review. Chapter 7 will conclude this research study, providing the principle findings, limitations to this study, and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This review investigates some of the known capabilities needed to enable culture alignment. It will explain through the existing literature, the importance for leaders to learn and possess skills and competencies that will enable successful culture alignment. The literature review also linked the importance of and showed the relationship between organizational culture and successful strategy implementation, which also explained the need to align culture to the strategy, and its implementation. The purpose was to show the importance of aligning culture to strategy, and that it takes a special skill set and capabilities to lead the alignment of an organization's culture to its strategy.

These points set the stage to lead the research to find out the following.

1. The main reasons for leaders failing to align the organizations culture to its strategy and implementation, given the positive relationship between aligned culture and successful strategy implementations,
2. The key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy, and
3. Important tips that can assist leaders to be proactive to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy, thereby improving the success rate of strategy implementations.

### **2.2 Strategy Formulation and Strategy Implementation**

Strategy formulation, the first component of strategy management, is the art of putting together a document or plan that will distinguish a defined ambition. The strategy formulation process is focused around gaining a competitive advantage. It is a task to attempt to be more successful, or aim to be the first in innovation against competitor organizations. This is achieved by mainly changing the way the company is structured, performing internal activities more efficiently, or acting faster to the external market and other outside factors (Pfarrer et al., 2019).

Strategy implementation is the other component of strategy management, and focuses on the effective and efficient implementation of strategies, as strategy will not be able to benefit an organization if it is not implemented correctly (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). Strategy



formulation and implementation must function together as they both have a significant impact on the company's ability to be successful and gain competitive advantages (Johansson & Svensson, 2017).

## 2.3 Culture

The culture in an organization consists of the beliefs people have, behaviors that they form, and the certain ways that things get done; these characteristics lead the way, detail the process and conduct to achieving the organization's goals and objectives (Song et al., 2017). In any organization, leaders have to acknowledge that any significant strategic change requires a culture change to enable the company's strategy and implementation thereof (Hemerling et al., 2018).

When discussing a need to change or align culture, there is sometimes a misunderstanding that takes place due to different people understanding culture differently (Schein, 2010). Edgar Schein's culture model talked to there being three different levels of culture within an organization. An explanation of this model will assist in understanding what is being referred to when discussing culture and culture alignment in this research study. The figure below shows a view of how Edgar Schein has explained the different levels of culture that exists within organizations.

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### 1. Artifacts

- Visible and feelable structures and processes
- Observed behavior
  - Difficult to decipher

### 2. Espoused Beliefs and Values

- Ideals, goals, values, aspirations
- Ideologies
- Rationalizations
  - May or may not be congruent with behavior and other artifacts

### 3. Basic Underlying Assumptions

- Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values
    - Determine behavior, perception, thought, and feeling
- 

**Figure 2: Edgar Schein's Three Levels of Culture  
(Schein, 2010)**

Schein (2010) calls the first level 'artifacts'. This refers to the tangible elements of culture. It is the part of culture that can be seen or touched. Culture in the artifacts meaning can be clearly distinguished. Some examples of the artifacts level of culture was if the organization or team dressed in a specific way, used a specific set of products, spoke a certain way, or used a common language. These artifacts are elements of culture that can be seen, heard or felt and does identify a culture. (Schein, 2010) refers to the second level of culture as 'espoused beliefs and values'. These are the values that an organization normally declare as their culture. It is the culture that to enact and show. It includes values that the organization would want to follow and behaviors it would aspire to keep. The third level of culture is the 'basic underlying assumptions'. This third level is the deepest and may be the most difficult to change and embed It refers to the assumptions of how members of an organization have a common understanding of what to focus on, how to think or react, and why these behaviors are embedded (Schein, 2010).

For this research study, when referring to culture and aligning culture, the reference is made to organizations aligning to all three levels of culture. There is the artifacts level that can be seen or heard, but measurement of culture for level two and three is normally performed through surveys within the organization. The second and third levels are more tricky to achieve, however when these are aligned, a strong organizational culture is developed (Gonzalez-Loureiro et al., 2017).

The importance of culture is emphasized by Fauver et al. (2018), who stated that skillful and competent employees are needed in organizations, however, without the correct culture in place they will lack commitment and loyalty, which is ultimately the key elements to continued organizational success, and competitive advantage. Thompson et al. (1999) further discussed organizational family culture which drives behaviors of trust, commitment, openness, and eliminates negative behaviors of doing only the minimum, not being interested in companywide initiatives, and only focusing on personal gains as opposed to having a team culture.

The benefits that employees can obtain by having and driving an aligned culture is that it creates a positive attitude where people can be more productive (Onyebuchi, 2018). It also creates an environment of belonging where employees can feel comfortable, secure, and empowered to deliver to their full potential, which creates an environment of trust and togetherness, opens up a favorable work environment which can enable innovation, and it develops a belief in the organizations strategy which allows the culture to be further

embedded, adopted and aligned effectively with strategy (Onyebuchi, 2018). However, as much as having the right culture is an effective tool for driving strategy and strategy implementations, culture can also be experienced as a disability when the need for change is critical and the beliefs, behaviors, and values do not agree with the new changes and strategic initiatives (Christensen, 2006).

Therefore, to benefit from a culture that is aligned to strategy and its implementation, leaders in an organization need to equip themselves with the capabilities, competencies and skills that will enable them to know how lead culture change successfully.

## **2.4 Strategy Implementation and Culture**

In order to have a competitive advantage and be able to challenge competitors, an organization needs to ensure its strategy is aligned with its culture and capabilities that fit its strategy (Beer et al., 2005). The reason organizations need to place a focus on culture is because it is the most crucial part to delivering successful strategy implementations. Rohajawati et al. (2016, p981) states that “there are many factors that can affect successful implementation. Organizational culture (OC) is known to be one of the main factors, followed by process, people, and technology”.

Grobler et al. (2019) points out from Kotter’s model, eight key errors that leaders in an organization make when trying to lead change in implementing strategy, and how successful culture change has a direct relationship with successful strategy implementation. These errors also show the need for leaders to focus on identifying and building capabilities that will enable culture change as errors can be avoided if the correct culture was aligned to strategy. The first error identified in strategy implementation failures is that leaders do not build a culture of drive and urgency, where employees do not understand the reason for the organization needing to move fast to secure a deal or complete a job. If drive and urgency is not built into the expected behaviors of working, the strategy implementation will fail. The second error is not being able to build a team that can support each other and have sufficient authority to lead change. If there is a lack in team culture from the top levels, implementation will fail. The third mistake is not developing a vision that is clear and able to direct the change initiative, which makes the culture change difficult in deciphering what behaviors and values need to be changed. The fourth error is not using the correct channels and not being able to communicate the vision, and culture change needed, which will lead to implementation shortfalls. The fifth mistake in Kotter’s model is not providing the correct tools for employees to make the change successful, if employees are not equipped, in both technically or culturally, they will not be successful,

which ultimately affects the implementation of strategy and the intended competitive advantage. The sixth mistake made by leaders in an organization when leading strategic and culture change is not successfully building a culture of continuous improvement and rewards, which is a key driver when planning and delivering on short-term targets. If this culture of continuous improvement does not exist, it will be difficult to drive this behavior and values. The seventh error is not understanding that changes in an organization's culture need to be deeply enrooted. Stopping the change initiative too early poses the risk of losing all the wins gained at the beginning. The eighth and final error in Kotter's model is when leader do not realize that change only becomes real when it becomes the new norm and the new way that things are done. Not establishing the change in the organization's culture loses all the benefits achieved during the change implementation (Grobler et al., 2019).

This relationship between successful strategy implementation and culture clearly shows the need for culture change to be embedded effectively. It can also be seen through the identified errors by Grobler et al. (2019) in Kotter's model why challenges exist in leading change. He showed why strategy implementations fail due to leaders in an organization not having the skills and capabilities to lead and embed cultural changes that will ultimately drive successful strategy implementations.

## **2.5 Enabling Culture**

Bate et al. (2000) discusses how the development of culture evolves over time and how culture needs to be enabled by other factors, likewise culture enables other growth factors which assist in organizational growth. This demonstrates a mutualism symbiotic relation between culture and other factors that enable success within organizations. Stojanovic et al. (2020) emphasizes how influential organizational culture is on every area of a business and how other factors of the business shape culture. This further highlight that the factors which enable culture need to be identified, to assist leaders and organizations to setup for better culture alignment to strategy, and more successful strategy implementations.

A leader's character has a strong influence and can persuade culture alignment (Lakatos et al., 2017). Humility is a great strength that can be defined as one who can honestly assess their own weaknesses, be considerate and appreciative of other people's views and someone who is open to new learning (Owens, 2016). In a study, Owens (2016) found that leaders who possess a characteristic of humility is able to positively influence team performance within an organization. The ability to actively listen to your employees is another skill that leaders need to possess, as this will enable them to understand what their employees are really saying (van

Quaquebeke, 2018). A leader with humility and the ability to listen to their people will are key skills to enable leaders to align an organizations culture to its strategy.

To enable culture, a leader also needs to be able to inspire and motivate employees to be part of the vision and culture of where the organization is moving toward (Molenberghs et al., 2017). Molenberghs et al. (2017) further discusses how an inspirational leader also needs to be inclusive and share a vision that illustrates the concerns and benefits of everyone in the organization. A closely knit skill for leaders to embody is to have emotional intelligence, which is the ability to understand well, the state and feelings of others and yourself, and be able to use this understanding to guide the decisions made (Tsaur & Ku, 2019). If a leader can understand people's feelings and act inspirationally, this would allow a better chance of aligning the organizations culture to its strategy.

Schilpzand et al. (2018) describes how an organizations intent to setup for empowerment and a leader's ability to empower others has shown to improve employee performances and efficiencies. Hakimi et al. (2010) discusses the many challenges that leaders face in their ambition to empower others, but points out that empowerment of others in an organization allows employees to commit, take responsibility and reaps many other employee and performance benefits. Hickman & Silva (2018) talked about commitment needed by all in an organization to successfully embed culture. In addition to commitment, Lee et al. (2019) talks about the benefits of having the capability and skill of being proactive. Being proactive is the ability to take your own initiative and prepare in advance for a task that needs to be addressed (Lee et al., 2019). Being proactive is a large driver of getting commitment and involvement by being inclusive from the start of a journey (Lee et al., 2019). Therefore, even empowerment should be an activity performed proactively to gain commitment from employees as early as possible.

## **2.6 Challenge with Embedding Culture**

Embedding culture in an organization needs the commitment and assurance from people in an organization to be successful (Hickman & Silva, 2018). However in addition to commitment, creating and embedding an aligned culture is an art that needs specific skills and capabilities to achieve successfully (Hemerling et al., 2018).

One of shortfalls of embedding strategic change and culture well, is ineffective change management (Fugate & Soenen, 2018). (Fugate & Soenen, 2018) argues that a big challenge for leader's and manager's is to effectively influence and ease in changes in the organization.

Leader's need to improve their ability to manage change by ensuring information is shared, expectations are agreed between all parties, and create an environment that is conducive to trust (Fugate & Soenen, 2018).

The benefits of effective communication can be the difference between succeeding at aligning culture to strategy or not, as being an effective communicator is one of the important skills needed by leaders leading change (Hutchison-Krupat, 2018). However, he further explains that when communicating, the very same message can be interpreted in different ways if the leader and employee has a different objective or understanding. Therefore, the need to be closer to your employees and understand each other plays a pivotal role when implementing change and new initiatives (Hutchison-Krupat, 2018).

Venus et al. (2019) speaks about employees not willing to align to change. It is mentioned further that employees often feel very comfortable in their current space and the thought of change coming in to disrupt that comfort is enough for employees to resist align to change. Rafferty & Jimmieson (2017) add that the resistance to change can also be due to many other factors like their misunderstanding of the impending change or fear of what the change will cause. When challenges with embedding culture and resistance to change come in the form fear, leaders need to be effective in how they communicate effectively to send the correct message (Aslam et al., 2018).

Boodoo (2020) adds another challenge to embedding and aligning an organizations culture to its strategy by raising the needs of the organization's shareholders. He talks about the shareholders focus on share price and profits, which may be prioritized over culture alignment if resources are limited. The pressures that come through to leaders from shareholder may force leaders to overlook the need to focus on culture alignment to strategy.

## **2.7 Capabilities Needed to Lead Culture Change**

One of the most critical and needed responsibilities and capabilities that an entrepreneur, leader, and manager needs to have is to be able to develop and manage their organization's culture (Christensen, 2006). It is further stated that one of the only ways culture change can be successful is through a capable, skilled and cutting-edge leader (Christensen, 2006).

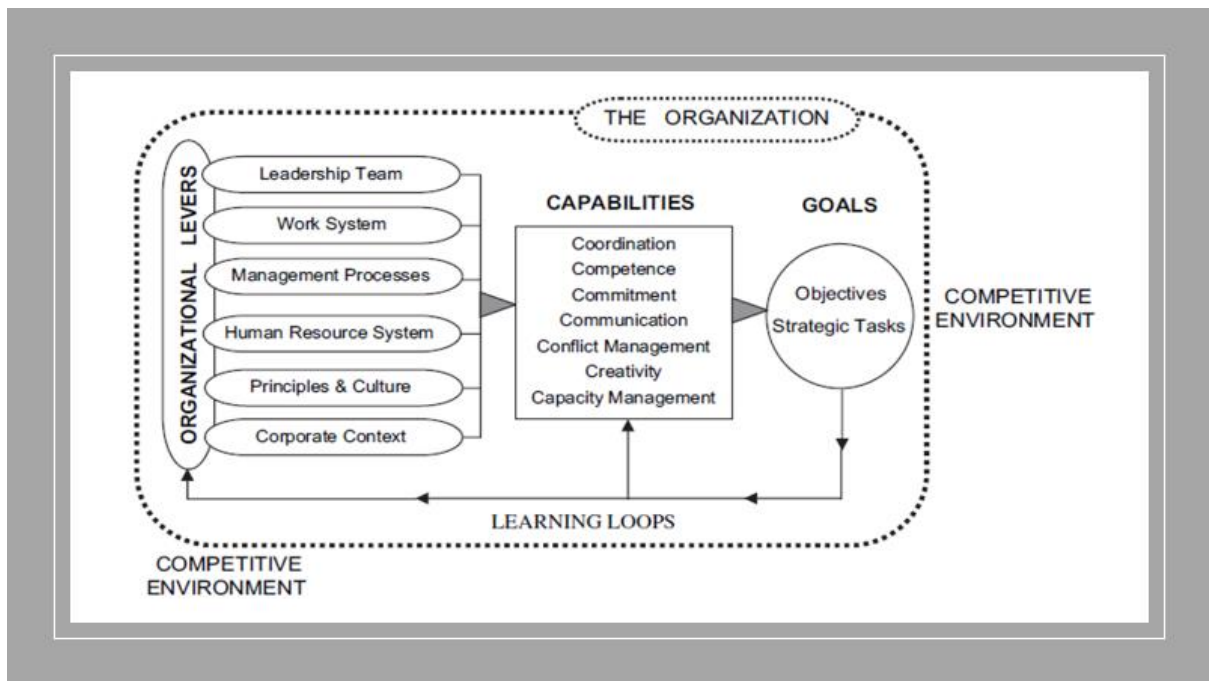
Devecchi et al. (2018) discussed the complexity of change, and that for successful strategic change to be effective, a mandatory pre-requisite is for leaders to understand the culture or cultures that exist within the organization, and embed a continuous learning process that

equips leaders to support culture change. It was further stated that when leading change, a vital responsibility of leadership is to lead and manage culture needed for change to be successful (Devecchi et al., 2018). Therefore, in addition to dealing with change to the environment, culture, and leadership, to fit its strategy, an organization also needs to determine what key capabilities need to be learnt quickly to be able to lead culture change successfully (Beer et al., 2005).

Beer et al. (2005) stated that it is very difficult for people in an organization to quickly change from their normal beliefs and values, which were their strong-rooted behaviors, to new ways of doing things, and these can become a barrier to culture change. He further stated that the process of identifying and learning new skills and competencies that assist in aligning to the strategy is a continuous process, and needed for organizational capabilities to enable culture change, and ultimately organizational success (Beer et al., 2005). Willis et al. (2016) affirmed this point by suggesting that organizations need to encourage their people to make gradual improvements to their skills and competencies in leading culture change, as this will make them more aware of their capabilities to reduce resistance to change, and then be able to build on these skills further.

Filson & Gretz (2004) discuss the differences in an older leader, versus a younger leader. The older leader tends to rely more on experience and is more cautious toward innovation and change. Whereas the younger leaders tend to place more focus on innovation and change. The eagerness to embrace change by the younger leader is not always optimal for business but displays the openness to change. However, whether a leader is open to change or not, a successful leader will always evaluate their actions (Dierdorff et al., 2019). Dierdorff et al. (2019) points out that all leaders need to have a high level of self-awareness. He further states if a leader can be self-aware, they are able to easily diagnose if their actions, behaviors, and performance are aligned to what it needs to be as leader in their organization. High self-aware teams have also shown results of having high team effectiveness (Dierdorff et al., 2019).

Lakatos et al. (2017) described when a significant strategic implementation was taking place at Wells Fargo, senior management had set their vision and strategy, and their expectations around how leaders should present themselves. There had to be proper direction provided to leaders on how they should act and lead culture change. In addition to coaching and advising their leaders on how to equip themselves, they acknowledged that it was also imperative to provide training and sufficient support for those that were request and tasked to make the changes needed for the transition (Lakatos et al., 2017).



**Figure 3 : Organizational Fitness Model – The comprehensive fitness model links business strategy and competitive environment with capabilities and enabling organizational levers.  
(Beer et al., 2005)**

## 2.8 Conclusion

To conclude, it could be seen through current literature that strategy is an integral part to driving organization competitive advantage. However, the implementation of strategy is the key to making strategy successful. In the journey to making strategy a reality within the company, there is a strong relationship between successfully implementing an organization's strategy and an aligned organizational culture. If leaders are not able to lead the culture change to align to the strategy and its implementation, the strategic initiatives will fail.

A key issue that contributes to culture change failures is that leaders are not trained and equipped to successfully lead and make culture change happen. There are some capabilities that have been found in literature to lead culture change successfully, however there are gaps in literature that identify why leaders do not give culture change the required attention by equipping and training themselves properly, and what are the specific capabilities needed by leaders to be successful culture change leaders, which will enable them to successfully align culture and implement strategy.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

An objective of this study was to understand why most leaders do not align the organization's culture to the strategy that the organization wants to implement. The inquiry behind this was due to a strong relationship noted in literature between an aligned culture, and a higher rate of success when implementing strategy.

Another objective in this research study was to fill the gap in the literature to develop a toolkit to enable leaders equip themselves to align an organization's culture to its strategy. This would not only assist leader's in upskilling themselves to reach the levels needed for this function, but also assist organization's if they were looking to hire leaders who were proficient in this role.

This research will aim to answer the following questions.

### **3.2 Research Question 1**

What are the main reasons for organization's and its leaders not aligning culture to its strategy, given the positive relationship between an aligned culture and successful strategy implementations?

Research question one aimed to identify the key reasons and root causes that prevent the alignment of culture to strategy. The investigation probes around whether this was mainly caused by leader's skills, capabilities, and mindsets, or whether it was due to restrictions that organizations may have established.

### **3.3 Research Question 2**

What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?

Research question two probes to identify what the core key skills and capabilities are that leaders need to possess to effectively be able to fulfil this purpose as a leader who needs strategy to be implemented successfully.

### **3.4 Research Question 3**

What can leaders proactively do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?

Research question three aimed to collect data that could contribute to the body of knowledge and provide leaders and organizations with input to being more proactive to align an organizations culture to its strategy.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the detail of the research methodology and design that was selected. The research was based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The data for this research was gathered through one on one semi-structured interviews with non-executive senior management, who have been involved in the strategy implementation process for at least ten years.

### **4.2 Philosophy**

The research philosophy influenced how the research was approached (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). It related to how the knowledge and information around this research study was developed and how this knowledge was understood (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

In this research paper, the focus was on three specific findings, the first was finding the main obstacles that exist which prevent leaders from aligning the organization's culture to its strategy, the second was then to identify the critical skills and capabilities needed by leaders to align culture to strategy, and the third was specifically looking at how leaders can be proactive in equipping themselves to align the organization's culture to the organization's strategy.

As many causes do exist, the type of research philosophy used was critical realism. The critical realism philosophy did not only cover what can be experienced and seen, it also looked at the main underlying reasons that shapes this result (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

During this research, the focus was on identifying the key reasons leaders do not align culture to strategy, looking at what skills and capabilities are needed, and how leaders can be proactive in this area. The critical realism philosophy drove the thinking around what the underlying issues were, which assisted and enabled resolutions to be identified on the root cause of the problems.

Badley (2003) describes pragmatism as a working point of view and what truly works within an organization's operation. This research study takes a deep dive into what does works when leaders in an organization apply the right and wrong skills and capabilities. Pragmatism was

a suitable approach for the research, as the research study investigated the participant's experience retrospectively and observed how the results could assist in translating these into workable, proactive solutions for leaders to successfully align the organization's culture to its strategy.

### **4.3 Approach**

The approach used for this research is the inductive approach. An inductive approach is a method where the theory became evident by looking at the outcome of the research (Rahi, 2017). The inductive approach can also explore feedback from individuals with exposure and experiences to similar situations and environments and translate it into meaningful outputs (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018).

This research approach was inductive as it aimed to understand from all the participants who have been involved in the strategy implementation process, the actual reasons behind the shortcomings of leaders to align culture to the organization's strategy successfully. The outcome of this research is to achieve an understanding of all the feedback and results, and induce the reasoning.

The inductive approach also allowed for an easy, non-rigid, flexible approach for any changes that came up during the research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). In this research, due to the literature gap around the lack of proper direction in successfully aligning the organization's culture to its strategy, and the right skills and capabilities needed by leaders, there is a need for flexibility to achieve the relatively unknown outcome.

### **4.4 Strategy**

The methodology used was the exploratory qualitative research study. Qualitative research is suitable when the study can add to and build on existing literature, collect new sources of data and information, and merge theory areas (Blackwell, 2019).

It can be reasoned that qualitative and exploratory research has always been an effective method to understand the problem's real root causes better (Zikmund, 2000). The requirement for exploratory research to be used is also when there are new and unexplained areas in the area of study.

In this research, the aim was to gather new information sources from leaders who have had at least ten years of experience in implementing strategy. As much as studies have shown the strong relationship between culture and strategy alignment to successful implementations, there was a gap for a focused study on the following. It was not clear why leaders were not successful in aligning culture to strategy, given that in Chapter 2, a clear relationship was shown between an aligned culture to an organization's strategy and successful implementations. There was also a study needed to learn how leaders can be more proactive in equipping themselves to align culture to strategy, and identify the critical skills and capabilities and needed to align culture to strategy successfully. This research aimed to gather and analyze data from interviews with the participants to extend the theory and attempt to develop a deeper understanding of why culture alignment to strategy has been a struggle for leaders, as this has been a key element to increase the success rate of successful strategy implementations.

The aim of exploratory research was to gain and achieve new understandings and insights around a topic (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). This research was aligned to an exploratory approach as it aimed to analyze and achieve new insights into the required capabilities, competencies, and skills to enable leaders to create alignment of the organizational culture and strategy, which will add to successful strategy rollouts.

The strategy used in this research was the survey strategy. This strategy used is an approach where information is collected from a group of individuals who agree to attending an interview where the topic related questions are asked (Ponto, 2015). The survey strategy approach can be executed in a number of different methods to bring in participants, gather the data needed, and use different instrumentation options (Ponto, 2015). When performing the research study using the survey strategy, it is planned to be used in conjunction with qualitative research strategies and is used to define and explore the behavior of people and interaction through interviews(Ponto, 2015). For this research, the researcher was required to reach out and set up interviews with participants who had at least ten years of experience with implementing strategies. An interview questionnaire guide (Appendix B) was developed and used in the semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.5 Time Horizon**

This research was performed using a cross-sectional research design. This type of research design was executed by collecting and gathering data from the participants at only one period during this research (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). During this research, the data was gathered

from the individual participants involved by conducting interviews online and going through the questionnaire guide during one session. The period from when the first interview was held to the last interview was five weeks. Each interview lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. There were no other interviews or sessions with these individuals that were held outside of these scheduled sessions.

#### **4.6 Population**

In research, the population is referred to as the full complement of all participants that the researcher would identify as key to the study and would wish to collect data from. (Rahi, 2017). For this type of research, there is a need to obtain information from as many individuals that can be reached within geographies and time frames to assist in obtaining, collecting, and analyzing the required data needed (Ponto, 2015). However, this is not always a possible option to meet and collect information from the full population, which is the reasoning to only use a sample (Ponto, 2015).

The strategy management process includes the formulation of strategy and the implementation of strategy. The population targeted for this research was focused on a group of participants that have been involved in the process of implementing strategies for at least ten years. The reasons for these criteria were because these individual participants have substantial experience in observing the approach taken by leaders to address and align culture to strategy, they have worked with the employees on the ground to gauge and understand the responses to strategy changes, and have had to implement strategy themselves. These criteria placed them in a perfect position to know what approaches and elements have worked well and which were failures. This group of participants were able to extract from experience the various types of leaders, their approaches, and their skills. They were also in a position that was close to the employees on the ground, and in the presence and delegating order of their leaders who formulate the strategy and lead the culture alignment approach.

A sample is defined as a small part or group of the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). The sample is normally a small set of people with the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). In research, it quite often occurs that when data is gathered or collected from participants, it is usually collected using a sample of participants and not the entire population, as it is simply not practical to gather data from everyone in the population group (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). The sample that was selected for this research was mainly made up of participants from one organization. There were 13 participants in total, 12 participants from one organization and one from a different type of organization. Saturation was clearly approaching toward the final

participants as the number of new insights were declining.

#### **4.7 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis is defined as the actual entity or item that the study is focused on (Vogt, 2005). In this research study the unit of analysis was the measurement of how culture is aligned. The alignment of the organization's culture to its strategy improves the implementation of its strategy, thereby its performance, competitive advantages, and revenues. The unit of observation for this research was mainly the behaviors and approaches of leaders that formulate and implement strategy, and reasons and obstacles that prevent leaders from more effectively aligning culture to strategy.

#### **4.8 Sampling Method and Size**

When referring to sampling techniques, there are two types. The one is probability sampling and the other is non-probability sampling (Taherdoost, 2016). For this research, the non-probability sampling technique was used. Within this sampling technique, there is the judgmental or purposive sampling technique that could have been used.

The non-probability sampling technique is an approach used when the researcher cannot access the complete set of the population and is not able to determine the probability of the participants to be used in the sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

The purposive sampling technique is an approach where the researcher includes participants in a sample as the researcher is aware of the study's outcome and knows participants that are well suited for the topic of study (Etikan, 2015). Purposive sampling is also known as judgement sampling, and is performed mainly when the researcher selects participants based on specific qualities and characteristics (Etikan, 2015).

The key benefits when using purposive sampling techniques are that it is quite low-cost, very convenient to set up, not time-consuming to run, and ideal when the exploratory research design is used (Taherdoost, 2016).

In this research, purposive sampling was used. The participants selected were all individuals that the researcher knew and were chosen because they were perfectly suited to provide input on implementing strategy and culture alignment. They have all had at least ten years of experience in leading and implementing strategies. They have worked closely with

organizational leaders and understand leaders' thinking and approaches when implementing strategy and aligning culture. They also work closely with their teams on the ground and have a view from an employee's perspective on what approaches work well when accepting a new strategy. The reason for using the majority of participants from one organization was due to my judgement and knowledge of their experience and what was needed for this research. They were perfectly suited candidates that had vast experience on this topic from their current and previous employers. The participants also hold different roles, which made the feedback interestingly valuable. The one participant that was from a different organization was selected as it was felt the criteria was fully met and it was interesting to see if the feedback would be vastly different, which was not the case. It could be argued that the distribution between males and females, roles, and age were quite disparate. However, the feedback was analyzed to determine if any difference could be highlighted. The generational gap did become an interesting and influential element in the research findings.

Therefore, purposive participants' specific need was critical for this research, so it was possible to obtain the information and data that would add and provide the correct input to the research.

Table 1 - Distribution Breakdown of the Participants

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>MALE / FEMALE</b>	<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AGE</b>
Participant 1	Male	Systems Engineering Manager	36 - 40
Participant 2	Male	Head of Project Management (EMEA)	36 - 40
Participant 3	Male	Head of IT Support (EMEA)	41 - 45
Participant 4	Male	Head of Solution Architecture (EMEA)	46 - 50
Participant 5	Male	Head of IT Development	36 - 40
Participant 6	Female	Senior Manager: Human Capital	36 - 40
Participant 7	Male	Senior Manager: Business Process (Africa)	36 - 40
Participant 8	Female	Senior Manager: Business Process (Africa)	41 - 45
Participant 9	Male	Project Manager (EMEA)	41 - 45
Participant 10	Male	Senior Project Manager (EMEA)	41 - 45
Participant 11	Female	Head of PMO (EMEA)	51 - 55



PARTICIPANT	MALE / FEMALE	ROLE	AGE
Participant 12	Female	Senior Change Manager	56 -60
Participant 13	Male	IT Operations Director	51 - 55

#### 4.9 Measurement Instrument

In research, the measurement instrument is described as a measurement device in the research process (Stebbins, 2012). For this research, the measurement instrument used was interviews. The researcher conducted one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews according to the interview guide included in Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire Guide. The interviews were performed only through the Zoom and Microsoft Teams online tools as during the Covid-19 lockdown period, it was not feasible to meet face to face in person. The interview guide followed a semi-structured format with open-ended questions linked to each of the overarching research questions.

The interviews were performed by designing and developing the questionnaires that were related to the research, by aiming to identify and provide conclusive feedback around what the key obstacles were that prevented leaders from aligning culture to strategy, what leaders can do to equip themselves to be able to align culture to strategy, and what were the key skills and capabilities needed for these leaders to be able to align their organizational culture to the strategy.

However, the interview guide was used to guide discussions with the participants and provided a structure for the conversation flow. The below table will demonstrate how the interviews with participants were structured around the research questions. This shows how the questionnaire was built around the research questions.

Table 2: Interview Questionnaire Grouped by Research Questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SEQ.	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Research Question 1  What are the main reasons that influence a leader's ability to align the organization's	1	In organizations you have worked at, do you believe there was sufficient focus on building the intended culture? Why?
	2	On a scale of 1-10, how much do you feel does the organization's culture affect the implementation of strategy, where 1 shows that culture does not affect strategy implementation and 10 shows that the impact is very high. Please justify your rating.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SEQ.	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
culture to its strategy and implementation, given the positive relationship between aligned culture and successful strategy implementations?	3	On a scale of 1-10, how critical is leadership's role in aligning the organizations culture to its strategy, where 1 shows that leadership's role is not critical and 10 shows that leadership's role is very critical. Please justify your rating.
	4	Do you feel that when leaders fail to align culture to strategy implementation, do they purposefully ignore culture alignment and change, do they not feel it is important enough to be part of the plan and initiative to drive a successful implementation of the strategy, or is it an element that they feel does not need any attention? Do leaders assume the people in the organization are already aligned? Why?
	5	What are the key reasons for leadership failing to align the organizations culture to its strategy or implementation plan? Why do they ignore it? Or not plan for it?
	8	Do you feel leaders often try to exploit their existing skills and capabilities to align and change culture, and not make the effort to learn the needed skills?
Research Question 2 What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?	6	Do you feel that hard or soft skills are a greater asset to possess when it comes to leader's skills and capabilities around aligning culture to its strategy?
	7	What are the most crucial skills and capabilities that a leader would need to be effective in aligning their organizations culture to successfully implement strategy?
	10	From the perspective of employees or organization on the ground, what do think their reasoning or drivers not to align to new strategy, and be resistant to change?
	11	From the perspective of employees or organization on the ground, what do think their reasoning or drivers to align to new strategy, and be supportive and excited about the change?
Research Question 3 What can leaders proactively do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?	9	How can leaders be more proactive in setting themselves up to be successful in aligning the organizations culture to its strategy?
	12	What key tips can you provide that will enable leaders to think about aligning culture whilst still formulating strategy?
	13	Is there anything else you would like to add to this topic and area of strategy implementation and culture alignment?

The sequencing of the interview questions were structured to get the participants thinking

about their experience in strategy implementations and culture alignment. It followed to help the participants realize their views on the importance of culture and the leader's role in aligning culture to strategy. The questions then progressed to be more focused on the collecting the data required for this research.

The questions in the interview questionnaire followed a structured flow which allowed the conversation to have a natural conversational flow. The researcher was able to execute test runs on the interview which assisted in setting up the questionnaire to flow in a conversational structure.

#### **4.10 Data Gathering Process**

Interviews were the mechanisms used in this research. An interview questionnaire was prepared for use in the interviews. Interviews are a method of collecting and gathering data, where the participants are requested to respond to the questions that were asked for the benefit of the research (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). Questionnaires are often used as a key tool when collecting data for structured or semi-structured interviews, however for the interviews to be meaningful and productive, the researcher needed to have skills associated with proficiently conducting the interview (Gray, 2004). The data for this research study was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, where participants engaged in conversation and shared their experiences on the topic. They were encouraged to share their experience on the topic and were guided and prompted by the researcher during the interview.

The questionnaires were kept simple and designed to be brief. It was able to translate and convey the importance of the topic, was easy to understand, it was in the proper order, was consistent, started with simple questions, and then moved to the more complex ones toward the end (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). The questionnaires were compiled and aimed to get information that answered the research questions and met the purpose and research objectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

The interviews were designed to be semi-structured interviews, that were consistently held on the Microsoft Teams online tool. This was due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that were in place, which did not make face to face meetings easy to agree and plan. The researcher allocated time to take the needed steps to prepare the necessary skills to conduct the interviews. Test interviews were carried out before the actual interviews to prepare for the flow and interview skills adequately.

The data collected was done using an unstructured observation approach. This approach

focused on answering the questions looking at the 'why' (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). The researcher used what was seen and heard to obtain qualitative data (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

The interview period started on September 29<sup>th</sup> having received the ethical clearance, and ended on October 4<sup>th</sup>, lasting a full five weeks. As the plan was to engage participants that were mainly from the same company, the researcher requested and received approval from an executive to engage and have interviews with the employees. The participants were assured that the interviews and their participation were anonymous. Consent forms were sent to the participants with the interview invites to provide their acceptance to take part in the study.

The interview times varied very slightly, with the longest interview taking the full 60 minutes and the shortest interview taking 46 minutes. Most of the interviews took between 50 and 55 minutes. A request was made to the participants to record the conversation, and notes were transcribed after the interviews. The interviews were recorded on Microsoft Teams, and the audio was uploaded to a transcribing software called Otter.

The data gathering process was a gratifying and teachable experience. Every effort was made to thoroughly prepare for the interviews and keep the interview experience consistent.

#### **4.11 Data Analysis Process**

Once the data had been collected and transcribed, the next step was to start analyzing the data. This is done to extract the feedback in a meaningful way to discover and fill gaps in knowledge and literature.

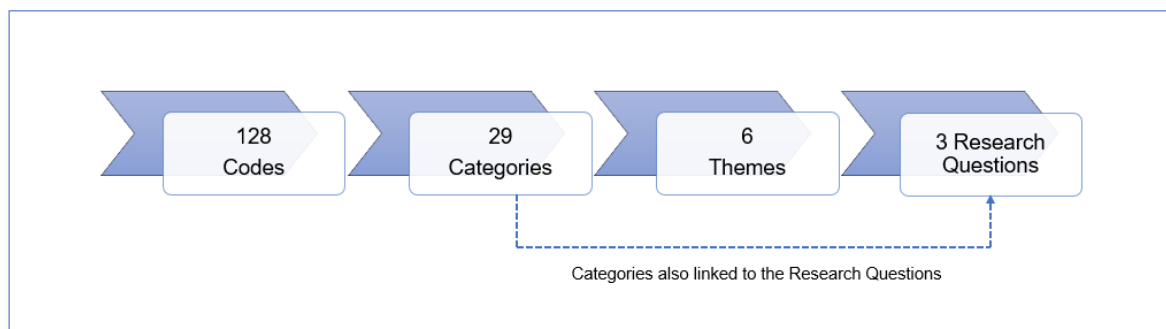
The researcher used the Atlas.ti tool to analyze the data collected. The transcribed documents for each of the participants were uploaded onto the Atlas.ti tool and was then analyzed. The analysis process of the transcribed document took the form of reading and listening through the interview, extracting key feedback from the participants, and grouping the feedback into groups of a similar meaning. The development of these similar groups is called coding.

On completion of the coding process, one hundred and twenty-eight codes were developed. The next step was to form categories that grouped similar positioned codes. This process was time-consuming and had to be relooked at and revised numerous times. The reason for this was because there were similar codes which could have been allocated to different categories.

The revision process allowed for the most suitable categories being formed.

The next step in the analysis process was to develop themes. Themes were formed by grouping categories into similar groups or themes. There were six themes defined and each category could be linked and grouped with its closest theme.

The final analysis step was to link each of the six themes to the research questions. However, there were themes that linked to more than just one research question. This was because the linking process involved linking the categories to the research questions and then bringing in the themes. The evident point here was that even though the themes could link to more than one research question, there was always a dominant link between a theme and a research question.



**Figure 4: Analysis Process from Coding to the Research Question Links**

#### 4.12 Limitations

The following limitations existed in this research study:

- The Covid-19 pandemic had initially taken away the option to perform face to face interviews. Besides participants not being keen to meet, the timing of the restrictions could not be planned.
- There was a high dependency on internet connectivity, which did impact some interviews that were scheduled and had to be rescheduled. This made technology a big factor in the ability to communicate.
- Majority of the sample was from the same organization. However, this was mitigated by including participants across the different business units. The other positive factor was that this topic focused more on individual's experience rather than having focus on any specific organization.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined how the research was conducted and the method used to collect the data. In this chapter, the presented results have been extracted from the interviews held with all participants. Thirteen participants took part in this research study, and their names have been removed from the data collected to maintain confidentiality.

The presentation of the data that follows shows excerpts and summaries from the thirteen interview transcripts. The process that followed after completing interviews and the interview transcribing was to code the feedback. The coding of the data was performed on a tool called Atlas.ti, where one hundred and twenty-eight codes were developed. The codes were then translated and grouped into twenty-nine categories. The categories were classified into six themes, and the six themes link to the research questions and objectives of the research study.

The themes were developed by grouping similar categories and placing them into structured themes. The final six themes selected are as follows.

1. Enablers to culture alignment
2. The influence of a leader's role
3. Leader abilities
4. Proactiveness is key to success
5. Resistance to culture alignment
6. Rich relationship between culture and strategy.

### **5.2 Link between Categories, Themes, and the Research Questions**

The linking between the categories to themes, and the themes to research questions are defined as per the below tables. The table depicts each category being aligned and linked to one of the six themes.

Table 3: Categories Linked to Themes

CATEGORIES (x29)	THEMES (x6)					
	Enablers to culture alignment	Influence of a leader's role	Leader abilities	Pro-activeness is key to success	Resistance to culture alignment	Rich relationship between culture and strategy
Bad leadership qualities			X			
Building culture needs commitment					X	
Cost-benefit analysis	X					
Creating a culture is an art	X					
Culture focus differs based on various characteristics					X	
Effective change management enables culture alignment	X					
Effective communication enables culture alignment	X					
Employee resistance to change					X	
Generational impact on culture		X				
An increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity						X
Leaders can learn from experience, others and take criticism	X					
Leaders lack of awareness				X		
Leaders need strong people and EQ skills			X			
Leaders need to be proactive				X		
Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment			X			
Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively			X			
Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground				X		
Leaders need to lead by example			X			
Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams				X		
Leaders need to understand their organization				X		
Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable			X			
Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture		X				

CATEGORIES (x29)	THEMES (x6)					
	Enablers to culture alignment	Influence of a leader's role	Leader abilities	Pro-activeness is key to success	Resistance to culture alignment	Rich relationship between culture and strategy
Leadership style influences culture alignment		X				
Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy				X		
No focus is needed on culture		X				
Practice good leadership qualities			X			
Revenue focus trumps culture focus					X	
Rich relationship between culture and strategy						X
The importance of inclusiveness				X		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

The categories were defined by carefully grouping the interview codes. The interview codes were analyzed from the interview transcripts. Each category has a group of codes that talk to a specific topic within aligning an organization's culture to its strategy and the skills and capabilities needed by leaders on this initiative. The golden thread or link is then further analyzed to link categories to the research questions for this research study. The resulting outcome from the analysis enabled the researcher to define themes, and link the categories to the themes as per the above table. The table also reflects a total row that shows the frequency of the categories per theme. This result depicts that there are themes that are more prevalent when linking the categories to each theme. This table's results will be discussed further in the paper as it links to other results per the research questions that highlights the golden thread.

The below table shows how the themes are linked to the research questions. The scope of this research is narrow, where the focus is on organizational leaders and their capabilities to align culture to strategy. Therefore, it was evident in the analysis that the categories would overlap and be linked to more than one research question.

This, in turn, can be seen in the results where the themes also overlap with the research questions. However, observing the results of the below table shows that there are dominant



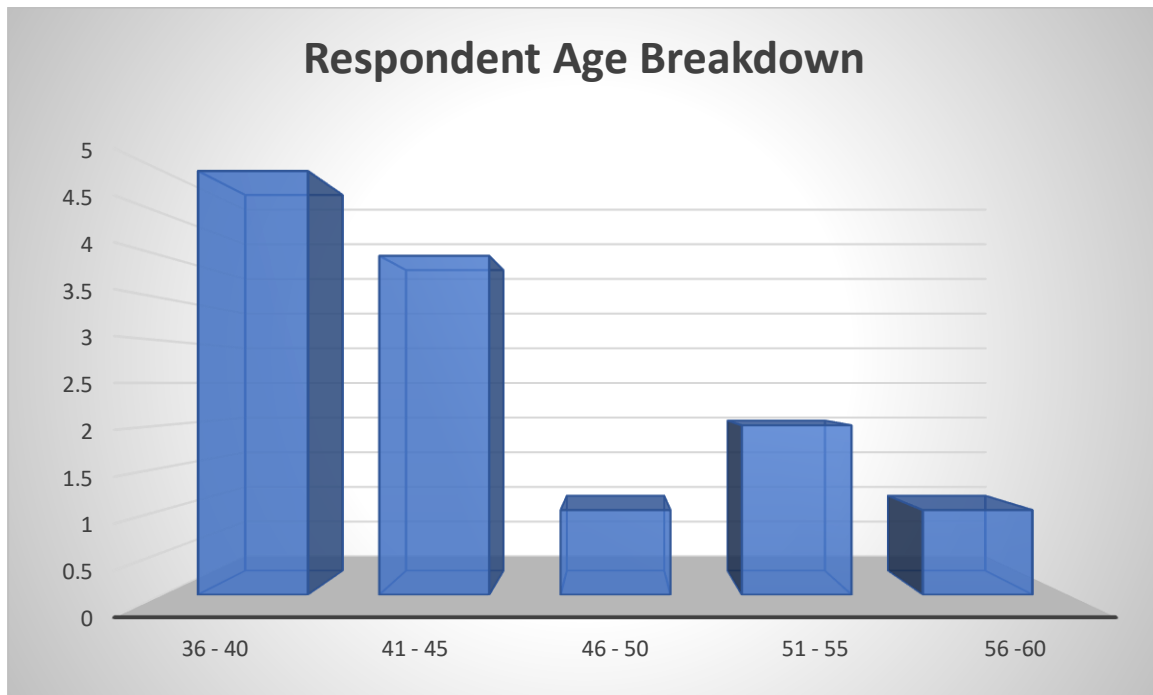
themes per research question. The percentages are calculated based on the number of categories per theme. As opposed to the Table 3: Categories Linked to Themes, where only the primary link between a category and theme is indicated, in the below table it is separated. The reason for this is due to our analysis format, where we break the detail per research question at the highest level. This enables the paper to show the impact of the themes per research question, even if it is at a smaller percentage.

Table 4: Themes Linked to Research Questions

THEMES (6)	RESEARCH QUESTIONS (3)		
	<u>Research Question 1</u>	<u>Research Question 2</u>	<u>Research Question 3</u>
	What are the main reasons that influence a leader's ability to align the organization's culture to its strategy and implementation, given the positive relationship between aligned culture and successful strategy implementations?	What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?	What important tips can leaders be given, to be proactive and equip themselves to align the organization's culture to its strategy successfully?
Enablers to culture alignment	68%	15%	18%
Influence of a leader's role	100%	0%	0%
Leader abilities	13%	78%	9%
Proactiveness is key to success	40%	23%	37%
Resistance to culture alignment	94%	0%	6%
Drive the culture and strategy relationship	57%	0%	43%

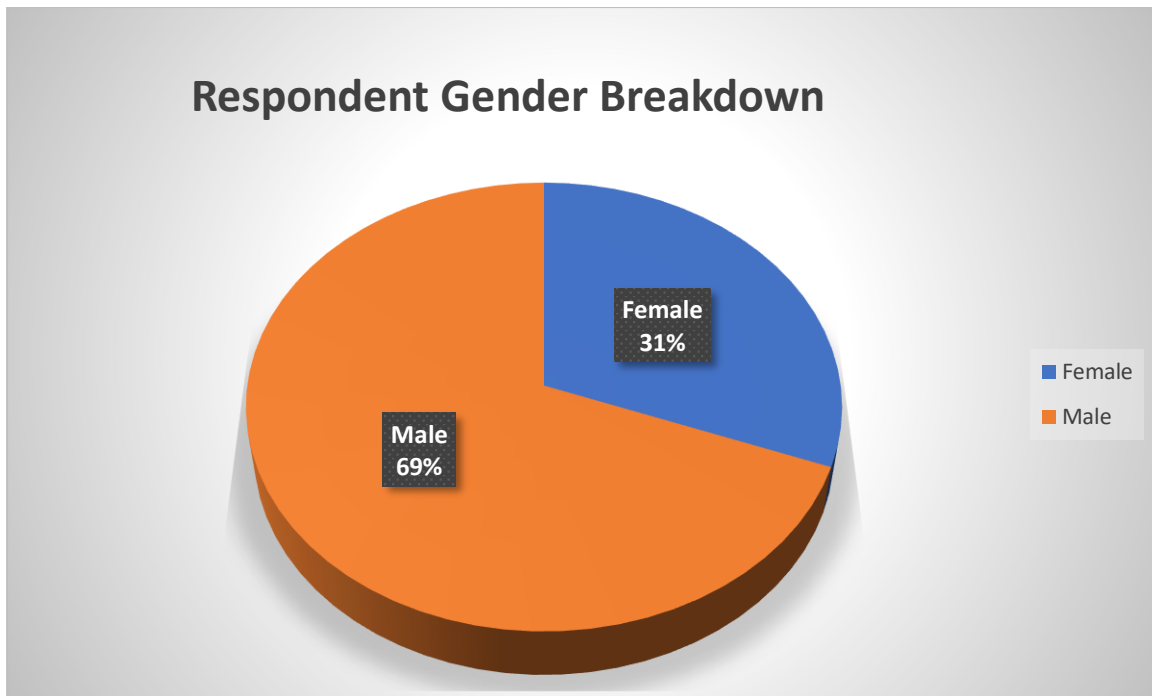
### 5.3 Demographics

The two demographics that are looked at in this study will be gender and age. The age of the respondents varies over a twenty-five year range, from the thirty-six year class to the sixty year class. The responses from the different age groups mainly included the topic of different generations.



**Figure 5: Respondent Age Breakdown**

Different generations looked at respondents that worked in the 1980's compared to some that only started working in the 2000's era. It became evident that leaders from different eras led in a different way and had a different perspective on culture in the workplace.



**Figure 6: Respondent Gender Breakdown**

A key code referred to generational differences having an influence on how culture becomes an intentional drive. Participant 11 said *“when I started working, things were explained very differently, we called people sir and ma’am, that set a tone, and part of setting a tone is a culture. You know, I think there are things around age, and gender, and all of those impact how culture is perceived.”* Therefore, it could be seen how age and gender is a factor in the responses, and it adds to this study by introducing specific experiences through the lens of different generations and gender.

## 5.4 Results for Research Question 1 (RQ1)

### 5.4.1 RQ1 - Introduction

The results for research question one covered the objective. The aim to identify the key reasons and root causes of what prevented the alignment of culture to strategy came out evidently in the feedback. The questions searched around whether this was caused by leader’s skills, capabilities, and mindsets, or whether it was due to restrictions that organizations may have established can be seen in the results. Research question one (RQ1) can be seen in the below figure.

**Research Question 1 (RQ1)**

**What are the main reasons for organization’s and its leaders not aligning culture to its strategy and implementation, given the positive relationship between an aligned culture and successful strategy implementations?**

**Figure 7: Research Question 1**

**5.4.2 RQ1 – Results linked by Theme and Category**

It is shown how the codes were grouped into categories, the categories linked to themes and the themes linked to the research questions. In this part of the results, each theme that is linked to RQ1 will be presented. The category associated to the theme and necessary quotes from the respective interviews will be noted.

The below table demonstrates each of the themes and their categories linked to RQ1, and those that are not linked to RQ1. The interesting result to note is that there are some themes and categories that have a stronger link to RQ1 than other themes and categories. There are also some categories that do not link to RQ1 at all. The table also shows a column called ‘Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ1)’. This column shows the number of codes linked to the associated category in that row. The reason for displaying this field is to indicate the strength of the links in terms of how frequently the area or topic came up in the interviews. This clearly shows the popular views and opinions and opposed to the one-off, yet sometimes valuable inputs to the research topic.

Table 5: Categories Linked to Research Question 1

<b>ID#</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>	<b>Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ1)</b>
RQ1-C1	Cost-benefit analysis	Enablers to culture alignment	3
RQ1-C2	Creating a culture is an art	Enablers to culture alignment	10
RQ1-C3	Effective change management enables culture alignment	Enablers to culture alignment	3
RQ1-C4	Effective communication enables culture alignment	Enablers to culture alignment	2

<b>ID#</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>	<b>Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ1)</b>
RQ1-C5	Leaders can learn from experience, from others and take criticism	Enablers to culture alignment	5
RQ1-C6	Generational impact on culture	Influence of a leader's role	5
RQ1-C7	Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture	Influence of a leader's role	5
RQ1-C8	Leadership style influence on culture alignment	Influence of a leader's role	6
RQ1-C9	No focus is needed on culture	Influence of a leader's role	2
RQ1-C10	Bad leadership qualities	Leader abilities	2
RQ1-C11	Leaders need strong people and EQ skills	Leader abilities	0
RQ1-C12	Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment	Leader abilities	0
RQ1-C13	Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively	Leader abilities	1
RQ1-C14	Leaders need to lead by example	Leader abilities	0
RQ1-C15	Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable	Leader abilities	0
RQ1-C16	Practice good leadership qualities	Leader abilities	0
RQ1-C17	Leaders lack of awareness	Proactiveness is key to success	3
RQ1-C18	Leaders need to be proactive	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ1-C19	Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ1-C20	Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ1-C21	Leaders need to understand their organization	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ1-C22	Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy	Proactiveness is key to success	3
RQ1-C23	The importance of inclusiveness	Proactiveness is key to success	5
RQ1-C24	Building culture needs commitment	Resistance to culture alignment	7
RQ1-C25	Culture focus differs based on various characteristics	Resistance to culture alignment	2
RQ1-C26	Employee resistance to change	Resistance to culture alignment	3
RQ1-C27	Revenue focus trumps culture focus	Resistance to culture alignment	3

ID#	CATEGORIES	THEMES	Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ1)
RQ1-C28	Increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity	Drive the culture and strategy relationship	1
RQ1-C29	Rich relationship between culture and strategy	Drive the culture and strategy relationship	3
<b>Total Coding Links to the Category</b>			<b>75</b>

### 5.4.3 RQ1 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Enablers to Culture Alignment

In this section, the results shown will depict how the categories and themes link to research question one. The table above displays the categories linked to themes just in research question one. The data collected will be presented in the form quotes received from the participants, and the link to the category and theme will be discussed. The “ID” numbers will be used to identify the categories. The objective is to identify and list the key findings and quotes to enable effective analysis of the information collected in this research.

The tables to follow will provide detailed findings on the themes and categories aligned and linked to RQ1. The detail is in the form of quotes and extracts from the interview discussions on the specified theme and category. The first table will relate only to the ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ theme, and the results within RQ1.

The theme ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ embodies the categories that refer to key factors that could enable aligning culture to strategy, and identify factors that are not enablers. There are five categories within the ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ theme that relate to and have been linked to RQ1. The first category is ‘Cost-benefit analysis (RQ1-C1)’. The input in this category relates to enabling from both an organization and employee perspective.

Table 6: RQ1 Responses from the Theme: Enablers to Culture Alignment

THEME: Enablers to Culture Alignment
Results for Category (RQ1-C1) - Cost-benefit analysis
The first discussion on this category talked about the benefit of getting leaders and teams aligned, and how this would add benefit in the long-run. However, as it normally is, with every benefit comes an associated cost. A practical example that can be used is the

monetary cost versus benefits. The benefit is always present in this case as when an organizations culture is aligned to its strategy, the rate of successfully implementations are higher (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). It may be easy to see the benefits that come with successful implementations, but is it worth the monetary cost?

From the perspective of the employee, the feedback shows that they do not analyze the cost of the benefit in monetary terms. Mostly, the employee will ascertain the benefit from how it affects them from a personal level. The results emphasize that personal growth and monetary benefit are high rankers in enabling employees to align to new strategy and change. If the benefit is higher, this will enable culture alignment to strategy, and thereby more successful strategy implementations.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C1) - Cost-benefit analysis**

- **Participant 7** - *"I think fundamentally, for any business, for them to do something, there is a value, and the cost. And the cost of getting that alignment, getting people to buy it, is a lot..." "...In order for you to do it in the right way, you must remember that you first need to take managers to leaders. So that's investment in training..."*
- **Participant 7** - *"And one of the biggest things is that to get you to understand that we put in place a really costly affair, because you have to think about it, to transform the mindset of a manager to a leader. I firstly now need to hire a different caliber of individuals, which is more expensive in the market, all those kinds of things."*
- **Participant 3** - *"Personal growth is a big motivator to get buy in to new strategy and change. This can be both a personal growth motivator for selfish reasons as well, but it gets buy in..."*
- **Participant 3** - *"...I've been doing the same thing, the same way for the past three years. Now I'm going to be doing it differently. Wow, this is exciting. Let me try it out..."*
- **Participant 5** - *"...it's because some of them will want to do something in a way that benefits them, or that sounds exciting..."*
- **Participant 10** - *"...at some point, a leader does have to face the fact that some people will just not, be conducive to change, you know, a lot of people like their comfort zones. And when you start disrupting that comfort zone, then you sort of get these people not on board with the change..." "...on the same hand, you get people that love innovative things and love change, they love the constant change. I would have to say it's down to the personality type of the staff on the ground..."*

- **Participant 12** - *“...it is inherent in the nature. So, what you'll find is the new bees, the youngsters, your people's people who have not been part of a process like this, who will get on quickly...”*
- **Participant 12** - *“...You'll also find your early adopters, who will always get onboard no matter what change it is...”*
- **Participant 4** - *“If it is a good strategy that they can relate to, if they believe in the strategy, it makes it easier to get on board and enables culture alignment to strategy. For example, I prefer to rather build rather than buy systems and applications, so if I see a similar strategy it's easier to get me onboard...”*
- **Participant 9** - *“...it's all about how that strategy is sold to you...”*

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C2) - Creating a culture is an art**

The second category in the 'Enablers to Culture Alignment' theme is 'Creating a culture is an art (RQ1-C2)'. RQ1 is focused on identifying the key reasons and root causes that prevent the alignment of culture to strategy, and determining whether this is due to leader's skills or the organizational restrictions. In this category, the results show that to create an intended or meaningful culture, the organization and leaders need to be committed to the cause, and to executing culture alignment to strategy effectively. Results reflect that creating and embedding an intended culture is an art, and needs the right expertise. The feedback provides a good view on narrowing down if the alignment is not executed because of the leader or the organization. An experience provided by one of the participants is that when culture is performed as a checkbox exercise, it is likely that either the leader does not have the right expertise, or the organization does not allow the platform to execute effectively.

The results further reflect many instances where there was an intent by the organizations to change and embed culture, but the skills to implement and align culture to the strategy was not at a level where it could be effective. There is feedback that talks to organizations letting culture form itself. This led to negative and toxic cultures being built and negatively affecting strategy implementations. The feedback shows that creating culture is a skill and an art to perform effectively. However, some leaders do not believe it needs any attention, or mistakenly believe it is a simple task to execute.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C2) - Creating a culture is an art**

- **Participant 9** - *“...to a certain extent, organizations do culture awareness, but they do it just because they need to show that. Culture is just a checkbox exercise, and not*



done properly...” “...it’s either the leader does not know how to align culture, or the company does not provide the right tools and platforms...”

- **Participant 2** - “I think the intent to align culture was definitely there, but the problem was the implementation. It’s easy for people at the top to have these great ideas, but they need to be able to implement and embed into the people, because culture to me is all about the people...”
- **Participant 4** - “...there’s been a real focus about how to enable your people to produce the goods...?”
- **Participant 2** - “...that to build a good culture you need to take the people on a journey and most of these corporates don’t take the people along. It’s a very top down approach...”
- **Participant 2** - “...when there’s no focus on building culture, it builds itself and becomes toxic...”
- **Participant 4** - “...it was clear that the negative type of culture did not breed positive results, they could not implement successfully as an organization...”
- **Participant 10** - “...leaders start ignoring the culture and think the culture will eventually adapt to the strategy...”
- **Participant 10** - “...Some leaders are pushed into senior leadership too early...”

### **Results for Category (RQ1-C3) - Effective change management enables culture alignment**

The third category in the ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ theme is ‘Effective change management enables culture alignment (RQ1-C3)’. This category has links to the ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ theme because the results see direct links to enabling culture alignment. This category also links to the other research questions as effective change management is identified throughout the research interviews from different perspectives.

In the data gathering process, it was noted from the perspective of the employees more resistant to change, that change management was poor, and played a big part in the resistance and unwillingness to align. However, it was also noted from the perspective of the employee that was positive about change, that effective change management helped with the change and alignment.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C3) - Effective change management enables culture alignment**

- **Participant 1** - *“The lack of effective change management is a key reason for leaders failing to align an organization’s culture to its strategy...”*
- **Participant 9** - *“...from a change management perspective, what is the understanding on how to achieve it? Is it something where you just write something down, and you put it up on a board, or you put it up on a wall? And people must just know...”*
- **Participant 2** - *They don't know, it's not clear how their lives are going to change, what the positives and the negatives are. Also taking them on the journey. If they weren't involved, then why would I buy into something that I don't agree with?.”*
- **Participant 1** - *“...Effective and comprehensive change management in place enables culture alignment...”*

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C4) - Effective communication enables culture alignment**

The fourth category in the ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ theme is ‘Effective communication enables culture alignment (RQ1-C4)’. This category is also mentioned throughout the study. The link to RQ1 comes through in the results where it was noted that employees resistant to culture change and alignment mostly attribute this the lack of effective or any communication about the culture or strategy. Therefore, a key reason to culture alignment failure is effective communication, as even though some organization’s do communicate, the manner and approach of how it is done, is unsuccessful.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C4) - Effective communication enables culture alignment**

- **Participant 1** - *“...very often no clear direction or communication on the requirement is provided, which raises concerns around fear of the unknown...”*
- **Participant 3** - *“The teams ask why weren’t they even told about why it is being changed? They don’t understand the reasoning as no communication took place...”*
- **Participant 7** - *“...the message is being conveyed in the wrong manner...”*

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C5) - Leaders can learn from experience, from others and take criticism**

The fifth category in the ‘Enablers to Culture Alignment’ theme is ‘Leaders can learn from experience, from others and take criticism (RQ1-C5)’. In this category, the results show leader’s being very reluctant to taking advice, learning, or admitting to not knowing how to align culture and strategy. The data collected calls out facts like leaders being afraid to admit to not knowing how to, or not willing to train for the right skills. Some also believe in themselves and the capabilities they possess, enough to be blinded not to ask for help.

**Quotes for Category (RQ1-C5) - Leaders can learn from experience, from others and take criticism**

- **Participant 1** - *“I have seen leaders not follow best business practices within organizations, and try to achieve goals with their own existing technical capabilities. This is probably due to them not wanting to admit that they do not have the required skill, or feel that their way is always the right way...”*
- **Participant 2** - *“...probably because information is so much more accessible than what it used to be. But all of a sudden, everyone is an expert in everything. And they don't make the effort to really to understand...”*
- **Participant 7** - *“...human nature that you will always try to use what you have already, and will always tend to think that we know a little bit more than what we do...”*
- **Participant 2** - *“...leaders don't always take the time to get the right skills. If it means bringing in a consultant to say, how do I do this thing, that shows that you have your focus on aligning culture...”*

**5.4.4 RQ1 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Influence of a Leaders Role**

The ‘Influence of a Leaders Role’ theme is linked to RQ1 because the results show the importance of leaders, and the role they play in aligning culture to strategy. There are challenges faced that cause confusion because a leader needs to be clear and provide good direction to the employees. However, the feedback provides good answers to RQ1. It shows the diversity of issues when it comes to leaders like, generational differences and leadership styles which have an impact of how culture is perceived and managed.

The categories within the ‘Influence of a Leaders Role’ theme are as per below.

1. (RQ1-C6) - Generational Impact on Culture
2. (RQ1-C7) - Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture
3. (RQ1-C8) - Leadership style influence on culture alignment
4. (RQ1-C9) - No focus is needed on culture

Table 7: RQ1 Responses from the Theme: Influence of a leader’s role

THEME: Influence of a Leaders Role
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C6) - Generational Impact on Culture</b>
For RQ1, there are four categories linked to the ‘Influence of a Leader’ theme. This theme

covers the results about how influential a leader is in aligning culture to strategy within an organization. Leadership styles also came out strong in the data, where the results show how different leadership styles can influence culture focus and alignment differently.

The first category is the 'Generational Impact on Culture'. The spread in age between the interviewees provided excellent feedback on the generational impact on leaders. The older employees indicated that focus on people was minimal 20 to 30 years back. There was no real focus on culture and keeping staff happy. In today's world, people are the center of all operations, so the older generation is forced to catchup.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C6) - Generational impact on culture**

- **Participant 7** - "...creating a culture around how we deliver things in the right manner in the right way. It's been a focus, I could say in the last decade, I've seen quite a lot..."
- **Participant 9** - "...those younger executives might have more of an appetite for culture alignment focus..."
- **Participant 11** - "...when I started working, things were explained very differently to the way that they are today... you called somebody sir or ma'am... and that sets a tone. And part of setting a tone is setting a culture..."
- **Participant 2** - "Mindsets of the older generation mostly differed. The whole thing about culture kind of flies out the window because they do not have that emotional connection. It's like, you know, we have a solid strategy, screw the culture, if they don't want to work here, they can go and find another job..."
- **Participant 7** - "...previously, management, middle management, senior management, executive management, and even at CEO level, were very competent businesspeople or business practitioners, but not necessarily understanding the mechanics of things like emotional intelligence. What is really leadership, you'd only find that over the last 10 years..."
- **Participant 4** - "...they didn't even attempt to align culture, the leaders were stuck in their older way of working. They had some really good people, who had to eventually leave because of management and the leaders..."
- **Participant 4** - "The older guys are sometimes more set in their own ways and are not willing to listen to new approaches..."

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C7) - Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture**

The second category is 'Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture'. The

results were definitive in this area. The respondents all felt that leaders need to take the lead and be committed to aligning culture to strategy, as this will improve the success rate of implementations, and improve competitive advantages for the organization if they succeed on their strategies. From the employee's perspective, it is always quite clear that leadership and direction is needed, and culture alignment cannot be successful if the leadership role is poor.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C7) - Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture**

- **Participant 1** - *"I would affirm the leader's role is very critical in aligning strategy to culture..."*
- **Participant 1** - *"...the need for the leadership teams to take control and align the organization was incredibly important to the successful rollout of its strategy..."*
- **Participant 7** - *"If the leaders are unable to interpret and present change immediately, then today's change has lost its legs..."*
- **Participant 11** - *"...leaders need to be out there. They need to walk the talk when it comes to both culture and strategy..."*
- **Participant 1** - *"The leadership team should take accountability, and it is critical that they ensure their staff and people are made aware of what is going on in terms of strategy, and its implementation..."*
- **Participant 11** - *"...there's a reason why we still have leaders and line managers like that, and it is because people look for leadership, direction and guidance."*
- **Participant 4** - *People want and need direction. They want to know where they are going.*
- **Participant 6** - *"...it's critical to lead the line on culture alignment and strategy. If leadership are misaligned, and even part of the leadership team are misaligned, I think it cannot be successful."*

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C8) - Leadership style influence on culture alignment**

The third category is 'Leadership style influence on culture alignment.' The results in this category show how leader's style of leadership and personality traits has a significant effect on the organizations culture. This is an important area to understand when it comes to RQ1. The reason is because the root cause of not aligning culture may be directly linked to a leader's personality or leadership style. In this case, there must be retrospection and additional analysis to focus on leader's style and personality.

#### Quotes for Category (RQ1-C8) - Leadership style influence on culture alignment

- **Participant 10** - *“A leader should not be someone that comes in and says this is the way we going, but rather, let us see how we can do this together. If you are a more collaborative sort of leader, you will definitely have more success in implementing a new culture...”*
- **Participant 8** - *“a leader determines culture. If you had a leader that was very autocratic, a dictator, they will determine what the culture of the organization would be, and you would have people working in that fashion. You would get behaviors that would emulate that culture...”*

#### Results for Category (RQ1-C9) - No focus is needed on culture

The fourth and final category for the 'Influence of a Leaders Role' theme is called 'No focus is needed on culture'. The results that brought together this category shows that some leaders do not feel any effort is needed when a culture is being built. It becomes a challenge to form an intended culture with no focus on it. T

In RQ1, the purpose is to find the main reasons why aligning culture to strategy fails, or just does not happen. This theme and category provide results to answer it with one of the main reasons. This is due to some leaders not placing any focus on culture alignment and strategy, because they believe no focus is needed.

#### Quotes for Category (RQ1-C9) - No focus is needed on culture

- **Participant 1** - *“... I think the intended culture changes over time. Culture changes as businesses mature overtime...”*
- **Participant 3** - *“I have never seen an instance where people follow what's written on the wall... these things are spoken, until someone actually does them... They will never really become a culture except just been statements that are written on the wall unless the principle leader leads by examples...”*
- **Participant 4** - *“It was just a culture that happened to be built over time or through unintended behaviors...”*

#### 5.4.5 RQ1 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Leader Abilities

In RQ1, the onus is to find out the main reasons why culture alignment to strategy does not take place or is not effective. This theme looks directly at the leader's abilities to fulfilling

alignment of culture and strategy. The results depict the shortfalls and bad qualities that some leaders display, which have a strong link to failure in aligning culture to strategy.

There are seven categories linked to the 'Leader Abilities' theme. However, only two of the seven have a link to RQ1. These two categories are.

1. (RQ1-C10) - Bad leadership qualities
2. (RQ1-C13) - Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively

Table 8: RQ1 Responses from the Theme: Leader abilities

THEME: Leaders Abilities
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C10) – Bad leadership qualities</b>
The results in this category focus on the bad leadership qualities that some leaders possess. The feedback received looks at the negative qualities and personalities of leader's, that pose direct threats to them having the necessary skills and abilities to align an organizations culture to its strategy.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ1-C10) – Bad leadership qualities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 2</b> - <i>"I think a lot of leaders, they lack that humility factor, where they believe they put together the strategy or culture, and now they are explaining it to you people..."</i> <i>"...they don't have that humility anymore to say...let's work that into this...and then let's make it work together..."</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 4</b> - <i>"...It sometimes feels that leaders think they almost know more, there's no sincerity in their approach..."</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 4</b> - <i>"...Leaders feel their way is the best and will not even consult expert or consultants to assist..."</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 12</b> - <i>"...I do not think most leaders feel they need to continuously be learning, whether through study or through people..."</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 10</b> - <i>"Leaders do not let go and give the proper empowerment..."</i></li> </ul>
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C13) - Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively</b>
This category talks to the results that show the need for leaders to actively drive culture alignment to strategy. The feedback refers to instances when leaders do take the lead on this, but are not actively involved. When leaders do not show the interest, buy in and



investment they have in the change, the adoption is not successful. Therefore, as strenuous a task as this may be, leaders need to drive culture alignment to strategy and provide the right direction to be successful.

**Quotes for Category (RQ1-C13) - Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively**

- **Participant 8** - *“...I think it is very difficult and very emotionally draining, to try to get people to fit into a certain culture, if you do not have leadership buy in and support...”*

**5.4.6 RQ1 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Proactiveness is key to success**

The ‘Proactiveness is key to success’ theme is linked to RQ1 because the results show some of the main reasons why alignment to culture will fail, and how leader’s and organizations have to be more proactive in order to be successful in this regard. Leader’s showing no awareness of what is going on with their teams, no time spent on how the strategy will be sold, no planning to motivate the teams, no focus on having a balanced approach, and not planning on how to include teams get them onboard to the strategy shows no proactiveness to succeed. This theme highlights that proactiveness is needed and is key to success in aligning culture to strategy.

There are seven categories linked to the ‘Proactiveness is key to success’ theme. However, only four of the seven have a link to RQ1. These four categories are.

1. (RQ1-C17) - Leaders lack of awareness
2. (RQ1-C20) - Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams
3. (RQ1-C22) - Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy
4. (RQ1-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness

Table 9: RQ1 Responses from the Theme: Proactiveness is key to success

<b>THEME:</b>
<b>Proactiveness is key to success</b>
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C17) - Leaders lack of awareness</b>
The results from the ‘Leaders lack of awareness’ category really focuses on whether the leaders in an organization know, or are aware of what is going on in the organization. From



the feedback it shows that most leaders are not aware of the relationship between culture and strategy, and therefore do not bother with this initiative. Some leaders are direct about the little time they have available and therefore do not pay attention to this area. Therefore, there is a need to be more aware, as the lack of awareness and not being proactiveness in aligning culture to strategy is a big barrier to success.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C17) - Leaders lack of awareness**

- **Participant 3** - *"...leaders are not unconscious about what's happening on the ground. It could be that they are not aware about the need to align the culture..."*
- **Participant 4** - *"Leader's probably don't realize that relationship between culture, strategy and its benefits..."*
- **Participant 5** - *"You know honestly, I don't always think about culture, and strategy, and I think it's just the reality that we don't always think about this area..."*
- **Participant 4** - *"...I think it's a matter of a lack of education in that area. Because they don't understand how to win over the hearts and minds of people and how important that is..."*

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C20) - Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams**

The results from this category showed how much importance was placed on how leaders should sell the strategy and align culture. Leaders need to inspire and motivate their staff to get the right type of buy-in. To be effective in selling the strategy and motivating the teams to get onboard, proactiveness planning and research on the organization's people is extremely important.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C20) - Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams**

- **Participant 9** - *"...a level of change management is required, it's that letting people know, this is what we want to do. It is constantly keeping people updated. It is constantly letting people know that you have got something to say, and inspire them to get involved..."*
- **Participant 9** - *"I think it's, it's all about how that strategy is sold to you..."*

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C22) - Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy**

The results from this category show the need to have balance from the leader and

organization perspective. Too many times, the focus is solely on one element of the business, and this causes neglect in other areas. The results show that focus can go either way, to culture or to strategy. Linking back RQ1, is that an unbalanced focus is a concerning barrier when aligning culture to strategy.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C22) - Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy**

- **Participant 2** –“ leader’s sometimes focus so much on culture, their culture basically become the focus of the business. So, they forget to create a proper business model.”
- **Participant 10** –“ if your culture isn't aligned to the strategy, you're not going to have a successful strategy implementation, therefore, these priorities need to be balanced.”
- **Participant 4** – “There is a need to balance the contractor permanent staff compliment, as this can make it difficult to form an intended culture...”

#### **Results for Category (RQ1-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness**

The results from this category show the importance of inclusiveness. The importance of taking the teams along for the ride. The feedback shows clearly that leaders most assume that the staff know what is going on and then leader’s simply do not communicate or provide any useful information. This causes the employees to separate themselves from the process and initiative. This is a severe barrier to enabling alignment of culture to strategy, and leaders must become more proactive to be inclusive with the team in this journey.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ1-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness**

- **Participant 3** – “Leaders assume that people know where they are going, and why they going there, or which direction they are going in, why they are we going that direction?”
- **Participant 4** – “...main reason would be the leaders are not in touch with the guys on the ground. They sit in their ‘ivory towers’ and think they know what the cultures is, and what the people are looking for from leadership...”
- **Participant 10** – “Leader’s state that this is how we do things, and you will follow this or you out. If leadership adopts that sort of mentality, then they are setting out to fail...”

### **5.4.7 RQ1 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Resistance to culture alignment**

The ‘Resistance to culture alignment’ theme is linked to RQ1 because the aim in RQ1 is identify the main reason why organizations and leaders fail to align culture to its strategy, and

resistance to aligning is a key reason. The results provide valuable information by highlighting that commitment is needed by all parties involved and culture focus could be influenced depending on certain characteristics within the organization. The feedback also highlights why employees can be resistant and how the pressures from shareholders add to the resistance to culture alignment.

There are four categories linked to the ‘**Resistance to culture alignment**’ theme. These four categories are.

5. (RQ1-C24) - Building culture needs commitment
6. (RQ1-C25) - Culture focus differs based on various characteristics
7. (RQ1-C26) - Employee resistance to change
8. (RQ1-C27) - Revenue focus trumps culture focus

Table 10: RQ1 Responses from the Theme: Resistance to culture alignment

THEME:
Resistance to culture alignment
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C24) - Building culture needs commitment</b>
The results show that to build culture, there needs to be commitment from everyone in the organization. There is evidence that a leader needs to lead the line, but if commitment is also not taken from the employees, then alignment of culture and strategy will not be successful. The feedback was also clear about the importance of accountability when leading culture change and alignment to strategy.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ1-C24) - Building culture needs commitment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 3</b> – ““ I have never seen an instance where people follow what’s written on the wall, where it says, work hard, play hard, do as you say you’re going to do, put the customer first. But these things are only spoken, until someone actually does them. They will never really become a culture until the organization commits to it...”</li> <li>• <b>Participant 8</b> – “...they have put a lot of attention into building a specific culture and they have a very empowering culture, but that is because they committed to doing that...”</li> <li>• <b>Participant 1</b> – “...it is also the duty of the employees in the organization to also commit and play their part in building the intended culture...”</li> <li>• <b>Participant 1</b> – “...Focus sometimes gets lost if nobody takes accountability to carry it through...”</li> </ul>

- **Participant 1** – “...could be that the hierarchy just has too many levels, and it is assumed that the next level will take care of the culture alignment...”

### Results for Category (RQ1-C25) - Culture focus differs based on various characteristics

This category also provides good insight to RQ1, answering those questions around the main reasons the alignment of culture to strategy fails. Here the results show that culture is only a bigger focus when organizations fulfil certain characteristics. The feedback referred to culture focus dependent on the size of the organization, as well as the age of the leaders. The results also mentioned more focus on culture with different types of start-up companies and if the organization was trying to scale quickly.

### Quotes for Category (RQ1-C25) - Culture focus differs based on various characteristics

- **Participant 1** – “...I have worked for startup companies and for bigger corporate companies. The culture in these different types and sizes of companies were notably different...”
- **Participant 4** – “...There was also a smaller company, a high-tech startup that spent time to drive and focus on an intended culture...”
- **Participant 7** – “...I've seen culture drive happen in companies that really want to scale very quickly...”
- **Participant 9** – “...the younger the organization is, then those younger executives might have more of an appetite for culture alignment focus...”
- **Participant 5** – “...At consulting houses, you are encouraged to fit in to your customers culture...”

### Results for Category (RQ1-C26) - Employee resistance to change

The results from this category show some of the key reason that employees are resistant to change, which makes aligning culture to strategy a challenge. The data collected shows that people love their comfort zones and need a really good reason to leave it. It also indicates that if people are not included, they feel far away from the process and go into a resistant bubble. There are also instances of bad past experiences which has already persuaded them to resist. A bad experience was said could be a trust issue, something that did not work, or even a direct personal relationship that went wrong.

### Quotes for Category (RQ1-C26) - Employee resistance to change

- **Participant 3** – “...It is hard to change as employees do not want to leave their comfort zones, it doesn't make sense for them to do so...”
- **Participant 5** – “...it's natural for people to be resistant, because they are comfortable with what they're doing now...”
- **Participant 7** – “...If that strategy seems too far away from me, if I was not included, then I am not bothered with it. An example is if there is a fire down the road, I won't get involved...”
- **Participant 9** – “There could be a negative past experience that holds you back from committing or getting involved...” “...it could be a trust issue...”

#### Results for Category (RQ1-C27) - Revenue focus trumps culture focus

The results from this category opens up the reality of the purpose of businesses and the demands from shareholders. The data shows that shareholders have a return on investment focus and often the leaders of organizations cannot translate that demand to include a culture focus. This poses a big resistance to culture alignment as in many cases leaders choose to focus on revenue and ignore culture.

#### Quotes for Category (RQ1-C27) - Revenue focus trumps culture focus

- **Participant 2** – “...executives focus on the business model and customer propositions, and this becomes the primary focus. Executives do not care how the guys on the ground align themselves...”
- **Participant 8** – “...the priority is customer focused, reducing costs, increasing revenue, and that's where the priority is in their mind, and culture probably moves to the bottom of the list...”
- **Participant 12** – “...The pressure from shareholders and senior stakeholders. Shareholders really do not care about your culture. They want an improvement in the share price...”
- **Participant 8** – “...the purpose of business is to make money, and it takes priority...”

#### 5.4.8 RQ1 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Drive the culture and strategy relationship

The 'Drive the culture and strategy relationship' theme is linked to RQ1 because the aim in RQ1 is identify the main reason why organizations and leaders fail to align culture to its strategy, and resistance to aligning is a key reason.

There are two categories linked to the ‘Drive the culture and strategy relationship’ theme. These two categories are.

(RQ1-C28) - Increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity

(RQ1-C29) - Rich relationship between culture and strategy

Table 11: RQ1 Responses from the Theme: Rich relationship between culture and strategy

THEME:
<b>Drive the culture and strategy relationship</b>
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C28) - Increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity</b>
<p>The results from this category show that culture alignment to strategy is no longer a nice to have, or an advantage if you do, but is rather becoming a necessity due to the time and environment we live in today. The data from participants explains how people leave organizations due to the lack of focus on people values and culture. Retention of employees has always been an ambition for companies, some who even pay retention bonuses. If culture alignment does not start becoming a necessity, this will affect strategy implementations.</p>
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ1-C28) - Increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 2</b> – <i>“...organizations have lost a massive amount of the good workforce, because of leaders not interested in people and culture and a dictatorship way of doing business. So, they are leaving for other companies that focus on people...”</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 4</b> – <i>“...there was no consideration for the people, nothing was delivered well, and you found that people would be leaving all the time to other departments or companies...”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Results for Category (RQ1-C29) - Rich relationship between culture and strategy</b>
<p>This category included the views of participants that agreed with and had experiences where the relationship between culture and strategy was strong. The feedback displayed instances where if culture was not given the correct focus, the strategy would fall over.</p>
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ1-C29) - Rich relationship between culture and strategy</b>

- **Participant 2** – *“...They had a solid strategy in place they want they definitely knew where they wanted to take the bank... but the problem was, there was no culture, they didn't have any support of the employees.... they had such a toxic culture that getting that strategy embedded is still a job to today...”*

#### **5.4.9 RQ1 - Conclusion**

The results for RQ1 was shown per theme and category within each theme that was linked to RQ1. Selected responses from each category was presented along-side the explanation of the results found. These results show the data collected provided good insight into answering RQ1 and will be analyzed further in the next chapter.

## 5.5 Results for Research Question 2 (RQ2)

### 5.5.1 RQ2 - Introduction

The results for research question two was very clear. The probing during the data gathering process was to identify what the core key skills and capabilities are that leaders need to possess, to effectively be able to fulfil the purpose as a leaders who needs strategy to be implemented successfully, saw many come through in the feedback. Research question two can be seen in the below figure.

#### **Research Question 2 (RQ2)**

**What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?**

**Figure 8: Research Question 2**

### 5.5.2 RQ2 – Results linked by Themes and Category

The below table demonstrates each of the themes and their categories linked to RQ2, and those that are not linked to RQ2. The interesting result to note is that there are some themes and categories that have a stronger link to RQ2 than other themes and categories. There are also some categories that do not link to RQ2. This column 'Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ2)' shows the number of codes linked to the associated category in that row. The reason for displaying this field is to indicate the strength of the links in terms of how frequently the area or topic came up while collecting the data. This clearly shows the popular views and opinions and opposed to the one-off, yet sometimes valuable inputs to the research topic.

Table 12: Categories Linked to Research Question 2

<b>ID#</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>	<b>Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ2)</b>
RQ2-C1	Cost-benefit analysis	Enablers to culture alignment	0
RQ2-C2	Creating a culture is an art	Enablers to culture alignment	1
RQ2-C3	Effective change management enables culture alignment	Enablers to culture alignment	0



<b>ID#</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>THEMES</b>	<b>Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ2)</b>
RQ2-C4	Effective communication enables culture alignment	Enablers to culture alignment	2
RQ2-C5	Leaders can learn from experience, others and take criticism	Enablers to culture alignment	2
RQ2-C6	Generational impact on culture	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ2-C7	Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ2-C8	Leadership style influence culture alignment	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ2-C9	No focus is needed on culture	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ2-C10	Bad leadership qualities	Leader abilities	0
RQ2-C11	Leaders need strong people and EQ skills	Leader abilities	7
RQ2-C12	Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment	Leader abilities	3
RQ2-C13	Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively	Leader abilities	2
RQ2-C14	Leaders need to lead by example	Leader abilities	2
RQ2-C15	Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable	Leader abilities	2
RQ2-C16	Practice good leadership qualities	Leader abilities	2
RQ2-C17	Leaders lack of awareness	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ2-C18	Leaders need to be proactive	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ2-C19	Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ2-C20	Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ2-C21	Leaders need to understand their organization	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ2-C22	Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ2-C23	The importance of inclusiveness	Proactiveness is key to success	2
RQ2-C24	Building culture needs commitment	Resistance to culture alignment	0
RQ2-C25	Culture focus differs based on various characteristics	Resistance to culture alignment	0
RQ2-C26	Employee resistance to change	Resistance to culture alignment	0

ID#	CATEGORIES	THEMES	Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ2)
RQ2-C27	Revenue focus trumps culture focus	Resistance to culture alignment	0
RQ2-C28	Increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity	Drive the culture and strategy relationship	0
RQ2-C29	Rich relationship between culture and strategy	Drive the culture and strategy relationship	0
<b>Total Coding Links to the Category</b>			<b>30</b>

### 5.5.3 RQ2 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Enablers to Culture Alignment

In this section, the results shown will depict how the categories and themes link to RQ2. The table above displays the categories linked to themes for only RQ2. Each related category and theme will be discussed followed by supporting quotes received from the participants. The “ID” numbers will be used to identify the categories. The objective is to identify and list the key findings and quotes to enable effective analysis of the data collected in this research study. In RQ2, the focus is on identifying skills and capabilities that leaders should possess to effectively align culture and strategy.

The tables to follow will provide detailed findings on the themes and categories aligned and linked to RQ2. The first table will relate only to the ‘Enablers to culture alignment’ theme, and the results within RQ2.

Table 13: RQ2 - Selected Responses from the Theme: Enablers to Culture Alignment

<b>THEME:</b>
<b>Enablers to Culture Alignment</b>
<b>Results for Category (RQ2-C2) - Creating a culture is an art</b>
<p>The results for this category support RQ2’s quest in identifying skills and capabilities needed for a leader to align culture and strategy. The results reveal that as much as there are key skills needed to align culture and strategy, the leader does not have to always possess all of them. Creating a culture is an art but a leader does not have to take this task on individually, but rather assemble a well-balanced skilled team to approach it together.</p> <p>The results show that key capabilities are to have the ability to be an effective communicator, good listener, and provide clear direction. This is an art and needs to be executed successfully at all levels of the organization. The results claim that the art to</p>

creating and aligning culture is to possess soft skills and be a strong people person. The ability to take criticism and turn it into improvements is an art that will set leaders apart.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ2-C2) - Creating a culture is an art**

- **Participant 12** – “...you should not have one leader aligning the culture to the to the strategy, I think it should be a combination of leaders who show different strengths within them...”
- **Participant 1** – “...be a good communicator, and be clear in the direction that is given...”
- **Participant 2** – “...that ability to give direction. It's that ability to focus on the people that need to get the work done”
- **Participant 3** – “...you can't be influential if you don't communicate...”
- **Participant 4** – “...need to be able to communicate appropriately for all levels to allow them to understand how they fit into that bigger picture...”
- **Participant 6** – “...possess soft skills, I think it's really important to be able to connect with people and to be able to communicate well...”
- **Participant 8** – “...have to be a people's person, because culture is very much around people, however this skill is an art to master...”
- **Participant 10** – “Leaders need to be able to take criticism and use it positively...”
- **Participant 4** – “...Needs to listen to what the people are saying, be in touch with everyone, as opposed to assuming what the people want...”

#### **5.5.4 RQ2 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Leader abilities**

In RQ2, the aim is to identify the key skills and capabilities for leader's to effectively align culture and strategy. In this theme 'Leader abilities', the results show the different views and experience that lay out the key abilities for leaders.

There are seven categories linked to the 'Leader abilities' theme. Six of the seven have a link to RQ2. These six categories are.

1. (RQ2-C11) - Leaders need strong people and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) skills
2. (RQ2-C12) - Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment
3. (RQ2-C13) - Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively
4. (RQ2-C14) - Leaders need to lead by example
5. (RQ2-C15) - Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable
6. (RQ2-C16) - Practice good leadership qualities

Table 14: RQ2 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Leader abilities

## THEME:

### Leaders Abilities

#### Results for Category (RQ2-C11) - Leaders need strong people and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) skills

The results for this category show what key skills are needed, that are linked with people and EQ skills, to be effective when aligning culture and strategy. The feedback refers to developing relationships, translating what change and alignment means for your people, being more self-aware and inclusive.

#### Quotes for Category (RQ2-C11) - Leaders need strong people and EQ skills

- **Participant 3** – “...When leaders develop true relationships, everyone pulls in the same direction together...”
- **Participant 7** – “...a leader is meant to understand their staff and find ways in which to interpret that strategy to make sense to them on a day to day basis. To do this, you need to know the people pretty well...”
- **Participant 8** – “...if you have self-awareness and high levels of EQ, then you know how to be inclusive with your teams...”
- **Participant 7** – “...need to possess a high level of self-awareness skills...”

#### Results for Category (RQ2-C12) - Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment

The results for this category show what leaders can do, or get proficient at doing to create a conducive environment to better align culture to strategy. The big ticket item that came through in the data was to create and build trust within the teams and leaders. There was also feedback about getting open feedback, collaborating more, and encouraging innovation with the fuller teams.

#### Quotes for Category (RQ2-C12) - Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment

- **Participant 3** – “Building trust is a big one, to get buy-in, you need trust...”
- **Participant 3** – “...create an environment where there's trust, trust in the sense that people can come to leaders and confide...”
- **Participant 7** – “...encourage an environment of innovation and opportunities to collaborate...”

### **Results for Category (RQ2-C13) - Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively**

The results for this category show that leaders need to be able to effectively drive culture alignment to strategy. Some feedback received is that leaders need to be able to articulate what needs to be done to achieve the alignment goal and strategy goals. The ability to articulate it at different staff levels is needed.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ2-C13) - Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively**

- **Participant 1** – *“Be an effective task manager to know how to drive and execute strategy, and how to lead culture alignment...”*
- **Participant 2** – *“...leaders need to be able to take the vision, and turn it into some sort of strategic planning...”*
- **Participant 9** – *“...it's the capability of being able to translate that strategy at the different levels that's required...”*

### **Results for Category (RQ2-C14) - Leaders need to lead by example**

The results for this category show that leaders need to lead by example. The teams will base their opinion on a leader based what they say and do. The results talk more about humility and trust being great assets that drive an effective work environment. Leader can also be more inclusive and closer to their teams and do not lose respect for each other.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ2-C14) - Leaders need to lead by example**

- **Participant 2** – *“...humility is one of those abilities for me, people need to have humility and integrity...”*
- **Participant 4** – *“I had an experience when one of our very senior executives who came to me after presenting a strategy. He knew my name and asked me what I thought, this went a long way with me as I felt appreciated, part of the team...”*
- **Participant 4** – *“...the culture changed after the leader showed no respect to us, and used us. Trust was there, and then disappeared when this happened...”*

### **Results for Category (RQ2-C15) - Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable**

The results for this category show that leaders need to be more approachable, visible, and available. The feedback included that leaders should sit amongst the teams to collaborate more and be available. Leaders should also have a sense of calm.

**Quotes for Category (RQ2-C15) - Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable**

- **Participant 4** – “...Have an open-door policy for the employees. Be accessible, be part of the team...”
- **Participant 10** – “...I think one of the one of the one of the best qualities in a leader is the fact that they don't get overly emotional and can remain approachable during discussion...”

**Results for Category (RQ2-C16) - Practice good leadership qualities**

The results for this category show that leaders must practice their good leadership qualities. The feedback talks to utilizing skills that you are strong at, and leverage these to make a positive impact on your teams.

**Quotes for Category (RQ2-C16) - Practice good leadership qualities**

- **Participant 10** – “...this is an important capability to demonstrate, leaders have to have very good charisma...”

### **5.5.5 RQ2 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Proactiveness is key to success**

In this section, the results shown will depict how the categories in the ‘Proactiveness is key to success’ theme link to RQ2. Proactiveness is an invaluable characteristic in any environment, and the same is magnified in the outputs of this study. The results show how leaders can be seen as incompetent and unprepared when not aware and proactive in their actions toward aligning culture to strategy. The results also provide invaluable advice as to how leaders can become more proactive and leverage this skill in becoming successful at aligning their organization’s culture to its strategy.

There are seven categories linked to the ‘Proactiveness is key to success’ theme. Six of the seven categories have a direct link to RQ2. These six categories are.

1. (RQ2-C18) - Leaders need to be proactive
2. ( RQ2-C19) - Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground
3. (RQ2-C20) - Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams
4. (RQ2-C21) - Leaders need to understand their organization
5. (RQ2-C22) - Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy
6. (RQ2-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness

Table 15: RQ2 Selected Responses from the Theme: Proactiveness is key to success

THEME: Proactiveness is key to success
<b>Results for Category (RQ2-C18) - Leaders need to be proactive</b>
The results from this category focuses on the importance of being proactive and how it is becoming a greater need to stay ahead of the curb in both the way an organization operates and how it serves their customers.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ2-C18) - Leaders need to be proactive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 2</b> – <i>“Leaders need to remember that, you can't solve new problems using old principles. Leader's need to become more proactive in everything they do...”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Results for Category (RQ2-C19) - Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground</b>
The results from this category shows that a leader cannot assume he knows his organization. At times, leaders sit too far away from what is going on, and this blinds their perspective when making decisions. If leaders do not know what is going on, on the ground then they have the incorrect data to work on, which will cause incorrect decisions to be made, especially when trying to align culture to strategy.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ2-C19) - Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 13</b> – <i>“Leaders need to know what's going on in their organization to act accordingly and effectively...”</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 13</b> – <i>“If a leader does not know what's really going on in the organization, it will hurt him...”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Results for Category (RQ2-C20) - Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams</b>
The results from this category shows that if leaders want people to engage and be part of the strategy or culture, they need to take those steps early on to plan for this. The feedback shows that focus on culture does not happen overnight. This is a process that takes place over time and observes behaviors. This takes being proactive to figure out how as a leader you plan to inspire and motivate your staff.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ2-C20) - Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their</b>

### **strategy to the teams**

- **Participant 1** – *“Proactively plan to motivate and be inspirational speakers to drive the organizations to buy in to the strategy, this will setup the path to aligning the culture...”*
- **Participant 4** – *“In this company, no one was motivated or positive, and there was no way this team was adhering to any culture...”*

### **Results for Category (RQ2-C21) - Leaders need to understand their organization**

The results from this category emphasizes the need for leaders to take time to listen and understand what the employees are saying. Listening is a proactive skill that can allow leaders to make effective plans and the right decisions. The feedback reiterates that leaders should not assume, but proactively listen. This is a key skill in being proactive to align culture to strategy.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ2-C21) - Leaders need to understand their organization**

- **Participant 1** – *“Be able to listen to the team and organization...”*
- **Participant 4** – *“...needs to listen and understand what people are saying, be in touch with everyone, as opposed to assuming what the people want...”*
- **Participant 6** – *“Listen to your employees as they are closest to your customer and can provide good advice...”*

### **Results for Category (RQ2-C22) - Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy**

The results from this category interestingly spoke about the need to have a diverse, balance team that both think differently and have different skills and capabilities. The feedback talks about leaders having different skills, but for them to also be balanced in the skills they possess. An example provided was to have both hard and soft skills, as well as know how to work with people but also have good technical knowledge.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ2-C22) - Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy**

- **Participant 1** – *“I feel that leaders need to have a good balance between possessing hard and soft skills, and the right balance between knowing the business and technical aspects...”*
- **Participant 8** – *“...there needs to be a balance to work well with people and have tacit technical knowledge of the business to properly align culture to strategy...”*



- **Participant 12** – “...leaders need to be proactive in structuring a balanced, diverse team, and not having group of like-minded people...”

#### Results for Category (RQ2-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness

The results from this category depicts the importance of being proactive to be an inclusive leader. The skill of being inclusive will improve the ability to take teams on the strategy journey. This will increase the success rate of aligning culture and strategy implementations. The feedback also refers to the negative impact where leaders are not proactive in being inclusive and this separates them from the employees.

#### Quotes for Category (RQ2-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness

- **Participant 4** – “Executives need to be on the ground, work together with their employees, and let them know they are in this together...”
- **Participant 4** – “...I feel that leadership needs to be closer to the ground. Sometimes I feel that leaders can be very separate in the leadership and strategic thinking, which make employees feel excluded, and this does not help with aligning to strategy...”

### 5.5.6 RQ2 - Conclusion

The results for RQ2 was shown per category within each theme that was linked to RQ2. The feedback displayed key skills and capabilities that would assist leaders in aligning culture to strategy by looking at factors that enable culture alignment, proven leader abilities from experience, and valuable proactive skills that can be practiced, Selected responses from each category was presented along-side the explanation of the results found. These results show the data collected, and provided valuable lessons into answering RQ2 and will be analyzed further in the next chapter.

## 5.6 Results for Research Question 3 (RQ3)

### 5.6.1 RQ3 - Introduction

The results for RQ3 saw data that could add to the body of knowledge and provide leaders and organizations with advice on how to proactively prepare to align culture to its strategy. RQ3 can be seen in the below figure.

#### **Research Question 3 (RQ3)**

**What can leaders proactive do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?**

**Figure 9: Research Question 3**

### 5.6.2 RQ3 – Results linked by Theme and Category

The below table demonstrates each of the themes and their categories linked to RQ3, and those that are not linked to RQ3. The same applies as per RQ1 and RQ2, where there are some themes and categories that have a stronger link to RQ3 than other themes and categories. There are also some categories that do not link to RQ3. The column 'Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ3)' shows the number of codes linked to the associated category in that row.

Table 16: Categories Linked to Research Question 3

#	CATEGORIES	THEMES	Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ3)
RQ3-C1	Cost-benefit analysis	Enablers to culture alignment	0
RQ3-C2	Creating a culture is an art	Enablers to culture alignment	2
RQ3-C3	Effective change management enables culture alignment	Enablers to culture alignment	0
RQ3-C4	Effective communication enables culture alignment	Enablers to culture alignment	2
RQ3-C5	Leaders can learn from experience, others and take criticism	Enablers to culture alignment	2
RQ3-C6	Generational impact on culture	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ3-C7	Leaders play a critical role in aligning strategy and culture	Influence of a leader's role	0

#	CATEGORIES	THEMES	Number of Coding Links to the Category (RQ3)
RQ3-C8	Leadership style influence culture alignment	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ3-C9	No focus is needed on culture	Influence of a leader's role	0
RQ3-C10	Bad leadership qualities	Leader abilities	0
RQ3-C11	Leaders need strong people and EQ skills	Leader abilities	1
RQ3-C12	Leaders need to create a conducive environment for culture alignment	Leader abilities	0
RQ3-C13	Leaders need to drive direction and action effectively	Leader abilities	0
RQ3-C14	Leaders need to lead by example	Leader abilities	0
RQ3-C15	Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable	Leader abilities	1
RQ3-C16	Practice good leadership qualities	Leader abilities	0
RQ3-C17	Leaders lack of awareness	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ3-C18	Leaders need to be proactive	Proactiveness is key to success	6
RQ3-C19	Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ3-C20	Leaders need to sell, inspire, and motivate their strategy to the teams	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ3-C21	Leaders need to understand their organization	Proactiveness is key to success	1
RQ3-C22	Need to have a balanced focus on culture and strategy	Proactiveness is key to success	0
RQ3-C23	The importance of inclusiveness	Proactiveness is key to success	3
RQ3-C24	Building culture needs commitment	Resistance to culture alignment	0
RQ3-C25	Culture focus differs based on various characteristics	Resistance to culture alignment	0
RQ3-C26	Employee resistance to change	Resistance to culture alignment	0
RQ3-C27	Revenue focus trumps culture focus	Resistance to culture alignment	1
RQ3-C28	Increase in culture alignment to strategy is becoming a necessity	Drive the culture and strategy relationship	3
RQ3-C29	Rich relationship between culture and strategy	Drive the culture and strategy relationship	0
<b>Total Coding Links to the Category</b>			<b>23</b>

### 5.6.3 RQ3 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Enablers to Culture Alignment

In this section, the results shown will depict how the categories and themes link to RQ3. The table above displays the categories linked to themes for only RQ3. Each related category and theme will be discussed followed by supporting quotes received from the participants. The objective is to identify and list the key findings and quotes to enable effective analysis of the data collected in this research study. In RQ3, the focus is on identifying tips that can be provided to leaders, to be proactive and equip themselves adequately to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy.

The tables to follow will provide detail on selected results and findings on the themes and categories aligned and linked to RQ3. The first table will relate only to the ‘Enablers to culture alignment’ theme, and the results within RQ3.

There are five categories linked to the ‘Enablers to culture alignment’ theme. Three of the five categories have a direct link to RQ3. These three categories are.

1. (RQ3-C2) - Creating a culture is an art
2. (RQ3-C4) - Effective communication enables culture alignment
3. (RQ3-C5) - Leaders can learn from experience, others and take criticism

Table 17: RQ3 - Selected Responses from the Theme: Enablers to Culture Alignment

THEME: Enablers to Culture Alignment
<b>Results for Category (RQ3-C2) - Creating a culture is an art</b>
The results for this category support the fact that creating culture is an art and cannot be executed effectively if the right skills are not exercised. The feedback focuses on leaders being self-aware enough to know that this expertise sometimes needs to be brought in. The data emphasizes bringing in expertise to focus on aligning culture to strategy if it is to be successful.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ3-C2) - Creating a culture is an art</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 5</b> – <i>“Bring in someone with the right expertise, that knows how to align culture to strategy, especially if the organization doesn’t have the skill...”</i></li> <li>• <b>Participant 8</b> – <i>“...leaders cannot concentrate on every component, so they should get other key members to lead it and advise...”</i></li> </ul>

- **Participant 11** – “Leaders have to be self-aware to acknowledge that they needed the help and get the right people in to give culture alignment to strategy that focus...”

#### **Results for Category (RQ3-C4) - Effective communication enables culture alignment**

The results for this category show the importance of communicating well and effectively. The communications should not only be a tick box, but leader’s need also to understand the effect it has. For people to align to strategy, they need to know what they are aligning to, and how it will affect them. The feedback emphasized that people just want to be informed, they want to be part of the journey and not left in the dark. Leaders need to proactive in planning how they communicate.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ3-C4) - Effective communication enables culture alignment**

- **Participant 4** – “Leaders need to be better communicators, be clear in how they communicate and be repetitive if needed, so everyone is on the same page and understanding. At my company, this is how they kept everyone aligned and informed, leaders need to invest in how to communicate well...”
- **Participant 2** – “People just want to be informed, it’s a funny thing...”

#### **Results for Category (RQ3-C5) - Leaders can learn from experience, others and take criticism**

The results for this category reveal the need for leaders to have a strong learning culture. Leaders need to always be looking to improve by learning by studying their areas of need and from others feedback. The feedback talks to also being able to take criticism which is a rare skill to possess. If leaders can proactively learn, they set themselves up for success in aligning culture to strategy.

#### **Quotes for Category (RQ3-C5) - Leaders can learn from experience, others and take criticism**

- **Participant 1** – “Leaders should be proactive and learn what the best practices are for their company’s and industry. This gains credibility...”
- **Participant 1** – “...leaders need to learn from experience, from mistakes and hindsight. An example would be hiring the wrong people, motivating in the right or wrong way, and what alignment approaches work...”

### 5.6.4 RQ3 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Leader abilities

In RQ3, the objective is to identify ways for leaders to be proactive and equip themselves to successfully align culture to its strategy. In this theme ‘Leader abilities’, the results reveal proactive leadership skills and capabilities that leaders should adopt as part of the arsenal.

There are seven categories linked to the ‘Leader abilities’ theme. Two of the seven have a link to RQ3. These two categories are.

1. (RQ3-C11) - Leaders need strong people and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) skills
2. (RQ3-C15) - Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable

Table 18: RQ3 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Leader abilities

THEME: Leaders Abilities
<b>Results for Category (RQ3-C11) - Leaders need strong people and (EQ) skills</b>
The results for this category bring through useful tips that can assist and equip leaders to be proactive. The feedback suggests that leaders get someone present in the strategy discussions that can be responsible to ask the people and culture questions. This will ensure proactiveness in planning for culture alignment to strategy.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ3-C11) - Leaders need strong people and EQ skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 6</b> – “...have a people focus in every strategy discussion, always remind yourself to ask people and culture related questions, maybe appoint someone that’s responsible to ask the people and culture questions...”</li> <li>• <b>Participant 10</b> – “...leaders should be cognizant of their staff and teams, and be aware of the culture in the team in the company...”</li> </ul>
<b>Results for Category (RQ3-C15) - Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable</b>
The results for this category call for leaders to be proactive in visibility. The feedback refers to being on the working floor, be proactive with the policies and rules that is set up and get the teams to see leaders even before the strategies start getting communicated.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ3-C15) - Leaders need to be visible, available, and approachable</b>

- **Participant 12** – “...be more physically visible to the people, in so not just sending the email...”
- **Participant 12** – “...be visible in putting in policies in place that actually enable the strategy...”

### 5.6.5 RQ3 – Selected Responses from the Theme: Proactiveness is key to success

In this section, the results show how the categories in the ‘Proactiveness is key to success’ theme link to RQ3. The results provide input into how by being proactive, leaders can equip themselves better to align an organization’s culture to its strategy.

There are seven categories linked to the ‘Proactiveness is key to success’ theme. Four of the seven categories have a direct link to RQ3. These four categories are.

1. (RQ3-C18) - Leaders need to be proactive
2. ( RQ3-C19) - Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground
3. (RQ3-C21) - Leaders need to understand their organization
4. (RQ3-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness

Table 19: RQ3 - Selected Responses from the Theme: Proactiveness is key to success

THEME:
<b>Proactiveness is key to success</b>
<b>Results for Category (RQ3-C18) - Leaders need to be proactive</b>
The results from this category suggest that leader need to be aware and proactive. Leaders need to continuously be watching and learning to improve. The feedback also recommends that leaders consider innovation.
<b>Quotes for Category (RQ3-C18) - Leaders need to be proactive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant 6</b> – “...a leadership program could be initiated, internally or externally, this could provide advantage to gaining skills needed to align culture to strategy...”</li> <li>• <b>Participant 7</b> – “...self-training, leaders need to make sure they are more equipped. That means they need to either self-study or whatever the case may be...”</li> <li>• <b>Participant 10</b> – “If you want to be a good leader, leader and implement effective strategies, you have to be aware of what the markets are doing, and don't be scared to innovate...”</li> </ul>

### **Results for Category (RQ3-C19) - Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground**

The results from this category stress the need to get close to the employees that do the work. Leaders need to walk the floors and understand what people are doing and what they think. The feedback encourages this behavior so leaders can then proactively plan having the knowledge of the reality amongst the staff on the ground. This will assist in better aligning how to prepare for aligning culture and strategy.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ3-C19) Leaders need to know what is going on, on the ground**

- **Participant 2** – “...get in touch with the people on the ground that are going to do the work, understand what those guys need, what they feel...”

### **Results for Category (RQ3-C21) - Leaders need to understand their organization**

The results from this category talk to how leaders need to be proactive and make an added effort to understanding their organization. The feedback suggests leaders start observing their environment, and thinking about culture alignment even whilst still in the strategy formulation phase.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ3-C21) - Leaders need to understand their organization**

- **Participant 1** – “...good leaders will take into consideration the culture within their environment whilst formulating their strategy...”
- **Participant 3** – “...leaders need to be on the ground and know what is possible or not possible, to implement to drive that strategy...”

### **Results for Category (RQ3-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness**

The results from this category talk to how leaders need to be proactive in including their employees in the strategy journey, as early as the strategy formulation stage. The feedback suggests an important tip, which is if employees are exposed earlier, they become part of the journey. If they are part of the journey, then aligning the culture to strategy is more easily achievable.

### **Quotes for Category (RQ3-C23) - The importance of inclusiveness**

- **Participant 4** – “...Be inclusive with their people, and involve them from early on to get their commitment and buy-in...”



- **Participant 7** – “...need to be continuously engaging their people to make sure they have a clear understanding of the strategy and what it means to the staff...”
- **Participant 2** – “...the best way to get teams onboard is for leaders to start talking to their employees and start including them as early as the strategy formulation phase...”

### 5.6.6 RQ3 - Conclusion

The results for RQ3 was shown per category within each theme linked to RQ3. The feedback Demonstrated important tips that could be used by leader to help them to proactively prepare and equip themselves to lead the alignment of an organization’s culture to its strategy. Selected responses from each category was presented along-side the explanation of the results found. These results show the data collected, and provided valuable lessons into providing tip and solutions for RQ3. This will be analyzed further in the next chapter.

### 5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the results chapter covered the selected findings and observations from the data collection process. This chapter was presented per research question. Each research question section covered the themes and categories linked to the respective research question. The results were presented to show how the feedback could answer the questions and provided insight to the research questions as follows.

1. In the RQ1 section, the results showed main reasons contributing to leaders and organization not being able to successfully align an organization’s culture to its strategy.
2. In the RQ2 section, the results displayed key skills and capabilities that a leader would need to successfully align culture to its organization’s strategy.
3. In the RQ3 section, the result extracted important tips to assist leaders in being more proactive and equipped to align an organization’s culture to its strategy.

These results will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of this research study. The results will be discussed by analyzing the findings from the previous chapter in relation to the literature reviewed in the second chapter. This chapter will be structured by going through each of the research questions, as per chapter five.

The objective of this research was to enable leaders in organizations to align their culture to their organization's strategy. The aim to achieve this was to identify the main reasons for organization's not aligning their culture to their strategy, to identify the critical skills and capabilities needed by leaders to align culture and strategy, and to The culminating goal was to ultimately provide leaders with a toolkit that has key tips to be proactive and equip themselves with needed capabilities, competencies, and skills to fulfil this function. The reason for this objective was due to findings in literature where it was noted that the consequence of failing to align an organization's culture to its strategy results in higher rates of strategy implementation failures (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015).

This chapter will aim to answer the three research questions from chapter three, by highlighting the differences and similarities between the literature and results. A model will be developed by building inputs from each of the research questions, and forming an output that can enable leaders in organizations to equip themselves to align their culture to the organization's strategy.

### **6.2 Research Question 1 (RQ1)**

#### **6.2.1 RQ1 – Analysis of Results**

Enablers to culture alignment is a key theme in this study. Stojanovic et al. (2020) emphasized the influential power that organizational culture has on every area of the business and more importantly, how other factors within the organization enables and shapes the culture. Bate et al. (2000) discussed how culture enables key factors of business for growth, but also stated that culture needs to be enable by other factors for it to be effective. For this reason, RQ1 investigated the main reasons organizations and leader do not effectively align culture to strategy. These negative factors allowed the researcher to identify factors which enable culture. It also provided input into how leaders and organizations can setup for better culture alignment to strategy, and prepare for more successful strategy implementations.

Below are some key responses from participants, which show significant contributors to enabling alignment of an organizations culture to its strategy. Participant 3 touched on cost-benefit analysis, willing to take on the cost of changing strategies if there were benefits of getting new opportunities for growth within the organization saying:

*“Personal growth is a big motivator to get buy in to new strategy and change. This can be both a personal growth motivator for selfish reasons as well, but it gets buy in...”*

Participant 4 shared that employees react well to change if the strategy aligns to their thinking, skills, or beliefs, saying:

*“If it is a good strategy that they can relate to, if they believe in the strategy, it makes it easier to get on board and enables culture alignment to strategy. For example, I prefer to build rather than buy systems and applications, so if I see a similar strategy it’s easier to get me onboard...”*

Participant 12 added that sometimes enablers to culture alignment is inherent in people’s character, age, or situation, adding that:

*“...it is inherent in the nature. So, what you will find is the new bees, the youngsters, your people’s people who have not been part of a process like this, who will get on quickly...”*

*“...You’ll also find your early adopters, who will always get onboard no matter what change it is...”*

Hickman & Silva (2018) state that to create and embed culture, everyone in the organization needs to make a commitment to executing culture alignment to strategy well. Hemerling et al. (2018) says that in addition to commitment, creating and embedding an aligned culture is an art that needs specific skills and capabilities to achieve successfully. The results reflect that creating and embedding an intended culture is an art, and needs the right expertise. Participant 9 highlights that there are times when leaders do not have the right expertise, and culture awareness is sometimes just a formality:

*“...to a certain extent, organizations do culture awareness, but they do it just because they need to show that. Culture is just a checkbox exercise, and not done properly...”*

*“...it’s either the leader does not know how to align culture, or the company does not provide the right tools and platforms...”*

Participant 2 added that culture alignment challenges were due to the lack in ability to execute successfully, and that top level executives used ineffective approaches to align culture and strategy.

*“I think the intent to align culture was definitely there, but the problem was the implementation”*

*“...that to build a good culture you need to take the people on a journey and most of these corporates don't take the people along. It's a very top down approach...”*

From the literature and the input from participants, creating, and embedding culture is definitely an art. It cannot be an awareness or a tick-box exercise, it needs the right skills and approach deployed to be successful.

Fugate & Soenen (2018) state that one of the shortfalls of properly embedding strategic change and culture is ineffective change management. Leader's need to improve their ability to manage change by ensuring information is communicated and shared, expectations are clear and agreed between all parties, and create an environment that is conducive to trust (Fugate & Soenen, 2018). The results show that effective change management, good communication and clear direction are enablers of culture alignment. Participant 1 is clear on his strong stance for change management to be in place:

*“...Effective and comprehensive change management in place enables culture alignment...”*

Participant 2 and participant 3 share the view from an employee's perspective, respectively. They agree that if change and communication was not clear, employees will be resistant to aligning to change because they are unaware of how it affects them:

*“They don't know, it's not clear how their lives are going to change, what the positives and the negatives are. Also taking them on the journey. If I were not involved, then why would I buy into something that I don't agree with?”*

*“The teams ask why weren't they even told about why it is being changed? They don't understand the reasoning as no communication took place...”*

Aslam et al. (2018) stressed the point of how the employee resistance to culture change and alignment comes simply from the lack of communication. Participant 7 concurs with this point, but highlights that communication also needs to be planning and executed effectively to achieve a successful outcome.

*“...the message is being conveyed in the wrong manner...”*

Earlier in this paper, Hoffmann (2019) discussed that leaders feel they have sufficient skills to execute any initiative, in this case the alignment of culture to strategy. It is added that leaders ignore the need to learn more to increase the ability to succeed. Participant 7 felt that this attitude and approach could be inherent in some leaders as they are confident in their abilities. Participant 7 said that:

*“...it is human nature that you will always try to use what you have already, and will always tend to think that we know a little bit more than what we do...”*

Participant 2 argued that if leaders are serious and focused to achieve culture alignment to strategy, they would make the time to upskill or get the right expertise on board:

*“...leaders don't always take the time to get the right skills. If it means bringing in a consultant to say, how do I do this thing, that shows that you have your focus on aligning culture...”*

This theme is linked to RQ1 because the results show the importance of the role that leaders play in aligning culture to strategy, and the reasons leader's fail in this function. Participant 11 shared the reason why organizations still place leaders and managers in today's workplace:

*“...there's a reason why we still have leaders and line managers like that, and it is because people look for leadership, direction and guidance.*

Beer et al. (2005) states that it is very difficult for people in an organization to quickly change from their normal beliefs and values, which were their strong-rooted behaviors, to new ways of doing things, and these can become a barrier to culture change (Beer et al., 2005). The results reveal this issue with the previous generation of leaders. Participant 4 discussed some experiences with the older generation of leaders and how their way of working did not have a focus of culture alignment, which poses a significant barrier to culture change.

*“...they didn't even attempt to align culture; the leaders were stuck in their older way of working. They had some really good people, who had to eventually leave because of management and the leaders...”*

*“The older guys are sometimes more set in their own ways and are not willing to listen to new approaches...”*

Filson & Gretz (2004) discussed the contrast in generational leadership styles, and how it could influence the approach to change. Participant 9 believed that the newer generation of leaders were more open to driving culture change and alignment to strategy, which could play an important enabling function:

*“...those younger executives might have more of an appetite for culture alignment focus...”*

Lakatos et al. (2017) talked about the influence that leaders have and how proper training and direction needs to be provided to leaders so they can influence in the right way. Participant 8 related to Lakatos et al. (2017) by highlighting the leader’s ability to influence culture in either the right or the wrong way:

*“a leader determines culture. If you had a leader that was very autocratic, a dictator, they will determine what the culture of the organization would be, and you would have people working in that fashion. You would get behaviors that would emulate that culture...”*

Owens (2016) found that leaders who have humility can positively influence team performance within an organization. This demonstrates humility being a strong leadership ability and factor to drive an organization’s culture to its strategy. Participant 2 was very passionate about the importance leaders having humility, however, communicated that this was a rare sighting:

*“I think a lot of leaders, they lack that humility factor, where they believe they put together the strategy or culture, and now they are explaining it to you people...” “...they don't have that humility anymore to say...let's work that into this...and then let's make it work together...”*

Hoffmann (2019) also emphasizes the need for leaders to be open and embrace new learning, else this will stagnate the ability for organizations to leverage opportunities like aligning culture to strategy. Participant 12 concurred with this view but has been concerned that many leaders do not prioritize learning and upskilling themselves:

*“...I do not think most leaders feel they need to continuously be learning, whether through study or through people...”*

Schilpzand et al. (2018) described the benefits of leaders empowering their employees, and the many performance and efficiency benefits that arise this. (Hakimi et al., 2010) talked about

the employee commitment gained from leader empowerment, and Hickman & Silva (2018) added that commitment from all employees will improve the ability to align culture to strategy. Participant 10 supports empowerment to employees and the benefits it delivers, but provided reasoning to why organizations and leaders sometimes fail in aligning culture to strategy:

*“Leaders do not let go and give the proper empowerment...”*

Participant 3 added that organizations can say they have a culture and put the signs on the wall, but it needs commitment from everyone to materialize into a real culture:

*“ I have never seen an instance where people follow what’s written on the wall, where it says, work hard, play hard, do as you say you’re going to do, put the customer first. But these things are only spoken, until someone actually does them. They will never really become a culture until the organization commits to it...”*

Participant 8 provided an example of where an organization did commit, and achieved an intended, empowering culture:

*“...they have put a lot of attention into building a specific culture and they have a very empowering culture, but that is because they committed to doing that...”*

*Participant 1 mentioned that commitment to aligning culture to the strategy should come from both the leaders and the employees to be successful:*

*“...it is also the duty of the employees in the organization to also commit and play their part in building the intended culture...”*

From an employee point of view, resistance to aligning to new strategy can be due to many reasons, one of which is employees being comfortable in their safe zone, and concerned that the change in strategy and culture may affect them negatively

Rafferty & Jimmieson (2017) discuss that the resistance to change can be due to many factors like the fear of what the change will cause, or not understanding the change. Venus et al. (2019) speaks about employees not willing to align to change because they do not want to leave their comfort zones. Participant 3 talked about employee’s comfort zones and how it relates to resistance to change in culture:

*“...It is hard to change as employees do not want to leave their comfort zones, it doesn’t make sense for them to do so...”*

Participant 7 added that if employees do not feel included, or do not understand the strategy change, then they will stay away from it and remain in their comfort zones:

*“...If that strategy seems too far away from me, if I was not included, then I am not bothered with it. An example is if there is a fire down the road, I won’t get involved...”*

Boodoo (2020) added that shareholders also place pressure on leaders in organizations to optimize profits and share price. This is another challenge faced by leaders that impedes their focus on embedding and aligning an organizations culture to it strategy, especially if they have to prioritize when there are limited resources available. Participant 8 raised the point of where do priorities lie, making money, or focusing on culture alignment?

*“...the priority is customer focused, reducing costs, increasing revenue, and that’s where the priority is in their mind, and culture probably moves to the bottom of the list...”*

*“...the purpose of business is to make money, and it takes priority...”*

Participant 12 added to the topic by looking at this from a shareholder’s viewpoint.

*“...The pressure from shareholders and senior stakeholders. Shareholders really do not care about your culture. They want an improvement in the share price...”*

However, with these points covered, it shows there may be a challenge to generate revenues and better share prices if an organization does not implement strategy effectively, which does have a relationship with an aligned culture and strategy focus.

### **6.2.2 RQ1 – Model Development**

The analysis for the enablers to culture alignment theme within RQ1 is depicted in the below diagram. This is part of the model development process to build a model that enables leaders to utilize a toolkit to improve the way they align an organizations culture to it strategy.



Table 20: RQ1 - Model Development

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RQ1 - Key Outcomes from Analysis of Results:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Answers to RQ1: Main reasons organization's and leader's do not align culture to strategy?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RQ1 - Feed into Model</b></p>
<p>Employees seek personal benefits to align to change Employees will align if strategic change is aligned to their thinking, strengths and beliefs Poor change management affects adoption and alignment of culture change Poor, unplanned communication leaves more questions than answers for employees Creating and aligning culture is an art, requires commitment and the right expertise to execute successfully</p> <p>Leaders are influential within an organization and can determine culture alignment. Given a leader's influence, training and direction must be given on the influence they need to deliver Different generational leaders have different leadership styles and personalities Previous generation leaders can be barriers to cultural alignment Younger leaders are more open to executing on culture alignment</p> <p>Leaders lack humility toward their teams Leaders avoid bringing in the right expertise to assist with</p>	<p>Leader's and organizations have not sold culture alignment and strategy change to show how it benefits and leverages the users Leaders have shown poor change management focus and ability Leaders have not executed well with communicating to their teams. Aligning culture is an art, that requires commitment and the right focus and expertise</p> <p>Leader's and organizations do not provide the required training, guidance and direction to leaders on how to influence culture alignment Organization's do not consider the generational leadership influence and impact on culture alignment</p> <p>There is no focus on leaders embodying key interpersonal characteristics like humility Leaders do not know when to bring in the right expertise and get the right focus Lack of thought leadership on real empowerment of teams Lack of leadership driven communication to get commitment and everyone on board</p>	<p>Strategically sell strategy with benefits, get closer to the people</p> <p>Plan change management in advance, take the team on the journey</p> <p>Formulate a leadership communication plan to get commitment from the full team</p> <p>Be self-aware and bring in the expertise on aligning culture to strategy, when needed</p> <p>Send leaders on training on how to use influence for aligning culture to strategy</p> <p>Give consideration to generational thinking</p> <p>Empower leaders and teams at the right levels</p> <p>Understand the reasons for resistance to change</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RQ1 - Key Outcomes from Analysis of Results:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Answers to RQ1: Main reasons organization's and leader's do not align culture to strategy?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RQ1 - Feed into Model</b></p>
<p>culture alignment to strategy  Importance of empowering leaders and teams  Commitment is needed from everyone in the organization to be successful</p> <p>Fear of change and lack of knowledge about the change causes employees to stay in their comfort zones  Shareholder focus on profits and share value trumps focus on culture, especially for priority decisions</p>	<p>Leaders and organizations do not understand the reasons for employee resistance to change  Leaders do not place sufficient emphasis on communicating the need for strategy change and how it affects employees  Leaders find it challenging to prioritize culture alignment amidst profit generation priorities</p>	

## 6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2 (RQ2)

### 6.3.1 RQ2 – Analysis of Results

The importance of culture was emphasized by Fauver et al. (2018). He stated that skillful and competent employees are needed in organizations, however, without the correct culture in place they will lack commitment and loyalty, which is ultimately the key elements to continued organizational success, and competitive advantage (Fauver et al., 2018). However in addition to commitment, creating and embedding an aligned culture is an art that needs specific skills and capabilities to achieve successfully (Hemerling et al., 2018). Therefore, RQ2 looked to identify the key skills and capabilities that leaders need to possess, to effectively be able to fulfil the purpose as a leader to align the organizations culture to its strategy.

Grobler et al.( 2019) discussed Kotter’s change model showing the eight key steps and errors leaders make when leading and implementing a new strategy. The fourth step discussed is communicating the vision for change, which is an important step to getting your team aligned. (Grobler et al., 2019) adds that not using the correct channels and not being able to communicate the vision, and culture change needed, which will lead to implementation shortfalls. The results reflect the same, identifying that being a good communicator and being able to provide clear direction during changing strategy and aligning culture is a key skill and capability for leader to possess. Participant 1 was clear in what the primary skill for a leader should be:

*“...be a good communicator, and be clear in the direction that is given...”*

Participant 2 added to this skill set, and recommended there also be focus on specific people:  
*“...that ability to give direction. It's that ability to focus on the people that need to get the work done”*

Participant 3 also stressed the importance of leaders possessing the skill of being a good communicator, and added that this skill is also a dependency to other key factors of change:

*“...you can't be influential if you don't communicate...”*

Participant 4 added that being a good communicator means having the skill to communicate at all levels, and not just a blanket approach. Participant 4 also calls for leaders to be extensive in the way they communicate, ensure the intended message gets across, be repetitive if needed:

*“...need to be able to communicate appropriately for all levels to allow them to understand how they fit into that bigger picture...”*

*“Leaders need to be better communicators, be clear in how they communicate and be repetitive if needed, so everyone is on the same page and understanding. At my company, this is how they kept everyone aligned and informed, leaders need to invest in how to communicate well...”*

Fugate & Soenen (2018) also discussed how leader's need to improve their ability to manage change and communicate well. The other skills they recommended leaders need to align culture to strategy change is to ensure expectations are agreed between all parties, and be able to create an environment that is conducive to trust (Fugate & Soenen, 2018). The results from the participants also reflected the skill needed by leaders to create environments that are conducive to aligning culture to strategy. Participant 3 emphasized the skill of building trust within a team:

*“Building trust is a big one, to get buy-in, you need trust...”*

*“...create an environment where there's trust, trust in the sense that people can come to leaders and confide...”*

Participant 7 spoke about the skill to create environments conducive to change, and that enables free thinking and collaboration:

*“...encourage an environment of innovation and opportunities to collaborate...”*

Participant 4 displayed the need for this skill by providing an example where an environment of distrust was created and had negative implications:

*“...the culture changed after the leader showed no respect to us, and used us. Trust was there, and then disappeared when this happened...”*

Hutchison-Krupat (2018) talked about the importance and benefits of effective communication, and how it could be the difference between successfully aligning culture to strategy or not, because being a good communicator is one of the important skills needed by leaders leading

change. However, Hutchison-Krupat (2018) stresses the need to work closer to your employees to understand each other, as the same message can be interpreted in different ways if the leader and employee has a different objective or understanding. The results show the participants also understood and voiced the importance of working closer and understanding your employees, so that the objectives and understanding is aligned. Participant 7 led this argument by saying this effective communication and alignment is achieved through knowing your employees very well:

*“...a leader is meant to understand their staff and find ways in which to interpret that strategy to make sense to them on a day to day basis. To do this, you need to know the people pretty well...”*

Participant 2 and Participant 9 respectively, also agreed that an important skill for leaders is to be able to get to know the employees more, to better succeed at translating the communication in a way that is mutually understood and received.

*“...leaders need to be able to take the vision, and turn it into some sort of strategic planning...”*

*“...it's the capability of being able to translate that strategy at the different levels that's required...”*

Devecchi et al. (2018) discussed that change can be complex, and to be successful in aligning culture for strategic change, it becomes a mandatory skill for leaders to understand the culture or cultures that exist within the organization, and know what is going on in their organization. Participant 13 also believed this skill is mandatory for leaders aligning culture and strategy and it could hurt their success if not practiced:

*“Leaders need to know what's going on in their organization to act accordingly and effectively...”*

*“If a leader does not know what's really going on in the organization, it will hurt him...”*

Molenberghs et al. (2017) emphasizes the skill needed by leaders to enable culture alignment. They speak about the importance of a leader to be able to inspire and motivate employees to be part of the vision and culture of where the organization is moving toward (Molenberghs et al., 2017). Molenberghs et al. (2017) adds that inspirational leaders also need to be inclusive

and share the vision to illustrate the concerns and benefits of everyone in the organization. Participant 1 also shared the need for leaders to be skilled inspirational speakers and motivators, adding that this will aid in aligning culture to the organization's strategy.

*“Proactively plan to motivate and be inspirational speakers to drive the organizations to buy in to the strategy, this will setup the path to aligning the culture...”*

Participant 4 shared an example showing the importance of a leader being able to motivate and inspire employees, as an unmotivated team is an unproductive and inefficient team.

*“In this company, no one was motivated or positive, and there was no way this team was adhering to any culture...”*

Dierdorff et al. (2019) points out that all leaders need to have a high level of self-awareness to be able to assess their actions, behavior, and performance and use this to influence the team positively. Self-awareness is showing to improve a leader and teams effectiveness (Dierdorff et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence is a complimentary skill to this and allows a leader to better understand people in the team and use this understanding to assist people and the team (Tsaur & Ku, 2019). The results show participant 8 in full agreement with leaders possessing the skill and competency of being self-aware and having a high level of emotional intelligence:

*“...have to be a people's person, because culture is very much around people, however this skill is an art to master...”*

*“...if you have self-awareness and high levels of EQ, then you know how to be inclusive with your teams...”*

*Participant 7 reiterated this, but emphasized that self-awareness is longer a ‘nice to have’ skill, it is a necessity to being successful in aligning culture, implementing strategy, and leading any team:*

*“...leaders need to possess a high level of self-awareness skills...”*

Molenberghs et al. (2017) discussed how an inspirational leader also needs to be inclusive and share a vision that illustrates the concerns and benefits of everyone in the organization.

Leaders should include the team on the strategy and change journey as early as possible. Participant 4 shared an experience where they felt included and part of the team. Participant 4 shared that an inclusive leader also makes themselves accessible to the team, knowing that they are on this journey together:

*“I had an experience when one of our very senior executives who came to me after presenting a strategy. He knew my name and asked me what I thought, this went a long way with me as I felt appreciated, part of the team...”*

*“...Have an open-door policy for the employees. Be accessible, be part of the team...”*

The ability to actively listen to your employees is another skill that leaders need to possess, as this will enable them to understand what their employees are really saying (van Quaquebeke, 2018). The results showed strong feedback about leaders who align culture and strategy to be able to listen well. The participants voiced experience around leaders who do not listen well and assume they know what people want. Some interesting feedback is that in some cases, your employees are closer to your customer that you know, and therefore they have the voice of the customer that can be used positively. The following are some of the feedback from participants 1, 4 and 6, sharing their view of the on the importance of listening:

*“...Needs to listen to what the people are saying, be in touch with everyone, as opposed to assuming what the people want...”*

*“Be able to listen to the team and organization...”*

*“...needs to listen and understand what people are saying, be in touch with everyone, as opposed to assuming what the people want...”*

*“Listen to your employees as they are closest to your customer and can provide good advice...”*

### **6.3.2 RQ2 – Model Development**

Table 21: RQ2 - Model Development

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RQ2 - Key Outcomes from Analysis of Results:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Answers to RQ2: What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RQ2 - Feed into Model</b></p>
<p>Leaders must know how to communicate effectively at all levels</p> <p>Leaders need to be able to create environments that are conducive to aligning culture and strategy</p> <p>Leaders must work closer to and better understand their staff</p> <p>Translate and interpret culture and strategy change to employees so they understand where their role fits</p> <p>If leaders do not know what is going on, on the ground, it will hurt them</p> <p>Proactively plan to motivate and inspire your teams</p> <p>Leaders need to be self-aware, have good EQ levels, and work well with people</p> <p>Be inclusive and include the teams early on in the journey to get their commitment</p> <p>Leaders must make themselves accessible and available</p> <p>Leader must learn to actively listen to their teams</p>	<p>Able to plan and communicate effectively at all levels</p> <p>Able to create an environment that is conducive to aligning culture and strategy</p> <p>Able to translate and interpret change to all levels</p> <p>Proactive motivator and inspirational speaker</p> <p>Is self-aware</p> <p>Has a good EQ and work well with people</p> <p>An inclusive leader that takes the team on the journey</p> <p>Is available, accessible, and approachable to the team</p> <p>Is an excellent active listener</p>	<p>Invest in planning and executing effective communication to all levels</p> <p>Place focus on change management and adding an inspirational touch</p> <p>Be consciously self-aware</p> <p>Make time to be available, accessible, and approachable to your employees</p> <p>Focus on EQ levels and being an active listener</p>



## 6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3 (RQ3)

### 6.4.1 RQ3 – Analysis of Results

Lee et al. (2019) explained being proactive as the ability to take your own initiative and prepare in advance for a task that needs to be addressed. Lee et al. (2019) further talks about the benefits of having the capability and skill of being proactive as it is a large driver of getting commitment and involvement by being inclusive from the start of a journey. This explanation presents that being proactive is an advantageous skill that could recognize leaders as being ahead.

RQ3 addresses the importance of being proactive, and what leaders can execute proactively that can add to the model of equipping leaders to improve aligning an organizations culture to its strategy. The results from this research shows that the participants also believe that being proactive is a key skill to possess as a leader in any role or organization. Participant 5 and participant 8 agree that leaders need to be proactive in bringing in expertise to areas where companies lack certain knowledge or skill. They discuss how leaders need to proactively think about deploying expertise earlier to gain competitive advantages:

*“Bring in someone with the right expertise, that knows how to align culture to strategy, especially if the organization doesn’t have the skill...”*

*“Leaders have to be self-aware to acknowledge that they needed the help and get the right people in to give culture alignment to strategy that focus...”*

Devecchi et al. (2018) discussed how complex change can be, and for strategic change to be effective, leaders need to understand the culture or cultures that exist within the organization, Participant 1,2 and 4 shared recommendations in being proactive toward team inclusiveness, knowing your current culture and getting buy-in.

*“...good leaders will take into consideration the culture within their environment whilst formulating their strategy...”*

*“...the best way to get teams onboard is for leaders to start talking to their employees and start including them as early as the strategy formulation phase...”*

*“...Be inclusive with their people, and involve them from early on to get their commitment and buy-in...”*

Participant 6 discusses being proactive, and considering your people and teams early in the strategy management process, to ensure early planning and involvement from the teams:

*“...have a people focus in every strategy discussion, always remind yourself to ask people and culture related questions, maybe appoint someone that’s responsible to ask the people and culture questions...”*

Participant talks about how being proactive can assist leaders to understand if certain strategies are possible to implement, instead of finding this out later:

*“...leaders need to be on the ground and know what is possible or not possible, to implement to drive that strategy...”*

Schilpzand et al. (2018) described empowerment and a leader’s ability to empower others as a benefit to improve employee performances and efficiencies. Hakimi et al. (2010) added that empowerment of others in an organization allows employees to commit, take responsibility and reaps many other employee and performance benefits. Empowerment is one of the initiatives that can be done proactively to setup teams for success. Participant 8 recommended that leaders do not have to do everything on their own, but proactively empower others to lead:

*“...leaders cannot concentrate on every component, so they should get other key members to lead it and advise...”*

Devecchi et al. (2018) discussed how a continuous learning process that equips leaders to support culture change and alignment needs to be embedded. Willis et al. (2016) supports this suggestion to encourage employees to make gradual improvements to their skills and competencies in leading culture change, as this will make them more aware of their capabilities to reduce resistance to change, and then be able to build on these skills further. Participant 1 also supports being proactive and suggested how leaders can be proactive in learning to align an organization’s culture to its strategy:

*“Leaders should be proactive and learn what the best practices are for their company’s and industry. This gains credibility...”*

*“...leaders need to learn from experience, from mistakes and hindsight. An example would be hiring the wrong people, motivating in the right or wrong way, and what alignment approaches work...”*

Participants 6 and 7 add to the recommendations for leaders to be proactive with educating themselves to be able to better align culture and strategy:

*“...a leadership program could be initiated, internally or externally, this could provide advantage to gaining skills needed to align culture to strategy...”*

*“...self-training, leaders need to make sure they are more equipped. That means they need to either self-study or whatever the case may be...”*

### 6.4.2 RQ3 – Model Development

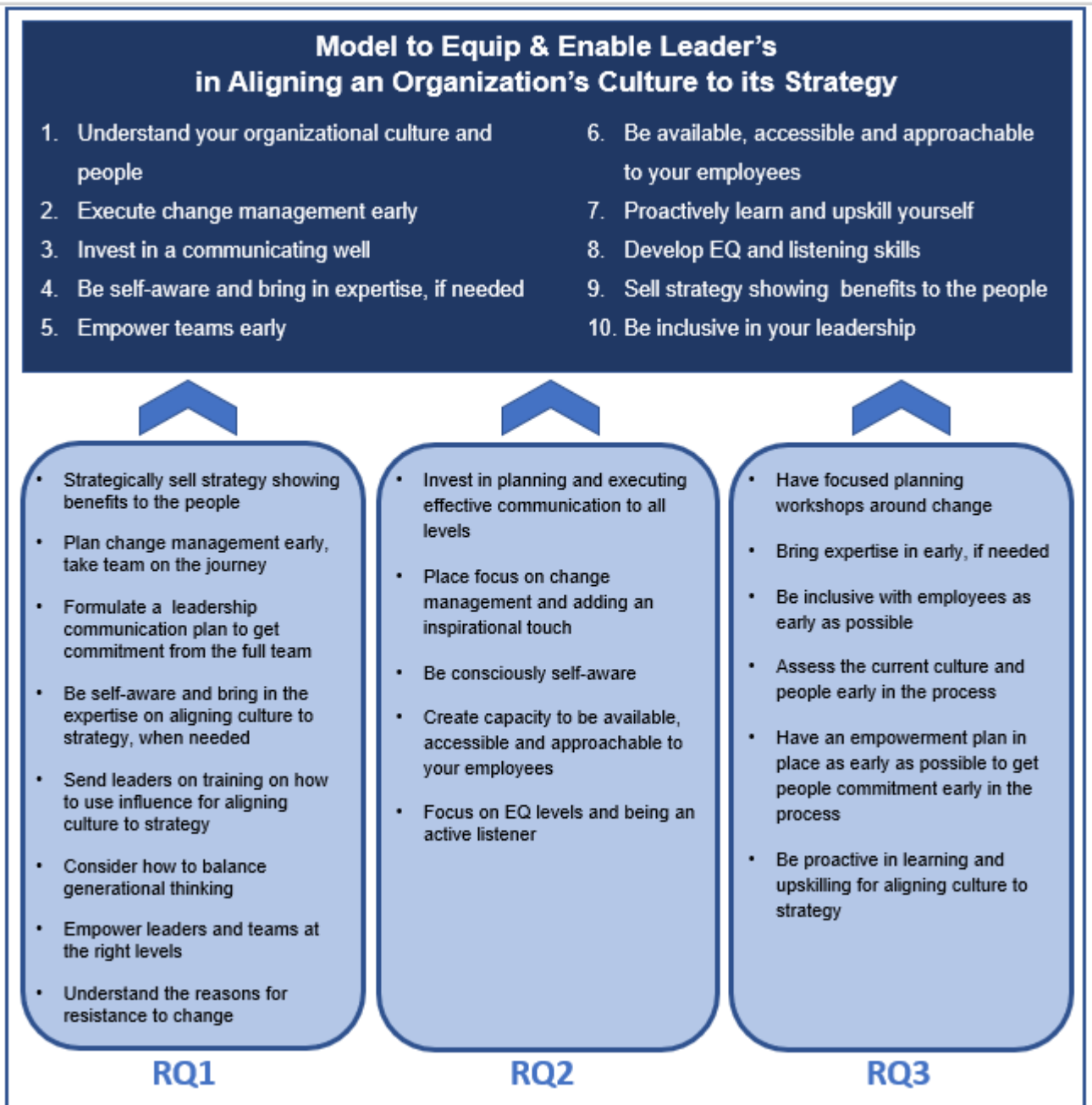
Table 22: RQ3 - Model Development

1 RQ3 - Key Outcomes from Analysis of Results:	2 Answers to RQ3: What can leaders proactively do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?	3 RQ3 - Feed into Model
<p>Leaders need to be proactive thinkers</p> <p>Leaders need to be more self-aware, and act if needed</p> <p>Expertise needs to be brought in proactively to set the teams up for success</p> <p>Leaders need to proactively assess the current culture and situation within the organization to be able to make decisions around this much earlier, and know what is possible or not</p> <p>Leaders need to include their staff as early as possible in the</p>	<p>Set up a workshop early in the strategy process to focus tasks that can be started proactively</p> <p>Be proactive in acquiring expertise if needed</p> <p>Be proactive on which employees can be brought into the strategy process early</p> <p>Run consistent feasibility tests on the new strategy and culture against the current culture and people</p> <p>Have an empowerment plan in place as early as possible to get people commitment early</p>	<p>Have focused planning workshops around change</p> <p>Bring expertise in early, if needed</p> <p>Be inclusive with employees as early as possible</p> <p>Assess the current culture and people early in the process</p> <p>Have an empowerment plan in place as early as possible to get people commitment early</p> <p>Be proactive in learning and upskilling for aligning culture to strategy</p>

1 RQ3 - Key Outcomes from Analysis of Results:	2 Answers to RQ3: What can leaders proactively do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?	3 RQ3 - Feed into Model
<p>strategy process to gain involvement and buy-in</p> <p>Proactively have a people focus while early strategy decisions are made</p> <p>Empowerments needs to be thought about proactively and set up early</p> <p>Leaders need to be proactive in their learning process, to avoid making the same mistakes</p> <p>Leaders can also be proactive in learning and upskilling by setting programs to equip aligning culture to strategy</p>	<p>Be proactive in setting up learning sessions to cover lessons learned and upskilling for continuous improvement to align culture to strategy</p>	

## 6.5 Conclusion and Final Model

This model was developed by extracting key findings and answers from each of the research questions. These extracted points form important inputs and enablers toward successfully aligning an organization's culture to its strategy. These inputs and enablers were then analyzed across the research questions where common findings were identified. The output was agreeing and formulating ten key actions that leaders can follow to equip themselves to effectively and successful align an organization's culture to its strategy. This is a model that can be built on for further research on this topic and assist leaders in practice.



**Figure 10: Model to Equip and Enable Leaders to Align an Organizations Culture to its Strategy**

## Chapter 7 - Conclusion

This chapter aims to consolidate all the findings and results of this research, and discuss them in context of the research problem, objective, methodology and findings. The principle findings will be discussed, followed by the implications for management, limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

For organizations to have competitive advantages, and sustain their businesses, they need to successfully implement their strategies (Maika, 2020). There have been studies that show when it comes to larger organizations, more than two-thirds of them are not able to successfully implement their strategies, which indicates only a thirty three percent success rate (Sull et al., 2015). One of the causes of organizations not able to implement strategy successfully is their failure to align their organizations culture to their strategy (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). In any organization, it is seen that any significant strategic change requires a culture change to enable the company's strategy and implementation (Hemerling et al., 2018). There was very little information available in literature around knowing why organizations fail at aligning their culture and strategy, and how leaders can equip themselves to be successful in aligning their culture their strategy.

The objective of this research became to add to literature around the causes of why organizations and leaders fail at aligning their culture to their strategy, given that a strong relationship exists between aligning culture and strategy, to successful strategy implementations (Engert & Baumgartner, 2015). The other objective was to identify key factors that would equip and enable leaders to align the organization's culture to their organization's strategy.

To achieve these objectives, the researcher identified three questions that needed to be answered. This research will aim to answer the following three questions.

1. What are the main reasons for organization's and its leaders not aligning culture to its strategy, given the positive relationship between an aligned culture and successful strategy implementations?
2. What are the key skills and capabilities needed for leaders to be effective at aligning culture to an organization's strategy?
3. What can leaders proactively do to prepare themselves to successfully align the organizations culture to its strategy?

Research question one aimed to identify the key reasons and root causes that prevented the organization and its leaders from aligning of their culture to their strategy. The questions mainly looked at if these causes were due to leader's skills, capabilities, and mindsets, or whether it was due to restrictions that the organization may have established. Research question two focused on identifying the key skills and capabilities are that leaders need to possess to effectively be able to align culture to strategy. The third research question aimed to collect data that could add to the body of knowledge and provide leaders and organizations with input to being more proactive in aligning an organizations culture to its strategy.

The critical realism philosophy was adopted and drove the thinking around what the underlying issues were. The research approach used was inductive, as it aimed to gather information from all the participants who have been involved in the strategy implementation process, the actual reasons behind leaders not being able to align culture to the organization's strategy successfully. The inductive approach also allowed for a more easily flexible approach for changes that came up during the research (Saunders & Lewis, 2017). Due to the literature gap around the lack of proper direction in successfully aligning the organization's culture to its strategy, and the right skills and capabilities needed by leaders, there is a need for flexibility to achieve the relatively unknown outcome.

The methodology used was the exploratory qualitative research study. The exploratory approach was used as it aimed to analyze and achieve new insights into the required capabilities, competencies, and skills to enable leaders to align the organizational culture and strategy, which will add to successful strategy implementations.

The data for this research was gathered through one on one semi-structured interviews with non-executive senior management, who have been involved in the strategy implementation process for at least ten years. All the participant opted not to conduct the interviews in person, so they were held using an online tool called 'Microsoft Teams'. Each question in the interview addressed one of more of the research questions.

Upon completion of the interviews with all thirteen participants, the interviews were transcribed using a translation tool called 'Otter', and the transcriptions were uploaded to the research coding tool called 'Atlas.ti'. In the 'Atlas.ti' tool, each transcribed interview was analyzed, and key information coded. There were one hundred and twenty eight (128) codes developed from all thirteen interviews. Once the coding was completed, each code was allocated a category.

On completion of categorizing all codes, there were twenty nine (29) categories developed. The twenty nine categories were then each allocated to themes, of which there six created.

The results chapter (Chapter 5) was compiled by research question. The results from the interviews were presented and aligned per theme and categories. Key quotes from the data gathering interview process were also presented alongside the themes and categories.

In analysis of results chapter (Chapter 6) then discussed each of the key findings against the information provided in the literature chapter (Chapter 2). Based on the analysis of results, a model was developed to equip and enable leaders to be able to successfully align an organizations culture to its strategy. The development of the model started by extracting the key outcomes from each research question analysis. The key outcomes were used to answer each of the research questions. Key findings were then extracted from the answers to the research question and fed into the model. The model was finally compiled by extracting ten key enablers to equip leaders to align culture to strategy, and ultimately improve the success rate of strategy implementations.

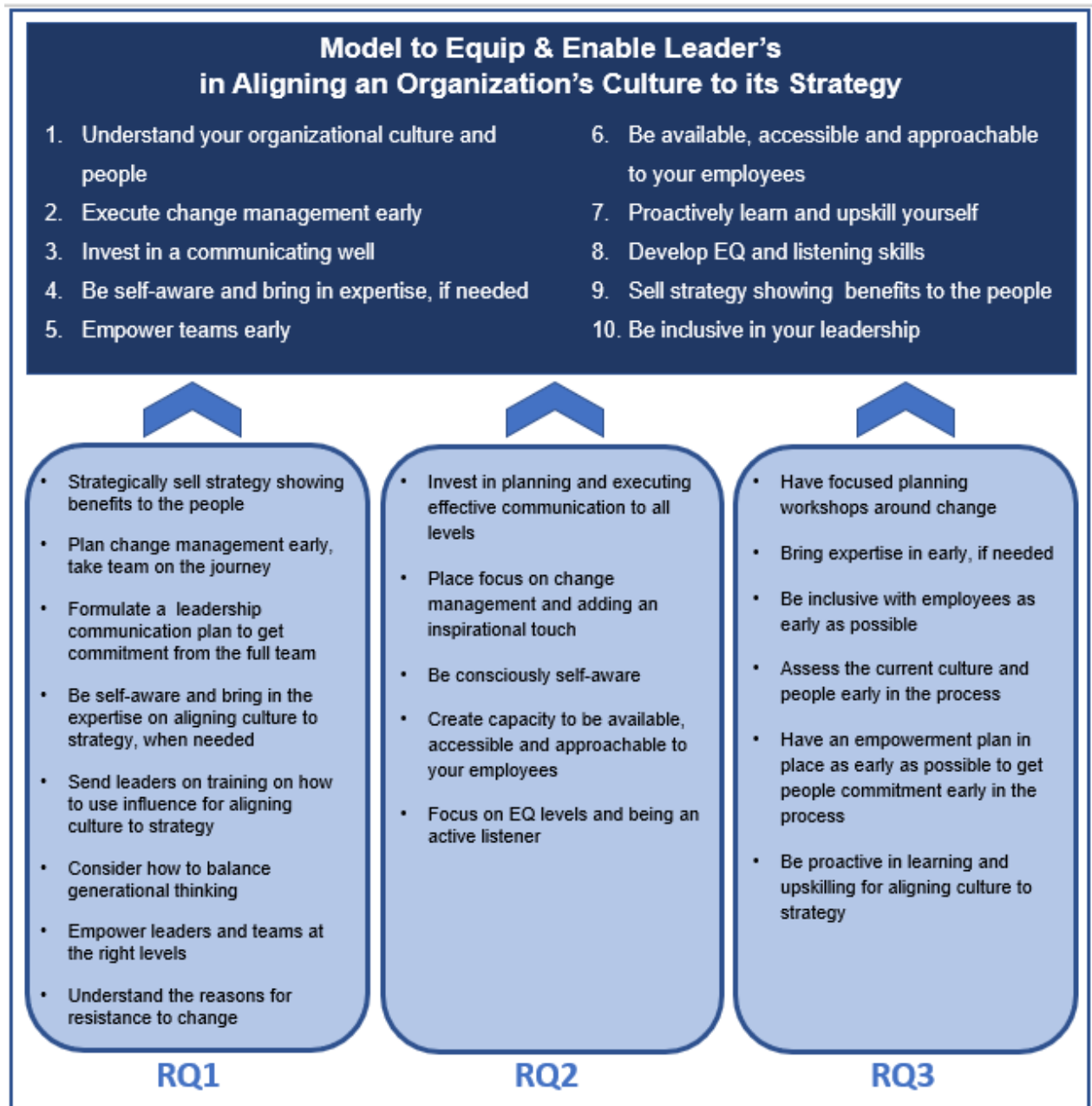
## **7.1 Principal Findings**

The principle findings of this research study are the research questions that were answered, and the model that was developed to equip and enable leaders in organizations to better align their culture to their strategy. In research question one, the study was able to present key findings on the main reasons that organizations and leaders did not align their culture to their strategy. For research question two, this research study provided findings on the key skills and capabilities that were needed by leaders to effectively align an organizations culture to its strategy. Finally, in research question three, this research study was able to identify findings showing what leaders can proactively do in preparing themselves to align the organizations culture to its strategy.

The findings identified in the research questions also enabled a model to be created that will add to the body of knowledge and in practice, to equip and enable leaders in aligning an organizations culture to its strategy.



## 7.2 Model to Equip and Enable Leaders in Aligning an Organization’s Culture to its Strategy



**Figure 11: Model to Equip and Enable Leaders to Align an Organizations Culture to its Strategy**

This model was developed by extracting key findings and answers from each of the research questions. These extracted points form important inputs and enablers toward successfully aligning an organization’s culture to its strategy. These inputs and enablers were then analyzed across the research questions where common findings were identified. The output was agreeing and formulating ten key actions that leaders can follow to equip themselves to effectively and successful align an organization’s culture to its strategy.

### 7.3 Implications for Management and Other Relevant Stakeholders

The academic contribution of this research study has been fill the gap in literature focusing on what the reasons were for organizations and leaders not aligning their culture and strategy, especially given the relationship that exists where strategy implementations are more successful if culture and strategy is aligned (Maika, 2020). This research study has also provided a model to equip and enable leaders to align culture to strategy. This model may serve as a foundation to build further skills and capabilities needed by leaders who align culture and strategy.

The managerial implications of this research study are that, if leaders and organizations adopt and subscribe to this model, it will equip and enable then to possess the skills required to align culture and strategy. This study and results have shown that these are key findings that will improve the success rate of aligning culture to strategy, and therefore strategy implementations.

This study can also have positive implications for employees within organizations if this model is adopted and followed by their leaders. This will cause their leaders to be more inclusive with them, communicate better, and consider how the strategy change can impact them beneficially.

Rafferty & Jimmieson (2017) discussed that if an organization and leadership do not have the skills and capabilities to align culture to strategy, they will have a higher rate of strategy implementation failures, and miss out on gaining competitive advantages. In this research study, the key findings and model enables leaders to be equipped to possess the needed skills and capabilities to ultimately gain strong competitive advantages.

### 7.4 Limitations

The researcher did exercise caution to ensure the necessary academic rigor was followed to execute this research study process. However, there are noted limitations that existed as listed below:

- 12 of the 13 participants, although having vast experience in this field, were all employees of the same organization during the period when the interviews took place. They were individual players from various departments in the company. This will impact generalizability of the proposed framework.

- Interviews took place soon after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, however, the participants opted to perform the interviews online using Microsoft Teams, as opposed to a face-to-face interview. The participants may have been in a more involved atmosphere and different results could have been possible.
- The selected participants for this research were non-executive senior managers who have had at least ten years of experience in the strategy management process. The view of this research was limited to just the lens of this group.

## 7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout the research process, the researcher did note a need for further research on this topic. The items below represent options for future research:

- This research study should be carried out with group of participants from different companies, or from an organization different from the one used here.
- Select participants for this research that are either executives or employees. It would be beneficial to see this study from the perspective of either an executive or employee view.

## 7.6 Conclusion

It was discovered in the literature that only one-third of strategy developed gets implemented successfully. If strategy does not get implemented successfully, this translate in objectives and competitive advantages not being met. One of the reasons for the low success rate of strategy implementations is due to the inability to align an organizations culture to its strategy. A gap existed in the literature as there were no reasons as to why leaders and organizations did not align culture to strategy, given its relationship with successful implementations. There was also gaps that existed to know how leaders could be equipped to fulfil the function of aligning culture to strategy.

To conclude, the research study was able provide results that could be related to literature and answer the research questions pertaining to the gaps in literature. In addition, a model was developed to equip and enable leaders in aligning an organization's culture to its strategy. These outputs from this paper will assist to continue building in this area for academic research and for practical usage.

## Reference List

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Ethical Clearance Approved

## Ethical Clearance Approved Inbox x

**MastersResearch2020** <MastersResearch2020@gibs.co.za>

to me ▾

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance  
Approved**

Dear Dane Moodley,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

## Appendix B – Interview Questionnaire Guide

Question Number	Interview Questions
1	In organizations you have worked at, do you believe there was sufficient focus on building the intended culture? Why?
2	On a scale of 1-10, how much do you feel does the organization’s culture affect the implementation of strategy, where 1 shows that culture does not affect strategy implementation and 10 shows that the impact is very high. Please justify your rating.
3	On a scale of 1-10, how critical is leadership’s role in aligning the organizations culture to its strategy, where 1 shows that leadership’s role is not critical and 10 shows that leadership’s role is very critical. Please justify your rating.
4	Do you feel that when leaders fail to align culture to strategy implementation, do they purposefully ignore culture alignment and change, do they not feel it is important enough to be part of the plan and initiative to drive a successful implementation of the strategy, or is it an element that they feel does not need any attention? Do leaders assume the people in the organization are already aligned? Why?
5	What are the key reasons for leadership failing to align the organizations culture to its strategy or implementation plan? Why do they ignore it? Or not plan for it?
6	Do you feel that hard or soft skills are a greater asset to possess when it comes to leader’s skills and capabilities around aligning culture to its strategy?
7	What are the most crucial skills and capabilities that a leader would need to be effective in aligning their organizations culture to successfully implement strategy?
8	Do you feel leaders often try to exploit their existing skills and capabilities to align and change culture, and not make the effort to learn the needed skills?
9	How can leaders be more proactive in setting themselves up to be successful in aligning the organizations culture to its strategy?
10	From the perspective of employees or organization on the ground, what do

	think their reasoning or drivers not to align to new strategy, and be resistant to change?
11	From the perspective of employees or organization on the ground, what do think their reasoning or drivers to align to new strategy, and be supportive and excited about the change?
12	What key tips can you provide that will enable leaders to think about aligning culture whilst still formulating strategy?
13	Is there anything else you would like to add to this topic and area of strategy implementation and culture alignment?

## Appendix C – Code Book

Number	CODING
1	Culture is formed without intention
2	Culture focus is different based on the organization size
3	Employees need to play a role in building an organizations culture
4	Leadership adopted the role of building an intended culture
5	No accountability is taken to drive a company's culture
6	There is an intent to build a certain culture, but the know-how is lacking
7	Building an intended culture falls flat because of a top-down approach of delegation
8	Culture is something abstract and cannot be deliberately built
9	Consulting houses drove the need to adapt to customers cultures
10	Organization had no focus on culture, or building culture
11	There has been a focus on culture and people, especially in last decade
12	Organizations have built an intended culture and focus on their people
13	Culture focus is just a tick box, with no real ambition to achieve anything
14	Type of leader influences whether intentional culture will be initiated
15	Generational thinking has an influence on if and how culture becomes an intentional drive
16	Relationship between culture and strategy implementation - 7/8 out of 10
17	Organization needs to be aligned to implement strategy successfully
18	Relationship between culture and strategy implementation - 10 out of 10
19	Value proposition and business model takes away focus on culture alignment importance
20	When there is no focus on building culture, it builds itself and becomes toxic
21	Too much focus on culture draws companies away from focusing on business strategy
22	Relationship between culture and strategy implementation - 9 out of 10
23	Need effective communication to employees to implement strategy
24	Leaders role is critical in aligning culture to strategy - 7/8 out of 10
25	Leaders have a responsibility to align culture to the strategy and implementation
26	Leadership need to drive culture alignment and strategy implementation, to drive better working environments
27	Leadership driving culture alignment is a sliding scale. Highly involved initially and then less involved
28	Leaders role is critical in aligning culture to strategy - 9/10 out of 10
29	Leaders need to develop relationships with their teams
30	Lack of leadership involvement in aligning culture can breed a negativity and toxic culture
31	People need leaders to drive and motivate
32	Leadership styles can determine cultures
33	Leaders expect the teams to execute on strategy, whether culture is aligned or not
34	Leaders do not feel culture alignment to strategy needs much attention
35	When too many hierarchies exist, alignment accountability fades
36	People are leaving and are looking for organizations that focus on culture
37	Leaders do not align culture, as they believe that culture aligns by itself

Number	CODING
38	Leaders do not consciously know how things are on the ground and do not believe they need to align with everyone
39	Leaders completely ignore culture alignment
40	Leaders are not aware of the relationship between aligning culture and strategy implementation
41	Leaders approach to aligning culture is driven by their leadership style
42	Approach to culture and people management has changed from the previous generation
43	Revenue, ROI, and customer satisfaction overrides the focus on culture
44	Lack of effective change management
45	Leaders choose not to take their people on the strategy journey with them, not inclusive
46	Leaders lack humility
47	Balance of permanent and contractor staff can influence culture negatively
48	The right people are not included in the strategy process
49	Leaders do not understand how critical the correlation is between strategy and culture
50	The cost and investment of equipping leaders and employees
51	Conflicting priorities on revenue and customers override culture alignment
52	Differing leadership styles lean toward not prioritizing culture alignment
53	Leaders do not know or do not focus on getting buy-in from their people
54	Some leaders are pushed into senior leadership too early
55	Generational differences and thinking influences the approach to culture
56	Culture is intangible, hard, and uncomfortable, and difficult to implement successfully
57	People do not believe in the leader's vision
58	Leader's stronger at hard skills tend to get more involved in execution and sometimes push their approach
59	Needs to be a balance of hard and soft skills to align culture to strategy
60	Leaders need soft skills - Courage and having your staff's back
61	Leaders need soft skills - EQ and empathy
62	Leaders need soft skills - Work closer with people and encourage inclusivity
63	Leaders need soft skills - Be able to work well with people, and communicate well
64	Leaders need soft skills - Able to work with people and take criticism
65	Soft skills and hard skills may work better for different organizational situations
66	Leader skills and capabilities - Able to listen to the organization
67	Leader skills and capabilities - Be inspirational, motivational and get buy-in
68	Leader skills and capabilities - Be effective at planning and managing tasks
69	Leader skills and capabilities - Communicate well and give clear direction
70	Leader skills and capabilities - Humility and integrity
71	Leader skills and capabilities - Empathy, put yourself in others shoes
72	Leader skills and capabilities - Be influential, respectful and lead from the front
73	Leader skills and capabilities - Be accessible, approachable and have a sense of calm
74	Leader skills and capabilities - Build a trust environment
75	Leaders skills and capabilities - Need to understand every aspect of their business well

Number	CODING
76	Leadership skills and capabilities - Work closer with teams on the ground and be more inclusive in the strategy approach
77	Leader skills and capabilities - A high level of self-awareness
78	Leader skills and capabilities - Able to understand and profile their people and know how to operationalize strategy
79	Leader skills and capabilities - Able to communicate and translate strategy and plans at every level, so it is received the right way
80	Leader skills and capabilities - Have high emotional intelligence
81	Leader skills and capabilities - Be charismatic and energetic
82	Leader skills and capabilities - Be able to build the right structured team to get the right job done
83	Leader skills and capabilities - Be a visionary and show passion
84	Leaders mostly leverage their existing skills and capabilities and do not follow best practices
85	Leaders do not take the time to learn something properly if they are unsure, they find information on their own and hope it is enough
86	Leaders are afraid of asking for help if they do not know
87	Leaders are arrogant, they do not ask for assistance and think they know better
88	Human nature forces us to look to our existing capabilities, strong points, and stay in our comfort zones
89	Generational differences, cause leaders to stick to their way of doing things
90	They truly believe in their abilities that got them to their senior levels
91	Being proactive - Learn industry best practices and trends
92	Being proactive - Take time to learn from experience and execute in an improved way
93	Being proactive - Understand the as-is and to-be culture of the organization
94	Being proactive - Understanding the guys on the ground and what they are experiencing
95	Being proactive - Communicate and inform the people
96	Being Proactive - Be inclusive and bring the team on the journey as early as possible
97	Being proactive - Identify areas of assistance needed to align culture, bring them in and have a focused team
98	Being proactive - Recommend leadership programs for leaders in the organization
99	Being proactive - Self invest and self-train, equip yourself with the right skills
100	Being proactive - Get a mentor
101	Being proactive - Plan to be more visible and how you plan to be more sustainable
102	Employee resistance to change in strategy is caused by poor change management efforts
103	Employee resistance to change is due to a lack of clear communication and direction
104	Employees enjoy their comfort zone, and change interrupts this
105	Employees do not like learning new things and do not deal well with change
106	Employees feel they were not included in the process
107	Employee had a negative experience with the leader, trust and respect is lost
108	Employees react well to change when change management is effective and comprehensive
109	Employees react well to strategy change when they feel they were listened to and involved

Number	CODING
110	Employees react well to strategy change when they feel valued and are rewarded
111	Employees react well to new strategy as they see new personal growth and learning opportunities
112	Employees react well if the strategy aligns to their thinking, skills, and beliefs
113	Whilst formulating strategy, leaders need to be sure they understand their organizations culture
114	Whilst formulating strategy, leaders need to consider how they will sell the strategy to their employees
115	Engage their employees, gain credibility and be more inclusive
116	Bring in expertise to assist with aligning culture to the strategy
117	Have a people focus, considering how it would affect your teams
118	Work through a checklist as a reminder to ensure you keep thinking about culture alignment
119	Exercise scenario planning
120	Be more inclusive in strategy formulation with the employees
121	Focus for leaders is mainly how they will get work completed rather than culture alignment
122	Leaders should stop trying to solve new problems with old solutions
123	Leaders need to create an environment where there is trust
124	Leaders need to create an environment where ideas and innovation is accepted
125	Focus on culture alignment has now become a necessity
126	The virtual way of working calls for more focus on culture and strategy alignment and leaders need to give this more attention
127	We need to stop being so busy and talk about the reality and importance of aligning culture
128	Leaders need to be more present to have a real influence on the culture