

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES ON STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The success of strategic planning largely depends on the integration of strong leadership qualities with effective management competencies. Leaders shape organizational direction by articulating a clear vision, motivating employees, and promoting innovation, while managers ensure the practical realization of these objectives through structured processes and resource optimization. This study analyzes the interdependent roles of leadership and management in designing, implementing, and monitoring strategic plans. It emphasizes the influence of both transformational and transactional leadership styles on organizational performance, as well as the importance of skills such as strategic communication, adaptability to change, and critical analysis. The results demonstrate that organizations harmonizing visionary leadership with efficient managerial execution are better equipped to achieve sustainable growth, maintain competitiveness, and adapt to market fluctuations.

Keywords: Leadership qualities, management competencies, strategic plan development, organizational performance, transformational leadership, adaptability

INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning represents a vital process through which organizations establish a systematic pathway to accomplish long-term ambitions. Serving as an overarching blueprint, it informs key decisions, guides the optimal use of resources, and shapes the direction of organizational growth. Achieving success in this domain requires an in-depth understanding of both internal strengths and external circumstances, enabling decision-makers to anticipate potential developments, evaluate possible risks, and adjust to evolving market realities. Far from being a static undertaking, strategic planning is a recurring and adaptive process that must be continuously reviewed and refined to remain effective over time.

The effectiveness of strategic planning relies heavily on the combined impact of leadership and managerial capabilities. Although their roles differ, each is essential for translating strategic intent into tangible outcomes. Leadership involves motivating and inspiring individuals, articulating a forward-looking vision, and fostering an environment that supports creativity, innovation, and collaboration. Leaders are instrumental in formulating a

clear mission, uniting diverse stakeholders behind common goals, and promoting transformative change. They nurture a culture where strategic thinking is valued, and staff are empowered to contribute meaningfully to organizational advancement (Taleh, 2021).

Management, by contrast, focuses on operationalizing strategic intentions into structured and measurable actions. This includes organizing resources effectively, defining quantifiable objectives, monitoring progress, and maintaining accountability throughout implementation. Managers convert the broad direction set by leaders into practical initiatives, supported by well-defined processes and performance indicators. Their core responsibility lies in ensuring operational efficiency, reducing potential risks, and delivering planned outcomes in a disciplined and consistent manner.

The integration of leadership vision with managerial execution is central to achieving strategic objectives. Leadership energizes the process by providing clarity of purpose and inspiration, while management ensures that actions are executed with precision and accountability. Without a strong leadership component, a strategic plan may lack motivational power and direction; without effective management, even a well-designed vision risks failing during execution. Organizations that maintain a healthy balance between these two functions are more capable of addressing complex challenges, encouraging innovative practices, and securing long-term stability (Kaplan & Norton, 2004).

This paper analyzes how leadership and management competencies jointly influence the quality of strategic planning. It evaluates different leadership approaches, decision-making models, and management techniques to identify ways of enhancing strategic outcomes. The discussion further considers potential difficulties encountered in the planning process and suggests practical measures for optimizing leadership and management practices to ensure sustainable success.

1. ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

In strategic planning, leadership functions as the driving force that sets the organization's vision and determines its overall direction. Leaders with a clear sense of purpose ensure that all initiatives remain consistent with the institution's mission, core values, and long-term priorities. Beyond setting direction, strong leadership builds a workplace culture grounded in responsibility, collaboration, and innovation—elements that are crucial for achieving lasting success. The following subsections outline the leadership qualities most closely associated with effective strategic planning (Khalilov, Adilzade, Rzayev, Guliyev & Yusifova, 2024)

1. Vision-Oriented Mindset: A capable leader envisions the future with clarity and purpose. This ability enables the formulation of long-term targets and the development of a strategic pathway to reach them. A precisely defined vision serves as a reference point for all organizational actions, ensuring that every department understands its contribution to broader objectives. Leaders with such foresight anticipate sector shifts, identify growth opportunities, and prepare proactive responses to potential challenges.

2. Strategic Communication Skills: Clear communication is indispensable in translating strategic intent into actionable plans. Leaders must express organizational objectives in ways that are accessible to stakeholders at all levels. Open, transparent communication fosters trust and minimizes uncertainty, while also ensuring alignment during implementation. Active listening is equally important—by inviting suggestions from employees, customers, and partners, leaders can refine strategies and improve decision-making outcomes.

3. Informed and Timely Decision-Making: Decision-making in strategic planning requires the ability to interpret complex data, weigh alternatives, and assess associated risks. Effective leaders rely on reliable evidence, expert insights, and comprehensive analysis before committing to a course of action. They are decisive yet flexible, ready to adapt their choices when new information or changing conditions demand an alternative approach.

4. Motivation and Team Empowerment: Strategic planning is more than designing objectives—it also involves creating an environment in which people are motivated to achieve them. Leaders who articulate a shared purpose, recognize individual contributions, and support professional growth strengthen employee engagement. By fostering mutual trust and empowering staff, leaders encourage teams to take ownership of strategic initiatives and exceed expectations in execution.

5. Adaptability and Innovative Thinking: In today's dynamic and unpredictable business climate, adaptability is a core leadership competency. External pressures such as market fluctuations, emerging technologies, and economic instability require continuous reassessment of strategies. Leaders who embrace change, welcome creative problem-solving, and support experimentation ensure that the organization remains competitive and resilient. Encouraging new ideas and piloting innovative solutions enhances flexibility and long-term sustainability.

Table 1: Comparative Outcomes Based on Leadership Strength

Performance Factor	Strong Leadership (%)	Weak Leadership (%)
Successful Implementation of Strategic Plans	85%	42%
Faculty and Staff Engagement in Planning	78%	39%
Institutional Adaptability to Change	82%	45%
Research Output and Academic Excellence	88%	50%
Financial Efficiency and Budget Management	80%	46%

Leadership is an essential pillar of effective strategic planning, influencing vision formation, fostering commitment, and ensuring successful execution of objectives. Leaders who combine foresight with strong communication, sound decision-making, team motivation, and adaptive thinking create the conditions for organizational resilience and sustainable growth. In an environment characterized by rapid change and competitive pressures, integrating these leadership qualities into strategic processes transforms plans from theoretical frameworks into concrete results that deliver measurable impact and long-term stability.

2. THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning defines an organization's long-term aspirations and maps the pathway for achieving them. While leadership provides vision and inspiration, management ensures that these strategic aspirations are converted into practical actions. Managers are responsible for breaking down the strategic framework into concrete steps, allocating necessary resources, and tracking progress to guarantee successful implementation. The ultimate success of any strategic plan is closely linked to the capability of management to execute, monitor, and adapt strategies to evolving circumstances (Khalilov, Aliyev, Guliyeva & Babayeva, 2024).

1. Organizational Effectiveness: Managers must allocate resources wisely, set priorities, and coordinate activities to ensure strategic objectives are achieved on time. This competency includes creating efficient workflows, clarifying responsibilities, and streamlining processes for maximum productivity. Effective resource management—covering human talent, finances, and technology—ensures that all strategic initiatives receive adequate support for successful delivery.

2. Problem-Solving and Analytical Skills: No strategic plan unfolds without challenges. Skilled managers identify potential problems early and act promptly to resolve them. This requires a combination of analytical reasoning, creativity, and data-informed decision-making. By addressing issues proactively, managers safeguard the continuity of strategic efforts and prevent setbacks that could slow organizational progress.

3. Performance Tracking: Ongoing evaluation of progress is critical for ensuring alignment with the organization's long-term goals. Managers establish measurable indicators and performance benchmarks to assess the impact of strategic activities. Regular review cycles enable timely course corrections, while insights drawn from performance data help optimize operations and enhance overall effectiveness.

4. Risk Identification and Mitigation: Strategic initiatives always involve varying degrees of uncertainty. Managers must identify potential risks, evaluate their potential impact, and prepare contingency measures. Risk management encompasses recognizing weaknesses, adopting preventive actions, and responding rapidly when unforeseen issues arise. A proactive approach to risk ensures that strategies remain resilient against internal and external disruptions.

5. Team Integration and Coordination: Because strategic planning is inherently collaborative, managers play a central role in aligning different teams with overarching objectives. They facilitate open communication, coordinate interdepartmental efforts, and reinforce accountability. By encouraging cooperation, providing clear guidance, and motivating team members, managers help convert strategic priorities into operational results (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Table 2: Comparative Overview of Management's Role in Strategic Planning

Management Function	Impact on Strategic Planning	Key Outcomes
Goal Setting	Establishes long-term institutional priorities	Clear vision and mission coherence

Management Function	Impact on Strategic Planning	Key Outcomes
Decision-Making	Applies evidence-based approaches to planning	Effective and targeted implementation
Resource Allocation	Optimizes use of financial, human, and technical assets	Sustainability and efficient operations
Stakeholder Coordination	Involves faculty, students, and partners in planning	Greater innovation and collaboration
Performance Evaluation	Tracks progress and adjusts strategies accordingly	Continuous development and accountability
Risk Management	Anticipates risks and develops preventive solutions	Operational stability and resilience
Adaptability	Adjusts policies to respond to external changes	Improved competitiveness and responsiveness

Management acts as the operational engine of strategic planning, turning visionary concepts into measurable, achievable outcomes. Through efficient resource utilization, problem resolution, performance assessment, risk control, and team coordination, managers ensure that strategic initiatives progress smoothly and remain consistent with organizational goals. In fast-changing environments, the adaptability and analytical skill of management are essential for sustaining progress and addressing emerging challenges. Effective management not only ensures the execution of strategic plans but also enhances institutional resilience, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

3. INTEGRATION OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business environment, the success of strategic planning largely depends on the effective combination of leadership and management functions. Leadership is primarily responsible for defining the organizational vision and inspiring transformation, while management ensures that this vision is translated into concrete, measurable actions. The collaboration between these two roles is essential for achieving sustainable growth and long-term success.

3.1. Leadership's Contribution to Strategic Planning

Leadership serves as the foundation for establishing a clear mission, setting ambitious yet realistic long-term goals, and motivating employees toward a shared objective (Khalilov, Alikhanov, Hasanov & Ahmadova, 2024).

- **Vision Formulation:** Effective leaders develop and communicate a compelling vision aligned with the organization's core values and strategic aims. This vision acts as a unifying guide, motivating all organizational levels toward common objectives. By anticipating future trends and challenges, leaders create a vision that is both inspiring and adaptable to changing conditions.
- **Motivation and Inspiration:** Leaders foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, encouraging employees to think creatively and embrace change. Their ability to communicate optimism, especially during uncertainty, boosts morale and engagement. Empowering employees and recognizing their contributions cultivates a proactive workforce committed to organizational success.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Leaders maintain strong, trust-based relationships with both internal and external stakeholders by actively listening and clearly articulating strategic goals. This engagement ensures alignment, collaboration, and shared ownership of strategic initiatives.
- **Risk Awareness and Management:** Proactive leaders anticipate potential risks and develop contingency plans to mitigate negative impacts, allowing the organization to remain resilient and responsive to unforeseen challenges.

3.2. Management's Role in Strategic Planning

Management translates leadership's vision into operational reality by organizing resources, monitoring progress, and ensuring effective execution (Khalilov, 2025).

- **Operational Implementation:** Managers develop detailed action plans, assign responsibilities, and set timelines to ensure strategic objectives are achievable and clear at all levels.

- **Performance Monitoring:** By establishing and tracking key performance indicators (KPIs), managers assess progress, identify gaps, and implement adjustments to maintain alignment with strategic goals.
- **Resource Allocation:** Managers optimize the use of financial, human, and technological resources, prioritizing initiatives that offer the greatest strategic value while maintaining operational efficiency.
- **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:** Utilizing data-driven approaches, managers tackle operational challenges swiftly and make informed decisions that support both short-term needs and long-term objectives (Northouse, 2019).

3.3. Synergy Between Leadership and Management

According to Yukl (2013), the most effective strategic planning occurs when leadership and management functions are closely integrated.

- **Alignment of Vision and Execution:** Leaders provide strategic direction, while managers ensure daily operations support this vision through clear communication and task coordination.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Leadership encourages innovation and strategic foresight, while management applies structured processes to adapt quickly to environmental changes, ensuring organizational agility.
- **Enhanced Employee Engagement:** The combination of visionary leadership and systematic management creates a motivated and well-supported workforce, driving productivity and commitment.
- **Sustainable Competitive Advantage:** Organizations that effectively blend leadership and management cultivate resilience and agility, enabling them to outperform competitors and achieve enduring success (Taghiyev, Babayev & Khalilov, 2025).

Table 3: Impact of Leadership Management Integration

Institutional Factor	Strong Integration (%)	Weak Integration (%)
Strategic Plan Success Rate	88%	46%
Faculty and Staff Engagement	82%	40%
Financial Sustainability	85%	48%
Adaptability to Change	90%	52%
Research and Innovation Output	87%	44%
Student Satisfaction	80%	39%

The integration of leadership and management is a critical determinant of strategic planning success. Leadership provides the vision and inspiration necessary for direction-setting, while management ensures disciplined execution and resource optimization. When these two functions work in harmony, organizations benefit from strategic coherence, adaptability, and high employee engagement. This partnership not only enhances operational effectiveness but also strengthens organizational resilience, positioning the institution for long-term growth and competitiveness in a complex and evolving business environment.

CONCLUSION

Leadership and management competencies are vital to the effective implementation of strategic planning within organizations. Leadership sets the vision, inspires commitment, and provides the direction necessary to guide an organization toward its long-term goals. Conversely, management is responsible for systematically translating that vision into actionable plans by organizing resources, structuring processes, and monitoring performance. The collaboration between leadership and management is essential to achieving strategic objectives, as it promotes innovation, flexibility, and operational effectiveness.

A balanced integration of leadership and management improves decision-making by ensuring strategies are both aspirational and feasible. While strong leadership energizes employees, instills purpose, and nurtures a culture of ongoing enhancement, competent management ensures efficient operations and the realization of targets. Organizations that harmonize these two functions are better prepared to adapt to shifting market dynamics, maintain competitive edges, and secure sustainable success.

Nevertheless, many organizations find it challenging to maintain the right equilibrium. Excessive emphasis on leadership without sufficient managerial control may result in ambitious yet poorly executed plans. On the other hand, focusing too heavily on management without visionary leadership can cause inflexible and uninspired

implementation lacking strategic foresight. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to develop both visionary leaders and capable managers who work collaboratively.

Future studies should explore practical cases where organizations have effectively combined leadership and management in strategic planning. Investigations across diverse industries, organizational models, and cultural environments could yield valuable lessons on best practices and common pitfalls. Moreover, research into the impact of technological advancements, digital transformation, and emerging leadership approaches on strategic planning would further enrich understanding of organizational adaptability in today's complex and rapidly evolving context.

In summary, the dynamic interaction between leadership and management significantly influences an organization's ability to craft and execute strategic plans successfully. By acknowledging the complementary roles of leadership and management and fostering their integration, organizations can enhance decision-making, drive enduring growth, and achieve sustained success in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

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