

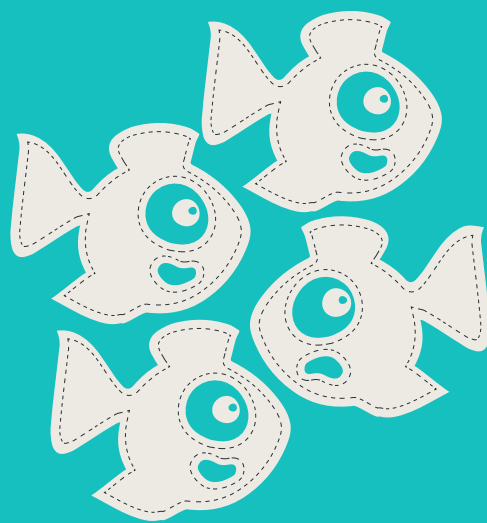
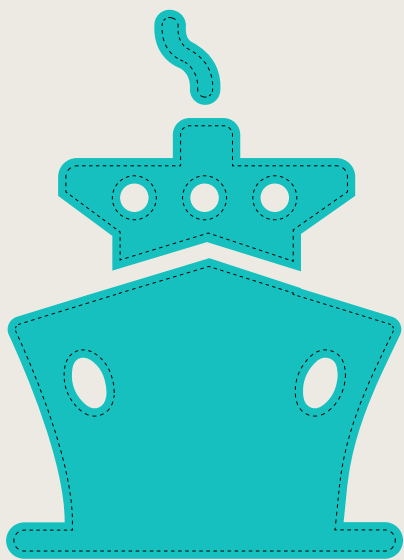
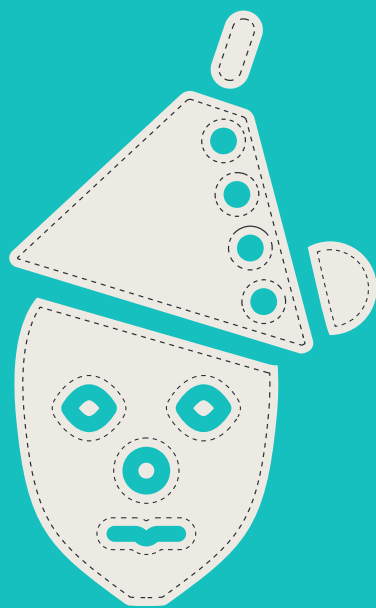
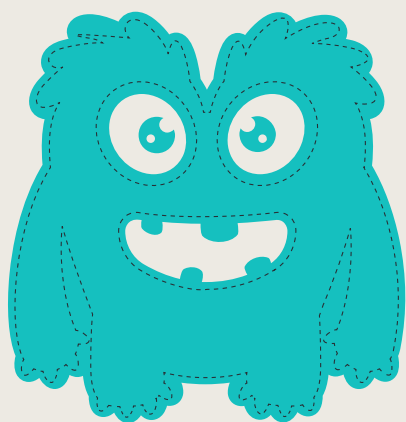


**reasons  
why your  
strategy  
will fail.**

**Flipview®**  
Rethinking Strategy and Risk

Through extensive research and literally building hundreds of dashboards for clients, we have landed on what we see are some of the key reasons why strategy fails. This is not intended to be a guide as to what strategy is, or how to do strategy. We believe that every organisation is unique, there is simply no “one size fits all” approach.

If you can avoid some of these obstacles, we believe your chances of executing on your strategy are greatly improved!





# 1. Imposter Syndrome

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Most companies' strategies are not strategies, they generally represent BHAGs – Big Hairy Audacious Goals. What distinguishes a strategy from a BHAG is it is focussed not just on the destination, but also and more importantly how to get there! This might involve identifying risks and obstacles for example. In addition, a core element that makes a strategy a strategy is it involves making decisions that involve big trade-offs. Warm fuzzy vague statements don't equate to strategy. If your core strategy is to be customer centric, then this is not really a strategy as it doesn't involve making trade-offs (would you be the opposite?). As the trade-off decisions impact capital allocation, any formal budgeting or reforecasting should happen in conjunction with strategy planning (not before).

Good strategies map a path, identify obstacles and risks, involve trade-offs, and are developed in conjunction with the capital allocation process. If your annual budget is completed prior to your strategy planning cycle, it is likely that your strategy will resemble a budget with a lot of prose. Similarly, if your strategy fails to map a path, or consider trade-offs, obstacles and risks, it is likely that your strategy suffers from imposter syndrome – it's not a strategy!

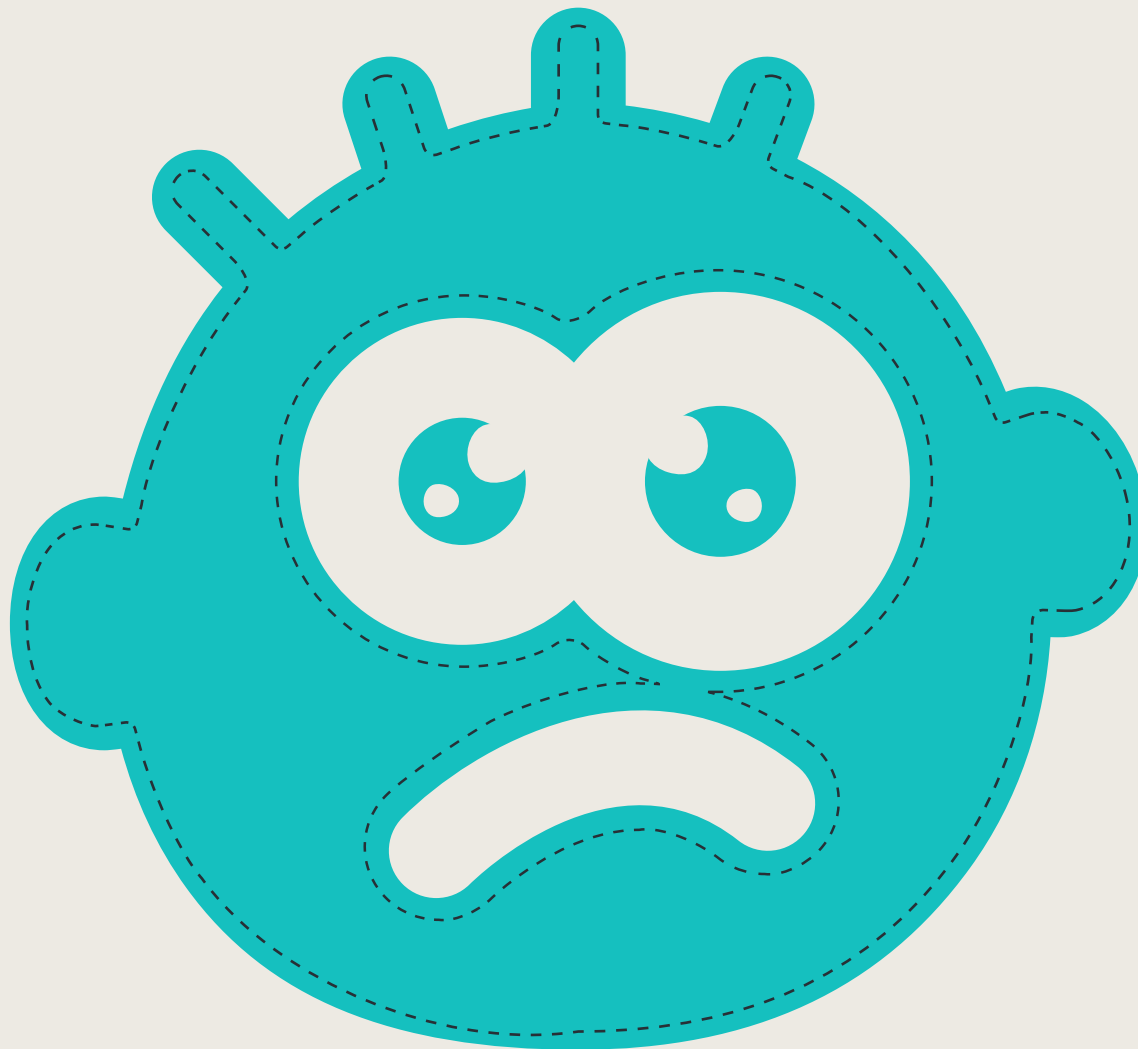


**2. Lights, camera...  
but no action**

## 2. Lights, camera... but no action

Some companies are consumed with the process of annual strategic planning, the obligatory off-site with post-it notes and flipcharts galore. These can be great team building exercises - but often that is all they are. After the off-site, someone has the unenviable task of putting the output into some form of strategic document. Weeks or months may have passed between the off-site and when the document is finalised and, as a result, the final output doesn't necessarily reflect what was discussed. The output is often too general, a bit fuzzy, positively biased, and contains some subjective, partial or wishful interpretations of what might happen in the future. A few weeks after the offsite, it is likely that things have moved on and enthusiasm has evaporated as key members of the leadership team are consumed with business as usual.

Good strategies strike the balance between orientation/planning and action and are not totally consumed by the planning off-site. In the absence of action all we are left with is a compliance deliverable, lights and a camera (and death by PowerPoint and Excel).



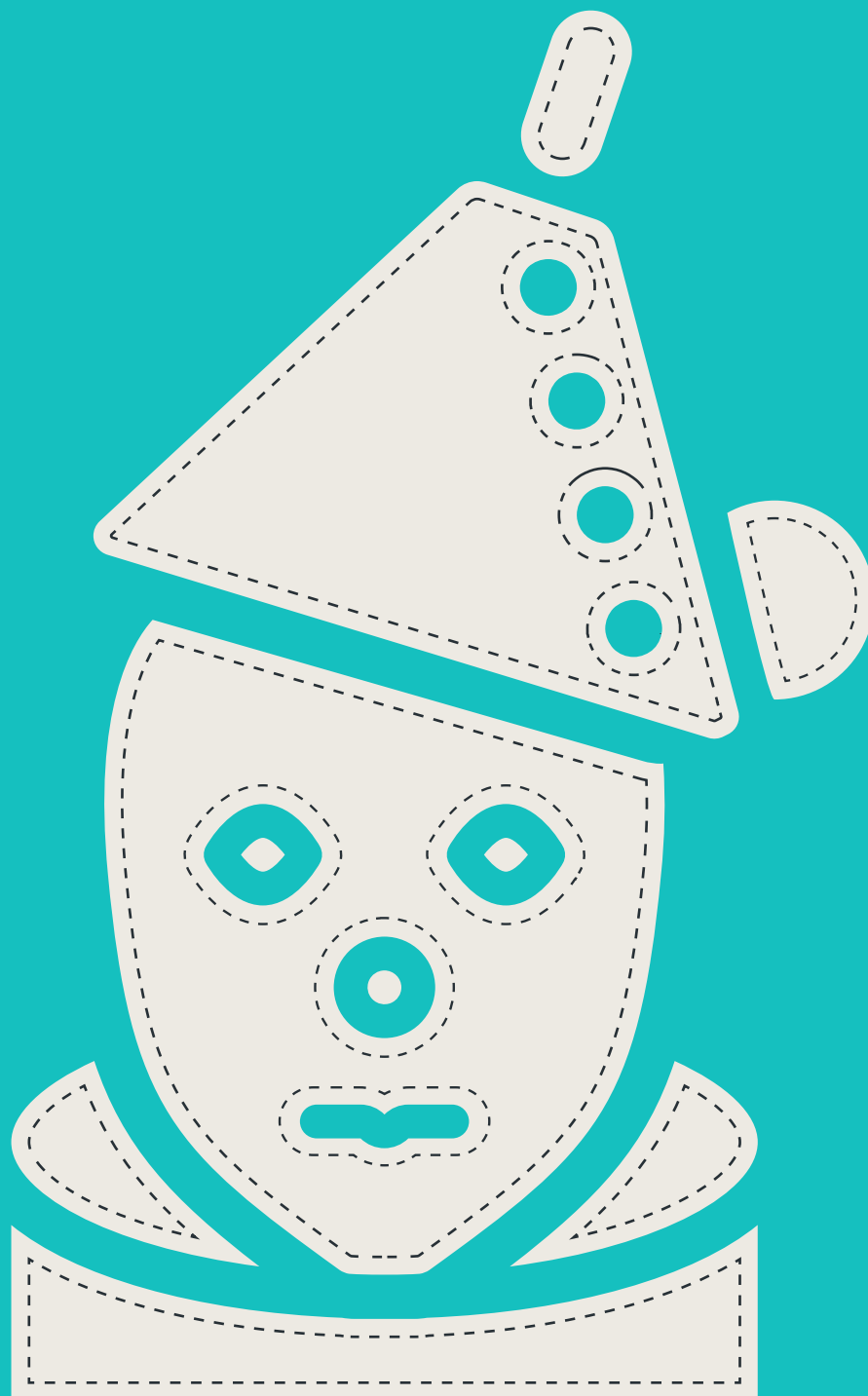
### **3. Disconnection and confusion**



### 3. Disconnection and confusion

Silos and disparate systems can be a huge problem in organisations. This is exacerbated when there are no clear links between people's priorities, actions, tasks, and the strategy itself. In many cases, a mixture of departmental 'strategies' arise in parallel to the official company-wide strategy, representing some functionally-focused priorities and wishes for the future, but these too are often divergent or conflicting with each other. Often, a strategy is designed using a top-down approach with the expectation that it will "cascade" from the ivory tower down through the organisation. Typically, the people on the frontline have had no opportunity to contribute, despite having the most real and confronting insights. If there is limited engagement and communication, even with the best intentions, the strategy will fail.

Good strategies require good communication, engagement and alignment. Good strategies have clear links between the strategy, pillars, and prioritised activities. In the absence of a bottom-up view, and a linkage between people's priorities and the strategy itself, all we have is disconnection and confusion.

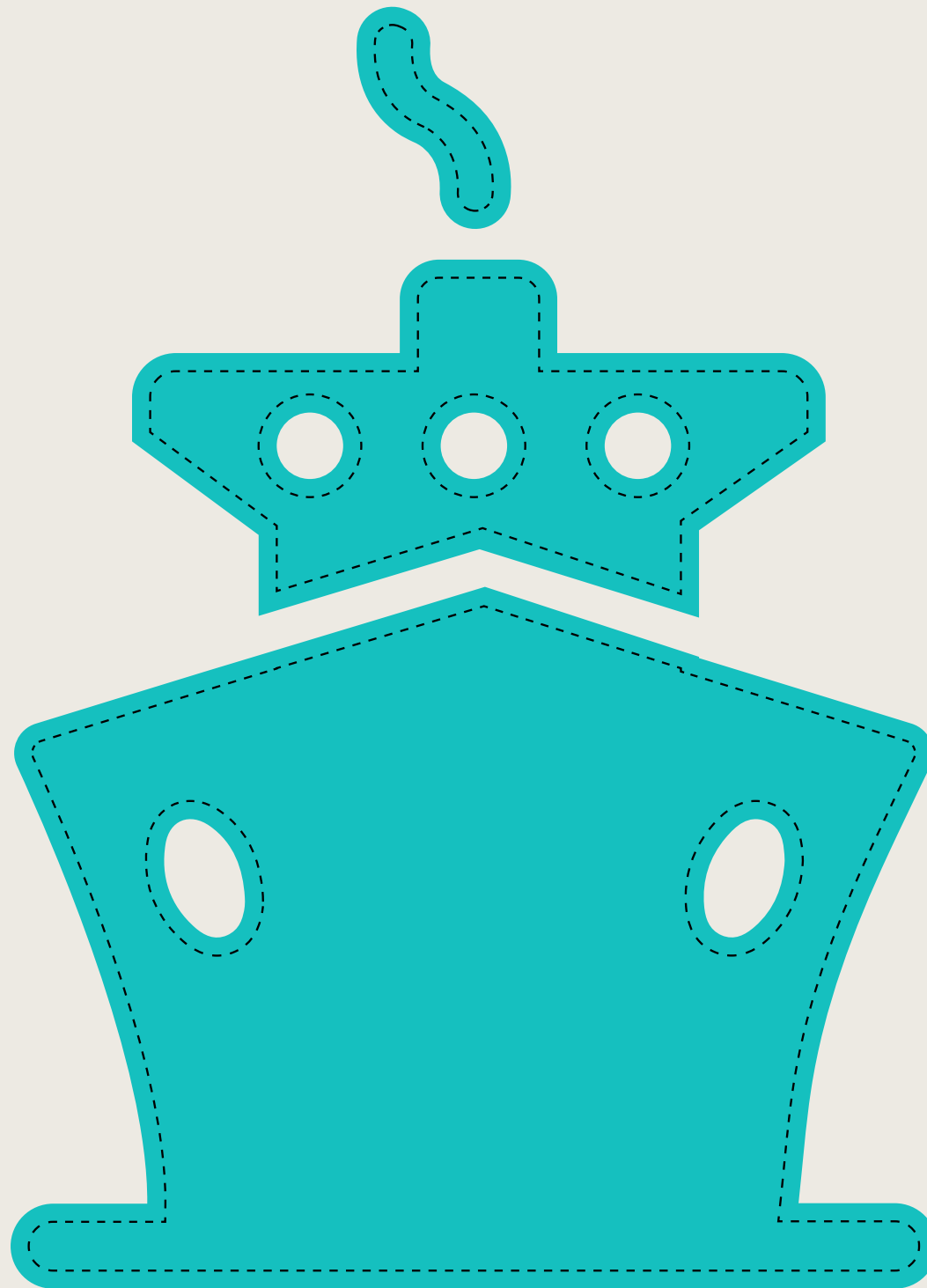


**4. We're not in  
Kansas anymore**

## 4. We're not in Kansas anymore

Strategic plans that assume a steady state and/or ignore the changing world around them are doomed to fail. If we've learnt one thing from the last two years, it is that the world is a most unpredictable place! The future is strongly affected by VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity). The strategic planning process needs to be informed by insights gathered through internal as well as external people, information from the coal-face, customers and front-line employees, as well as constant multi-faceted information-gathering to stay in touch with developments and changes. It also needs to be done quickly and constantly iterated. Often organisations are consumed with the strategy planning process. It is long and drawn out. The strategy might involve identifying obstacles and risks, it might involve scenario planning, resource allocation, timeframes, and clarity on who is doing what. This is great, but by the time this is complete, the world may have moved on.

Good strategies take account of the VUCA world we live in and are dynamic. If your strategy fails to take into account and regularly adjust to the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) of your environment, it is likely that it will fail. You will find yourself asking the same questions that Dorothy asked Toto in the Wizard of Oz.

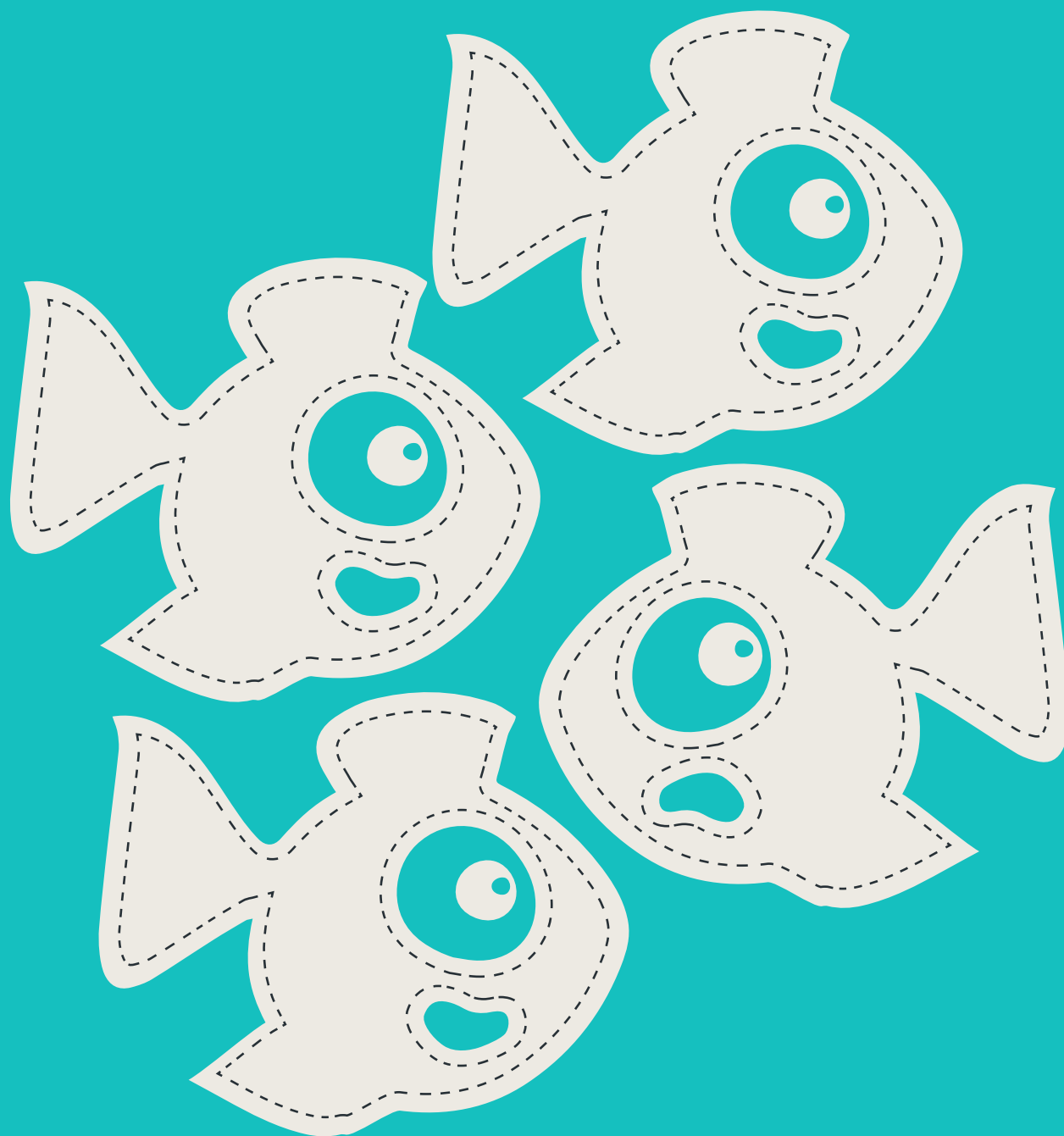


**5. Agile as an oil tanker**

## 5. Agile as an oil tanker

Strategies involve a degree of forecasting into the future. History is littered with examples where even the people that should have known how the future would play out were proven wrong. It is becoming increasingly difficult to shape and predict the future, as the world becomes increasingly connected and technology, pandemics and existential risks disrupt. More and more there is a need for strategies to be more dynamic and agile. The days of preparing a 5-year plan on a PowerPoint deck and expecting it to play out are gone.

Good strategies involve constant refinement and adjustment to the market you operate in. Good strategies don't live in a PowerPoint document, they are continually iterated and adapted, enabled to perform 'hard turns', as only fast and powerful ships can do. In these disruptive times, if your strategy is enshrined in a static document, it is probably as agile as an oil tanker!



**6. Are we going the  
right way?**

## 6. Are we going the right way?

If strategy is about how to get from A to B, then a critical part of this navigation is recognising key junctures, signs and markers. If your strategy doesn't have milestones and the ability to measure success, you may end up heading in the wrong direction. If you are travelling in the wrong direction, enthusiasm could dissipate, as people gradually run out of steam. It is not uncommon for there to be lots of support early on, but employees get blindsided by business as usual and competing priorities. Having clear road signs and markers helps ensure that you are on track and can stay motivated!

Good strategies have clear markers and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that allow for validation and drive momentum. How can we know that our strategy's execution is on track, if we don't monitor systematically what we have planned to achieve? How can we learn when a 'hard turn' is required, and adapt our strategy, if we don't continuously monitor the validity of the strategic hypotheses that we have employed? In the absence of detailed targets, milestones and key performance indicators, there is a risk we will lose momentum, or worse still, head in the wrong direction!

**Allow ideas to surface.  
Capture risks that matter.  
See your organisation's  
strategy come to life.**

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