



BUILD WHAT LASTS
AgStrat Strategic Solutions

Is Everyone Rowing in the Same Direction?

5 questions for turning a busy organization into a focused one

Most growing organizations do not have a shortage of things to do. Customers need attention. Equipment breaks. Employees need answers. Opportunities appear. Problems need solved. Someone has a new idea. And the normal work still has to get done.

Everyone can be working hard while the organization still is not making much progress on the things that matter most. **Activity is not the same thing as progress.** As an organization grows, leaders need to create enough clarity that people understand where they are going, what matters most right now, what they own, how progress is measured - and **what they should say no to.**

1 Make sure everyone knows where you are going

Founders often have a much clearer picture of the future than everyone around them realizes. You may know where you want the business to be in three years, which customers you want more of, what needs to become more profitable, and what kind of organization you are trying to build. But how much of that exists only in your head? Direction also helps people recognize opportunities that may be good - but are not good **for us.** A clear direction gives people a filter for both yes and no.

ASK YOURSELF: Could the people around me explain where we are trying to take this organization - and recognize what does not fit - without me standing there to explain it?

2 Decide what matters most right now - and what does not

Everything can feel important: increase sales, hire people, improve margins, install software, develop managers, reduce mistakes, launch a product, improve inventory, fix the website, pay down debt. Suddenly the organization has 14 priorities. **Fourteen priorities are usually no priorities.** Execution systems such as EOS and The 4 Disciplines of Execution reinforce a simple idea: progress improves when attention is concentrated on a small number of important outcomes. But focus has another side: **your people need to know what to say no to.** Every yes consumes limited time, money, people, equipment, or attention.

ASK YOURSELF: Do my people know not only our three most important priorities - but what they have permission to stop, defer, or say no to in order to accomplish them?

3 Turn priorities into ownership

A priority without an owner is usually just a good intention. **'We need to improve hiring'** is different from **'Sarah owns getting our new hiring and onboarding process operating by October 1.'** Ownership does not mean that person does all the work. It means one person is responsible for moving it forward. If every important initiative still depends on the founder to remember it, push it, check on it, and solve the problems around it, tasks may have been delegated - but responsibility has not.

ASK YOURSELF: Does every major priority have one person who knows they are responsible for getting it across the finish line?



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4 Measure the few things that tell you whether you are winning

Organizations can collect enormous amounts of data without gaining much clarity. The goal is not more numbers. It is knowing which numbers help people make better decisions. Revenue, profit, and cash matter, but they often tell you what already happened. It can also help to track a few activities that influence what happens next - qualified leads, on-time production, overdue accounts contacted, or another measure that fits the business. A useful scorecard should let someone quickly answer: **'Are we winning or losing?'**

ASK YOURSELF: What five to ten numbers would tell me whether the organization is healthy and moving in the right direction before I get to the financial statements?

5 Create a simple rhythm for keeping priorities alive

Most organizations do not abandon priorities intentionally. **Everyday work simply overwhelms them.** Monday starts with a customer problem. Then an employee calls off. A truck breaks. A supplier is late. By Friday everyone worked hard, but nobody touched the strategic priority that was supposedly important Monday morning. Focused organizations create a simple rhythm for returning to what matters: How are our numbers? Where are we on priorities? What is off track? What problem needs solved? **What do we need to stop, defer, or say no to?** Priorities cannot simply be added on top of an unchanged workload.

ASK YOURSELF: What regularly brings our attention back to the things we said were most important - including what we agreed not to do?

Busy Isn't the Same as Aligned

Imagine strong rowers in a boat. Everyone is working hard. Nobody is lazy. But one is rowing north, another east, another keeps changing direction when something interesting appears, and another is waiting for the owner to tell them where to row. **The problem is not effort. The problem is alignment.**

DIRECTION	PRIORITIES	TRADEOFFS	OWNERSHIP	MEASUREMENT	RHYTHM
Where are we going?	What matters most now?	What will we say no to?	Who is responsible?	Are we winning?	How do we keep it moving?

Focus is knowing what deserves a yes - and having the discipline to say no to the rest.

Focus gives people both **direction and permission**: direction toward the things that matter, and permission to decline, defer, stop, or escalate the things that do not. That is how limited organizational capacity gets concentrated on meaningful progress.

THE FOCUS TEST

Ask your leadership team these questions **separately** and compare the answers.

DIRECTION - Where are we going? What are we trying to build over the next few years?

PRIORITIES & TRADEOFFS - What matters most right now - and what does not? Can people name the few outcomes that deserve disproportionate attention and what they can stop, defer, or say no to?

OWNERSHIP - Who owns them? Can we name one person accountable for each major priority?

MEASUREMENT - How do we know if we are winning? What handful of numbers tell us whether we are making progress?

RHYTHM - How do we stay focused? When and how do we review progress, solve what is off track, and decide what happens next?

Do not worry initially about whether the answers are 'right.' Look at whether they are **the same**. If capable people give different answers - or employees believe they still have to say yes to everything - you may have discovered an important growth barrier.

BUILD WHAT LASTS

AgStrat helps founders and leadership teams create the clarity, accountability, organizational structure, and execution rhythms needed to turn vision into consistent progress.

You may not need another complicated management system. You may need greater clarity about where you are going, what matters now, who owns it - and what your people should say no to.

To begin a conversation about creating greater focus and execution in your organization, contact AgStrat at virgil@agstratsolutions.com.

Leadership | Focus | Accountability | Execution | Legacy