

Discussing Strategic Planning: Interview with Dr. Alan Barlow



Dr. Alan Barlow (Hamworthy Combustion Group) discusses his pioneering business process model and strategic planning.

Mr. Barlow will be presenting at the upcoming [Association for Strategic Planning Virtual Conference](#).

Would you provide a high-level explanation of your innovative core business process model, 'leading and operating with heightened integrity'?

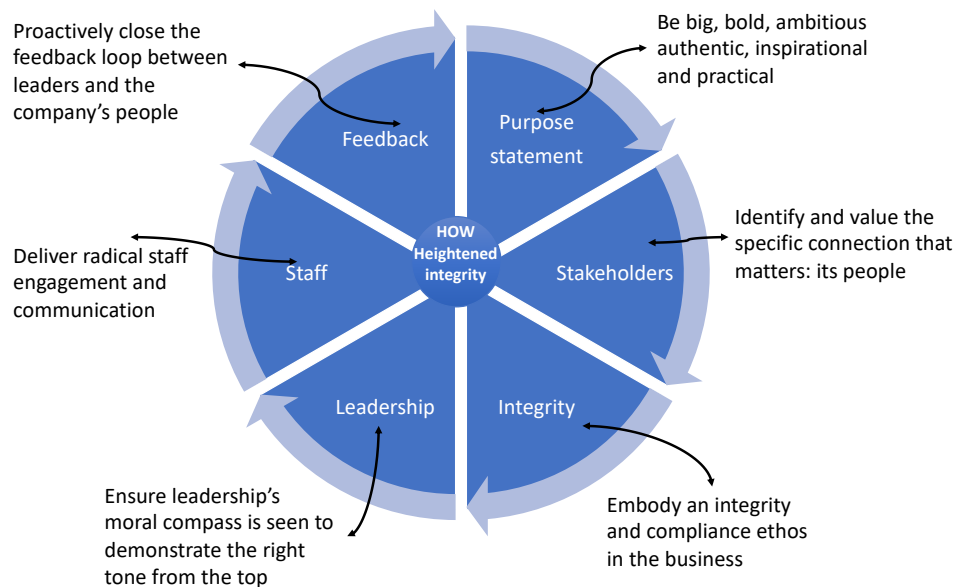
The innovative core business process model is based on a culture of leading and operating a company with heightened integrity.

'Heightened integrity' is defined as when a company's leaders and its people proactively interact and operate transparently with the highest levels of ethical values and behaviour in the execution of their company's goal: its defined purpose. That is, heightened integrity is the engine for the execution and delivery of the company's previously defined purpose. It must pervade the entire activities of a company in order deliver its purpose.

Heightened integrity is the hub of the innovative business model. The model consists of enabling and delivery sub-processes (figure 2). The three enabling sub-processes are:

- Purpose statement: Be big, bold, ambitious, authentic, inspirational and practical. It has to meet a real societal need that all of the company's people identify with and value.
- Stakeholders: Identify and value the specific connection that matters: Its people. It is a company's people who actually deliver its performance and hence its purpose. They are very rarely driven in their daily working life to maximise shareholder value.
- Integrity /compliance: Embody an integrity and compliance ethos in the business. In addition to compliance, there has to be proactive promotion of engendering good or otherwise a company's purpose will not be realised. Employees themselves take responsibility for what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in furthering their company's purpose.

Figure 2 The Heightened Integrity Model¹



The three delivery sub-processes are:

- **Leadership:** Ensure leadership's moral compass is seen to demonstrate the right tone from the top. What matters is employees' perception of a leader's trust worthiness and demonstration of their ethical values (i.e. what they do) and not their proclaimed values (i.e. what they say)
- **Staff:** Deliver radical staff engagement and communication. Staff perception is shaped by what and how leaders communicate and interact with them. There is the vital need to ensure that employees decode communications in the way it is intended with respect to the company's purpose.
- **Feedback:** Proactively close the feedback loop between leaders and the company's people. Employees have to feel truly empowered to feed back issues that could compromise delivery of their company's purpose. The acid test here is the extent to which a company's people ask, and continue to ask, their leaders challenging questions - which require and get cogent replies publicly.

When led and operated with heightened integrity, a company's people get greater self-worth, feel valued, have fulfillment and job satisfaction, and are empowered. They have trust in their leaders, and are treated as a someone and not a something, which engenders greater transparency and respect between the company's leaders and its people.

You've been involved with strategic planning efforts in many companies and across many countries. What special challenges are presented to multi-national organizations?

The key challenge is actual implementation of the agreed strategy. There is no single blockbuster action or initiative that results in delivery of a strategy. Pivotal to

¹ Source Figure 4.1 Barlow A. (2021). "PURPOSE DELIVERED: Bigger Benefits for Society and Bigger Profits for

implementation is ensuring that middle level leaders challenge, understand, buy-in and are emotionally committed to delivery of the agreed strategy. Strategic delivery is all about the effective implementation of the myriad of individual actions that are required to be taken and executed daily. Hence, the pivotal role of middle level leaders. They are the ones that actually lead the deliver of a company's performance, and thus the reality (or otherwise) of its strategy.

The more distant and /or different – geographically, culturally, linguistically or socio-economically, national political/market system) – country operations are from the multinational's HQ, then the greater is the challenge.

What key points would you to achieve the focus of this conference, Mastering the Strategic Life Cycle?

The key and fundamental point in mastering the strategic life-cycle, is that whilst all elements of it are important the imperative one is successful execution. Without successful execution, then by definition the other elements of the strategic life-cycle have little value for ensuring a company's success and ultimately its very existence.

However, the imperative foundation for successfully mastering delivery of the strategic life cycle is a solid business model that sets out how the company creates, delivers and captures value. For the case study multinational in my presentation, the key elements of its business model² included:

- Its purpose, vision, mission and values
- Its robust portfolio of:
 - Customer diversity: In any one year, the top 10 customers account for less than 30 per cent of total annual revenue.
 - Product markets: Five main and discrete product market sectors with little overlap in customer base, where each could potentially contribute some 25% of total sales annually.
 - Geographic markets: Four world regions, where each could potentially contribute some 25% of total sales annually.
 - Revenue /Gross margin /Cash: Three distinct revenue sources (I.e. capital sales, spares sales and service sales), each with very different gross margin contributions and cash flow profiles .

What should participants to the ASP Annual Conference expect to learn, and benefit from, attending your discussion?

The key knowledge people will get is an innovative core business process model for how to deliver a company's defined strategy: the "Heightened Integrity Model".

² See Appendix A, Barlow (2021) *ibid*.

I do this in terms of:

- setting out the core business process model of how to lead and operate a company with heightened integrity
- demonstrating its application to a multinational corporation where I was its CEO
- reporting results achieved in terms of integrated business reporting. That is, human, social, intellectual, natural and financial capital - In the latter case, 18% cagr in profits.

In brief, I demonstrate with evidence-based arguments that leading an operating a company with heightened integrity - as a core business process - directly delivers both bigger benefits for society and bigger profits for business.

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Alan Barlow has some 25+ years' international experience, with extensive P&L responsibilities for multi-country operations in Europe, the Americas, Asia Pacific, the Middle East, East Africa and the sub-continent of India. His executive career is wide ranging : partner PricewaterhouseCoopers, which included five years' residence in the Asia-Pacific region; director of a FTSE 100 / NYSE listed integrated energy group; and, CEO of a private equity owned multinational chemical engineering group.

Currently, Alan is a trustee of the charity Integrity Action and has a portfolio of charity trusteeships. He has a doctorate degree in economics from Oxford University.

Alan is regularly invited as a speaker on how to deliver a Purposeful / Responsible business.

He is the author of "[PURPOSE DELIVERED: Bigger Benefits for Society and Bigger Profits for Business - A CEO's Experience](#)". Routledge 2021. It has been nominated for the prestigious "Financial Times and McKinsey Business Book Award, 2021".