
From Innovation Strategy to Execution: a Principle-Driven Strategy Blueprint

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Abstract: Innovation strategy becomes more effective when ambition is translated into clear choices, coherent direction, organisational learning and a credible path to value creation. This paper presents a principle-driven strategy blueprint that helps organisations structure innovation strategy as a practical system of decisions and execution conditions. The blueprint combines the innovation management principles articulated in ISO 56000 with the What, When, Who, Where and How questions from Tidd and Bessant's search strategy logic. Rather than proposing a measurement framework, it offers a fill-in structure that produces four core artefacts: a strategy narrative, explicit bets and trade-offs, a governance and operating model, and a learning loop. An anonymised ICT services case illustrates how the blueprint can clarify strategic choices, reduce fragmentation and support progressive adoption of standard-informed innovation management practices. The paper contributes a lightweight, transferable approach for making innovation strategy execution-ready by design.

Keywords: innovation strategy; innovation management; innovation management principles; ISO 56000; ISO 56001; strategy execution; innovation capability; innovation governance; organisational learning

1 Introduction

Many organisations invest considerable effort in articulating an innovation strategy. However, the strategic intent expressed in formal documents is often not sufficiently translated into priorities, governance choices and learning routines. As a result, innovation strategies may remain compelling narratives rather than becoming practical guides for disciplined execution. This gap is particularly visible in contexts characterised by uncertainty, where organisations must make choices before all information is available and must continuously adapt as evidence emerges.

This paper presents a practice-oriented approach to this challenge: a principle-driven strategy blueprint designed to help organisations structure innovation strategy so that it becomes execution-ready by design. The blueprint is built on the innovation management principles articulated in ISO 56000 and structured through the search strategy questions proposed by Tidd and Bessant: What, When, Who, Where and How. Its purpose is not to introduce another measurement framework, but to provide a fill-in structure that translates innovation principles into the minimum set of strategic decisions and artefacts required for execution.

The contribution of the paper is practical and integrative. It shows how recognised innovation management principles can be used as design constraints rather than compliance elements, and how they can be combined with a simple strategy logic to support alignment, decision-making and capability building. Through an anonymised consulting case, the paper illustrates how the blueprint helped clarify strategic trade-offs, strengthen governance decisions and accelerate alignment between leadership and operational teams.

2 Conceptual background and proposed blueprint

The proposed blueprint is grounded in two complementary streams of innovation management thinking: the standard-based articulation of innovation management principles and the strategy-oriented logic of innovation search. Together, they provide a practical foundation for structuring innovation strategy in a way that is conceptually robust and operationally usable.

ISO 56000 provides the vocabulary, fundamental concepts and principles of innovation management. Its relevance for this paper lies not in formal adoption of an innovation management system, but in the fact that it identifies principles that can guide how organisations manage innovation in a systematic and intentional way (ISO, 2025). These principles offer a common language for connecting strategic direction, value realisation, leadership, culture, uncertainty, systems thinking and adaptability into a coherent management logic. In this paper, they are used as design constraints: they shape the questions that a strategy must answer if it is to become executable (see figure 1).

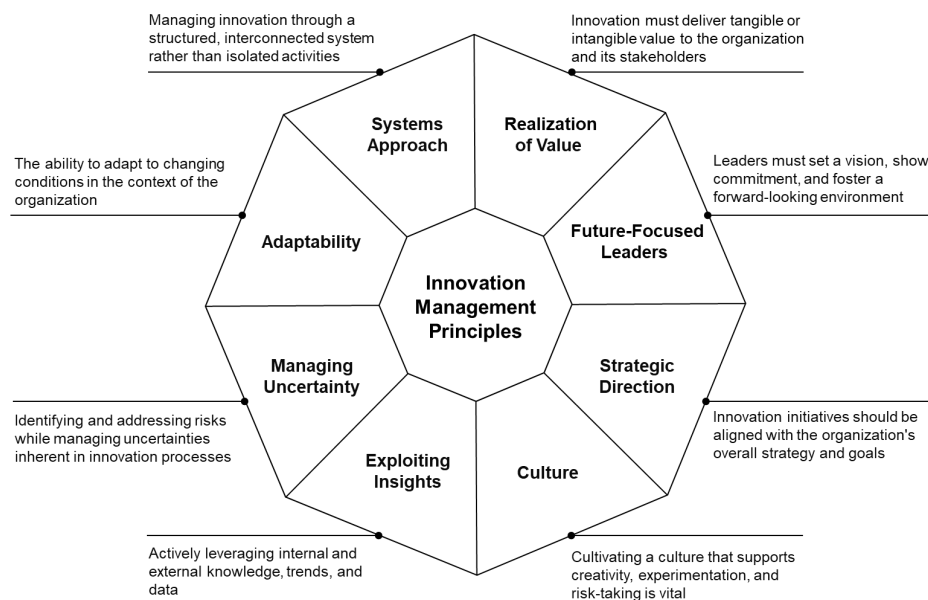


Figure 1 The 8 principles of innovation management according to ISO 56000

The second conceptual anchor is the strategy search logic developed by Tidd and Bessant. Their work emphasises that innovation management is not only about generating ideas, but about searching, selecting, implementing and learning in conditions of technological, market and organisational change. The What, When, Who, Where and How questions help organisations move from general innovation ambition to a more explicit definition of opportunity areas, timing, stakeholders, domains of application and modes of execution (Tidd & Bessant, 2025).

The combination of these two anchors is important. The ISO 56000 principles define the qualities that an innovation strategy should embed; the Tidd and Bessant questions help structure the content of the strategy. The blueprint therefore treats principles not as abstract statements or compliance requirements, but as design prompts for strategic decisions and artefacts. Value realisation requires clarity on expected value and beneficiaries. Strategic direction requires choices and boundaries. Exploiting insights requires a visible evidence base. Managing uncertainty requires assumptions and learning loops. A systems approach requires governance, interfaces and decision cadence. Adaptability requires mechanisms for reviewing and revising the strategy as evidence emerges.

The blueprint produces four core outputs: a concise strategy narrative, explicit strategic choices, a governance and operating model, and a learning loop. Together, these outputs form the execution spine of the innovation strategy (see table 1).

Table 1 Outputs of the principle-driven blueprint

<i>Blueprint output</i>	<i>Guiding questions</i>	<i>Main principle lens</i>	<i>Practical artefact</i>
Strategy narrative	What, When, Who, Where and How	Value realisation; strategic direction; future-focused leadership; exploiting insights	Concise innovation strategy narrative
Strategic choices	Which bets and trade-offs define focus?	Strategic direction; value realisation; exploiting insights	Bets, trade-offs, boundaries and priorities
Governance and operating model	Who decides? How are initiatives coordinated?	Systems approach; innovation culture	Roles, interfaces, decision cadence and portfolio logic
Learning loop	Which assumptions must be tested? How will the strategy adapt?	Managing uncertainty; adaptability	Assumptions, experiments and review rhythm

The first output, the strategy narrative, turns innovation ambition into a structured and communicable direction. The second output, strategic choices, makes bets and trade-offs visible. The third output, the governance and operating model, connects strategy with decision rights, roles and coordination. The fourth output, the learning loop, ensures that assumptions are tested and that evidence feeds back into strategic adaptation. The blueprint is intentionally lightweight: it can be used in a facilitated leadership session, in

the early design of an innovation strategy, or as a structuring device when an existing strategy appears fragmented or difficult to execute.

3 Positioning the contribution within structured innovation approaches

The principle-driven strategy blueprint is not intended to replace existing structured approaches for innovation management, transformation or portfolio governance. Rather, it addresses an earlier and often under-structured managerial step: transforming innovation intent into the minimum set of strategic choices, governance arrangements and learning routines required before execution tools can be used effectively.

Recent literature confirms the growing relevance of structured approaches for innovation and transformation. ISO 56001 formalises requirements for establishing, implementing, maintaining and improving an innovation management system (ISO, 2024). Recent research on innovation management systems highlights the importance of designing such systems in relation to the organisation's innovation ambition, context and capabilities (Kihlander, Magnusson & Karlsson, 2024; Karstegl, Enjolras & Mayer, 2025). Similarly, work on digital transformation canvases and innovation portfolio management shows the value of visual and structured tools to guide complex transformation efforts, coordinate initiatives and support resource allocation (Elia et al., 2024; OECD, 2025).

Established strategy tools, such as SWOT analysis (Puyt, 2023) and Blue Ocean Strategy (Kim, 2015), also remain highly relevant for framing internal and external conditions, clarifying strategic positioning and exploring value innovation opportunities. However, they primarily support diagnosis, positioning and strategic option framing. The proposed blueprint complements these approaches by focusing on how innovation intent is translated into an execution-ready structure of choices, governance arrangements and learning routines.

These approaches are most effective when strategic intent, decision criteria and governance logic are already sufficiently explicit. In practice, this is precisely where many organisations struggle. They may adopt portfolio reviews, transformation canvases, project pipelines or performance routines, while still lacking a clear articulation of what innovation choices are being made, what trade-offs are accepted, how uncertainty will be governed, and how learning will feed back into strategy. The blueprint helps clarify these premises before moving into detailed planning, portfolio balancing, metrics or system implementation (see table 2).

The novelty of the principle-driven strategy blueprint lies in its integrative and practice-oriented nature. First, it uses the ISO 56000 innovation management principles as design constraints rather than as compliance requirements or generic values. Second, it combines these principles with the search strategy questions of Tidd and Bessant, creating a simple structure for moving from innovation ambition to executable strategy. Third, it produces a minimum but coherent set of artefacts: a strategy narrative, explicit bets and trade-offs, a governance and operating model, and a learning loop.

In this sense, the blueprint does not compete with recent structured approaches. It enables them. It acts as a pre-execution structuring method that helps organisations move from a

well-intended innovation statement to a strategy that can be governed, tested, adapted and translated into action.

Table 2 Structured innovation approaches complemented by the blueprint

<i>Structured approach</i>	<i>Main contribution</i>	<i>What it often assumes</i>	<i>How the blueprint complements it</i>
Innovation management systems	Provide a comprehensive logic for establishing, implementing and improving innovation management practices	Innovation ambition, strategic direction and governance priorities are sufficiently clear	Clarifies the strategic artefacts and operating premises that a system should support
Transformation canvases	Visualise and structure complex transformation processes	The transformation scope and strategic focus are already defined	Structures innovation-specific choices through principles, questions and execution artefacts
Portfolio management approaches	Coordinate initiatives and support resource allocation across horizons, risks and impacts	Selection criteria, boundaries and decision rules are explicit	Makes innovation bets, trade-offs and learning assumptions visible before portfolio balancing
Dynamic capability perspectives	Explain how organisations renew resources and competences in changing environments	Routines for sensing, choosing, coordinating and adapting can be activated	Provides a repeatable practice for strategic dialogue, governance and learning under uncertainty

4 Practice application: an anonymised ICT services case

The blueprint was applied in an anonymised context involving a mid-sized ICT services company operating in software development, managed services and compliance-sensitive digital solutions. The company had strong technical expertise, a consolidated customer base and growing opportunities linked to technological change, increasing customer demand for secure and reliable digital services, and the evolution of service platforms and operational models.

Innovation was already recognised as strategically important. Several innovation-related initiatives were emerging from different parts of the organisation: client-specific developments, platform improvements, security and resilience requirements, process optimisation and opportunities arising from operational learning. Each initiative appeared relevant, but the overall logic connecting them was not sufficiently explicit. The challenge was therefore not a lack of innovation activity, but the need to transform multiple opportunities into a coherent and execution-ready innovation strategy.

At the starting point, the organisation faced a pattern common to technology-intensive service firms. The strategic intent was broad; initiatives were often generated by client needs or technical opportunities; trade-offs were mostly implicit; governance was distributed across functions; and learning from projects and customers was not always converted into strategic adaptation. The central issue was to distinguish which developments should remain bespoke responses to specific customers, which should become scalable service innovation, and which required internal capability building or ecosystem collaboration.

4.1 Applying the blueprint

The principle-driven strategy blueprint was used as a facilitation structure for leadership dialogue. Its purpose was not to assess the organisation through a score, but to help the leadership team produce the minimum set of strategic artefacts required for execution.

The What, When, Who, Where and How questions first helped clarify the strategy narrative. What moved the discussion from a generic intention to innovate services towards a more precise focus on technology-enabled, secure and scalable service models. When introduced sequencing, distinguishing short-term stabilisation and validation from medium-term standardisation and longer-term scaling. Who clarified the stakeholders required for execution, including leadership, commercial roles, delivery teams, operations, security and compliance expertise, selected customers and, where appropriate, group-level capabilities or external partners. Where defined the service areas and customer contexts where innovation could generate visible value and where the company already had credible capabilities. How brought the discussion to governance, ownership, portfolio logic, learning mechanisms and decision cadence.

Throughout this process, the ISO 56000 innovation management principles were used as design constraints. Value realisation required clarity on expected benefits for customers and for the organisation. Strategic direction required focus and boundaries. Exploiting insights required evidence from customers, operations and market trends. Systems approach required attention to interfaces between functions. Innovation culture required cross-functional collaboration. Managing uncertainty required assumptions to be explicit. Adaptability required a review rhythm through which choices could be updated as evidence emerged.

4.2 Clarifying strategic trade-offs

One of the most valuable outcomes was the clarification of strategic trade-offs. The first trade-off concerned customisation versus repeatability. Customer-specific requirements generated many innovation opportunities, but the company recognised that not every customised development should become part of the innovation strategy. The blueprint helped distinguish between bespoke adaptation and repeatable service innovation.

The second trade-off concerned short-term delivery versus long-term capability building. The organisation needed to respond to immediate customer needs, while also building capabilities for more systematic innovation management. The strategy therefore had to balance near-term service improvements with investments in governance, knowledge sharing, standardisation and learning routines.

The third trade-off concerned internal development versus ecosystem leverage. The company had strong internal expertise, but some innovation opportunities required complementary capabilities. The blueprint helped make explicit where internal development was appropriate and where collaboration with group functions, technology providers or specialised partners could accelerate execution.

The fourth trade-off concerned portfolio breadth versus strategic focus. The company had many plausible innovation directions. The blueprint helped reduce dispersion by identifying a smaller number of innovation bets aligned with value, feasibility and strategic direction. These trade-offs did not reduce ambition; they made it more actionable.

4.3 Before and after transformation

The case highlights three practical lessons. First, innovation strategy becomes more actionable when it is treated as a set of decisions rather than as a narrative statement. Second, principles become useful in practice when they are translated into design prompts. Third, execution readiness depends on governance and learning as much as on strategic content. The company did not need a complex management system at the outset; it needed a clear enough structure to decide, coordinate, test and adapt.

Table 3 Before and after transformation

<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Broad innovation ambition and multiple emerging initiatives	Innovation strategy structured around selected domains and bets
Customer-specific requests often drove innovation opportunities	Distinction between bespoke development and scalable service innovation
Mostly implicit bets and trade-offs	Trade-offs explicitly discussed and documented
Governance distributed across functions	Governance roles, interfaces and decision cadence clarified
Learning from projects and customers	Learning loop connected to strategic review
Innovation dependent on individual expertise and informal collaboration	Innovation supported by shared artefacts and operating routines

The blueprint therefore acted as a practical entry point into more systematic innovation management (see table 3). It made the strategy more coherent and helped the organisation begin to build recurring routines for strategic dialogue, trade-off management, cross-functional governance and learning under uncertainty.

5 Organisational implications and capability building

The practice application suggests that the value of the principle-driven strategy blueprint is not limited to producing a clearer strategy document. Its broader contribution lies in

helping organisations develop recurring capabilities for innovation management: strategic dialogue, explicit choice-making, governance discipline and learning under uncertainty.

The first capability supported by the blueprint is strategic dialogue. Innovation strategies often remain ambiguous because difficult choices are postponed or left implicit. The blueprint creates a structured space in which leadership teams can discuss what innovation means for the organisation, where efforts should be focused, which opportunities should be prioritised and which alternatives should be deferred. By making bets and trade-offs visible, it reduces fragmentation and creates a shared basis for resource allocation.

The second capability is governance discipline. Innovation execution requires clear decision rights, roles and coordination mechanisms. Without them, even well-formulated strategies may be slowed down by uncertainty over who decides, how priorities are reviewed and how initiatives are stopped, pivoted or scaled. The blueprint supports governance discipline by requiring the organisation to define sponsorship, decision forums, functional interfaces, portfolio logic and review cadence from the outset.

The third capability is learning under uncertainty. Innovation strategies are built on assumptions about customers, technologies, partners, resources, regulation, timing and organisational readiness. If these assumptions remain implicit, learning tends to remain local and episodic. The blueprint addresses this issue by requiring assumptions to be made explicit, evidence-gathering actions to be defined, and a review rhythm to be established. This allows the strategy to evolve without losing coherence.

This connects with the logic of innovation management systems and dynamic capability thinking. ISO 56001 provides requirements and guidance for establishing, implementing, maintaining and improving an innovation management system, while recent research shows the importance of designing such systems in relation to organisational context, ambition and capabilities (ISO, 2024; Kihlander et al., 2024; Karstegl et al., 2025). Teece's dynamic capability perspective is also relevant because it emphasises the ability to renew resources and competences in response to changing conditions (Teece, 2025). The blueprint contributes to this agenda by making strategic dialogue, trade-off management, governance and learning more explicit and repeatable.

The approach may therefore be used as an entry point for progressive adoption of standard-based innovation management practices. It does not require organisations to begin with formal system implementation. Instead, it introduces standard-informed thinking through practical outputs that can later be connected to more formal innovation management system elements, such as leadership, planning, support, operations, performance evaluation and improvement.

6 Future development and conclusion

The blueprint presented in this paper is practice-oriented and exploratory. It is based on professional experience and illustrated through an anonymised case, with the aim of offering a structured approach that can be discussed, adapted and further tested across organisational contexts. Its purpose is not to claim universal applicability, but to propose a practical structure that can support innovation strategy design in different settings.

Three areas for future development appear particularly relevant. First, the level of operational detail could be expanded. The blueprint intentionally avoids metrics and scoring in order to remain lightweight and usable in early strategy structuring. In more advanced applications, it could be complemented by indicators, portfolio metrics or innovation management system performance measures, depending on the organisation's maturity and objectives. Second, facilitation guidance could be developed further, including examples of prompts, workshop sequences, expected outputs and typical decision points. Third, comparative cases could be collected across sectors and maturity levels to understand how the blueprint adapts to different organisational contexts.

This paper has addressed a recurrent challenge in innovation management: the difficulty of translating innovation strategy into coherent priorities, governance choices and execution routines. The principle-driven strategy blueprint offers a practical response to this challenge. Built on the innovation management principles articulated in ISO 56000 and structured through Tidd and Bessant's What, When, Who, Where and How questions, it helps organisations produce the minimum set of artefacts required for execution: a concise strategy narrative, explicit strategic choices, a governance and operating model, and a learning loop.

The contribution of the paper is both practical and integrative. It does not propose another complex framework or a new measurement system. Rather, it offers a lightweight, standard-informed structure for making innovation strategy actionable. It positions innovation management principles as design constraints, not as compliance requirements, and uses them to support strategic dialogue, decision-making and capability building.

In doing so, the blueprint can help organisations take a practical step towards more systematic innovation management. It can support immediate alignment, while also contributing to longer-term maturity by strengthening routines for strategic choice-making, governance discipline and learning under uncertainty. Its simplicity is purposeful: it aims to make innovation strategy not only well-written, but execution-ready by design.

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