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Effective Leadership Strategies for Aligning Vision and Mission to Drive Sustainability

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Nyree Price

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Effective Leadership Strategies for Aligning Vision and Mission to Drive Sustainability

by

Nyree Price

MSW, Howard University, 2002

BA, Arizona State University, 1997

Consulting Capstone Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2026

Abstract

Organizational leaders often struggle when ambitious innovation outpaces the systems, structures, and leadership practices needed to support consistent operational performance. When leaders fail to implement effective resolution strategies to align the organizational vision and mission with operational effectiveness, it impacts long-term operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. This qualitative single case study was an exploration of the strategies used by some business leaders in a mid-sized, for-profit telecommunications firm in the Midwest United States. The study applied the Baldrige Excellence Framework as the conceptual lens. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with executive leaders and through an analysis of internal archival records and organizational documents. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns and alignment practices. The study identified three key themes: the need for structured communication systems that reinforce mission-driven expectations, the importance of cross-functional collaboration to translate strategic intent into daily action, and the value of performance measurement processes that provide leaders with real-time insight into operational execution. A key recommendation is for leaders to implement a formalized alignment system that links strategic goals, departmental actions, and workforce accountability through standardized communication, documented processes, and measurable outcomes. Applying these findings may contribute to social change by supporting stronger, more sustainable organizations that improve workforce stability, enhance service quality, and positively impact the communities and industries they serve.

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Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my family, whose unconditional support made every step of this journey possible. To my husband, Mario, thank you for your support throughout this journey. I appreciate the ways you showed up when I needed it. To my children, Kennedy, Maverick, and Maxim, you are my greatest joys and the reason I strive for excellence every day. To my mother, Pearlene, and my siblings Katrina, Jennifer, and Evans, your encouragement has carried me more than you know.

A special dedication goes to my late father, Evans “E.J.” Thompson, whose voice still echoes in my heart. You often told us how proud you were, and you taught us the meaning of hard work, dedication, and excellence. I hope this accomplishment honors the legacy you poured into us.

And to my entire family and friends, near and far, thank you for loving me, supporting me, and cheering me forward.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

For this study, I collaborated with the client leader at organization X (a pseudonym) to identify and explore a resolution strategy which would align the organizational vision and mission to ensure operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. Using the 2023–2024 Baldrige excellence framework (BEF), I conducted a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the relevant academic literature to explore effective strategies that business leaders use to resolve organizational mission and vision misalignment challenges since such an alignment is crucial for enhancing performance management and ensuring long-term sustainability. In accordance with Walden University’s consulting capstone guidelines, my role as both a consultant and scholar-researcher involved working closely with the client leader to ensure a resolution strategy was relevant and would enable the client leader to achieve the desired outcomes to support the operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability for the organization. In Sections 1 and 2, I present the business problem and substantiate the need for the study through an in-depth review of the literature, which incorporates the Baldrige excellence framework as the conceptual lens for the study.

Background of the Problem

The business challenge revolves around the business leaders’ visionary focus and enthusiastic passion for innovation, propelling the company toward revolutionary advancements and inventive solutions (Farhan, 2024). Visionary leaders are known for their entrepreneurial passion and innovative thinking, setting ambitious goals that push the boundaries of traditional practices (Anunthawichak & Kitcharoen, 2023). However,

this intense emphasis on innovation can challenge aligning day-to-day operations with the company's overarching mission and strategic objectives. Visionary leaders' intense focus on future-oriented change initiatives sometimes creates a separation between operational activities and organizational strategic objectives (Hassan, Kadhum, & Abdulhasan, 2023). Research indicates that such misalignment leads to operational inefficiencies, unclear employee priorities, and disjointed departmental efforts (Nakitende, 2024). Employees who lack understanding of how their daily tasks contribute to organizational objectives experience reduced engagement, and their ability to implement innovation effectively becomes compromised. The gap between aspirations and actions becomes more pronounced when leaders fail to build connections, leading to resource waste, lower employee morale, and decreased productivity (Cassone, 2024). The lack of alignment between strategic goals and operational activities leads to resource mismanagement because organizations pursue initiatives without a clear strategic direction. Employees experience confusion and a lack of appreciation when they cannot understand how their daily work supports the organization's overall mission. This results in decreased morale, employee disengagement, and reduced productivity. The absence of alignment creates obstacles for both organizational efficiency and long-term sustainability.

Leaders need to implement integrative approaches that link long-term vision to structured execution, in line with the Baldrige performance excellence framework, which supports systems thinking and organizational alignment (NIST, 2023). Organizations must provide visionary leaders with the necessary tools and frameworks to convert

innovation into lasting action, while operational systems should support rather than oppose strategic objectives (Maaravi et al., 2023). This misalignment often leads to operational inefficiencies, employee confusion regarding priorities, and a lack of cohesive direction across departments (Cassone, 2024). These discrepancies between visionary aspirations and practical execution can result in wasted resources, diminished productivity, and decreased employee morale as team members grapple with the dual pressures of pursuing innovation while fulfilling immediate operational demands (Aksoy, 2024; Potonik et al., 2022). Furthermore, some business leaders focus on innovation, which may overshadow the critical need to establish robust operational processes and systems essential for sustainable growth and organizational stability (Hassan et al., 2023). Balancing visionary thinking with effective operational management is essential for turning innovative ideas into tangible results that support the company's long-term goals (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2020). Therefore, tackling these challenges is crucial. It improves organizational efficiency and creates a work environment where visionary goals can be achieved without compromising operational integrity.

Business Problem Consulting Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem addressed in this research project is that some business leaders lack effective strategies to effectively balance their visionary focus and passion for innovation with the practical execution of the company's mission, which can result in misalignment and negatively impact operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore the effective strategies that some business leaders use to align the

organizational vision and mission to ensure operational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability.

In this study, I collected data from three or more purposefully sampled leaders within X organization in the Midwest United States. They were interviewed using a semi structured interview process designed to elicit their lived experience for aligning the organizational vision and mission to ensure operational effectiveness. I will also review organizational documents for relevant information. The conceptual framework for this project is the BEF. With the background to the problem provided, the focus will now shift to the research question.

Research Question

What effective strategies do some business leaders use to align the organizational vision and mission to ensure operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions in research influence how studies are framed and guide the interpretation of findings (Park et al., 2020). In this study, I made three assumptions. My first assumption was that effective leadership strategies are essential for aligning an organization's mission and vision, leading to improved operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. My second assumption is that the leaders within the organization are aware of the importance of aligning the organizational vision and mission with operational effectiveness and are open and willing to share their experiences during the

semistructured interviews. My third assumption is that organizational documents will provide valuable and relevant insights into aligning the organization's vision and mission with its strategic operations.

Limitations

When conducting research, limitations are defined as elements which may impact the validity, reliability, and scope of the study's findings (Yin, 2018). In this research, there were four limitations. The first limitation was the small sample size, which might show only some perspectives. The second limitation was that the interviews are subjective, leading to possible bias. The third limitation was limited access to organizational documents, which may leave out important details. The fourth limitation was using a single case study, which does not enable the generalization of the findings to other organizations.

Transition

In Section 1, I introduced the background and significance of the study, presenting the problem statement related to the lack of effective strategies among business leaders to align organizational vision and mission with operational execution. This misalignment can hinder productivity and sustainability (Westover, 2024). I further outlined the purpose of the study, research question, assumptions, and limitations. In Section 2, I will shift to the foundational elements of the study, exploring relevant literature that informs the topic, including an overview of the concept of strategic alignment and its historical development. I provide a rationale for using the Baldrige excellence framework as the conceptual framework, emphasizing its relevance to

aligning organizational mission and vision to operational execution. In Section 3, I outline the research project methodology used to explore the alignment of an organization's vision and mission with its operational effectiveness. This will include a description of the research design, data collection methods, and analysis approach, ensuring a structured, credible, and systematic investigation. In Section 4, I will provide an overview of the Consulting Capstone project, including a brief introduction to the Baldrige excellence framework, the client organization, and its history, establishing the context for analyzing and applying strategic alignment principles.

Section 2: Literature Review of Business Consulting Topic

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A literature review is used to explore and integrate existing research, synthesizing prior work to identify, critique, and build upon the foundational elements of a study. It serves as a critical component of scholarly research by summarizing existing knowledge and providing a framework for understanding how individual studies contribute to the broader field. Kraus et al. (2022) indicated literature reviews are independent studies that enable researchers to gain a deeper understanding of existing research in their field, making it easier to identify gaps in the literature by identifying and highlighting gaps that exist or where researchers have yet to address emerging questions.

In this qualitative single case study, I was assigned as a student scholar with Company X to explore what effective strategies some business leaders use to align the organizational vision and mission to ensure operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. Researchers who have studied balancing visionary focus with practical execution indicated that a lack of alignment significantly impacts operational execution (Ahmed et al., 2020; Farhan, 2024; Maran et al., 2022). I presented a thematic literature review structured around the BEF, focusing on three main themes: strategic alignment of vision and mission, operational excellence, and leadership strategies. I gathered professional and academic literature using multi-database search tools to collect relevant information. I searched the following databases: Scopus; PubMed; Web of Science; JSTOR; ERIC; ScienceDirect; IEEE Xplore; Academic Search Complete; Business Source Complete; PsycINFO; ABI/INFORM Collection; EBSCO; CORE;

Directory of Open Access Journals; Paperity; ProQuest. The keywords searched included *strategic alignment, organizational vision, mission statement, leadership strategies, operational effectiveness, sustainability in business, organizational performance, long-term sustainability, business strategy, vision-mission alignment, strategic leadership, organizational culture, business sustainability, and Malcolm Baldrige framework*. As a requirement for Walden University Doctoral Business Administration scholars, I established a robust foundation for this study by drawing on 70 total references, including 63 sources (90%) published within the last 5 years and 63 sources (90%) from peer-reviewed journals, ensuring a current and reliable basis for analysis.

Conceptual Framework

Baldrige Excellence Framework

This study used the BEF as its conceptual lens, enabling a structured examination of how organizational leaders enhanced performance and competitiveness. In 1987, the U.S. Congress established the BEF to improve the quality and competitiveness of American businesses. The framework was created and named after Malcolm Baldrige, U.S. Secretary of Commerce, to recognize and reward organizations demonstrating outstanding performance and leadership. Manufacturing was first to be targeted, and then in later years, healthcare, education, government, and nonprofit organizations were included, thus illustrating its universality (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). The BEF is used as a structured approach for evaluating and improving various aspects of organizational operations, enabling business leaders to achieve excellence and sustained success in the marketplace. BEF is used by researchers as a comprehensive and

systematic approach to organizational performance management, ensuring alignment between strategy, operations, and outcomes.

BEF Key Components and Organizational Excellence. The BEF includes seven interrelated categories emphasizing a results-driven focus, encouraging organizational leaders to evaluate and improve processes designed to improve performance and achieve excellence. These categories include leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, workforce engagement, and operational effectiveness (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). The Leadership category in the Baldrige excellence framework emphasizes how senior leaders establish the organization's vision, mission, and values, ensuring ethical behavior and accountability. This focus fosters a culture of trust, open communication, and alignment between leadership and employees, contributing to organizational excellence (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2023). The Strategy category examines how organizations develop and implement strategic objectives that align with their mission and address environmental challenges, driving long-term sustainability and operational effectiveness by linking strategic goals to actionable plans (Malik et al., 2021).

The Customers category ensures organizations understand and meet customer needs, build relationships, and enhance satisfaction, which is critical for maintaining loyalty and a competitive edge (Eom & Byun, 2022). The Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management category focuses on data-driven decision-making using performance metrics and knowledge-sharing practices, promoting innovation and efficiency by identifying areas for improvement (Demir et al., 2021). The Workforce

category examines how organizations engage, empower, and develop their workforce to achieve high performance and satisfaction, essential for creating a motivated and capable workforce aligned with organizational goals (NIST, 2023).

The Operations category centers on managing key processes to ensure efficiency, flexibility, and reliability in delivering products or services, enhancing productivity and quality through continuous improvement (Malik et al., 2021). Finally, the Results category measures key outcomes related to customers, workforce, leadership, and financial performance, offering a comprehensive assessment of organizational success and identifying areas for growth. Together, these categories create a robust framework for driving organizational excellence and achieving sustainable success.

One significant advantage of the BEF is that it can help establish strategic thinking by providing tools and techniques that enable organizations to link their vision, mission, and values with their operations. BEF ensures that all activities and decisions are consciously made to achieve long-term objectives. This alignment is essential for business leaders who have difficulty sustaining high operational performance and productivity levels while meeting organizational objectives.

The authors of the Baldrige Excellence Framework emphasize continuous improvement and innovation. Its quantitative approach enables organizations to identify areas of weakness and strength, gaps, and potential for development. Researchers and practitioners use the BEF to promote a systematic approach that facilitates organizations to view their processes as integrated systems rather than a collection of separate parts (Xie et al., 2022). BEF is beneficial in developing a culture of excellence and

accountability. It integrates the concept of workforce involvement, which means that all workforce members know and can support and nurture the organization's strategic plan. This improved sense of purpose increases productivity, morale, and commitment. The BEF is suitable for use in all industries and organizational structures, making it an effective tool in performance management.

Consequently, the BEF effectively deals with organizational challenges through strategy integration, continuous improvement, systems thinking, and employee involvement (Lusdiono & Noer, 2025). For this reason, the framework's principles benefit leaders who want to improve operational efficiency, output, and sustainable development.

Applying the BEF questions as a self-assessment is a crucial first step for developing an organizational profile. The profile presents a comprehensive view of the organization's essential characteristics, including its culture, the problems it encounters, and its environment (Sahputra et al., 2021). The organizational profile offered stakeholders a snapshot of the organization, setting the stage for continuous enhancement and excellence (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). It benefits stakeholders by providing information about the organization's strengths, goals, and challenges to understand its strategic direction better and bridge the gap between visionary focus and practical execution.

The BEF is an integrated framework of empirical research. It provides a guide for collecting and analyzing data to ensure alignment with the project's overarching goals and to provide actionable insights (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). To address the

challenge of business leaders lacking effective strategies to align their organizational vision and mission, I approached the issue through the lens of the seven categories of excellence. During this process, I identified that the leadership and strategy categories within the BEF most closely align with the research question. These categories emphasize the importance of visionary leadership and strategic alignment, which are crucial for translating vision and mission into actionable strategies that drive organizational success.

The leadership category in Section 1 of BEF explains how leaders connect an organization's vision and mission with its operational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). This section describes the role of leadership in setting and communicating the vision and mission, fostering an environment conducive to achieving strategic goals, and ensuring alignment across the organization. Leaders play a crucial role in guiding teams and creating clear directions, which is essential for aligning organizational vision and mission with operational effectiveness (Suharto, 2023). Developing a strategic vision that is clear, motivational, and forward-looking is vital for aligning stakeholders and directing organizational actions. This requires analyzing the external environment and continuously refining the vision through adjustments. (Nsengiyumva, 2024).

The strategy category in Section 2 of BEF explains how leaders direct an organization toward its strategic goals by optimally utilizing resources and deeply understanding the vision and mission (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). This category outlines a systematic method of formulating and implementing strategies that

contribute to organizational success and long-term sustainability. Strategy Development requires leaders to identify strategic challenges and opportunities in their operating environment. This process includes analyzing market trends, stakeholder needs, and internal capabilities to establish clear priorities that address current and future challenges.

Another essential component is Strategy Implementation, which describes how leaders implement and adjust strategies as needed. It also requires leaders to monitor progress through key performance indicators (KPIs), responding to changing market conditions and making decisions flexibly. This means that to stay on course, organizational leaders must be able to pivot and adapt their strategies based on how well they are performing.

The final strategy component involves the Alignment with Goals, which ensures that strategic plans and initiatives contribute to the organization's day-to-day operations, productivity, and sustainability. Leaders achieve strategic alignment by connecting objectives to measurable outcomes and ensuring that all employee activities support the organization's mission and vision. Effective alignment leads to accountability and standardization and allows organizations to be successful in the short term as well as the long term.

Application of the Framework in Various Sectors. The BEF has been successfully applied across multiple sectors, including healthcare and manufacturing, to enhance the performance and sustainability of organizations. Healthcare organizations that have embraced the BEF report improved patient care quality, stronger performance outcomes, and higher employee morale. For instance, the Baldrige Excellence

Framework for Health Care (NIST, 2023) provides a comprehensive performance management system that enables healthcare organizations to fulfill their missions and enhance their results. The manufacturing industry uses the framework to improve process efficiency and customer satisfaction. Leaders in the manufacturing industry use BEF to assess performance and planning in conditions of uncertainty, with issues such as operational efficiency and workforce development (Alam, 2024).

BEF also supports efforts to deliver superior clinical performance and high patient satisfaction when implemented in healthcare organizations. For example, healthcare leaders use the framework to ensure a comprehensive and systematic approach to enhance organizational performance, emphasize leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, measurement, and operational excellence (Xie et al., 2024). The successful adoption of the BEF is well-documented by Roberts et al. (2020) and Strahan et al. (2022) across various healthcare organizations, resulting in consistent performance improvements. These findings are consistent with the best practices of major healthcare providers, including Intermountain Healthcare, the Tennessee Department of Health, and Kaiser Permanente. These organizational leaders have used the BEF to link their strategic plans to their objectives, enhance the quality of care, enhance the performance of their operations, and improve the patient experience. While the BEF has demonstrated success in various healthcare settings, the initial quality improvements observed in some cases may not be sustained in the long term. This highlights the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of quality management practices to maintain and enhance performance outcomes over time (Xie et al., 2024).

BEF is also instrumental in driving performance excellence within the manufacturing sector. The framework is used since it emphasizes leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, and process management, which are crucial for manufacturing success. This, in turn, enables manufacturing leaders to concentrate on long-term objectives and react flexibly to market changes (Aulia & Waluyo, 2023; Dhurandhar & Kumar, 2024). Applying the BEF criteria alongside lean principles has produced remarkable improvements in the Thai automotive industry in terms of efficiency and quality, highlighting the framework's appropriateness and effectiveness across various manufacturing environments (Thunyachairat et al., 2023).

Ullah et al. (2023) found that the BEF effectively supports process management and continuous improvement to support manufacturing. By adopting the Baldrige criteria, manufacturing leaders can ensure they have established mechanisms for identifying weaknesses and implementing changes to enhance product quality with minimal losses (Ullah et al., 2023). Additionally, combining Lean and Six Sigma strategies with the Baldrige framework has dramatically improved production systems, with numerous case studies showing significant improvements in process performance and cost optimization (Ullah et al., 2023).

The BEF's emphasis on customer satisfaction and stakeholder engagement supports efforts to ensure that manufacturing processes meet customer requirements. By increasing customer satisfaction, BEF acts as a driver of innovation and enhances the competitive position of the manufacturing sector (Dhurandhar & Kumar, 2024).

While the Baldrige excellence framework has also proven successful in many manufacturing contexts, it is important to note the decline in the number of manufacturing organizational leaders applying for the Baldrige award. This suggests that while the framework is effective, barriers to its adoption may need a refocus to ensure its continued relevance and application in the industry (Strahan et al., 2022).

Adapting the BEF to unique challenges in manufacturing organizations requires intentional thought and customization. Manufacturing leader must align the framework with their particular operational settings and strategic objectives to realize its full potential. Furthermore, as the manufacturing industry evolves, integrating digital transformation strategies, such as advanced industry technologies and sustainable practices, has become essential for achieving and maintaining long-term excellence. (Dhurandhar and Kumar, 2024). These additional complexities underscore the importance of manufacturing organizations continually enhancing their application of the BEF to ensure it remains appropriate for the current industry environment.

These two examples highlight the framework's versatility and success across various industries. Through providing a systematic way of performing performance excellence, the BEF assists organizational leaders in coordinating their activities with their strategic plans and developing a cultural phenomenon of continuous improvement and accountability. It is important to address sector-specific issues while maintaining a standard of excellence.

Evidence Supporting the Business Problem

Challenges in Aligning Vision and Mission

Aligning a company's vision and mission with its business problems is a complex challenge that many leaders face, often due to a lack of effective strategies to balance visionary focus with practical execution. This misalignment can negatively impact operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability (Alawwad, 2024).

Vision and mission statements are frequently not executed because of low employee engagement and understanding, leading to a disconnect between strategic objectives and operational activities. As supported by Westover (2024), employees are more inclined to accept strategic objectives when they can recognize how their roles contribute to the organization's vision. However, this is where many organizational leaders struggle to convey the message, resulting in disengagement. When employees do not embrace the vision, their work may not align with the organization's long-term strategic objectives. This misalignment hampers efficiency, demotivates people, and raises turnover (Alawwad, 2024; Nakitende, 2024). Without the leadership's active support of the mission, employees may feel disconnected, preventing organizational success. To enhance employee buy-in, organizations should ensure that they have clear and well-defined strategies for employee communication, which may include leadership forums, mission-driven performance incentives, and the involvement of employees in strategic planning (Kimani, 2024). These approaches enable employees to determine how their work fits into the organization's larger vision and, therefore, engage and align with its goals.

Balancing visionary focus and practical execution in business requires overcoming several barriers, including cultural resistance, which can impede innovation and operational effectiveness. Cultural resistance often arises from entrenched traditions, fear of change, and a lack of alignment between innovative strategies and existing organizational culture (Leong et al., 2021). Addressing these barriers is essential for business leaders to ensure alignment with the company's mission and long-term sustainability. Successful companies such as Netflix, IBM, LEGO, and Adobe have demonstrated that adaptability, a growth mindset, continuous skill development, and fostering open communication serve as effective strategies for overcoming these barriers (Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Innovation and Growth, 2024). Although cultural resistance is a considerable challenge, it is not insurmountable. By applying certain strategies such as skill development, agile frameworks, and effective leadership, businesses can effectively translate their innovative vision into practice, thus increasing operational effectiveness and sustainability. However, it is crucial to recognize that cultural resistance is deeply ingrained and often requires sustained effort and commitment to overcome.

Visionary leaders typically focus on future challenges, creativity, and team flexibility. Nevertheless, without the proper management to translate these visions into strategic plans, organizations may experience strategic misfits and poor execution (Nakitende, 2024). Nakitende (2024) found that organizational leaders with strong visionary leadership, but weak execution systems would likely face poor operational efficiency, slow decision-making, and low productivity. Similarly, Ateş et al. (2020)

identified that a misfit between vision and execution results in difficulties in strategy implementation, which in turn impacts the organization's long-term viability. As well, the authors further noted that leadership is vital to the organization's vision and ability to innovate and adapt; however, it must be combined with management to make the vision a reality. Goal setting, for instance, is a critical framework that, when missing, leads to vision-based strategies that are more bureaucratic in theory than in practice. This gap can lead to unrealized teamwork, financial mismanagement, and lack of progress in achieving operational goals. To close the gap between vision and execution, organizations should adopt hybrid leadership approaches combining inspirational and structural operational leadership. This is accomplished by developing execution-focused leadership that can convert thoughts into strategies. Carvalho et al. (2023) highlighted the relationship between operational excellence and organizational agility, suggesting that a hybrid leadership approach can enhance quality and adaptability. By combining operational excellence with a culture of agility, leaders can effectively translate vision into execution, adapting to changing environments while maintaining high performance.

Business Topic Scholarship

Effective Strategies for Aligning Vision and Mission

The case of H. Lawrence Culp Jr. at Danaher Corporation demonstrates the successful integration of strategic leadership with execution (Rahmat & Rahmat, 2023). By implementing the Danaher Business System (DBS) and integrating Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma principles, Culp shifted the company's culture towards a strong emphasis on quality, efficiency, and innovation. This strategic execution resulted

in significant improvements in Danaher's financial performance, characterized by steady revenue growth and successful expansion through strategic acquisitions, showcasing the positive impact of strategic leadership on achieving organizational goals.

Organizational success depends on effective leadership, which promotes employee commitment while driving sustainable growth. To achieve their vision, leaders must demonstrate the right behaviors while using effective communication approaches and implementing engagement methods that boost productivity and creativity. Nsengiyumva (2024) and Suharto (2023) provided vital strategies for removing leadership obstacles and maintaining high-performing work environments.

Rahmat (2023) explained that strategic leadership execution is essential in reaching business objectives. A common issue organizations encounter is the challenge of translating their vision into execution while managing resistance to change. Through forward-thinking decisions, flexible leadership, and personal responsibility, leaders translate strategic goals into actionable plans that align vision with execution. Leaders who establish precise goals and formal implementation procedures foster unity because their team members fully understand how their efforts contribute to overall strategic results. Furthermore, innovation resistance remains a challenge in leadership execution. Leong et al. (2021) noted that both cultural and organizational factors challenge the implementation of innovation. Through employee involvement in decision-making processes and change management strategies, leaders can eliminate barriers to progress and develop an environment that supports ongoing improvement.

Successful leadership also depends on effective communication practices. Rahmat (2023) proposed that leaders implement systematic and open communication processes to connect organizational vision with employee execution. Implementing precise goal definitions, consistent feedback processes, and open workplace communication results in better organizational decisions and increased employee commitment. Leong et al. (2021) expanded on this by stating that leaders must adapt their communication strategies to reflect workforce demographics. Using technological communication tools, town hall meetings, and interactive leadership forums strengthens employee commitment to organizational goals.

Employee dedication is essential for maintaining future operational effectiveness and business success. Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Innovation and Growth (2024) identified three key employee engagement methods: recognition programs, professional development initiatives, and participative leadership to enhance morale and productivity. According to Leong et al. (2021), organizations that foster employee autonomy provide meaningful work experiences and create opportunities for advancement, thereby increasing employees' sense of value and driving organizational success. In conclusion, leadership behaviors and communication methods guide organizational visions toward productive outcomes that support sustainable growth. Leaders who apply strategic execution (Rahmat, 2023), culturally responsive communication (Leong et al., 2021), and proactive employee engagement strategies (Shirinzad, 2024) strengthen innovation, operational excellence, and long-term sustainability. By aligning vision with actionable execution and maintaining open

communication and employee-focused practices, leaders enhance competitive advantage and achieve stronger organizational alignment.

Synthesis and Gaps in Literature

This literature review highlights the importance of combining visionary leadership with operational management through a hybrid leadership approach. Leaders who focus on strategic execution while engaging employees help create a culture of continuous improvement and accountability (Carvalho et al., 2023). The BEF framework provides a practical model that aligns leadership vision with operational strategy and workforce engagement to produce results. Implementing the BEF in healthcare settings has produced improvements in patient care, employee morale, and operational efficiency (Xie et al., 2024). In manufacturing, BEF implementation supports process optimization, boosts customer satisfaction, and strengthens competitive advantage (Dhurandhar & Kumar, 2024). The research provided critical insights that effective communication strategies and structured leadership execution are vital to addressing change barriers. The BEF approach enables organizational leaders to make data-driven decisions and use performance measurement tools, which helps them monitor their progress and develop improved long-term strategies (Demir et al., 2021). Strategic leadership execution that aligns with organizational goals helps business leaders maintain their adaptability and competitiveness while building resilience in the face of market changes.

The Danaher Corporation's application of BEF principles for strategic leadership execution improved significantly under H. Lawrence Culp Jr.'s leadership. Through his leadership, Culp reinforced Danaher by adopting the Danaher Business System (DBS),

which incorporated Lean Manufacturing, Six Sigma, and strategic planning as fundamental operational components. The system promoted ongoing enhancement and measurement of performance while involving staff in the process, which matched closely with the BEF categories of leadership, strategic planning, and operational excellence. Through the implementation of structured execution frameworks, Danaher managed to improve operational flow and deliver better customer satisfaction while increasing revenue growth. The company leadership incorporated data-driven decision-making and employee development through its leadership approach, which helped address operational misalignment and innovation resistance. Danaher continued its market expansion and maintained its position as one of the most innovative and well-managed corporations because its balanced vision and execution approach led to enduring organizational success (Rahmat & Rahmat (2023)).

Rahmat and Rahmat (2023) identified the need to close the divide between visionary leadership and operational execution. Leaders must implement formal goal-setting structures alongside effective employee communication channels and apply performance management tools that incorporate BEF sustainability framework principles. Continuous improvement strategies, participatory leadership models, and data-driven decision-making enable organizations to reach sustainable business success and develop over time. Cossette (2001) introduced a systematic method to connect strategic vision with execution and contributed to leadership research in business. The method consists of four stages: exploration, validation, analysis, and finalization to help leaders make their

strategic vision explicit and actionable. Future researchers should investigate the effects of industry-adjusted BEF models and hybrid leadership on new business challenges.

Gaps in the Literature

The implementation of visionary leadership and passionate innovation, together with practical mission execution, has created multiple research gaps. Although research highlights the importance of visionary leadership and innovative processes, it does not provide sufficiently detailed frameworks for translating theory into practical application. For example, Widiyanto et al. (2024) found that the lack of empirical evidence across settings poses challenges to developing testable theoretical frameworks of visionary leadership. More longitudinal research is needed to determine the long-term effects of visionary leadership on organizational performance and longevity. Mittal (2024) underlined that organizational leaders need to integrate innovation with sustainability; however, current leadership models do not effectively combine these elements within organizational strategy. Current researchers lack an integrated approach to research at the intersection of psychological, sociological, and business management disciplines, hindering effective understanding of visionary leadership applications (Widiyanto et al., 2024). The authors noted that no quantitative assessment tools exist to support the practical implementation of visionary leadership, limiting leaders' ability to convert vision into action. In addition, Dinibutun (2024) found that entrepreneurial passion serves as a primary driver of innovation, but current frameworks for translating this passion into business model innovation require further development.

The research-practice gap is a significant obstacle that requires greater effort toward building practical frameworks that merge academic theories with real-world business applications (Hammoda, 2024). Although researchers have generated valuable insights into visionary leadership and innovation management, these studies lack practical implementation strategies that leaders can apply within organizations. To narrow the gap between visionary dreams and practical implementation, organizational leaders should develop interdisciplinary, evidence-based frameworks that unite strategic vision with realistic business actions. The BEF systematically enhances organizational performance, though previous studies have not fully detailed its connection with visionary leadership frameworks. Leaders who use structured goal-setting systems, participative leadership approaches, and data-driven decision-making can achieve better vision execution, according to Hammoda (2024). By closing these knowledge gaps, organizations can better align strategic execution with innovation, workforce engagement, and sustainability. Resolving existing research gaps requires a deliberate emphasis on practical application alongside theoretical and interdisciplinary research. Business leaders will receive practical leadership tools to achieve operational execution through quantitative tools, leadership assessment models, and multidisciplinary strategic frameworks.

Al-Kasasbeh & Madadha (2025) indicated that to reduce the gap between academic theories and real-world business leadership practices, future studies should investigate how industry-specific versions of the BEF framework, along with hybrid leadership approaches, influence organizational responses to new business challenges,

ensuring organizations remain viable and competitive in their markets. Research on combining established frameworks such as the BEF with flexible leadership styles has enabled practitioners and scholars to identify context-specific strategies that strengthen innovation and operational resilience. Leaders with dual perspectives can better align organizational objectives with current execution and make proactive adjustments to market and stakeholder needs (Leong et al., 2021). Future studies that expand research on integrated models will help bridge the theory-practice gap, enabling leaders to make strategic decisions that drive sustainability and competitive advantage.

Transition

In Section 2, I reviewed key strategies identified in the research literature, including the BEF, strategic leadership execution, and interdisciplinary approaches to innovation and sustainability. While researchers offer theoretical support for these approaches, limited empirical research has explored their practical application in various organizational settings and real-world businesses environments. This study addressed this gap by exploring how business leaders can effectively integrate visionary leadership with structured operational execution using BEF as a guiding framework. In Section 3, I outlined the qualitative single case study methodology and detailed how I used thematic analysis to examine leadership strategies in practice. In Section 4, I presented the findings, including how these strategies contribute to organizational success, employee engagement, and long-term sustainability.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Capstone Research Project Ethics

This research project addressed a business issue in which some leaders lack effective strategies to balance visionary focus and passion for innovation with the practical execution of the company's mission, leading to misalignment that negatively affects operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to identify and explore the effective strategies that some business leaders used to align their organizational vision and mission, ensuring operational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability.

In this study, I served as an independent scholar-practitioner, leading an evidence-based investigation to assist the client organization in aligning its vision and mission with operational execution to enhance effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. I led the development of an ethical and rigorous data collection process combining BEF principles with collaborative and ethical standards. As the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, 2023) outlined the Baldrige framework promotes systems thinking, leadership accountability, and continuous improvement as cornerstones of organizational success. In parallel, ethical considerations were guided by the principles outlined in the *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), which emphasized respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

The research approach utilized a qualitative single-case study methodology, which effectively explored complex, real-world organizational phenomena in depth (Yin,

2018). The methodology utilized semistructured interviews with senior leaders from the client organization. In the interviews, I explored leadership strategies, organizational alignment methods, and the challenges associated with implementing the executive vision. I analyzed organizational documents and publicly available information to enhance the validity of the study's results through methodological triangulation. During data collection, I provided participants with a detailed informed consent form (Appendix A) outlining the study objectives, procedures, and participant rights. The consent form clearly stated that participation remained voluntary and that participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The consent form included the required information before participants started their interviews. No payment was given to subjects who participated in the study. Any participant could withdraw from the study at any time by notifying me via email or phone. No explanation was required. Any participant's withdrawal involved removing their provided data from the dataset, ensuring it would not be used in the final analysis. Several ethical protections were implemented to guarantee ethical conduct and participant protection throughout the study. Each recorded interview was saved as an audio file, which was transcribed after the participants' names were removed. I stored the data on a password-protected, secure drive in an authorized environment, accessible only by me. Walden University requires that data collected remain secure for 5 years before it is completely erased. I disclosed my dual status as both a student and a consultant and took steps to prevent biases from influencing participant responses.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study # 08-23-24-1201238 as outlined in Walden's Consulting Capstone Handbook and in accordance with IRB requirements. All research procedures and instruments adhered to Walden's established ethical research standards. A redacted organization service agreement dated August 15, 2024, is attached as Appendix B and listed in the Table of Contents. The agreement defined project boundaries, confirmed the partnership's involvement, and granted access to vital organizational data and personnel, ensuring that all parties understood their roles and data-use restrictions.

Nature of the Project

This qualitative study used a single-case research design to examine how some business leaders experience challenges in balancing their visionary focus and passion for innovation with the practical execution of their company's mission. Such misalignment can undermine operational effectiveness, reduce productivity, and threaten long-term sustainability. I utilized the BEF to guide this analysis.

This approach was appropriate for this study because a single-case study enabled a detailed examination of a specific organization. This targeted approach helped identify the organization's specific strengths and challenges, providing a clear understanding of its current status. By concentrating on a single organization, the study developed tailored solutions that aligned its vision and mission with its operations and long-term goals. This in-depth analysis aimed to provide practical and relevant recommendations. Successful implementation of these recommendations can lead to meaningful improvements. Furthermore, the findings of a single case study may give practical insights into what

works (or does not) in a real-world setting, offering actionable lessons for leaders facing similar challenges, which is an approach noted by Yin (2018) as effective.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

In qualitative research, selecting participants is crucial because it determines the quality and depth of the data collected. I used purposeful sampling to select participants who had direct knowledge of, or influence over, the core research topics. Tongco (2007) asserted that purposeful sampling involves researchers selecting participants who possess specific knowledge or characteristics that meet the study's requirements. The purposeful sampling method was particularly useful for this research study because it aimed to gather detailed, meaningful insights from organizational leaders most qualified to inform the topic, rather than from Company X, to ensure broad applicability.

This study focused on executive leaders at a participating organization in the midwest United States that was selected for the consulting capstone project. The organization, a mid-sized, for-profit, veteran-owned technology firm, was engaged through a formal service agreement to serve as the client site for this research. It operates as a professional staffing and engineering services provider dedicated to the wireless telecommunications industry. The organization holds ISO certification and provides services nationwide to major carriers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). Using a purposeful sampling approach, I selected three executive leaders from the organization who were directly involved in the strategic planning and execution process. The research included participation from the owner/CEO, operations director, and finance director. These executives lead the organization through their leadership positions, which

focus on finance and operations, as well as talent management and technology functions that align with BEF core areas.

The leaders were chosen because they actively participate in organizational planning, operations, and decision-making, which are essential to understanding how vision and mission are operationalized. Their diverse functional expertise provided a comprehensive understanding of how leadership alignment affects performance across departments. The inclusion of these specific roles ensured that the data collected accurately reflected both strategic intent and operational realities, thereby providing depth and credibility to the study's findings.

As the researcher, I interviewed this specific group of participants to gain practical insights into leadership dynamics and alignment practices in a high-performance, technology-based business environment. This research method supports the study's main objective of exploring proven strategies for linking organizational vision and mission to enhance operational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability.

Data Collection Activities

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Creswell and Poth (2018) identified that the research design follows a qualitative single-case study approach, with me acting as the main data collection instrument. The research used semistructured interviews with 3 senior leaders from the client organization, including the owner/CEO, Operations Director, and Finance Director. The research method suited the investigation of leader perceptions about strategic actions that connect organizational vision and mission with operational execution.

The interview questions derived from the BEF emphasize leadership, strategy, operations, and results (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2023). The framework enabled a structured evaluation of leadership practices that guided organizations in maintaining their operations and directing teams toward lasting achievement. The Baldrige categories guided the development of the interview protocol to create both strategic and comprehensive questions.

The semistructured interviews followed a standardized format to ensure reliability while allowing participants to add extra details about their responses. Participants signed an informed consent form before the interview. I received permission to record all interviews, which were transcribed completely before conducting thematic analysis. I gathered internal organizational documents, including strategic plans, mission/vision statements, performance reports, and publicly accessible information. Yin (2018) noted that collected data enables the validation of research findings while improving both the study's credibility and depth. The combination of data sources provided a complete understanding of strategic alignment practices throughout the organization.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Qualitative research defines reliability as the dependable and consistent nature of data collection methods and analysis procedures operating across different times and settings (Noble & Smith, 2015). To improve reliability, I used semistructured interview protocols that ensured this qualitative single-case study maintained trustworthiness

through methodological rigor, member checking, triangulation, and a structured interview process.

The BEF (NIST, 2023) informed the development of a semistructured interview protocol designed to ensure consistent questioning of the owner/CEO, Operations Director, and Finance Director to evaluate the alignment of vision, mission, and operations. The protocol included standardized questions based on BEF (NIST, 2023), with provisions for additional probing to gather deeper insights.

Member checking served as a validation technique to verify the research findings. Member checking requires researchers to present their data or initial interpretations to participants for accuracy verification and to confirm that the findings match the participants' real-life experiences. This research method aimed to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative results by having participants validate their contributions, thus reducing the risk of researcher bias and misrepresentation (Vella, 2024; Birt et al., 2016). In my study, participants received their interview transcripts for verification to ensure accurate representation of their responses while giving them the chance to clarify or expand on their answers. The process helped preserve authentic participant perspectives and minimized researcher bias and misinterpretation (Birt et al., 2016).

The research process was fully documented through an audit trail system that tracked all stages, from interview scheduling to transcription, coding, and theme development. Qualitative research depends on audit trails to improve rigor and transparency by documenting research procedures and methodological and theoretical

choices (Carcary, 2020). By employing triangulation methods, my study validated findings through multiple data sources. I analyzed organizational documents and publicly available data, including industry reports, mission and vision statements, and strategic plans, to verify interview data and strengthen the credibility of emerging themes (Vivek et al., 2023). The study's findings are trustworthy and reliable because they used structured data collection methods, member checking, and triangulation. The implemented measures helped achieve the study's goal of providing practical, ethical recommendations to improve strategic alignment within the client organization.

Validity

Qualitative research requires validity to ensure that the collected data accurately represent participants' experiences and the studies conducted by researchers. Validity in qualitative research extends beyond statistical measures, emphasizing the importance of establishing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Adler, 2022; Kakar et al., 2023). The research process consisted of multiple steps to ensure the data accurately reflected participant perspectives and the study context. Qualitative research is significant because it frequently addresses complex human experiences that cannot be easily quantified.

The credibility of this qualitative single case study was supported by three methods: triangulation, member checking, and audit. I used triangulation by gathering data from five senior leaders through semistructured interviews, organizational documents, and publicly available strategic plans and industry reports (Ramakrishnan et al., 2023). I used member checking to validate data interpretation by letting participants

review their interview summaries and the thematic findings (Vella, 2024). I kept an audit trail to document research decisions, coding processes, and reflections to support transparency and replicability (Carcary, 2020). Combining these methods developed a strong system to improve the study's trustworthiness. The multiple data sources in the triangulation helped validate the findings, preventing any single data source from dominating the results. The member-checking process enabled participants to engage in interpretation activities, reducing researcher bias and strengthening the authenticity of the results. The audit trail established a transparent documentation system, which qualitative research requires to prove methodological integrity. The procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the collected data. By systematically applying these strategies, I ensured accurate and trustworthy results that offer meaningful and reliable insights for organizational leadership research.

Transition and Summary

Section 3 explains how I used a qualitative single case study methodology to examine how business leaders connect their organizational vision and mission to operational execution to strengthen effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. The Baldrige excellence framework guided my research, which combined semistructured interviews with document analysis to perform thematic analysis for identifying executive leadership strategic approaches and recurring patterns. Section 4 presented findings that showed how leaders used communication clarity, cross-functional collaboration, and the integration of performance metrics as alignment strategies to address organizational misalignment challenges. The research findings demonstrated that

these strategies produced organizational effects, including better employee engagement, more consistent operational performance, and enhanced strategic agility.

Section 4: Research Project Findings and Professional Conclusions

Organization Profile

For this study, I used the BEF as the guiding structure to assess organizational performance across seven key categories: Leadership, Strategy, Customers, Measurement, Workforce, Operations, and Results. This profile describes how Company X's leaders use their vision, technical capabilities, and stakeholder relationships to support the organization's strategic goals and operational systems. I used the framework to guide a structured evaluation of Company X's internal and external environment, including its mission-driven culture, customer value creation, workforce capacity, and performance outcomes. This evaluation helped clarify how leaders position the organization for sustainable growth and continuous improvement.

Organizational Description

Company X is a mid-sized, for-profit, veteran-owned firm specializing in professional staffing and field engineering services for the wireless telecommunications industry. Founded in 1999, the company has built a reputation for providing end-to-end communication solutions across North America with a focus on lifecycle engineering, wireless network expansion, and telecom infrastructure deployment.

Organizational Environment

Company X is a privately held firm that offers comprehensive technology solutions, application hosting, and IT services to a broad range of clients in the telecommunications and engineering sectors. The leadership team cultivates a strong understanding of the organization's external and internal environment, leveraging this

knowledge to drive continuous improvement and strategic innovation. This awareness allows company X to adopt a systems perspective, aligning its core capabilities with market demands, emerging technologies, and regulatory trends. Company X integrates quality improvement and agile problem-solving into daily operations, ensuring responsiveness, customer focus, and organizational learning across all levels of the enterprise (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023).

Product Offerings. Company X offers a wide range of technology and telecommunications solutions to meet its clients' evolving needs. These offerings include wireless telecommunications staffing and engineering services, as well as call center support and scripting/integration assistance. The company provides Passive Intermodulation (PIM) remediation, Remote Electrical Tilt (RET) migrations, and antenna swap services to enhance network performance. Company X also specializes in fiber splicing and underground construction to support the expansion of broadband infrastructure. Their expertise extends to Fourth Generation (4G), Long-Term Evolution (LTE), and Fifth Generation (5G) scripting and integration services, ensuring clients remain at the forefront of wireless innovation. Additionally, company X delivers in-building solutions and small cell engineering to strengthen indoor connectivity. The company also supports program and project management services to ensure the successful execution and oversight of technical initiatives.

Mission, Vision, and Values. Company X's mission is to be a world-class telecommunications convergence technology service provider delivering quality engineering, build, installation, integration, software development and consulting services

combined with reliable and consistent program and project management to maximize our clients' value in their marketplace. This mission supports a strategic commitment to responsive service delivery and operational reliability. The organization's vision is to become the preferred provider of technical and engineering services in the wireless telecommunications industry by fostering a culture of innovation and operational excellence. Underpinning this mission and vision are core values that emphasize veteran leadership, integrity, high performance, customer responsiveness, continuous improvement, and the cultivation of strategic partnerships. These guiding principles shape the organization's internal culture, decision-making, and external engagements, aligning with the BEF's focus on leadership, strategic planning, and customer results.

Workforce Profile. Company X maintains a diverse and scalable workforce of over 100 professionals with specialized experience in telecommunications engineering, field support, scripting, integration, and project management. Staff capabilities span technical and administrative domains, including field engineers, certified technicians, scripting specialists, and customer support personnel. This dynamic workforce is deployed based on client needs and regional project demands, allowing for agile team integration into client environments.

The organizational culture emphasized high standards for professionalism, problem-solving, and cross-functional collaboration. Employees participate in continuous improvement initiatives and receive compliance-focused onboarding that includes ISO, TL 9000, and Lean Six Sigma training. Several employees also hold advanced technical or business degrees and maintain industry-recognized certifications.

Workforce development is supported by structured performance reviews, ongoing mentorship, and clear expectations set by leadership. As shared by the organization's founder during interviews, expectations for staff included responsiveness, strong communication, and “owning the role” with a sense of accountability. These cultural standards support long-term talent development and quality assurance aligned with BEF Category 5: Workforce.

The organization leadership also engages with educational institutions and veteran advocacy groups to expand recruitment pipelines and support career progression for historically underrepresented groups in STEM fields.

Assets. Company X possesses a robust portfolio of tangible and intangible assets that support its operational excellence and competitive advantage. Tangible assets include a full suite of advanced telecommunications equipment, fiber splicing tools, testing and monitoring technologies, fleet vehicles, and project management software platforms. These assets are strategically deployed to enable efficient field operations, integration services, and infrastructure support across multiple states. The company also maintains secure data centers and remote-access capabilities to support application hosting and IT services.

Intangible assets are a significant strength of the organization, including its highly skilled workforce, proprietary operational workflows, long-standing relationships with major wireless carriers, and a proven track record of successful large-scale deployment projects. Company X’s internal knowledge base, subject matter expertise, and certified

processes (including Lean Six Sigma and ISO standards) contribute to its capacity to deliver consistent, high-quality outcomes across a variety of technical disciplines.

Regulatory Requirements. Company X operates in a highly regulated telecommunications and IT environment and maintains strict adherence to all applicable local, state, and federal laws. The company complies with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety standards to ensure a secure work environment for all field and technical staff. In its wireless and fiber installation projects, Company X follows Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guidelines, ensuring that all equipment and practices meet national standards for frequency use, infrastructure design, and network performance.

Additionally, Company X adheres to state-specific licensing and permitting requirements related to underground construction, fiber splicing, and antenna deployments. For government contracts and defense-related projects, the firm complies with federal acquisition regulations (FAR), Department of Defense (DoD) standards, and data protection laws such as the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA). The organization's commitment to Lean Six Sigma and ISO 9001 quality management systems further ensures that it meets both customer expectations and regulatory benchmarks. This compliance infrastructure strengthens Company X's credibility, reduces operational risk, and ensures accountability in all engagements.

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Structure. Company X employs a lean and agile operational structure designed to promote direct access between field teams, leadership, and clients.

It follows a flat management model with minimal hierarchical barriers, which supports dynamic decision-making and responsiveness to customer and market needs. Functional divisions within the organization include engineering, project management, integration/scripting services, customer support, and business development. These divisions are cross-collaborative, with team members regularly participating in project kickoff meetings, strategic planning sessions, and operational reviews to ensure alignment with client specifications and quality benchmarks.

Organizational operations are overseen by its founder, who has advanced academic and technical credentials in business leadership. Company X integrates ISO and TL 9000 standards to guide its quality assurance processes, with performance metrics tracked via a project management platform. Employees receive onboarding and compliance-related training, while knowledge is shared across teams using cloud-based systems, email, and virtual collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams and SharePoint.

Customers and Stakeholders. Company X primarily serves national telecommunications providers, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), and large infrastructure clients. Its service model is tailored toward complex business-to-business engagements, with a limited but strategically significant client base of 3–6 customers at any given time. Client relationships are maintained through continuous engagement, performance-based feedback loops, and tailored service delivery based on regional market needs.

Customer feedback is solicited informally by frontline staff and formally through ISO-compliant satisfaction surveys. Feedback is reviewed quarterly and annually as part of the organization's strategic planning process. Root cause analysis is conducted in response to any negative feedback or service failure, and corrective measures are implemented with measurable outcomes. The organizational leadership uses a consultative approach to customer collaboration, participating in joint planning meetings and adapting service delivery based on market-specific standards and client preferences. Feedback mechanisms are also used to inform strategic discussions about productivity, compliance, and pricing models.

Stakeholders include government and municipal entities, private carriers, subcontracted service providers, and regulatory bodies. The organization's emphasis on quality, risk management, and cost containment has enabled it to maintain long-term relationships with its core customers while remaining flexible enough to pivot based on customer-driven requests and compliance obligations.

Suppliers and Partners. Company X maintains strategic relationships with suppliers and partners that align with its telecommunications and infrastructure service offerings. Key suppliers include fiber optic material vendors, construction subcontractors, and OEM partners who support both installation and equipment-related needs. In addition, educational institutions and professional certification bodies are engaged to support workforce development and training compliance.

Partners also include minority business development organizations and veteran-owned business advocates. These affiliations support the organization's diversity and

inclusion objectives, as well as its participation in government contracting and supplier diversity programs. The organization also relies on third-party vendors for software platforms, project tracking, and financial oversight systems to maintain transparency and accountability across all operations.

Operational collaboration with suppliers is guided by standardized processes outlined in the organization's quality management framework, which emphasizes documentation, feedback integration, and cost-performance evaluation. In cases where specialized insurance or compliance requests arise, supplier partnerships and customer negotiations are leveraged to arrive at cost-effective and compliant solutions.

Organizational Situation

The current business problem is that some business leaders struggle to align their innovative ideas with day-to-day operations, which can affect productivity and long-term success. Leaders at Company X are passionate about delivering cutting-edge solutions in the wireless telecom space and empowering clients through high-quality service and innovation.

However, their strong focus on innovation sometimes makes it harder to ensure that everyday processes fully support the organization's mission. Company X is working to improve how its vision and operations align to drive better results. Using the BEF, this study explores how leaders can strengthen this alignment to support effectiveness, consistency, and sustainable growth.

Competitive Environment

Competitive Position. Company X operates in the highly competitive wireless telecommunications industry, serving national telecom carriers and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). The company's strengths lie in its ability to scale quickly, maintain close client collaboration, and offer highly specialized technical expertise across engineering, scripting, integration, and project management services. Their veteran-led leadership and Lean Six Sigma/ISO-certified workforce further contribute to a distinctive reputation for reliability and performance-driven delivery. By embedding engineers directly into client teams, the company fosters seamless integration, agility, and responsiveness that distinguishes it from competitors.

Competitiveness Changes. Company X has experienced significant market shifts, including the increased demand for 5G solutions and fiber expansion, as well as evolving compliance and security requirements from telecom providers. The organization has responded by prioritizing workforce training and integrating scripting capabilities that allow clients to test, deploy, and support 5G upgrades faster. Additionally, the founder emphasized that government contracting and broadband expansion grants have introduced new competitors, raising the bar for performance documentation, certifications, and audit readiness.

Comparative Data. Company X uses industry benchmarks and client feedback loops as its primary forms of comparative data. While there are no specific benchmarking dashboards, the company leadership regularly monitors turnaround times, script deployment success rates, and field performance against key client metrics. Continuous

feedback from telecom clients allows the organization to remain agile and adapt services quickly. The founder noted that maintaining ISO certification and Lean Six Sigma standards provides a structured method to measure, compare, and improve performance across all operational areas. Additionally, feedback from third-party audits and client scorecards is used to make real-time adjustments and ensure competitive standing.

Strategic Context

Performance Improvement System

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers. The BEF is widely recognized as a comprehensive systems approach for organizational improvement, designed to foster excellence through an integrated alignment of leadership, strategy, and customer focus. Within this framework, the Leadership Triad, comprising Category 1 (Leadership), Category 2 (Strategy), and Category 3 (Customers), serves as a critical driver of organizational performance. This triad highlights the vital connection between visionary leadership, strategy formulation and implementation, and the establishment of robust, trust-based customer relationships (NIST, 2023). The following analysis examines the leadership practices of Company X, through the lens of the Baldrige Leadership Triad, while applying the Baldrige evaluation dimensions of approach, deployment, learning, and integration Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration (ADLI) to assess the maturity of processes.

Leadership

Senior Leadership

At the heart of the Baldrige model is the expectation that senior leaders create a clear mission, vision, and set of values, and that they model behaviors that reinforce organizational culture (NIST, 2023). In Company X, leadership is concentrated in the CEO and Director of Finance roles, who oversee most of the decision-making and organizational direction. While this centralized leadership provides clarity and responsiveness, it also reflects the broader challenge noted in the business problem. Overreliance on a narrow leadership group can hinder broader organizational alignment between mission and operational execution. Furthermore, Jack and Bayo (2024), asserted that centralized leadership can create bottlenecks in decision-making, hindering teams' ability to align with the organization's mission and vision. This rigid structure often stifles collaboration and innovation, as teams may lack the autonomy to adapt their roles and strategies effectively.

Company X leaders embed the values of quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction into the organization's processes. For example, ISO 9001 and TL 9000 certification requirements are integrated into quality management systems to reinforce consistent service delivery. Additionally, leaders model accountability and growth through practices such as open-door communication, mentoring, and setting realistic goals to motivate employees. These practices demonstrate efforts to link leadership values with operational performance.

Viewed through the ADLI lens, leadership practices at Company X demonstrate strong approaches and systematic deployment. Leaders implemented corrective actions following audits or surveys, demonstrating organizational learning, while integration across project management, financial oversight, and customer engagement continues. However, because leadership accountability rests heavily on senior leaders, there is a risk of inconsistent execution, echoing the identified business problem: leaders may lack effective strategies to translate their vision and mission into fully sustainable operational practices.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities

Company X's governance framework is anchored in ethical leadership, accountability, and transparent decision-making, all of which align with the 2023–2024 BEF principles of integrity and performance stewardship (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program [BPEP], 2023). The governance system ensures that operational and financial decisions reflect the organization's mission and values, reinforcing trust among employees, customers, and stakeholders. Leadership consists of the company's executive team, made up of individuals with decades of experience in telecommunications, and upholds a disciplined approach to governance by integrating compliance, quality management, and fiscal transparency into daily operations. The governance structure is anchored in structured reporting and financial integrity, with weekly and quarterly reviews assessing project progress, budget performance, and customer satisfaction. These reviews serve as both accountability mechanisms and learning opportunities, allowing the

leadership team to identify risks early and ensure that decisions are data-driven and mission-aligned.

Governance practices are further reinforced through ISO/TL 9000 compliance processes, which provide audit trails, corrective-action tracking, and risk-mitigation frameworks. These compliance mechanisms serve as both operational controls and ethical safeguards, ensuring that projects meet contractual, safety, and quality requirements. Governance at Company X is characterized by open communication and transparency around financial and operational priorities, fostering employee trust and shared accountability. Collectively, these practices illustrate a mature governance approach consistent with the Approach and Deployment dimensions of the Baldrige ADLI system, integrating structured reviews and internal audits into organizational learning.

The company's leadership system also ensures adherence to legal, ethical, and regulatory standards. ISO/TL 9000 audits verify compliance with federal and state labor regulations, insurance requirements, and data security expectations. Company X maintains strict adherence to General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and enforces internal controls that safeguard against errors and conflicts of interest. Ethical standards are embedded in vendor relationships and procurement practices, with leadership emphasizing fairness, confidentiality, and respect for intellectual property. The company's reliance on documented corrective-action procedures and continuous improvement plans demonstrates an ethical commitment to transparency and accuracy.

These systems collectively ensure that the company remains compliant and responsive to evolving regulatory and industry standards while maintaining stakeholder confidence.

Beyond compliance, Company X recognizes societal responsibility as an integral part of its governance model. As a minority-owned and veteran-led organization, the company exemplifies its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through active engagement in workforce and community development. Company X's strategic plan outlines a clear commitment to supporting minority suppliers, subcontractors, and small business mentorship initiatives, thereby expanding economic opportunity within the telecommunications industry. Environmental responsibility is integrated into operations through responsible materials disposal, equipment recycling, and adherence to OSHA and EPA standards, ensuring that the company's operations are both safe and sustainable. The leadership team also encourages community reinvestment through outreach programs, mentorship of emerging technical professionals, and partnerships that promote workforce training and inclusion.

From a Baldrige perspective, Company X's approach to governance and societal responsibility demonstrates alignment with the framework's Citizenship and Ethics core values. The organization integrates governance and societal stewardship into its broader accountability system, ensuring that leadership behavior, compliance mechanisms, and community engagement are interconnected. The use of ISO audits as both quality assurance and ethical governance tools reflects the organization's ability to institutionalize integrity while driving continuous improvement. These practices

exemplify the Integration and Learning dimensions of Baldrige's evaluation system by linking internal controls, leadership accountability, and societal contributions.

In summary, Company X's governance and societal responsibility systems collectively reflect an organization that not only complies with industry standards but also upholds a broader mission of ethical leadership and social contribution. By combining transparent financial oversight, regulatory compliance, and diversity-focused community initiatives, the company reinforces trust with stakeholders and promotes sustainable performance. Continued development of measurable impact indicators, such as supplier diversity spend, environmental performance, and workforce engagement metrics, will allow Company X to strengthen its governance maturity and demonstrate leadership excellence consistent with Baldrige's principles of high performance, accountability, and public stewardship.

Strategy

Strategy Development

According to the Baldrige framework, strategic objectives should flow directly from the organization's mission and vision to maintain alignment between long-term goals and operational actions (Moore et al., 2024). Senior leaders at Company X develop strategy primarily during quarterly and annual meetings where they evaluate financial metrics, operational performance, and customer feedback. These structured sessions enable the organization to establish performance targets and allocate resources in line with its mission of delivering efficient, customer-focused technical services.

Leaders employ SWOT analysis, financial ratio reviews, and GAAP principles as tools to guide decision-making and ensure strategies are grounded in both environmental scanning and financial discipline. In addition to formal planning processes, Company X encourages innovation and ideation from its workforce through open-door policies and one-on-one brainstorming meetings, allowing new ideas and potential solutions to be considered as part of the strategic formulation process. This collaborative approach demonstrates an organizational learning focus aligned with Baldrige principles, where leaders actively seek and incorporate feedback from internal stakeholders to improve strategy.

Strategy Implementation

While strategy development defines objectives, implementation translates these goals into operational execution (Balukja, 2024). At Company X, implementation occurs through monthly and weekly performance reviews, where leaders monitor progress toward strategic goals, evaluate what is working, and identify areas that require adjustment. These meetings facilitate real-time alignment between strategy and operations by ensuring that corrective actions are taken when financial or operational performance falls short of expectations.

Strategy is also implemented through customer engagement mechanisms, such as incorporating client-specific requirements into project planning and adapting practices to meet the unique needs of specific regions or markets. Furthermore, implementation is reinforced by the organization's quality management systems, which embed mission-driven performance standards into daily workflows.

Despite these strengths, implementation remains heavily dependent on senior leadership oversight. Strategy is not consistently cascaded to all workforce levels through formal documentation or cross-departmental ownership, mirroring the stated business problem: leaders often lack strategies that fully connect the organizational mission and vision to operational execution. Without broader workforce engagement and accountability, Company X risks gaps in sustainability and productivity.

Customers

Customer Expectations

Customer focus is a cornerstone of the Leadership Triad, requiring leaders to understand and anticipate customer needs, build strong relationships, and integrate customer requirements into operations and strategy (NIST, 2023). Meeting customer expectations is a central feature of Company X's operational model. Customer requirements are captured through several mechanisms, including direct frontline interactions, ISO-required surveys, and structured leadership reviews during planning cycles. These mechanisms provide both real-time and periodic insights into evolving customer needs.

Customer expectations are further clarified and reinforced during project kickoff meetings, where leaders and project managers align deliverables with client-specific standards. For example, Company X adapts implementation practices to account for regional variations in client requirements, such as AT&T's diverse market specifications. These practices reflect a proactive approach to customer alignment, ensuring that expectations are explicitly discussed and integrated into project planning before

execution. The organization also conducts root cause analyses and holds escalation meetings when expectations are not met. These corrective mechanisms ensure that problems are addressed quickly and transparently, which strengthens customer confidence in the company's ability to adapt and resolve challenges effectively.

From an ADLI perspective, Company X demonstrates a systematic approach to identifying customer expectations, consistent deployment across projects, and a clear learning cycle through corrective analysis. Integration, however, could be further enhanced by expanding expectation-setting processes beyond senior leadership to include more customer-facing staff, thereby reducing reliance on escalation pathways alone.

Customer Engagement

While setting expectations establishes the foundation for customer satisfaction, customer engagement ensures that relationships extend beyond transactional interactions. Company X fosters long-term engagement through project closeout surveys, archival documentation of project performance, and repeat business, all of which serve as indicators of customer trust and organizational sustainability. These practices demonstrate the organization's commitment to capturing the voice of the customer not only during project initiation but also after project completion.

Customer engagement is also reflected in Company X's ability to adapt and negotiate when customer requests are misaligned with operational or financial realities. For instance, the organization engaged in extensive discussions with a client regarding environmental insurance requirements, striking a balance between compliance and financial feasibility. This ability to balance customer needs with organizational

sustainability reflects Baldrige principles of both customer-centeredness and long-term strategic alignment.

From an ADLI perspective, Company X's customer engagement processes demonstrate a strong approach, grounded in ISO-driven standards and project management practices, with deployment across multiple customer touchpoints, and active learning through negotiation and feedback cycles. Integration is evident in how customer satisfaction data is incorporated into strategic and operational planning. However, consistent with the overarching business problem, customer engagement could be strengthened by developing more formalized metrics that link customer loyalty and retention to organizational sustainability, such as tracking customer lifetime value or net promoter scores. Without these measures, engagement remains primarily anecdotal, limiting the organization's ability to systematically connect vision and mission to long-term sustainability.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

The foundation of the Baldrige systems perspective is Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management. Information in this section is essential for effective management and leadership, supporting a fact-based, knowledge-driven, agile system to improve performance and competitiveness. By outlining processes for Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management, you strengthen the Leadership Triad and the Results Triad.

Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement of Organizational Performance

Measurement, analysis, and knowledge management are vital to the Baldrige framework because they guarantee that data and information support both strategic decision-making and daily operations. Company X's measurement processes focus on tracking financial performance, operational efficiency, and customer outcomes. On the financial side, leaders monitor weekly and monthly revenue, gross profit, and profitability ratios, which provide the foundation for strategic planning and operational decisions. These measures are supplemented by tracking contractor placements, billable hours, and individual staff's gross profit contributions, enabling a granular assessment of workforce productivity and project profitability.

Operational measurements are aligned with the mission of providing timely, high-quality services. Leaders assess whether projects are delivered on time and within budget, with project managers tasked to report deviations and corrective actions. Measurements extend beyond internal data to include ISO audit requirements, which serve as external validation of process consistency and compliance.

Analysis occurs at multiple organizational levels. Leaders conduct weekly leadership meetings to review financial and operational reports, compare outcomes to strategic goals, and identify areas for improvement. These analyses include ratio comparisons with prior quarters and years, enabling leaders to detect trends and variances. Additionally, monthly and quarterly meetings with broader leadership groups offer opportunities for reflection on the effectiveness of strategy and customer satisfaction outcomes. Root cause analyses are employed when problems emerge in

customer service or project delivery. For instance, escalation meetings are used to identify causes of project delays or customer dissatisfaction and to implement corrective actions. This analytical approach demonstrates a systematic process of identifying not only what happened but also why, reinforcing organizational learning and resilience.

Knowledge management at Company X centers on both formal documentation systems and informal leadership-driven practices. Formal processes include maintaining a repository of project closeout packages, audit records, and corrective action plans, which serve as organizational memory and support repeatability of successful practices.

Knowledge is also codified in ISO quality manuals, which define processes and provide standardized guidance for employees. Informally, leaders foster knowledge sharing through daily huddles, open-door communication, and one-on-one brainstorming sessions. These practices allow employees to surface insights, propose innovative ideas, and receive guidance on immediate challenges. However, consistent with the broader business problem, knowledge management remains heavily dependent on senior leaders, which creates a risk of uneven deployment and limited integration across all workforce levels.

Information and Knowledge Management

Information and knowledge management processes at Company X are designed to ensure that leaders and employees have reliable access to timely, accurate, and secure data while preserving organizational learning for future use. These processes are central to connecting mission and vision with operational execution and sustaining long-term effectiveness. First, information reliability and accuracy are maintained using project

management platforms, such as Tracker RMS, and financial reporting systems that standardize data collection and monitoring. Reports are generated weekly and validated by leadership, ensuring that strategic and operational decisions are based on current and accurate information.

To preserve organizational learning, Company X relies on formal knowledge sources, including project closeout packages, audit reports, and ISO quality manuals. These sources serve as an organizational memory, documenting project milestones, corrective actions, and customer outcomes. Leaders use these resources to reference past experiences, support corrective actions, and inform future project planning. Knowledge is also shared through informal mechanisms that promote accessibility and collaboration. Daily huddles, open-door communication, and one-on-one brainstorming sessions provide opportunities for employees to exchange insights, surface challenges, and propose innovative ideas in real-time.

In addition, Company X promotes knowledge retention and continuity by maintaining a “hardened core” of project managers rather than relying heavily on external consultants. This approach preserves tacit knowledge of company culture, processes, and mission alignment, thereby reducing the risk of knowledge loss and supporting operational stability. Finally, security and compliance are reinforced through ISO certification, which requires the maintenance of secure documentation and audit trails. These measures ensure that sensitive information is protected while also remaining accessible for compliance verification and external audits.

Workforce

Workforce Environment

The Baldrige excellence framework emphasizes that organizations must develop systematic approaches for ensuring a capable workforce environment while fostering engagement that aligns with mission, vision, and strategy (NIST, 2023). For Company X, a small but growing organization, workforce systems are especially critical given the reliance on a lean staff structure, project-based contractors, and the need to adapt quickly to shifting customer demands. Insights from leadership interviews highlight both strengths and challenges in building a workforce capable of supporting long-term sustainability.

Company X operates with a lean core of employees, including senior leadership, finance and operations managers, and a small administrative staff, supported by contractors deployed as project needs arise. Leaders acknowledge that staffing levels fluctuate based on contracts, creating pressure on both operational continuity and financial planning. Project managers and supervisors ensure that field staff align with customer expectations, while finance leaders monitor payroll and capacity weekly to ensure adequate resources are available to meet demand.

Workforce Engagement

Leaders at Company X emphasize open communication as a primary engagement strategy, using open-door policies, frequent check-ins, and structured weekly meetings to surface concerns, share ideas, and align on metrics. Engagement is further supported by breaking down large strategic objectives into realistic, actionable steps, such as weekly

hiring or recruiting targets, which prevent overwhelm while maintaining alignment with broader organizational goals. This practice helps translate vision into daily execution, addressing the challenge of connecting mission and strategy to operations. Retention is reinforced by limiting reliance on external consultants and investing in a core group of employees, signaling value to staff and preserving organizational knowledge. Leaders also motivate employees by providing growth opportunities, encouraging them to envision future leadership roles as the company expands. Workforce development occurs primarily through on-the-job learning and ISO compliance activities, where employees participate in audits, corrective action planning, and financial monitoring. These practices build technical competence, foster ownership of outcomes, and support continuous adaptation, particularly as staff gain experience across diverse client projects and technical domains.

Operations

Work Processes

Company X's primary work processes center on delivering telecommunications and technical consulting projects to customers. These projects begin with contract acquisition and planning, where leaders conduct kickoff meetings to integrate customer requirements, timelines, and risk considerations into the operational plan. Processes are supported by Tracker RMS, a project management system used to monitor contractor placements, billable hours, and profitability contributions, enabling leaders to ensure appropriate staffing and financial oversight. Leaders described this system as crucial for aligning operational resources with client demand while also maintaining margins.

Execution processes are standardized through ISO quality management systems, which require the documentation of milestones, tracking of corrective actions, and completion of project closeout packages. Leaders noted that closeout documentation provides an archival record for future reference, reinforcing organizational learning and ensuring consistency in delivery. Audit reviews are conducted to assess compliance, identify areas of improvement, and ensure corrective measures are implemented.

Operational Effectiveness

Operational effectiveness is achieved through a combination of financial discipline and process accountability. Leaders monitor performance by reviewing profit and loss statements, contractor utilization, and project timelines during monthly and quarterly reviews. Payroll and financial systems are tightly integrated with operational decisions, ensuring that staffing levels and expenses are aligned with contract revenues. Leaders emphasized that these systems provide transparency and accountability, helping to reduce risks of overspending or misalignment between project resources and budgets.

Efficiency is also enhanced by root cause analysis and escalation meetings when project issues arise. Leaders described using these mechanisms to address problems such as staffing gaps, customer dissatisfaction, or compliance challenges in real time. This responsiveness not only improves operations but also strengthens customer trust.

Project Results

Product and Process Results

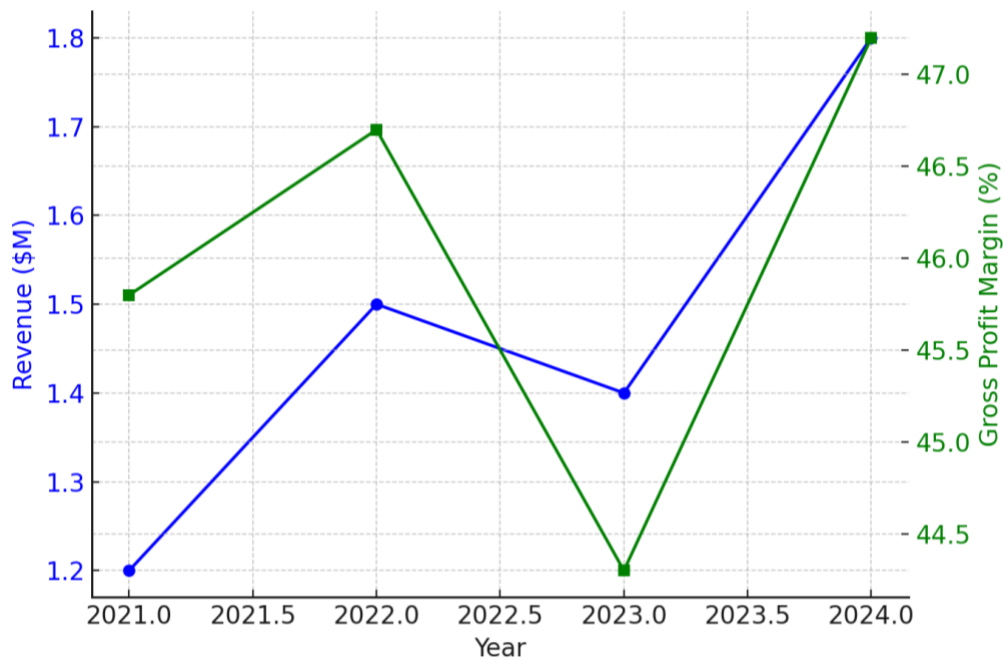
Product and process results provide evidence of how well Company X executes its operational strategies to deliver value to customers and achieve financial

sustainability. Within the Baldrige Excellence Framework, these results reflect the outcomes of core work processes and demonstrate alignment between operations, customer requirements, and long-term goals (NIST, 2023). For Company X, product and process performance can be assessed through revenue generation, gross profit margins, and project-based income, which together highlight both operational strengths and challenges, particularly during periods of slowdown.

Figure 1 presents revenue and gross profit margin performance from 2021 to 2024. Revenue showed steady growth between 2021 and 2022, reaching \$1.5 million, before declining in 2023. Gross profit margin mirrored this decline, dipping to its lowest point in 2023 before rebounding in 2024.

Figure 1

Company X Financial Results: Revenue and Gross Profit Margin (2021–2024)

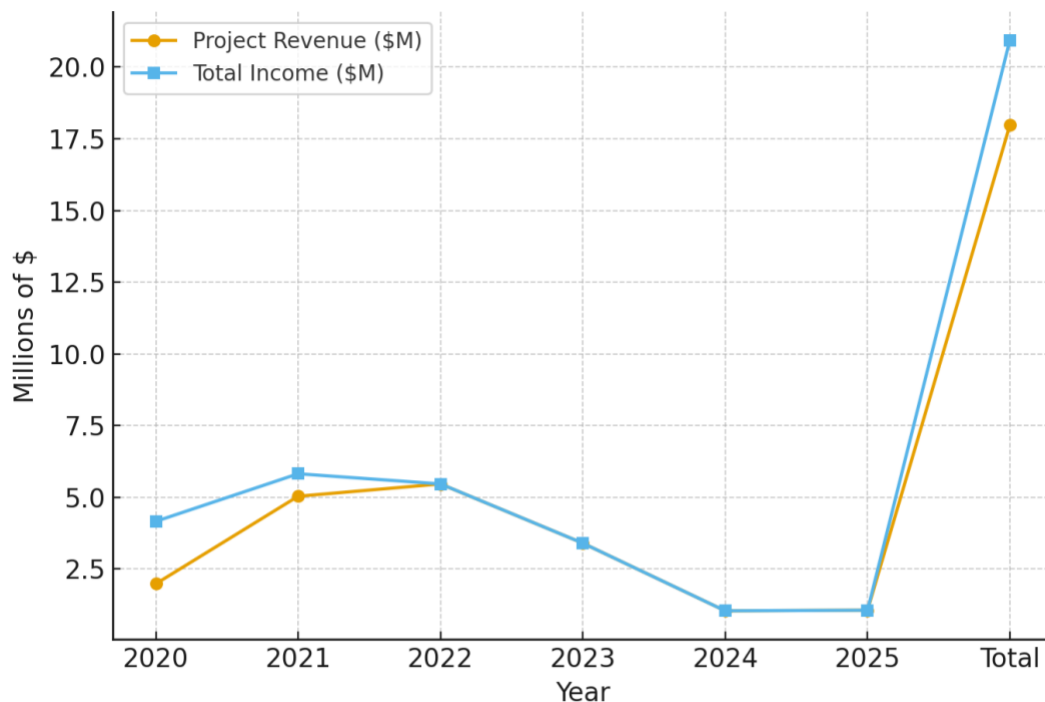


Note. This dual-axis chart displays Company X’s financial performance over four years. Revenue, shown in millions of dollars (left axis), increased from 2021 to 2022, declined in 2023, and recovered in 2024. The gross profit margin, shown as a percentage (right axis), followed a similar pattern, with its lowest point occurring in 2023.

Similarly, Figure 2 compares project revenue and total income between 2020 and 2025. Results indicate consistent growth from 2020 to 2022, followed by a downturn from 2023 to 2024. A recovery is projected in 2025, suggesting that operational adjustments and new contracts have positioned the company for renewed growth.

Figure 2

Company X Quality Results: Project Revenue Versus Total Income (2020–2025)



Note. This chart compares project revenue and total income, shown in millions of dollars, over six years. Both revenue streams grew steadily between 2020 and 2022, declined in 2023–2024, and are projected to recover in 2025.

These trends illustrated the tangible impact of the business slowdown on operations and financial outcomes. The decline in 2023 highlights challenges such as staffing shortages, customer renegotiations, and constrained workforce capacity, which limited the organization’s ability to meet customer demand while maintaining profitability. The recovery in 2024–2025 demonstrated resilience and adaptability, driven by shifts toward higher-value technical roles, adjustments in hiring practices, and proactive renegotiation of customer contracts. These results also underscore the interconnectedness of workforce, customer, and financial categories: workforce challenges in capacity directly influenced operational results, while customer demands required strategic renegotiations to preserve margin stability.

Company X demonstrated a systematic approach to tracking revenue and profitability, deploying results across projects, and learning from downturns to implement corrective actions. Integration is evident in the alignment of financial monitoring with workforce planning and customer engagement strategies. However, consistent with the broader business problem, the reliance on leadership-driven adjustments indicates that processes are not yet fully cascaded across the workforce. Strengthening the ability to connect mission and vision to operational execution through formalized systems will be essential to sustaining results over the long term.

Customer Results

Customer results reflect how effectively Company X manages client acquisition, retention, and satisfaction, all of which are central to the Baldrige excellence framework's focus on customer engagement and relationship management. Analysis of project contract trends and market expansion from 2020 through mid-2025 provides insight into how the company has balanced growth, loyalty, and geographic reach during periods of both expansion and slowdown.

Between 2020 and 2023, Company X demonstrated consistent growth in total project contracts, increasing from 15 in 2020 to a peak of 26 in 2023 (see Figure 3). This upward trend indicates successful client diversification and strong business development strategies. However, in 2024, total projects declined sharply to nine, a reduction of approximately 65%, reflecting the effects of market fluctuations and workforce constraints. By mid-2025, the company appeared to be regaining momentum, securing 10 projects by June, which suggests early signs of recovery if the trajectory continues through the remainder of the year.

Further evidence of market evolution is illustrated in Figure 4, which tracks new state entries, multi-state contracts, and the percentage of revenue derived from repeat customers. The data shows significant market expansion from 2020 through 2022, during which the company entered up to five new states and secured multi-state contracts covering as many as 17 states per client. The proportion of revenue from repeat customers decreased from 99% in 2020 to 63% in 2022, signaling the company's transition from localized operations to broader multi-state engagements. Although the

percentage of revenue from repeat clients improved slightly in 2023, it fell to 17% in 2024 before rebounding to 29% by mid-2025.

The combined trends demonstrate both strength and vulnerability in Company X's customer management processes. The consistent acquisition of new business across multiple years underscores a strong market reputation and effective business development strategies. The dominance of new contracts over repeat ones between 2021 and 2023 (see Figure 3) reflects a deliberate strategy to expand into new markets and diversify revenue streams. However, the decline in repeat-customer revenue (see Figure 4) reveals challenges in sustaining long-term customer relationships while scaling geographically. This dynamic suggests that rapid expansion outpaced the company's ability to maintain consistent engagement with existing clients, particularly during the slowdown period in 2024.

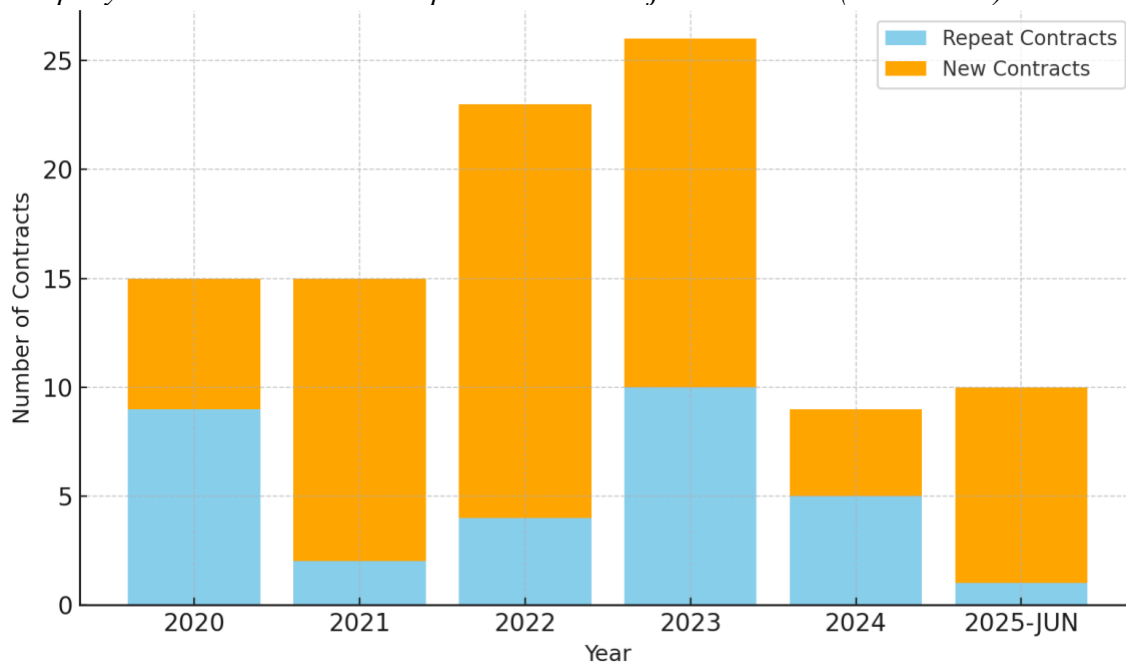
Despite these fluctuations, the early 2025 data indicate a positive trajectory. The company's rebound in both project activity and repeat-customer revenue suggests that operational adjustments—such as refocusing on technical contracts, optimizing workforce capacity, and reinforcing client communication—are beginning to yield results. These shifts align with leadership's emphasis on continuous learning and strategic responsiveness, demonstrating adaptability and a renewed focus on customer relationship sustainability.

From a Baldrige perspective, Company X's customer results highlight both operational agility and opportunities for deeper integration between customer relationship management, workforce planning, and strategic execution. The company has shown

strong performance in expanding its market presence and attracting new clients, but sustained success will depend on strengthening systems that promote long-term customer loyalty and engagement. The combined data from Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that while the organization has achieved growth through diversification, its next phase of maturity will rely on stabilizing repeat business and leveraging its expanding geographic reach to ensure enduring customer relationships and profitability.

Figure 3

Company X Customer Results: Repeat vs. New Project Contracts (2020–2025)

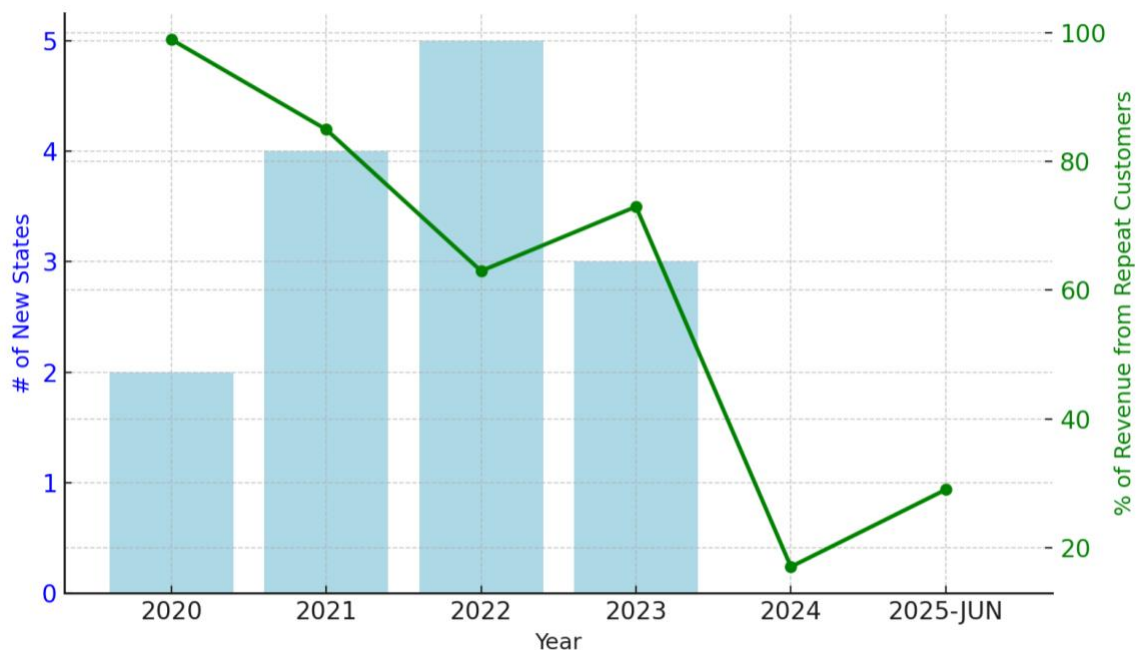


Note. This stacked bar chart illustrates the number of project contracts secured by Company X from 2020 through June 2025, segmented by repeat and new customers. The data reveal a steady increase in total contracts through 2023, followed by a sharp decline in 2024 and early signs of recovery in 2025.

New customer contracts consistently outpaced repeat contracts, highlighting the company’s emphasis on expanding its market presence and acquiring new business while continuing to rebuild repeat client relationships.

Figure 4

Company X Customer Results: Market Expansion and Repeat Revenue Trends (2020–2025)



Workforce Results

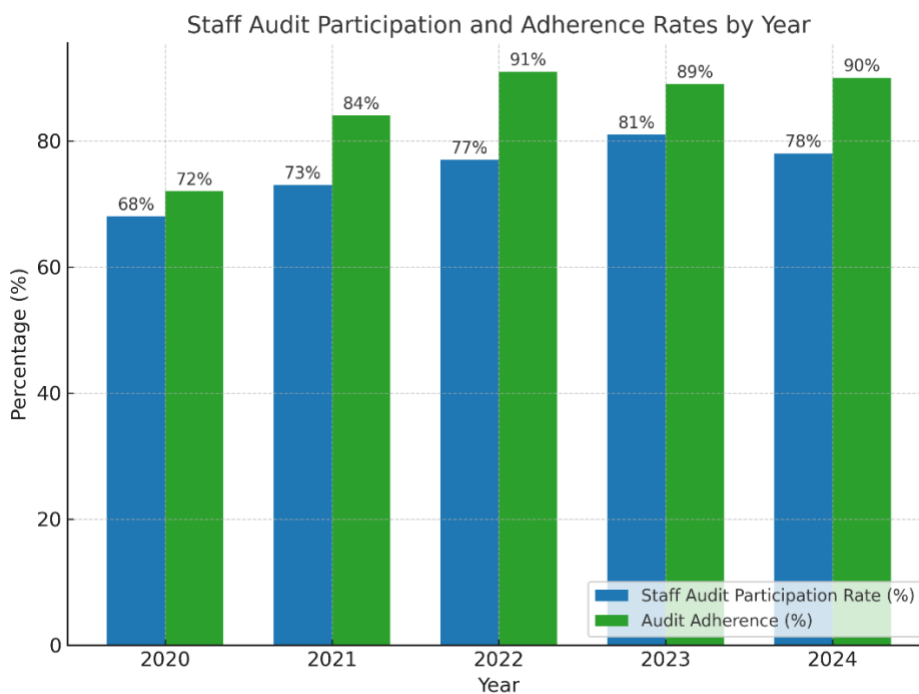
Company X’s workforce results demonstrate deliberate, data-informed leadership strategies that align employee engagement, performance, and quality compliance with the organization’s mission and operational objectives. These results reflect the company’s ability to sustain productivity and ISO/TL 9000 adherence through workforce

optimization and targeted engagement initiatives, illustrating how leaders effectively connect vision and mission to daily execution and long-term sustainability.

Workforce performance data show consistent improvements in employee engagement and process compliance from 2020 to 2024. As illustrated in Figure 5, staff audit participation increased from 68% in 2020 to 81% in 2023, while audit adherence rose from 72% to 89% over the same period. These trends indicate that as workforce participation in ISO/TL 9000 audits increased, operational reliability strengthened. The metrics reflect a strong alignment between workforce engagement and quality outcomes, consistent with Baldrige Category 7.3's focus on workforce capability, engagement, and development.

Figure 5

Staff Audit Participation vs. Audit Adherence (2020-2024)



Note. Figure 5 illustrates year-over-year workforce participation in internal ISO/TL 9000 audits and adherence to audit procedures, aligned with Baldrige Category 7.3 (BPEP, 2023).

The trend demonstrates that as employee participation increased from 68% in 2020 to 81% in 2023, adherence rates improved from 72% to 89%, reflecting a positive relationship between workforce engagement and process reliability. Both metrics exceeded the organizational benchmark of 80% in 2023 and 2024, highlighting the organization's culture of accountability and continuous improvement (BPEP, 2023).

Additionally, workforce retention trends from 2021 to 2025 show that strategic rightsizing preserved efficiency and improved overall workforce quality. Following a period of organizational contraction, Company X retained a smaller but more capable team of seven employees by 2025, down from 19 in 2021. The workforce reduction was not reactive downsizing but a strategic effort to streamline the workforce, cut overhead, and retain employees who could perform multiple roles effectively while maintaining compliance and productivity.

Table 1

Workforce Retention Trends, 2021-2025

Year	Retained Employees	Total Employees	Retention Rate (%)
2021	0	19	0
2022	2	17	12
2023	6	11	55
2024	1	10	10

2025	3	7	43
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Together, the audit participation, adherence, and retention results indicate that Company X has developed a resilient, mission-aligned workforce capable of maintaining high-quality performance during periods of restructuring. The upward trends in audit participation and adherence from 2020 to 2023 show that employee engagement in compliance processes directly contributed to improved consistency and quality outcomes. The slight dip in 2024 participation corresponds with market and staffing shifts but did not reduce adherence levels, which remained at or above 90%, demonstrating that quality behaviors have become embedded in organizational culture.

The retention data complement this finding by illustrating how leadership strategically optimized workforce capacity without compromising operational effectiveness. Company X intentionally “went lean” to improve efficiency, reduce redundancy, and retain high-performing staff with strong institutional knowledge. This shift fostered agility, enabling employees to adapt to changing project demands while sustaining ISO/TL 9000 compliance and customer satisfaction. The organization’s ability to maintain performance with a smaller workforce highlights the effectiveness of its leadership and governance systems in aligning human capital with strategic priorities.

The workforce results underscore how strategic alignment between leadership, workforce management, and quality systems supports operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Company X’s ability to retain a core, cross-trained workforce while sustaining high audit adherence exemplifies Baldrige’s principle that engaged, capable

employees are essential drivers of performance excellence. These outcomes also address the study's central business problem that some leaders lack strategies to connect vision and mission to operational execution by showing that when leaders deliberately link workforce engagement, training, and process accountability to strategic goals, the result is sustainable performance and organizational resilience.

Viewed collectively, Table 1 and Figure 5 illustrate a compelling relationship between workforce optimization and performance. Even as total headcount declined from 19 employees in 2021 to 7 in 2025, audit participation and adherence remained strong, with adherence surpassing 89% by 2023 and holding above the organizational benchmark in 2024. This pattern confirms that workforce reductions were strategically implemented to preserve quality rather than imposed reactively. Employees who remained through this transition developed deeper process ownership and accountability, reinforcing Company X's culture of continuous improvement.

Reflections from leadership highlight that strategic resizing allowed the organization to prioritize quality over quantity, ensuring that retained employees were not only technically skilled but also aligned with the organization's mission and core values. This outcome aligns with the BEF's emphasis on learning and integration, demonstrating that even a lean workforce can achieve operational excellence when guided by purpose, communication, and data-driven leadership (BPEP, 2023).

Leadership and Governance Results

Leadership and governance results reflect how Company X's senior leaders evaluate organizational performance, ensure ethical governance, and foster accountability

across strategic, financial, and operational systems. The Baldrige Excellence Framework emphasizes that effective leadership systems integrate performance review, risk management, and strategic analysis to support long-term sustainability (BPEP, 2023).

A review of leadership interviews and operational data indicates that Company X engages in continuous reflection on organizational strengths, challenges, and opportunities. This assessment culminates in a comprehensive SWOT analysis developed through structured leadership discussions, ISO audit findings, and performance data from 2020–2025 (see Table 2). The analysis reflects the leadership team’s awareness of both internal capabilities and external market dynamics, serving as a foundational governance tool for decision-making.

Figure 6

Company X SWOT Analysis on Leadership Interviews and Organizational Data (2020–2025)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership alignment with mission and vision supported by transparent communication and consistent financial oversight. • Proven expertise in large-scale technical contracting and project management, including multi-state service delivery. • Robust quality control through ISO/TL 9000 certification and compliance-driven processes that ensure reliability and data integrity. • High responsiveness to customer feedback through escalation reviews and post-project analyses that support continuous improvement. • Financial and operational adaptability reflected in 2025 rebound following a 2024 market slowdown, showing organizational resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited formalization of strategic communication and cascading of goals beyond senior leadership, leading to variable understanding at operational levels. • Overreliance on a core group of experienced project managers, creating vulnerability in knowledge transfer and succession planning. • Inconsistent workforce development framework, with informal learning but limited structured training or leadership pipelines. • Reactive customer retention efforts, with limited use of systematic data analytics for predicting customer loyalty trends. • Gaps in connecting long-term strategy to measurable workforce and customer outcomes.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand strategic alignment processes to include cross-departmental scorecards and documented performance indicators to strengthen accountability and integration (BPEP, 2023). • Develop formalized knowledge management and mentorship programs to preserve institutional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market volatility and client dependency on large national accounts, which may affect contract stability and cash flow. • Increased competition from firms adopting advanced digital infrastructure and AI-based project management systems.

<p>expertise and support leadership succession.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce predictive analytics for customer retention and project forecasting to align financial and customer data trends. • Diversify market offerings to stabilize revenue streams beyond major telecom clients. • Enhance employee development programs and professional certification pathways to strengthen engagement and retention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce shortages and limited recruitment pipelines for specialized technical roles. • Regulatory changes and compliance risks associated with multi-state contracts. • Potential erosion of customer loyalty due to resource constraints and limited post-project engagement.
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Note. SWOT analysis based on leadership interviews, ISO/TL 9000 compliance findings, and internal organizational performance data (2020–2025).

The analysis indicates that the leadership team is both introspective and proactive in identifying performance gaps. The organization’s strengths, particularly in governance transparency, ISO-driven compliance, and adaptive leadership, demonstrate a mature Approach and effective Deployment consistent with the Baldrige ADLI evaluation method (BPEP, 2023). However, weaknesses such as inconsistent strategic communication and limited knowledge transfer represent missed opportunities in the Learning and Integration dimensions. These challenges, if addressed through structured knowledge management and formalized workforce development programs, could significantly enhance governance maturity.

Moreover, the leadership team’s willingness to critically assess threats, such as market volatility and workforce shortages, demonstrates risk-awareness and a commitment to organizational sustainability. These governance practices align with research by Crosby and Ghanbarpour (2023), emphasized that performance excellence depends on leaders’ ability to link strategic foresight with operational execution. Leadership’s responsiveness to financial fluctuations and market pressures in 2024 further demonstrates adaptive governance, a hallmark of high-performing organizations. (BPEP, 2023).

Overall, Company X's leadership and governance results demonstrated a solid foundation of ethical stewardship, transparency, and strategic responsiveness. Leaders actively engaged in structured reflection, using tools such as SWOT analysis to align governance practices with organizational priorities and external realities. While areas for improvement remain in communication cascading, workforce succession, and data-driven customer retention, the organization's capacity for self-assessment and learning reflects a governance system consistent with Baldrige principles of excellence and accountability. Continued refinement of leadership systems will further strengthen Company X's ability to ensure operational effectiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability.

Financial and Market Results

Financial and market results demonstrate that Company X's effectively achieving sustainable performance outcomes aligned with its mission and strategy. Within the Baldrige excellence framework, these results reflect how the organization translates strategic intent into measurable outcomes in financial viability, market growth, and customer value creation. Data across Table 2 and Figures 1 through 4 collectively illustrate the company's financial trajectory from 2020 through mid-2025, revealing patterns of growth, contraction, and recovery that correspond to market shifts, workforce capacity, and customer engagement strategies.

Between 2020 and 2023, Company X achieved consistent financial growth, marked by increasing revenue and stable gross profit margins (see Table 2). During this period, revenue rose steadily from \$1.2 million in 2020 to \$1.8 million in 2023, indicating strong business development performance and client diversification. However,

in 2024, revenue declined sharply to \$1.0 million, reflecting a temporary business slowdown linked to workforce capacity constraints and macroeconomic factors. Early 2025 data suggest recovery, as revenue rebounded to \$1.8 million by midyear.

Table 3 integrated financial performance with project activity and market indicators, presenting a holistic view of the company's results over time. The data show that total project contracts increased from 15 in 2020 to 26 in 2023 before dropping to nine in 2024 and recovering to 10 by mid-2025. The proportion of revenue from repeat customers declined from 99% in 2020 to 63% in 2022, indicating a strategic shift toward new market expansion. This was accompanied by steady growth in multi-state contracts and new state entries, peaking between 2021 and 2022 when the company entered up to five new states and secured clients with operations across as many as 17 states. These findings highlight the company's ability to expand geographically while adapting to changing customer and market demands.

Figure 7*Company X Financial and Market Results Summary*

Year	Revenue (\$M)	Gross Profit Margin (%)	Project Contracts (Total)	New Contracts	Repeat Contracts	% of Revenue from Repeat Customers	New States Entered	Multi-State Contracts (Count)
2020	1.2	45.9	15	6	9	99	2	2 (2- and 3-state clients)
2021	1.5	46.8	15	13	2	85	4	2 (9- and 3-state clients)
2022	1.4	44.4	23	19	4	63	5	1 (17-state client)
2023	1.8	47.1	26	16	10	73	3	2 (18- and 2-state clients)
2024	1.0	—	9	4	5	17	0	2 (4- and 2-state clients)
2025 (Jun)	1.8	—	10	9	1	29	0	2 (2- and 5-state clients)

Note. Revenue and margin figures are in millions and percentages, respectively. Data synthesized from internal financial reports, leadership interviews, and project management records (2020–2025).

The financial and market trends summarized in Table 2 and illustrated in Figures 1 through 4 reveal both agility and vulnerability in Company X’s performance. The consistent growth in new contracts and revenue through 2023 reflects effective business development and customer acquisition strategies. However, the decline in both total contracts and repeat-customer revenue in 2024 indicates that rapid expansion may have exceeded operational and relational capacity. The reduced percentage of revenue from repeat customers underscores a shift toward short-term growth rather than sustained customer retention, creating financial volatility when market conditions tighten.

The rebound in 2025 demonstrates organizational learning consistent with the ADLI dimensions of the Baldrige criteria. Leadership’s corrective actions, refocusing on

technical service delivery, strengthening customer communication, and optimizing internal staffing, produced measurable improvements in both financial outcomes and customer engagement. These patterns confirm that Company X effectively applied lessons learned to realign its strategy, reinforcing the interdependence between financial health, market reach, and workforce performance.

From a Baldrige perspective, Company X's financial and market results reflect a maturing organization transitioning from growth to stabilization. The integration of financial, customer, and market metrics (Table 2) demonstrates the organization's capability to analyze and respond to changing conditions systematically. Figures 1 through 4 reinforce that sustainable success will depend on balancing expansion with long-term relationship management and operational alignment. Moving forward, maintaining consistent revenue streams and improving repeat-customer profitability will be critical to ensuring sustained financial stability and organizational resilience.

Key Themes Findings

Process Strengths

Company X exhibits multiple process strengths across leadership, strategy, customer focus, knowledge management, workforce, and operations that align with the Baldrige Excellence Framework's emphasis on integrated performance systems (BPEP, 2023). The organization demonstrates an intentional, data-driven approach to strategic planning, operational execution, and continuous learning that supports organizational sustainability and stakeholder value.

Leadership practices at Company X show strong alignment between mission, vision, and daily operations. Leaders conduct structured quarterly and annual meetings to review performance outcomes, integrating financial data, customer feedback, and workforce metrics into decision-making. This structured process reflects the Baldrige leadership system principle of connecting governance and strategy with ethical, transparent communication (Westover, 2025). The company also demonstrates consistent strategy development using SWOT analyses and financial ratio reviews, ensuring that both internal performance indicators and market realities inform planning.

Customer engagement is strengthened by ISO-required surveys, closeout reviews, and root-cause analyses that capture the voice of the customer. These feedback loops are integrated into strategy revisions, supporting a learning organization mindset. The organization's knowledge management practices reinforce reliability and accessibility of information through tools such as Tracker RMS, audit documentation, and corrective-action tracking systems. These processes meet Baldrige's knowledge management criteria, which stress information reliability, accuracy, and organizational learning as the foundation of sustainable performance (BPEP, 2023).

Workforce engagement processes further demonstrate organizational strength. Leaders foster open communication through regular one-on-one check-ins, team huddles, and an open-door policy that encourages collaboration and accountability. This approach aligns with Baldrige's People category by emphasizing workforce capability and engagement as a driver of productivity and innovation (Crosby & Ghanbarpour, 2023). Operational efficiency is maintained through standardized project management processes

and ISO/TL 9000 audits, which ensure compliance and promote continuous improvement.

These process strengths reveal a well-integrated management system where leadership, workforce, and operations are strategically aligned. The use of data for decision-making and feedback-based improvement demonstrates maturity in the Approach and Learning dimensions of the Baldrige ADLI evaluation method (BPEP, 2023). Leadership's transparency and strategic planning discipline foster trust and engagement across the organization, while systematic customer feedback integration enhances adaptability to market changes. Furthermore, the combination of structured knowledge systems and workforce engagement reinforces cross-functional collaboration, an essential component of the Integration dimension of performance excellence.

Collectively, these strengths also address the central business problem identified in this study: that many business leaders lack strategies to connect organizational vision and mission to operational execution for effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability. Company X's practices demonstrate how structured planning, data-informed decision-making, and cross-departmental integration can translate strategic intent into measurable outcomes.

Overall, Company X's process strengths provide compelling evidence of an evolving performance system consistent with Baldrige principles. Leadership's alignment with mission and strategy, robust measurement systems, engaged workforce, and disciplined operations collectively enable the organization to learn, adapt, and sustain competitive advantage. These findings suggest that the company's management

framework embodies the Baldrige philosophy of integrated excellence, in which leadership commitment, strategic alignment, and stakeholder engagement reinforce long-term organizational success.

Process Opportunities

While Company X demonstrates multiple process strengths aligned with the Baldrige Excellence Framework, opportunities remain to enhance the integration, documentation, and consistency of its management systems. The Baldrige framework emphasizes that high-performing organizations must not only design effective processes but also ensure systematic deployment, organization-wide learning, and alignment across strategic, operational, and workforce dimensions (BPEP, 2023). The analysis of Company X's leadership interviews and operational practices revealed several key areas for improvement that, if addressed, could strengthen long-term sustainability and performance maturity.

One significant opportunity is the formalization and cascading of strategy across all organizational levels. Although leadership employs quarterly and annual planning cycles, the translation of strategic goals into department-level and individual performance metrics is inconsistent. This gap creates variability in how strategy is operationalized, a common challenge in growing organizations where leaders focus on execution rather than communication and alignment (Westover, 2025). Similarly, while the company has well-defined short-term financial and operational targets, it lacks documented mechanisms to connect these with long-term sustainability objectives, such as customer retention or workforce development.

A second area of opportunity involves systematic documentation and knowledge transfer. Interviews revealed that much of Company X's institutional knowledge resides within a core group of long-tenured project managers. Although this continuity preserves organizational culture, it increases the risk of knowledge loss and process inconsistency if key individuals depart. Baldrige criteria emphasize the importance of knowledge management systems that ensure information reliability, accessibility, and retention across leadership transitions (BPEP, 2023). The organization's reliance on informal communication, though effective for collaboration, could be strengthened by formalizing procedures for data sharing, audit documentation, and process standardization.

Another improvement opportunity pertains to customer relationship management and data-driven retention strategies. While the organization maintains strong customer engagement during project execution, post-project relationship tracking is limited. The absence of structured mechanisms to analyze repeat-customer patterns and satisfaction metrics limits leaders' ability to forecast customer loyalty trends or develop targeted re-engagement initiatives. This aligns with findings in the performance excellence literature, which emphasize the need for longitudinal customer satisfaction measurement as a predictor of sustainability (Crosby & Ghanbarpour, 2023).

Finally, workforce capability development represents a critical improvement area. Although employees benefit from informal mentorship and exposure to ISO compliance processes, the organization lacks a formalized workforce development plan that identifies training needs, performance outcomes, and succession readiness. This gap limits the

integration of learning across departments and may hinder the consistent application of best practices, especially during periods of growth or restructuring.

The opportunities identified highlight that Company X is transitioning from a performance-driven organization to a systems-managed enterprise, a key maturity stage within the Baldrige framework. Addressing these gaps will require strengthening the Deployment and Integration dimensions of the ADLI evaluation system. The absence of documented processes for cascading strategy, capturing knowledge, and measuring long-term customer outcomes limits organization-wide learning and adaptability. By establishing formalized feedback loops, leadership can ensure that strategic intent is consistently executed at every level, enhancing cross-functional alignment and sustainability.

Moreover, formalizing workforce and customer data systems will improve predictive analytics and performance measurement, enabling leaders to make more informed decisions. As Westover (2025) notes, organizational excellence is achieved when leadership ensures that mission, vision, and strategy are not only articulated but embedded into all operational processes. Thus, improving process discipline through documentation, communication, and integration of workforce learning would elevate Company X's overall performance maturity from responsive to proactive.

From a Baldrige perspective, these opportunities for improvement present pivotal areas for advancing organizational excellence. By formalizing strategic alignment, strengthening knowledge management, and enhancing customer and workforce development systems, Company X can move toward a fully integrated performance

model. These improvements will allow leadership to connect strategic intent to operational execution better, aligning directly with the organization's broader challenge of ensuring long-term effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability. Addressing these opportunities will position Company X to achieve higher performance maturity and competitive resilience consistent with Baldrige's principles of continuous improvement and learning.

Results Strengths

Company X demonstrates multiple areas of organizational strength across financial, customer, workforce, operational, and governance results. These outcomes reflect a consistent leadership focus on strategic alignment, quality management, and continuous improvement consistent with the BEF principles of systems integration and data-informed decision-making (BPEP, 2023). Financially, Company X maintained stable profit margins and year-over-year revenue growth through 2023, indicating disciplined fiscal oversight and market competitiveness. Despite a temporary contraction in 2024, early 2025 data suggest a strong recovery, demonstrating organizational resilience and adaptability to market fluctuations. Gross profit and revenue ratios remained healthy through the period, supported by cost control, project utilization management, and resource optimization.

Customer results reinforce this strength. The organization has consistently demonstrated high client satisfaction and loyalty, evidenced by repeat business rates ranging from 63% to 99% and sustained contract renewals over multiple years. The consistent acquisition of new customers, ranging from 6 to 19 annually between 2020 and

2023, demonstrates effective market diversification and brand credibility. Customer engagement processes, including ISO-mandated surveys, project kick-off meetings, and close-out evaluations, have contributed to a strong feedback loop that enables timely problem resolution and continuous improvement. The company's ability to analyze customer data and adapt to performance feedback reflects maturity in both customer focus and operational responsiveness.

Workforce results further support the organization's operational strength. Leadership interviews revealed a culture of transparency, open communication, and recognition, which fosters high engagement and retention. Employees are encouraged to participate in quality improvement activities, ISO audits, and corrective action planning, thereby strengthening ownership and alignment with organizational goals. Workforce development occurs through mentorship, hands-on technical learning, and exposure to complex multi-state contracts, allowing staff to expand technical proficiency and leadership capacity. The deliberate retention of a "hardened core" of project managers preserves institutional knowledge, ensuring continuity, quality, and customer confidence.

Operational and process results reveal consistent performance control through ISO/TL 9000 audits, with minimal nonconformities and timely closure of corrective actions. These outcomes illustrate a mature process discipline rooted in measurement, documentation, and verification. The integration of Tracker RMS for project management, GAAP-based financial systems, and customer feedback mechanisms reflects a well-developed approach to data management and process integration. Collectively, these systems ensure that decisions are evidence-based and outcomes are

measurable. Governance results reinforce ethical and regulatory integrity through transparent financial reporting, vendor accountability, and quality compliance. Moreover, the company's status as a certified minority- and veteran-owned enterprise demonstrates a broader societal commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These strengths, collectively, illustrate a performance system that is both disciplined and adaptable, advancing the organization toward higher levels of maturity under the Baldrige Levels, Trends, Comparisons, and Integration (LeTCI) evaluation framework.

Results Opportunities

Although Company X demonstrates strong results across multiple performance dimensions, opportunities exist to strengthen measurement maturity, expand comparative benchmarking, and enhance integration of workforce and customer metrics into strategic decision-making. The BEF emphasizes that high-performing organizations not only maintain strong performance levels but also demonstrate sustained positive trends, external comparisons, and systematic learning (BPEP, 2023). Financially, while the organization shows consistent growth through 2023 and early signs of recovery in 2025, the 2024 downturn reveals a need for more proactive forecasting and scenario-planning tools. Nayak (2025) notes that developing predictive analytics and diversifying revenue sources beyond key national accounts would mitigate future volatility and strengthen financial resilience. In addition, establishing benchmarking data against peer organizations in the telecommunications and infrastructure industries would allow leadership to assess performance relative to best-in-class competitors and guide strategic investments.

Customer results could be enhanced through more structured measurement systems that quantify loyalty and long-term satisfaction beyond project-based surveys. Implementing metrics such as Net Promoter Scores (NPS) or American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), longitudinal satisfaction tracking, and customer-retention indices would provide greater insight into relationship strength and market positioning (Weinstein, 2024). Likewise, post-project engagement could be formalized into an ongoing customer partnership model that extends beyond project closeout to include performance reviews and value-added service recommendations.

In the workforce category, while qualitative evidence from leadership interviews indicates strong engagement, retention, and communication, there is an opportunity to develop more robust quantitative tracking of workforce trends. Systematically measuring metrics such as turnover rate, training hours per employee, and engagement index scores would allow Company X to demonstrate performance improvements over time. Establishing a formalized workforce development plan, including leadership pipelines, cross-training programs, and professional certifications, would further align human capital management with strategic growth objectives. Additionally, implementing periodic employee climate surveys and performance dashboards could provide actionable data to leadership and reinforce workforce integration within the broader organizational strategy.

Operationally, although ISO/TL 9000 audits demonstrate compliance, the organization would benefit from developing process-performance dashboards that visualize cycle time, schedule adherence, and cost variance across business units. This

would enhance transparency and support real-time decision-making. Expanding benchmarking data against industry process standards would also provide comparative insights for operational improvement. From a governance perspective, establishing quantifiable metrics such as audit-closure timeliness, policy-adherence rates, and risk-assessment completion would strengthen accountability. Similarly, in the area of societal responsibility, the company could develop performance indicators to track supplier diversity spend, reductions in environmental impact, and community engagement outcomes.

Overall, these opportunities highlight the organization's transition from data-driven management to analytics-based performance excellence. By formalizing trend tracking, establishing comparative benchmarks, and integrating workforce, customer, and governance metrics into strategic planning, Company X can strengthen its position as a learning organization and further advance on the Baldrige maturity continuum. These enhancements will not only improve transparency and accountability but also reinforce the company's ability to sustain long-term performance and operational effectiveness through evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

Business Recommendations for Professional Practice

The findings from this study offer practical strategies that business leaders can apply to address the problem of misalignment between organizational vision and mission and operational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability. The evidence from Company X demonstrates that when leaders consistently align strategic goals with measurable outcomes, the organization achieves greater operational stability and

engagement. Business leaders can apply these insights by developing management systems that integrate vision and mission into performance expectations, project planning, and evaluation processes. Establishing mission-linked performance indicators, such as on-time project delivery, customer satisfaction, and workforce capability metrics, ensures that daily operations reinforce the organization's strategic intent (BPEP, 2023). When leaders clearly define and communicate the relationship between organizational purpose and measurable results, employees are better equipped to translate strategy into execution, thereby enhancing accountability and productivity (Crosby & Ghanbarpour, 2023).

Another important implication is the need for data-informed decision-making to sustain performance alignment. While Company X demonstrated operational discipline, findings revealed that leadership relied heavily on qualitative judgment rather than predictive analysis. Business leaders can strengthen strategic execution by implementing integrated data systems that track financial, operational, and workforce metrics in real time. Data-driven dashboards enable leaders to assess performance against mission-driven objectives, identify emerging gaps, and proactively adjust resources or strategies (Abdul-Azeez et al., 2024). Embedding analytical reviews within routine governance meetings also creates a culture of transparency and shared accountability, helping teams understand how their work contributes to long-term sustainability (BPEP, 2023).

The study further revealed that leadership communication and engagement practices are key mechanisms for connecting vision with execution. Business leaders can apply this learning by fostering open communication environments that encourage

employees to contribute ideas, express concerns, and participate in decision-making. Regular one-on-one check-ins, cross-functional huddles, and open-door policies—as practiced by Company X’s leaders create alignment between organizational priorities and daily workforce activities. Leaders who consistently articulate the “why” behind strategic initiatives reinforce a shared sense of purpose, thereby enhancing motivation, trust, and retention (Westover, 2025).

Another actionable finding involves workforce development and succession planning as enablers of mission continuity. The results revealed that Company X benefits from a core group of experienced project managers but lacks a formalized structure for cross-training and leadership succession. Business leaders can address similar challenges by designing competency-based training frameworks, leadership development programs, and mentorship initiatives that align employee growth with organizational objectives (Rustam et al., 2024). Investing in professional development ensures that employees not only meet technical demands but also internalize and perpetuate the organization’s mission, thereby strengthening both adaptability and sustainability (Abdul-Azeez et al., 2024).

Finally, the findings emphasize that effective leaders must integrate governance, ethics, and societal responsibility into performance systems to ensure mission alignment and stakeholder trust. Company X’s adherence to ISO/TL 9000 quality standards and minority- and veteran-owned business commitments demonstrate that ethical behavior and community engagement reinforce organizational credibility. Business leaders can replicate these outcomes by embedding compliance, equity, and sustainability metrics

into their governance scorecards. Doing so not only strengthens public accountability but also ensures that strategic intent reflects broader societal values, a key driver of long-term performance excellence (BPEP, 2023).

In summary, the findings demonstrate that business leaders can close the gap between vision and execution by operationalizing mission through measurable performance systems, data-informed decision-making, transparent communication, and structured workforce development. Applying these approaches enables leaders to move beyond short-term performance management toward sustained excellence and resilience. Through the systematic application of Baldrige principles and leadership alignment strategies, organizations can create a culture where purpose drives performance, employees are empowered to act on shared values, and sustainability becomes an embedded outcome of daily operations (BPEP, 2023; Crosby & Ghanbarpour, 2023; Westover, 2025).

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study have meaningful implications for positive social change by demonstrating how business leaders can connect organizational vision and mission to operational systems that promote equity, ethical governance, workforce empowerment, and community sustainability. The results show that when leaders integrate transparent decision-making, data-informed management, and workforce engagement into their operations, they create environments that benefit employees, customers, and communities. Applying these principles enables organizations to move

beyond profit-driven outcomes toward socially responsible performance that supports long-term community well-being and economic resilience (BPEP, 2023).

One key implication for social change is the role of ethical and transparent leadership in advancing organizational accountability. The study revealed that Company X's governance system, grounded in ISO/TL 9000 quality standards and GAAP compliance, promotes fairness, accuracy, and ethical decision-making. Leaders who model transparency and integrity not only improve internal trust but also enhance the organization's reputation within the broader community (Hwang, 2024). This commitment to governance excellence contributes to a culture where honesty and accountability are expected and rewarded, values that extend beyond the workplace into society. When business leaders demonstrate ethical stewardship, they set standards that foster more just and trustworthy industries, strengthening public confidence in corporate institutions (Crosby & Ghanbarpour, 2023).

The study also highlights the potential for inclusive workforce development to drive social equity. Company X's emphasis on mentorship, internal advancement, and minority and veteran inclusion provides a replicable model for other organizations seeking to promote diversity and opportunity. Leaders who invest in structured learning programs, cross-training, and professional certification not only improve organizational capability but also open pathways for underrepresented populations to access skilled technical roles (Leuhery et al., 2024). These practices contribute to social mobility and workforce diversification, key drivers of community development and economic

inclusion (Hwang, 2024). By aligning workforce strategy with social responsibility, leaders can ensure that success is shared among employees, customers, and communities.

A further implication lies in sustainability and environmental stewardship as part of mission-aligned governance. The findings showed that Company X incorporates responsible environmental practices, including recycling materials and adhering to OSHA and EPA standards. Business leaders who adopt similar practices contribute to long-term environmental health while reinforcing corporate social responsibility. Koh (2024) argued that sustainable operations not only reduce environmental harm but also model responsible citizenship, supporting global efforts to create cleaner, safer communities. By integrating sustainability metrics into governance dashboards and business reviews, leaders can institutionalize practices that protect resources for future generations.

Lastly, the study underscores the role of community partnership and social investment as extensions of corporate mission. Company X's leadership supports small business mentorship, supplier diversity, and minority subcontractor engagement initiatives that strengthen local economies and foster community resilience. Omelchenko (2025) notes that when business leaders engage with community stakeholders and reinvest in the regions they serve, they create shared value that enhances both organizational reputation and societal trust. These community-centered practices align with Baldrige's Citizenship and Societal Responsibility core values, which emphasize that high-performing organizations must contribute to the public good through ethical leadership and social engagement (BPEP, 2023). In conclusion, this study's findings show that when leaders operationalize their organization's vision and mission through ethical

governance, inclusive workforce practices, and sustainable operations, they generate outcomes that extend beyond internal performance. The integration of leadership alignment, employee empowerment, and social accountability builds stronger organizations and healthier communities (Shafiya & Sekar, 2025). Business leaders who embrace these principles contribute to enduring social change by creating workplaces that model integrity, opportunity, and environmental stewardship, advancing both organizational excellence and societal well-being. As summarized in Table 4, these organizational actions illustrate direct pathways through which leadership behaviors and operational systems contribute to measurable social outcomes consistent with the BEF (BPEP, 2023).

Figure 8*Pathways to Social Change: Organizational Actions and Societal Impacts*

Organizational Action	Description / Example from Findings	Resulting Societal Impact	Baldrige Core Value Alignment
Leadership Transparency and Ethical Governance	Leadership at Company X embeds ISO/TL 9000 and GAAP principles into governance reviews; open communication promotes accountability.	Strengthens public trust and models ethical business conduct; enhances confidence in corporate institutions.	<i>Ethics and Transparency</i>
Inclusive Workforce Development	Mentorship, internal advancement, and inclusion of minority and veteran employees expand access to skilled technical roles.	Increases diversity and economic mobility within communities; promotes equitable employment opportunities.	<i>Valuing People and Workforce Engagement</i>
Data-Informed Decision-Making and Accountability	Use of project dashboards, financial metrics, and compliance audits ensures data-driven performance evaluation.	Enhances corporate accountability and supports evidence-based management across industries.	<i>Management by Fact</i>
Environmental and Safety Stewardship	Compliance with OSHA/EPA standards and responsible recycling of network materials.	Reduces environmental impact; contributes to community health and sustainability.	<i>Societal Responsibility</i>
Community and Supplier Partnerships	Engagement with minority subcontractors and small businesses through mentorship and contracting opportunities.	Stimulates local economic growth and fosters small-business resilience.	<i>Community Citizenship</i>
Open Communication and Employee Empowerment	Regular check-ins, team huddles, and transparent leadership practices.	Builds trust, collaboration, and employee well-being; fosters psychologically safe workplaces.	<i>Visionary Leadership / People Engagement</i>
Ethical and Sustainable Growth Mindset	Strategic decisions prioritize both profitability and social impact.	Encourages long-term value creation that balances economic success with community benefit.	<i>Sustainability and Societal Well-Being</i>

Note. This figure summarizes the relationship between organizational actions identified in the study and their corresponding societal outcomes. Adapted from interview data, organizational documentation, and the BEF (BPEP, 2023).

Conclusion

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore strategies business leaders use to align their organization's vision and mission with operational effectiveness,

productivity, and long-term sustainability. The findings revealed that effective alignment requires more than a well-crafted vision statement; it depends on how leaders operationalize that vision through systems, people, and performance measures. Using the Baldrige Excellence Framework as a guide, this study identified interdependent processes across leadership, strategy, customers, workforce, operations, and results that together form the foundation for organizational excellence. Company X provided a clear example of how mission alignment, ethical leadership, and disciplined operational practices create measurable performance outcomes, while also highlighting areas where formalized systems, data integration, and workforce development can strengthen long-term sustainability.

The analysis of results indicated that leadership is the foundation of alignment. Leaders at Company X modeled transparency, accountability, and ethical governance by embedding ISO/TL 9000 and GAAP principles into operations and decision-making. These actions ensured that strategic goals were not aspirational but executable. Yet the findings also revealed that leaders must move beyond compliance to create systems that continuously connect strategy to outcomes. For sustained alignment, leaders should formalize how the organization translates vision into measurable goals, cascades them throughout the workforce, and uses performance feedback to adapt in real time.

A central insight of this study is that alignment is a continuous process that depends on deliberate measurement, communication, and engagement. Company X's success in maintaining operational performance and customer satisfaction during periods of market fluctuation demonstrates how adaptive leadership can sustain effectiveness and

productivity. However, the temporary business slowdown observed in 2024 underscores the need for leaders to use predictive analytics and scenario planning to anticipate disruptions. Integrating these tools would allow business leaders to connect strategic intent with future-oriented decision-making, reinforcing both agility and sustainability.

The workforce findings underscored the critical role of engagement and inclusion in achieving alignment. Company X's open communication culture, mentorship opportunities, and internal advancement practices demonstrated how leaders can translate mission into workforce motivation and accountability. Nonetheless, the absence of formal workforce metrics such as engagement scores or training outcomes represents an opportunity for deeper alignment. When leaders quantify and track workforce performance indicators, they can better connect employee development to strategic goals, thereby enhancing productivity and long-term retention. These practices affirm that workforce alignment is not ancillary to strategy—it is its driving force.

Customer and operational results also reinforced the importance of alignment. Company X's ability to sustain repeat business, expand into new markets, and maintain ISO/TL 9000 compliance reflected effective systems management rooted in mission-driven leadership. At the same time, opportunities exist for leaders to strengthen integration between customer data, financial forecasting, and process performance. Doing so would ensure that organizational learning directly informs strategic planning, closing the loop between vision, execution, and results.

Finally, the study demonstrated that alignment of vision and mission extends beyond organizational performance to encompass ethical responsibility and social impact.

Company X's minority and veteran ownership, community partnerships, and environmental compliance practices illustrate that mission alignment includes stewardship that improves both organizational outcomes and societal well-being. When leaders embed social responsibility into their governance systems, they reinforce values that enhance trust, equity, and sustainability at every level of operation.

In conclusion, this study confirms that aligning vision and mission with operational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability is not achieved through isolated actions but through integrating leadership systems, workforce engagement, data-informed management, and continuous improvement. Business leaders can apply these findings by creating transparent governance structures, formalizing performance measurement systems, and empowering their workforce to act on shared goals. The implications for both practice and social change are profound: leaders who intentionally connect purpose with performance not only build resilient, high-performing organizations but also contribute to a more equitable, ethical, and sustainable society.

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