PERSPECTIVE · COMMITMENT STRESS TEST

The Strategy Was Approved. The Organization Has Not Yet Decided.

Your leadership team said yes. Before you rely on that yes, know which commitments behind it will hold when priorities compete.

Waheeda Görlitz · Senior Strategic Mobilization Adviser · 29 October 2026

KEY TAKEAWAYS

01 Alignment is a shared direction, and agreement is a shared opinion. Both are valuable, and neither obliges anyone to act.

02 A commitment is a pledge to act, with consequences. While the stakes remain unnamed, a yes costs nothing.

03 A commitment holds when the people, the budget and the authority to keep it stand behind it, also when keeping it becomes costly.

04 From the moment someone commits, someone must answer for the result.

05 Fragile commitments do not mean the transformation should stop. They mean the commitments have not yet become a mandate the organization can execute.

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The Meeting Went Well. Did Anyone Commit?

The meeting went well. The strategy was presented, the questions were answered, and nobody objected. Your leadership team is aligned on the direction, and it agreed to the decision. You leave the room believing it has committed.

It may not have. Alignment, agreement and commitment are different things. The difference decides whether the organization acts on the strategy you approved.

Alignment And Agreement Bind No One.

Alignment is a shared direction: leaders facing the same goal. Agreement is a shared opinion: a yes to the decision on the table. Both are necessary, and both are valuable. Neither obliges anyone to act.

Strategic language makes this easy to miss. “Customer focus”, “one company”, “faster decisions”: every leader can endorse the same words while protecting a different set of priorities, budgets and people. The room hears consent. Each leader hears something compatible with what they already do.

Some agreements are not even agreements. When disagreement cannot be voiced without the speaker being seen as resistant, the yes in the room is a vote, not a conviction. The minority has been outvoted, not persuaded, and it will act accordingly. A team that agrees immediately may be withholding the information it most needs.

A Commitment Has A Price.

A commitment is a pledge to act, and a pledge has consequences. It binds the leader who makes it to something that will cost them: authority that moves, budgets that shrink, people who are reassigned, comparisons that become visible, priorities they will no longer protect.

As long as those consequences remain unnamed, a yes costs nothing. A leader can support the transformation in principle and, in practice, preserve the conditions that prevent it. A commitment begins where a leader can say what the transformation requires from their area, and what will become harder, smaller or no longer possible for them if it succeeds.

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A Commitment Holds When It Is Backed.

A pledge without the means to keep it is still a commitment, just a fragile one. Commitments hold when the people, the budget and the authority to keep them stand behind them, also when keeping them becomes costly.

You see the difference in where resources go: what has received more since the decision, what has received less, and what has stopped. A leadership team that can only name the first has added an initiative, not made a choice.

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You see it in decisions under pressure. One decision in line with the strategy proves little. What matters is whether the same logic holds when short-term targets press, when nobody from the transformation office is in the room, and across functions that each have good reasons for an exception.

And you see it one level down. A leader's commitment means little if it changes meaning on its way into the organization. Every management team that must carry it has to commit to it again, with its own people, budgets and decisions. If each function tells a different local story, the leadership team has aligned its language, not its commitments.

Someone Must Answer For It.

From the moment someone commits, someone must answer for the result. Accountability is what a commitment owes: the duty to account for what was pledged, to someone who can draw consequences.

The decisive moment comes when a leader reverts: protects an old target, delays a shared decision, withdraws a resource that was promised. Does the leadership team address it and restore the commitment? Or does everyone look away, because confronting a colleague costs more than letting the transformation weaken?

Accountability also needs its counterpart. A leader asked to answer for a result needs the authority to produce it. Authority without accountability turns into power. Accountability without authority turns into blame. Neither puts value in the books.

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When Commitments Prove Fragile.

Fragile commitments do not mean the transformation should stop. They mean the commitments behind it have not yet become a mandate the organization can execute: commitments negotiated between the leaders who must keep them, with clear authority and clear accountability.

The wrong response is to communicate the same message more forcefully while the contradiction stays in place. More conviction from the top does not turn agreement into commitment. Negotiation between the leaders who must keep the commitments does.

Before you commit further capital and credibility to a transformation, know which commitments behind it you can rely on, and which still need to be negotiated.

WHERE THIS LEADS

Commitment Stress Test

Know which commitments you can rely on.

manreau.com/engagements/commitment-stress-test

WHERE THIS LEADS

Commitment Negotiation

Turn board approval into commitments your leaders can keep.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT MANREAU

A transformation program is not yet a transformation.

MANREAU, The Strategic Mobilization Advisory, works with CEOs and leadership teams on the conditions a transformation depends on: the priorities, commitments, resources and decision rights that decide whether the business case reaches the books.

What Do You Need Now?

Start with a confidential conversation with Waheeda Görlitz about the decision ahead of you. You'll leave with a clearer view of what that decision depends on, and which engagement fits, if any.

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