

We see the present and plan the future – Krishna sees the future and plans the present: Proposition and implementation of a method to identify strategic objectives

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Abstract

Objective: The motivation for this research stems from the clear recognition of the relevance of the organizational planning process method. The objective of the study was to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic planning process within a pharmaceutical company, outlining the organization's strategic objectives and operational goals. **Method:** Adotou-se, neste estudo, a metodologia de pesquisa-ação. Dois pesquisadores participaram ativamente de todas as fases do processo de planejamento, seguindo as seis etapas do protocolo de pesquisa. O processo iniciou-se com a formulação da sequência de atividades do planejamento e foi concluído com a discussão, junto à diretoria, acerca da experiência e dos resultados obtidos.

Results: Understanding and learning were gained about the practical consequences of implementing specific steps of a comprehensive conceptual method of strategic planning in a pharmaceutical business context. The intervention led to several key findings, including: (i) the effectiveness of using a structured questionnaire to identify internal and external variables through SWOT analysis; (ii) the difficulty managers faced in reaching consensus on strategic priorities; (iii) the importance of senior leadership in articulating strategic themes; and (iv) the successful co-creation of strategic objectives and operational goals using the Balanced Scorecard framework.

Contributions: The academic literature presents a research–practice gap with a lack of studies on the application of action-research method on strategic planning in pharmaceutical industry. At a conceptual level, the study designs a method to identify strategic objectives and operational goals. At a practical level, it reports and discusses the results of applying the method in a real pharmaceutical company, providing insights, lessons, and recommendations that can be useful when adopting the method in other business contexts.

Keywords: Action research; Strategic planning; Strategic objectives; Operational goals; Balanced scorecard.

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Introduction

The strategy-process literature is extensive, with numerous studies exploring the formulation of strategic planning in organizations (e.g., Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2006). Notably, these studies have examined a variety of formulation contexts, including both industrial and service firms (e.g., Sayed & Lento, 2018). Studies have sought ways to reduce barriers to the implementation of strategic planning (O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2002) through practices that simplify its preparation, taking into account the benefits for performance. These are identified in organizations that use it (Shraeder, 2002), along with the fact that strategic planning reduces cognitive differences in different areas of the same organization, regarding the most important decisions (Nowak, 2021). In addition, several tools have proven effective in facilitating the development of strategic planning, such as SWOT analyses (Helms & Nixon, 2010; Wu et al. 2024) and the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Quezada et al. 2009; Chehimi & Naro, 2024). Bain & Company conducted a survey with managers called Management Tools & Trends evidencing the relevance of strategic planning for organizations, with a usage rate of 48%, and also highlighting the use of mission and vision statements (32%) and Balanced Scorecard (29%) (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2018; Tawse & Tabesh, 2023). Supporting these findings, a study developed with large industrial companies operating in Brazil investigated managers' perceptions of the sociomateriality of the management accounting practices most used in their organizations from the perspective of ceremoniality and instrumentality (Russo & Guerreiro, 2017). The results showed that strategic planning is one of the three management accounting practices most used in these organizations. Strategy development and its effective implementation is a critical responsibility of the top executives of any organization, considering that the failure and success of an organization are closely related to how strategies are developed and implemented (Koo et al. 2008; Johnsen, 2023).

The research of Grinver and Norburn (1974), carried out 50 years ago, addressed the issue of methods for conducting strategic planning. In most companies, the consensus was that the planning process involved pre-ordained information flows, which were routinely discussed at scheduled management meetings. More recently, several papers (Ip & Koo, 2004; Koo et al. 2008; Quezada et al. 2009; Manteghia & Zohrabib, 2011; Quezada et al. 2019) discuss different methods and integrate different concepts and tools to identify business strategies and establish operational goals. Strategy development consists of analyzing the existing situation and the desired future, and then deciding on the most effective means to achieve the goals. From a conceptual standpoint, two valuable tools that are present in most of the planning methods suggested in the litera-

ture stand out: SWOT analysis (Helms & Nixon, 2010) and the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

The motivation for this research stems from the clear recognition of the relevance of the organizational planning process method. It is assumed that this process becomes more effective in the corporate environment when it is materialized in practical, logical, and analytical procedures that facilitate its replication (e.g., Quezada et al. 2009). A management control practice, when properly codified (Burns & Scapens, 2000), that is, consciously organized and detailed, is the first step toward its institutionalization.

As Haig (2019) emphasizes, the strength of the scientific method lies precisely in its systematic, explicit, and replicable character, which transforms practices into reliable and transferable knowledge. Therefore, having a method—derived from the Greek words *meta*, meaning “to follow,” and *hodos*, meaning “the way”—provides the “way to follow,” suggesting order, intelligibility, and legitimacy, and ensuring that managerial practices evolve from tacit routines into institutionalized and validated processes.

In light of our motivation and assumption, the research question that guided this study was: How does the method of carrying out the steps of strategic planning take place in an industrial pharmaceutical organization?

Strategic planning remains a cornerstone of organizational success, yet its practical implementation often suffers from a disconnect between theoretical models and real-world application. This article addresses that gap by proposing and empirically testing a method for identifying strategic objectives and operational goals within a pharmaceutical company. The choice of the pharmaceutical sector is particularly relevant due to its complexity, regulatory intensity, and strategic importance in both economic and social dimensions (Torres & Souza, 2010; EFPIA, 2023). By employing an action research methodology, the study not only contributes to academic discourse but also generates actionable insights for practitioners. The dual perspective embedded in the title—“we see the present and plan the future” versus “Krishna sees the future and plans the present”—offers a conceptual framework for understanding how organizations can balance reactive and visionary approaches to strategy formulation, echoing the need for adaptive planning in turbulent environments (Johnsen, 2023).

The article is grounded in the recognition that management accounting, as an applied social science, must evolve to address contemporary organizational challenges (Guerreiro, 2022; Fraser & Sheehy, 2020). The integration of

classical tools such as SWOT analysis with modern frameworks like the Balanced Scorecard provides a structured yet flexible approach to strategic planning. This hybrid method is designed to be replicable across different organizational contexts, making it particularly valuable for companies with limited planning maturity. Furthermore, the study contributes to the literature on action research by demonstrating its effectiveness in generating both theoretical knowledge and practical solutions (Kaplan, 1998; Alfaro-Tanco et al. 2021). The detailed documentation of the intervention process, including stakeholder engagement, thematic analysis, and strategy mapping, ensures that the method can be adapted and scaled, thereby enhancing its relevance for scholars and practitioners alike.

The practice of planning is one of the most important tasks of human beings and organizations. We can say that the more refined the habit of planning, the more evolved the mental state of the individual and, at the organizational level, it reflects the adoption of a management model that excels. In the present case, we observed that envisioning the desired future was a prominent task of the founder and CEO of the pharmaceutical company.

While each organization has unique characteristics, the method proposed in this study is grounded in a replicable structure that integrates SWOT analysis, strategic themes, and the Balanced Scorecard into an eight-step process. This framework provides a flexible yet systematic approach that can be adapted to different organizational contexts. The theoretical contribution lies in codifying a planning process that transforms tacit managerial routines into institutionalized strategic practices (Burns & Scapens, 2000), thereby offering a model that bridges conceptual rigor and practical applicability.

2 Literature review

2.1 Strategic planning

The concern with the practice of strategic planning goes back many years, with the work of Haines (1977) and Higgins and Finn (1977). The formulation of strategic planning should be the guide to visualize what the company wants to achieve and how it should act to achieve its goals. It should begin with the identification of the company's current competitive position and market, which allows a better orientation toward its goals. The economic management model (Catelli, 2013) emphasizes the study of the management process by discussing its stages. Guerreiro and Souza (2015) suggest that the theoretical framework of the economic management model is helpful to (i) check if there are any differences in the perceived importance of strategic planning activities between operational managers and top executives, and

(ii) identify the main barriers to implementing strategic planning in companies. More recent research reinforces this tension, showing that the effectiveness of strategic planning depends not only on methodological tools but also on managerial cognition, cultural alignment, and user acceptance within organizations (Johnsen, 2023; George, 2025).

Regarding strategic planning, and especially for establishing strategic objectives, a fundamental assumption is the analysis of the company's internal and external environment (Haberberg, 2000; Helmes & Nison, 2010). The method that has been emphasized in academic texts and used in business practice for over fifty years is the SWOT analysis, whose acronym stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are identified by analyzing the internal environment, and opportunities and threats are identified by analyzing the external environment. Helms and Nixon (2010) noted that the origin of the term SWOT is unknown.

The methodology for establishing strategic objectives is a step in the development of strategic planning (Sadler, 2002). Several academic papers discuss the method for identifying strategic objectives, including those by Ip and Koo (2004), Koo et al. (2008), Quezada et al. (2009, 2019), Manteghia and Zohrabib (2011), and George et al. 2024.

2.2 Balanced Scorecard (BSC)

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is a strategic performance monitoring and management model, whose conception resulted from research developed by Kaplan and Norton in 1991 through the Nolan Norton Institute, with the main objective of studying performance measurement in organizations where intangible assets were the central part of value creation. To this end, they designed the BSC model to translate the organization's vision and strategy into measurable objectives linked to financial and non-financial indicators and their respective targets. In addition to adequately developing operational activities, achieving these goals requires managers to implement strategic initiatives, which are ultimately responsible for the realization of the proposed strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Sayed & Lento, 2018).

Kaplan and Norton (1996) conceived the BSC with four dimensions to achieve a holistic view of the organization and ensure the achievement of short- and long-term results. They are: (i) the financial perspective, (ii) the customer perspective, (iii) the internal processes perspective, and (iv) the learning and growth perspective. The four perspectives are integrated based on a cause

and effect relationship of the initiatives generated from each objective; therefore, they seek to translate the vision and strategy through measurable criteria. According to the authors, companies that adopt the BSC should focus on critical processes. One way to present an organization's BSC is through strategy maps, since they allow the visualization of the four dimensions proposed by Kaplan and Norton (1996), the strategic objectives, and their cause and effect relationships (Kaplan & Norton, 2001, 2004).

Due to their visual form, strategy maps provide an opportunity for more intense co-creation during the strategy development process, and then contribute to easier and more precise communication in the stages of strategy dissemination, follow-up, and evaluation. Although the BSC has existed for thirty years, there are still doubts and criticisms about several dimensions of its implementation and use (e.g., Norreklit, 2000). However, the BSC has been central to operationalizing and integrating strategy with other practices (Kumar et al. 2022).

In the BSC, the strategic-operational goals form the path through which the strategy goes from conception to achievement, promoting communication and alignment. To be effective, they must balance the various perceptions of stakeholders (Sundin et al. 2009). Identifying and communicating objectives, while seemingly simple, can mobilize managers, who are often unsure of where to focus their energy.

In addition, identifying and measuring objectives contributes to defining organizational goals that can then be systematically tracked (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). The measurable objectives in the BSC are associated with retrospective indicators, also known as lagging, which report the results of past actions, and prospective indicators, also known as trend or driving, which are associated with future performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2001).

Kumar et al. (2022), who reviewed the literature on the BSC from 1992 to 2021, concluded that the BSC is more often used in organizations as a performance measurement system compared to its use as a management control system. They also confirmed that its successful use requires top management support and effective communication and coordination.

2.3 SWOT analysis

The SWOT framework has its roots in the SOFT model, developed in the mid-1960s by Robert Franklin Stewart and colleagues at the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) as part of the Long Range Planning Service (LRPS). The acronym

originally stood for Satisfactory, Opportunity, Fault, and Threat, and was designed to stimulate managers to identify real operational problems and potential solutions through participatory planning processes (Puyt et al. 2023).

The first formal publication using the acronym "SWOT" was by Learned et al. (1969), who reframed the terms as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, consolidating the version that became widespread in strategic management. Importantly, no single inventor of SWOT can be identified. Rather, as Puyt et al. (2023) demonstrate, its origins were collective, rooted in practice-oriented consultancy and not solely attributable to Harvard Business School, as some myths have suggested.

SWOT analysis organizes internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) into a 2×2 matrix, providing a visual synthesis that supports strategic decision-making. Its main contribution lies in enabling organizations to align strengths with opportunities and to develop strategies that mitigate risks associated with weaknesses and threats (Hill & Westbrook, 1997).

Despite its diffusion, SWOT has been subject to significant criticism. Hill and Westbrook (1997) argued that it should be considered for "product recall," pointing out methodological weaknesses such as: (i) subjectivity in identifying elements, with no validation criteria, (ii) lack of prioritization, resulting in extensive and impractical lists, (iii) static nature, making it less suitable for dynamic and uncertain environments.

Moreover, when used mechanically or without critical discussion, SWOT may lead to superficial analyses and weak strategic insight. To overcome these shortcomings, recent studies have proposed hybrid and data-driven adaptations of SWOT: Quezada et al. (2019) combined SWOT with the Analytic Network Process (ANP), linking SWOT diagnoses with BSC indicators. This integration strengthens the connection between strategic analysis and performance measurement. Cheng et al. (2021) introduced a framework that automatically extracts SWOT factors from user-generated content using data mining, sentiment analysis, and TF-IDF weighting, thereby reducing subjectivity and allowing for dynamic, evidence-based applications.

Despite its limitations, SWOT remains a powerful tool for managerial mobilization and strategic synthesis. In the case of Company Farma, its use was decisive in consolidating managerial perceptions into strategic objectives. To mitigate the risks of subjectivity and static analysis, the process was subsequently reinforced

with the Balanced Scorecard, ensuring greater focus, objectivity, and alignment between strategic diagnoses and performance indicators.

3 Methodology

3.1 Action research

The study adopted the action research methodology, characterized by the active involvement and intervention of the researchers in the field. In this study, two researchers were involved in strategic planning (e.g., diagnosis, design, and implementation) within a large pharmaceutical company in Brazil. According to Thiollent (1977), action research consists of coupling research and action in a process where practitioners interact with researchers to elucidate their reality. Among the most prominent researchers in management accounting, Kaplan (1998, p.89) emphasizes the importance of applying this method to gain knowledge in the field. He also recalls Kurt Lewin's sentence, quoted by Argyris (1993): "If social scientists really want to understand certain phenomena, they must try to change them. Creating, not predicting, is the most robust test of validity-applicability".

Susman and Evered (2023) observe there is a crisis in the field of organizational science. The principal symptom of this crisis is that as the research methods and techniques have become more sophisticated, they have also become increasingly less useful for solving the practical problems that members of organizations face. Zandee and Coghlan (2025) highlights the growing interest in impact-driven research invites organization and strategy scholars to not merely study, but actively help address grand challenges. Alfaro-Tanco et al. (2021) analyze the dual contribution of action research both for research as well as business practice, and how this methodology puts into practice a win-win collaboration between researchers and practitioners.

The literature review demonstrates significant use of the action research method in various fields of knowledge. Shani and Coghlan (2021) observe in the context of business and management, action research operates in the realm of strategies, practical tasks, and structured hierarchical organizational systems in diverse industries and across multiple business. The study of Li et al. (2022) examines the use of action research in management studies in China. Jensen and Dikilitas (2025) analyze through action research the closer association between research and teaching in higher education. Recent reviews also emphasize its role in bridging the gap between theory and practice and in generating societal impact (George, 2025; George et al. 2024).

Coghlan (2023) defines action research as an approach to research which aims at both taking action and creating knowledge or theory about that action as the action unfolds. It starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the development of living knowledge.

3.2 Researcher's participation

In action research, the researcher plays an active role, within the reality of the observed facts, assisting in the reflection, formulation, or implementation of the action, in order to develop, improve, or test theoretical frameworks or relevant models for the phenomenon under study (Brandão, 1985). Action research typically involves researchers working with a client organisation. Davison et al. (2022) observes that despite numerous guidelines and studies, ethical issues in action research are often overlooked, and that ethical dilemmas are rarely and inconsistently reported. This research followed all appropriate ethical procedures.

Two of the co-authors have participated in extensive consulting work to improve the management competence of a pharmaceutical company. The development of the strategic planning process was one of the projects conceived with strong involvement of the co-authors. The researchers were deeply involved in all phases of the planning process following the established research protocol: (i) formulation of the row of activities for the planning process; (ii) development and application of a questionnaire to identify the company's internal and external strengths and weaknesses; (iii) processing and analysis of responses and getting knowledge about company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; (iv) participation in the three-day in-person planning meeting, delivering lectures about strategic themes, monitoring the tasks of groups of managers and moderating the discussions of the groups; (v) preparing the final strategic planning report; (vi) discussion with the board on the planning experience and results obtained.

3.3 Organizational context

The company was chosen for convenience. It is a privately-held corporation that operates throughout the Brazilian territory, producing and selling pharmaceutical products. The company has an annual revenue of almost R\$ 1 billion (in 2022), with a staff of around 700 employees. The company operates in the generic medicines, its customers are the largest distributors and pharmacy chains in Brazil, reaching 80% of consumption points. For confidentiality purposes, from here on, it will be referred as Company Farma (CF).

The pharmaceutical industry was chosen due to its social and economic relevance. Silveira, Hikichi, and Salgado (2016) state that the health sector is of great importance to

the quality of life of the world's population, being responsible for the research, manufacturing, and marketing of products used for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. According to Torres and Souza (2010), the Brazilian pharmaceutical market is one of the largest and most attractive in the world, dominated by large transnational companies and a few large domestic firms. The pharmaceutical industry stands out as one of the most innovative and profitable productive sectors. The defense of this position is aggressive, through the creation or maintenance of entry barriers, mainly through patents, corporate restructuring processes, or increased stringency in sanitary requirements established by regulatory agencies.

More recently, studies emphasize that the Brazilian pharmaceutical industry is shaped by a complex interaction of actors, institutions, and public policies, which directly influence innovation strategies and market dynamics (Paranhos et al. 2023). Within this framework, the generic drugs policy has been particularly relevant, fostering structural changes and expanding domestic access, while also affecting firms' innovative capacity (Caliari & Ruiz, 2014). At the international level, the pharmaceutical sector is recognized as one of the most strategic and competitive, combining high profitability with persistent barriers to entry and strong regulatory oversight (EFPIA, 2023).

In Brazil, recent developments in the life sciences sector show an increasing integration between regulation, industrial policy, and private initiatives, creating opportunities for growth and competitiveness (Mattos Filho, 2025). On a global scale, the industry's economic contribution is significant: pharmaceutical production and R&D generate hundreds of billions of dollars annually and support millions of jobs worldwide, highlighting the sectors strategic role in both economic and social dimensions (WifOR Institute & IFPMA, 2024).

4 The empirical study

4.1 Intervention process

The intervention activities consisted of formulating the firm's strategic planning through a pre-established method and took place over three months (from September to November 2022). During CF's strategic planning process, we observed the involvement of 38 participants, including the CEO, directors, and top managers.

In sum, the intervention process kicked off in September, when we organized a conceptual alignment meeting with the participation of the CEO, directors, and managers, which addressed the objectives and methodologies to be used in the strategic planning event. At this meeting, the detailed activity plan for the three days of the strategic planning event was presented to the participants. In addition, there was a general training activity for the whole strategic planning team on the concepts and methodologies used. At the end of the training,

managers received an online questionnaire to indicate their perceptions on the adequacy of CF's current purpose, mission, vision, and organizational values and elements that would enable the SWOT analysis. In the period between the alignment meeting and the planning event, managers answered the questionnaire; next, consultants consolidated the answers and prepared SWOT analysis reports based on the managers' perceptions. The reports were made available to the participants via dashboards at the planning event.

In October, a three-day strategic planning event was held in a hotel with excellent infrastructure for the proposed activities, with the participation of the CEO, Board of Directors, management team, and consultants. During the planning event, activities were carried out in four sessions. Each session started with a lecture given by an expert on the subject to be addressed in that session. Participants were arranged in groups of five to eight managers. In the first two stages, in order to better capture the qualitative aspects of the strategic planning process, the groups were multidisciplinary, and each was given a specific topic to reflect on (e.g., production, R&D, people management). In later stages, the groups were formed of experts in the topics being assessed, seeking greater objectivity in proposing strategic-operational goals. During the event, the managers had notebooks and the activities were carried out in a virtual sharing environment (Miro Collaboration Platform <<https://miro.com>>) previously prepared by the consulting firm, which gave all participants full access to the material under development and the possibility of co-creation. It also allowed the registration of all activities in a single place for later access by managers and consultants. In this process, the consultants used some strategic tools such as SWOT analyses and the Balanced Scorecard. After the event and until November, the consultants worked on consolidating the inputs obtained and validating the final elements of the strategic planning with the CEO and the Board of Directors. The interventionist study was authorized by the company's CEO, who granted permission to the researchers to record all elements considered fundamental to the academic study.

The method proposed in this paper for establishing strategic objectives and operational goals is presented in Figure 1 and involves eight steps. The model begins with the purpose analysis, that is, the review or restatement of the established mission and vision and the list of institutional values. Next, after reviewing the mission, vision, and values, two paths must be followed: (i) establishing the strategic themes and (ii) carrying out an internal and external SWOT analysis (Helms & Nixon, 2010). These are additional paths that lead to the establishment of strategic objectives. Once these have been identified, discussed, and approved, the process moves on to defining operational goals derived from the strategies, through the creation of the strategy map, inspired by the BSC model (Kaplan & Norton, 1996), and the definition of performance indicators.

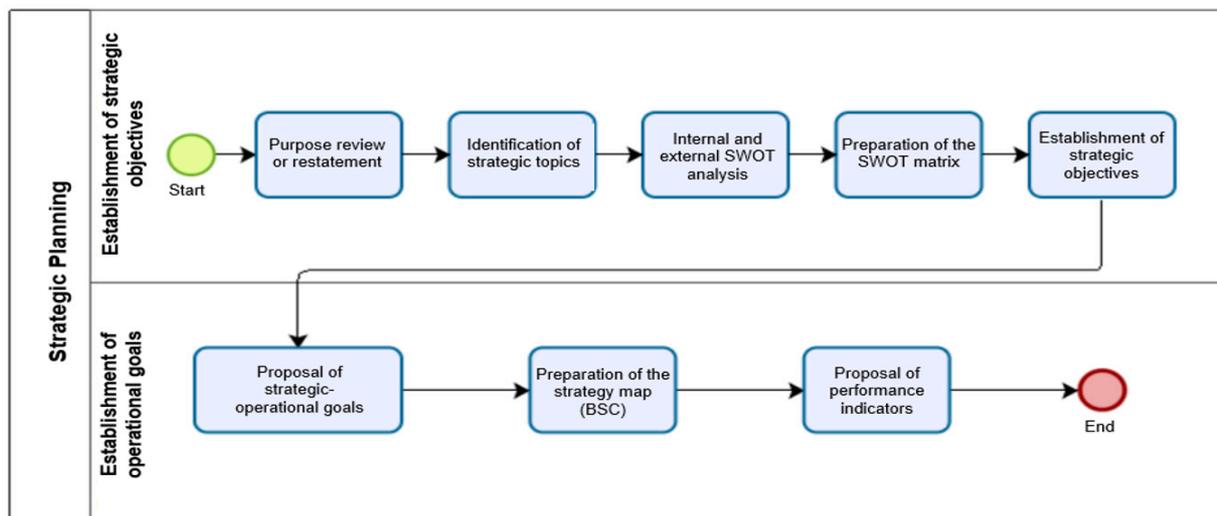


Figure 1. The method for identifying strategic objectives and operational goals

Analyzing the reflection inherent in the title "we see the present and plan the future – Krishna sees the future and plans the present," it is possible to infer that the company's strategic objectives can be established in two ways. The first, more traditional, the desired future state can be stated by looking at the current environment and analyzing it. This approach is best applied to the company's operational managers.

The second part of the sentence indicates that, alternatively, it is possible to envision the desired future and, from there, plan for the present. This perspective is almost a prerogative of the company's top management. According to Inamori (1998, p. 138), the company's objective reflects the manager's intentions, and to align these objectives with the organization's members, a top-down policy is required. Inamori notes that if this is not done, challenging objectives will never emerge.

This duality applies both to reviewing the organization's purpose and identifying strategic themes, as well as to internal and external analysis. The following sections detail the eight steps undertaken in the process of building the strategic planning framework.

4.1.1 Review or restatement of purpose – mission, vision, and values

In the first step of the strategic planning event, the CEO presented data on the historical evolution of CF's product sales and market share. The main message was a focus on growth. Next, a national and global pharmaceutical market expert gave a presentation, pointing out current opportunities and challenges. Then, the multidisciplinary groups were gathered and discussed the adherence to the current mission, vision, values, and purpose. Each group had the opportunity to suggest adjustments to each of these elements, if deemed necessary. At the end of a reflection

period, the plenary was formed and a representative of each group shared his/her reflections with the others in order to align and consolidate the central elements of the strategy.

Khalifa (2012) conducted an extensive review of the literature on strategic planning and found that purpose is a central part of defining the mission. Campbell and Yeung (1991) argued that the firm's purpose should be translated into behavioral patterns through strategy and values. For Campbell (1992, p. 239), "strategy deals with the business logic that defines what business(es) the company should be in, and how it will achieve competitive advantage"; and values "represent the emotional and moral logic of the purpose, which will make employees and managers feel proud and committed to its achievement."

For Horwath (2005), purpose covers two temporal dimensions: current purpose, or mission, and future purpose, or vision. A mission is a clear, concise, and lasting statement of why an organization exists today. A vision represents the future purpose, providing a mental picture of an organization's aspirations. Values support the current and future purpose. Values are the ideals and principles that guide the thoughts and actions of an organization, defining its character. Together, mission, vision, and values provide a powerful direction to unify and coordinate actions and decisions that ensure business optimization.

As the group representatives presented their perceptions on the necessary adjustments, their sense of belonging grew more and more, structuring the bases of a path, which was still unknown, but which would be built by all of them. The discussions addressed apparently antagonistic issues that needed to be reconciled; on the one hand, those related to sustainability, health, well-being, care, and life, and on the other hand, those related to return on capital and meeting

market and regulatory requirements.

At the end of the first day, the result was rich contributions to clarify the perceptions of what should be declared (and lived) in order to build the short and long term through actions based on CF's values and purpose, consciously shared by managers. The result was an increase in the objectivity of the statements and a focus on what was most important: people, whether customers, shareholders, or employees.

4.1.2 Identification of strategic themes

Strategic themes are the drivers of the main high-level business strategies in organizations and guide the construction of the expected future and the business model. They are used in designing strategic planning and recommended when using the BSC as a way to communicate and manage strategy. They are first instance references and emerge from the first insights on purpose, mission, vision, and values. In general, organizations declare these themes, which are vectors that guide the other stages in the elaboration of the strategic plan (Perry, 2011; Quezada et al. 2009). It is like Krishna "sees the future and plans the present."

Each theme is associated with a specific expected strategic result and is specific to each organization, and its statement identifies a desired final state. We know when the theme has been achieved when it is clearly visible, which is possible as long as the strategy has elements of evidence and measurement. In general, the goals arising from the themes are broader than those arising from processes in which there was operational detailing (treated as strategic objectives in this study) (Perry, 2011).

The strategic themes, as vectors of strategy building, are pillars that support the logic of the strategy; if the BSC is to be used effectively, they must affect each of the dimensions of this model for monitoring and managing strategic performance: learning and growth, internal processes, customers, and finances (Perry, 2011; Ronchetti, 2006). The purpose established with the mission, vision, and values inspire strategic themes that are materialized in inspiring statements that reflect a desired future state. From the elements of this desired future state, strategic objectives can be identified, which must be addressed in the present.

Strategic themes such as growth, quality, and others should be established based on a thorough analysis of the elements of purpose, that is, the mission, vision, and values. The planning group's reflection and discussion of the themes leads to the establishment of specific strategic objectives (such as one of the models of Quezada et al. 2009).

During the first stage of the strategic planning event, the board did not clearly state the strategic themes, but they permeated the ideas: (i) growth – as market share, to be among the largest companies; (ii) innovation – as the basis and support for growth, focusing on the development and improvement of its products, but also on the way it relates to the market and structures its business model; and (iii) sustainability – understood in a broad sense, aiming at financial return as a necessary means to enable growth and innovation, and at the same time providing the resources to serve people, inside and outside the organization, thus ensuring sustainable actions within ESG (environmental, social, and governance) approaches.

CF's challenge concerns a positioning addressed by the line of research in organizational ambidexterity (March, 1991) and refers to the tensions generated by the need to balance operational efficiency and effectiveness regarding the lifespan and growth of organizations. In this context, they deal with the dualism of refining operational processes, seeking to improve their efficiency (exploitation) and novelty and innovation through experimentation (exploration) (e.g., Posch & Garaus, 2020).

4.1.3 Internal and external analysis

The method emphasized in academic texts for internal and external analysis is called SWOT analysis, an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Helms and Nixon, 2010). In the business environment, grouping internal and external issues is a common starting point for strategic planning and, in particular, for guiding the identification of strategic objectives. The SWOT analysis can be quickly elaborated and incorporate several standpoints obtained from a brainstorming exercise or otherwise. The key question is how to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Although apparently easier to apply, the brainstorming technique for identifying the elements of analysis involves a complex process that is very difficult to manage. Thus, in the case of CF, we applied a questionnaire to ask managers for their points of view on issues in the company's internal and external environment.

To prepare the questionnaire items, we conducted a prior contextual analysis of the internal and external elements to be assessed. The consultants identified the attributes that characterize these main elements, considering the near and far external environment and the internal environment. In this study, we used the strategy of decomposing the internal analysis elements according to business subsystems (Guerreiro,

1989). The questionnaire items were presented to the managers as assertions and they were asked to rate them as positive or negative if they were associated with opportunities and strengths or with threats and weaknesses. A question related to a negative external environment was characterized as a threat, and one related to a positive internal environment was characterized as a strength. Strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and threats are the motivating and inducing elements for the establishment of strategic objectives.

The process of internal and external analysis generates knowledge about the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These are elements or events observed in the present and determinants of the future. Opportunities and strengths can create new possibilities, leverage businesses, strengthen positioning, and lead to differentiation. Weaknesses and threats indicate opportunities for improvement or the establishment of a preventive positioning to reduce the consequences of unavoidable unfavorable situations.

4.1.4 Designing the SWOT matrix

Once all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats had been mapped, the consultants proposed, in the second stage of the planning event, that the multidisciplinary groups choose, according to their focus (production, R&D, people, finance, etc.), the intersection, through a 2 x 2 matrix, of the positive attributes (opportunities and strengths) and the negative attributes (threats and weaknesses) in order to effectively leverage opportunities and take advantage of threats.

The advantage of using the SWOT matrix is its ease of execution. It helps to build the strategy, as it uses the components of what can be visualized in the mission and vision of the organization and

what was perceived in the contextual analysis of the organization (internally and externally)

Therefore, the study identified strengths and weaknesses, of which we highlight the four most relevant in each category:

- Strengths: people, culture, production, infrastructure.
- Weaknesses: result, finance, logistics and distribution, management process.
- Opportunities: new markets, economic growth, new pharmacy chains.
- Threats: loss of employees, theft, technology piracy.

4.1.5 Establishing strategic objectives

From a pragmatic standpoint, strategic objectives are business goals that have the following features: (i) they are goals that are truly meaningful to the company; (ii) they can make a difference; (iii) they are more qualitative and less quantitative; (iv) they are independent of the temporal dimension of short or long term; (v) they are derived from the purpose; and (vi) they are achieved through SWOT analysis.

A strategic guideline can be defined in two ways. The first is based on the analysis of the identified strategic themes. Managers' reflection and discussion on each of the listed strategic themes can lead to specific strategic objectives. In this way, a specific and limited set of objectives can be identified. The second way of establishing strategic objectives is through reflection and discussion on the content – strengths versus opportunities and weaknesses versus threats – of the SWOT matrix. The following example (Figure 2) illustrates this procedure. It is like "we see the present and plan the future."

		Strengths			Weaknesses		
		Aggressive Sales	R&D Investment	Team Dynamism	Rework in Projects	Centralized Management	Lack of Market Focus
Opportunities	International firms' disinterest in generics drugs	Expand rapidly in generics, filling gaps left by multinationals	Develop higher-value generics using R&D	Expand generics portfolio with team agility	Review R&D processes to cut rework	Decentralize strategy to respond faster	Focus on priority generic niches
	Growing market	Expand market share via direct sales	Broaden portfolio aligned with demand	Enter new niches quickly with agility	Apply quality methods to cut rework	Gradually decentralize to speed responses	Define priority segments, avoid dispersion
	Health-conscious consumers	Use consultative sales to highlight health benefits	Direct R&D to healthy, innovative products	Run awareness campaigns with agile teams	Reduce rework to strengthen credibility	Adjust centralized control to avoid delays	Reorient marketing toward prevention & wellness
Threats	Loss of key staff	Retain talent to sustain aggressive sales	Build resilient teams to sustain R&D	Use adaptability for retention & succession	Ensure knowledge management to cut rework	Decentralize responsibilities, succession plans	Strengthen market intelligence to stay focused
	Regulation	Adapt aggressive sales to legal limits	Anticipate regulations, ensure compliance & differentiation	Train teams to react quickly to rules	Stricter quality controls in projects	Adjust governance for compliance w/o rigidity	Balance compliance with market needs
	Market consolidation	React fast, occupy uncovered niches	Leverage scale to expand R&D and innovate	Preserve dynamism during integrations	Harmonize processes to avoid duplication	Balance centralization with local autonomy	Run periodic competitive analyses

Figure 2. Example of the SWOT matrix at CF

A practical way of defining the strategic guideline considers three elements: (i) label, (ii) verb, and (iii) statement. The label refers to the object of the strategic guideline, the verb must express an active and audacious action on the object, and the statement combines the label and the verb, complemented by other elements that make the strategic guideline a valuable goal for the company. The statement that effectively corresponds to the strategic guideline is determined by the company's business dimensions. As an example of this orientation, Table 1 shows examples aligned with the four dimensions of the BSC.

Table 1
Examples of statements in CF aligned with the four dimensions of the BSC

Label	Verb	Statement
Financial dimension	Ensure	Ensure the necessary return on investment, considering the opportunity cost.
	Exceed	Exceed R\$ 2 billion/year in billings within a maximum of 5 years.
	Control	Control the growth of expenditure so that it grows less than revenue.
Learning and growth dimension	Increase	Increase the sales volume of current customers.
	Add	Add new customers to the current base.
Internal processes dimension	Improve	Improve product and process quality.
Learning and growth dimension	Train	Train human resources in digital technologies.

At the end of the second stage, each group presented its proposed strategic objectives to the other participants. In this way, the vision of the desired future was gradually built up with the elements perceived as most relevant by the CEO, Board of Directors, and other managers involved. With the elements proposed by the multidisciplinary groups, a set of strategic objectives was defined to ensure the accomplishment of the company's mission, thus achieving the objectives of this stage of CF's strategic planning event.

4.1.6 Establishing the operational goals of the strategy

Following the establishment of strategic objectives, the operational pre-planning stage begins with the creation of a set of operational goals that will support the implementation of the strategy. According to the conceptual framework of economic management (GECON) proposed by Catelli (2013), the establishment of operational goals (linked to the strategy) has as prerequisites (i) the preparation of strategic objectives, (ii) the involvement and participation of key managers, and (iii) a simulation system of economic results (Pereira, 2011). When the third stage of CF's planning event started, requirements (i) and (ii) were met, since strategic objectives were proposed and managers were together to continue planning.

Based on the generic strategy map (Kaplan & Norton, 2004) and the set of all strategic objectives proposed by

the multidisciplinary groups, the expert groups, that is, professionals working in the areas they addressed in the planning event, started to identify which objectives were associated with the BSC dimensions, in order to communicate an action (a goal) that would contribute, together with the other goals, to the strategy design.

Quezada et al. (2019) observed that some approaches that seek to operationalize goal setting in the BSC adopt quantitative methodologies for multicriteria-based decisions. Ip and Koo (2004) suggested prioritization through conceptual frameworks such as STEP (social, technical, economic, and political). Given the previous alignment steps and the qualitative characteristics of the presented objectives, we chose to develop the goals using the perception of expert groups. We suggested that they identify the strategic objectives that would make the greatest contributions to their area of expertise and which related goals could be suggested. We also explained that the elements of the SWOT analysis and those derived from the themes, purpose, mission, vision, and values should be part of their reflection process.

Suggesting goals using the BSC strategy map facilitates co-creation; it stimulates elements of thinking explained by theories related to design thinking, which considers the creative process an important factor in developing innovation (Owen, 2007). Managers were encouraged to propose goals that went beyond the boundaries of their areas of expertise. At the end of this stage, the groups presented their proposed goals in a plenary session. At first, there were approximately 30, such as (i) implementing innovation management processes, (ii) ensuring cash availability, (iii) expanding R&D initiatives, etc. At the end of the event, and given the similarities in the texts, the consultants grouped these goals into 24 strategic-operational goals, according to Kaplan and Norton's guidelines of up to six indicators per perspective (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, 2004).

In the next stage, the expert groups were invited to propose projects to help materialize the initiatives arising from the goals defined by the groups. For the communication of the projects, in order to simplify this activity, the project model canvas (PMC) methodology was used (Finocchio, 2013). It is a visual way to show a project through 11 dimensions, presented on one page. At the end of this activity, nine projects were presented in plenary. Each received contributions from the participants; some clearly expressed the common perception of initiatives that should be taken, even immediately, while others were considered important but less urgent.

4.1.7 Designing the strategy map

As proposed in this method, the strategy map incorporates the strategic-operational goals chosen through the consequences arising from the strategic themes, SWOT analysis, and guidelines (Ip & Koo, 2004; Quezada et al. 2019) and contributes to communicating and aligning the strategy for the whole organization.

With the strategic goals and projects proposed by the expert groups as input, after the event, the consultants grouped them together based on similarity of content. Next, they allocated them to each of the four dimensions of the strategy map, assessing their alignment with themes, purpose, mission, vision, and values. They identified if there were overlapping actions and made new adjustments to their descriptions. Finally, they evaluated whether cause and effect relationships could be expected between them, in order to ensure the achievement of the strategy's specific and general goals. The consolidated strategy map was then presented to the CEO and Board of Directors, who critiqued it by expressing the need for clearer ways of communicating the intended directions to managers through the BSC. It was then accepted, with 24 strategic objectives, as a driver of efforts for the coming years. Figure 3 shows eight strategic objectives that were deliberated through the planning process presented, in the four perspectives of the strategy map, as well as their cause and effect relationships.

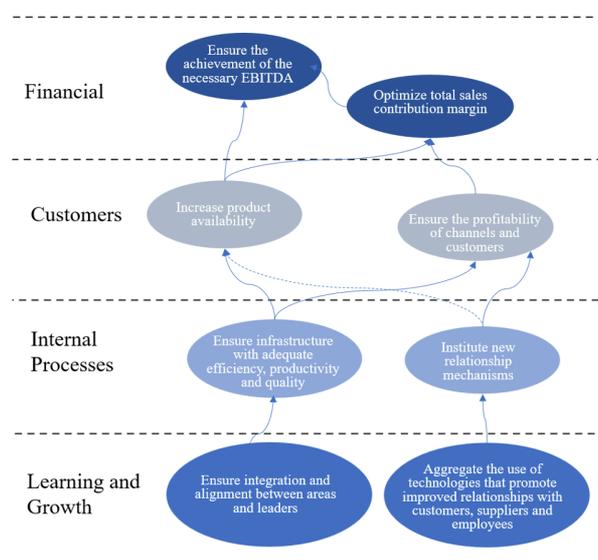


Figure 3. Partial overview of the BSC developed at CF

The performance indicator is the metric used to measure performance against the established goal. They were defined and aligned with each of the 24 strategic-operational goals.

4.2 Critical analysis of the intervention

This section presents a reflection on the application of the strategic planning method (Figure 1) and the results observed in each of its stages in Company Farma. An important aspect to note is that this formal strategic planning experience was the first in the company's history. In addition, the reflections presented below are aligned with the consultants' perceptions during and after the strategic planning development, based on the interactions with the CEO, top managers, and managers involved in this process.

4.2.1. Review or restatement of the purpose – mission, vision, and values

The use of the electronic questionnaire before the event to collect answers from managers helped to prepare the event and led them to reflect on the essential elements for planning that define the intended future situation of the company (mission, vision, and values). Through this approach, the managers' perceptions were consolidated, thus contributing to the communication of the set of perceptions on the moment the company is going through, which in theory reflects the vision of the set of CF decision makers. The development of this activity was considered positive by the participants, especially in the plenary session, which brought interesting contributions to specific parts of the statements.

One perceived limitation of the process was the trade-off between time allocation and depth of reflection. Although the activity yielded excellent results, some participants expressed concerns that certain strategic issues could have been explored more thoroughly if additional time had been available. Conversely, the need to obtain measurable and actionable outputs within a limited timeframe necessitated a more accelerated pace. This tension between depth and efficiency is common in strategic planning interventions, where time constraints often challenge the ability to manage change and engage stakeholders meaningfully (Holm et al. 2025).

As a reflection for other processes, it is important to evaluate the previous experience and maturity of the managers involved and adjust the time available for this stage more carefully.

4.2.2 Identification of strategic themes

The empirical approach showed that the steps of reviewing or restating the company’s purpose and the internal and external analysis followed in the planning event were not able to adequately capture the strategic themes. They are subtle and multidisciplinary concepts that cut across business areas. This stage was found to be the most challenging for managers. While they demonstrated the ability to analyze the present and outline plans for the future, they found it considerably more difficult to envision the future as a basis for guiding present actions. In this company, the CEO emerged as the manager with the greatest potential to articulate a clear desired future state for the organization. This finding resonates with studies showing that in turbulent and uncertain environments, effective strategic planning requires stronger involvement and vision from top management (Johnsen, 2023).

In order to overcome this limitation, the consultants applied discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1985, 2003) to the speeches of the Board of Directors and, especially, the CEO. By identifying the central ideas often present in the various business dimensions, it was possible to define the main strategic themes at CF.

The Table 2 presents an analytical framework of the main types of strategic discourse commonly observed in the speeches of Boards of Directors and CEO. By categorizing the discourses into legitimacy, competitiveness, internal mobilization, risk control, social responsibility, and future orientation, it illustrates how leaders use language to shape organizational identity, mobilize stakeholders, and legitimize strategic choices. Each discourse type is exemplified with typical statements and linked to its potential strategic implications, offering insights into how rhetoric influences both decision-making and organizational positioning.

Table 2

Main types of strategic discourse commonly observed in the speeches of Boards of Directors and CEO

Type of Discourse	Core Objective	Example Statement (Board/CEO)	Strategic Implications
Institutional Legitimacy	Demonstrate alignment with norms, regulations, and societal expectations.	“Our commitment to ESG principles ensures that CF remains aligned with global sustainability standards.”	Reinforces reputation, facilitates compliance, and strengthens ties with regulators and stakeholders.
Growth and Competitiveness	Emphasize innovation, expansion, and market leadership.	“We are setting new benchmarks for our industry through digital transformation and R&D investment.”	Drives continuous innovation but may create high expectations for financial results.
Internal Mobilization	Engage and motivate employees around corporate goals.	“Our people are the driving force behind our achievements. Together, we can reach unprecedented performance.”	Promotes cultural cohesion but may conceal inequalities or workforce overload.
Control and Risk	Reinforce financial discipline and prudent management of uncertainties.	“Our risk management framework guarantees financial solidity and shareholder confidence.”	Balances boldness with prudence; can justify conservative decisions and limit innovation.
Social Responsibility and Purpose	Project the company as an ethical actor with a positive societal impact.	“Beyond profits, we are committed to improving the quality of life in the communities where we operate.”	Builds moral legitimacy and strengthens branding, but requires coherence between discourse and action.

4.2.3 SWOT – internal and external analysis

As previously described, the SWOT analysis was based on the use of an electronic questionnaire, and the data were consolidated and made available to managers through a dashboard that allowed them to browse the information, which contributed to understanding the perceptions on environmental variables. In addition, since the groups could choose the variables they considered most relevant, it was possible to validate the perceptions.

At this stage, a perceived limitation concerns the trade-off of the number of dimensions considered in the SWOT analysis: the consultants proposed around 130 attributes (among strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats). If, on the one hand, the initial survey gained

in coverage, a large number of items were considered indifferent. If we had used the brainstorming method, it is possible that these items would not have been mentioned; however, this would have required a different dynamic, consuming more of the managers' time together. This challenge reflects a common criticism of SWOT analysis, which often lacks clear prioritization criteria and can result in overly extensive and unfocused lists of factors, thereby diluting strategic clarity (Teece, 2018).

4.2.4 Preparation of the SWOT matrix and establishment of strategic objectives

The SWOT matrix proved to be potentially interesting because it allows a comparison of the dimensions of strengths and weaknesses with those of opportunities and threats, and visual identification of the intersections that create opportunities for action, even in a general way. For a good performance of the proposed dynamics, the group should identify between three and five of the most relevant attributes of each dimension and then compose the matrix.

In practice, we observed two types of problems: the difficulty of some groups in the process of negotiating among the participants on which attributes were the most relevant, and then highlighting actions (ultimately the objectives) that would be able to resolve or take advantage of the root causes of the opposing elements. The analytical process required by this approach was not grasped by some participants, who, on the other hand, suggested interesting answers almost intuitively in light of their perception of the elements presented. These challenges are consistent with findings in team research, which show that effective group decision-making depends on shared cognition and coordinated processes, and that misalignment can lead to fragmented or superficial outcomes (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

Again, the issue of time is decisive as a limiting factor in the process. If, on the one hand, there is a tendency to extend the deadline for this activity, on the other hand, the stress caused by the deadline forces the participants to answer the questions presented together, which in a way contributes to saying that the objectives arise from contextual variables, but their choices result from a broad process of negotiation and cognition in a given group.

4.2.5 Proposition of strategic-operational goals

Based on the set of strategic objectives shared by all groups, managers were invited to propose goals in light of the four dimensions of the BSC, focusing on the goal of the expert group. For example, the R&D group identified the guideline of increasing the number of molecules and

therefore what the goals should be, here understood as strategic-operational, in each of the perspectives, within a cause and effect relationship that would contribute to this goal. Next, managers were invited to propose one or more projects to make the goals feasible and thus achieve the guideline. In the plenary session, the results of this work were presented in two stages: first, the objectives, and second, the projects.

The managers' perceptions on what should be done to lead the organization to achieve its purpose, especially during the plenary sessions, showed some interesting results of this process, including the alignment among managers, the co-creation in identifying solutions, which was not perceived by the participants before the event, and above all, the commitment to the proposed goals and projects. Such dynamics resonate with recent findings by Netland et al. (2023), who emphasize that the commitment of both middle and top managers plays a crucial role in fostering the organizational infrastructure required for effective implementation of strategic initiatives. Their study also highlights how middle managers tend to view such programs more favorably, reinforcing the importance of managerial alignment and engagement.

The possibility of dividing the planning process into different moments seems desirable in order to deepen the themes; however, the energy exchanged between the participants in this joint and ongoing process must be considered before making this choice.

4.2.6 Preparation of the strategy map and proposal of performance indicators

At the end of the event, the consultants organized and consolidated all the material produced by the groups. In this strategic planning process, perhaps for the first time at CF, the range of the themes, strategic objectives, goals, and projects required the consultants to contribute to help make sense of the available inputs. The process started with the elaboration of a large strategy map containing all the goals proposed by the groups, as well as the objectives. They then identified the effects of overlap, synergy, and cancellation until it was possible to communicate the strategy clearly and objectively through measurable goals.

Next, the consultants presented the synthesis of the inputs from the groups' activities to the CEO and the Board of Directors, who provided their criticisms, which were considered in the final version of CF's strategic planning elements. After validation by CF's Board of Directors and CEO, the final version of the strategic planning elements was shared with all managers who participated in the process. Next, the consultants helped them identify the

indicators to use for measuring the goals. In the financial dimension, examples of objectives and corresponding indicators include the objective of "ensuring the generation of economic profit" and the corresponding indicator "net profit less the cost of capital." Another established objective was to "optimize the total contribution margin of sales" and the corresponding indicator "total contribution margin."

One of the first actions taken at CF that emerged from the strategic planning process was to improve its budget process in response to one of the proposed strategic-operational goals. This sequence of validation, dissemination, and operationalization illustrates how strategic planning becomes effective when supported by structured managerial involvement and executive endorsement. As Holm, Kringelum, and Anand (2025) argue, translating strategic decisions into concrete actions requires a capable management team and continuous alignment across organizational levels.

6 Conclusions

This study was motivated by the recognition of the centrality of planning processes in organizational success. Through the development and application of a method for identifying strategic objectives and operational goals, the research adopted an action research approach, which proved effective in bridging academic inquiry and practical relevance.

The intervention yielded several insights. Operationally, the statement "we see the present and plan the future" highlighted the importance of preliminary data collection via questionnaires. The process revealed the cognitive diversity among participants and the challenges of aligning perceptions across hierarchical levels and functional areas. This reinforces the notion that strategic planning is not merely a technical exercise but a social and interpretive process.

Managerially, the statement "Krishna sees the future and plans the present" emphasized the strategic foresight required from senior leadership. This aligns with the methodological step of identifying strategic themes, reinforcing the role of top management in shaping macro-level objectives. The CEO's ability to articulate a compelling vision was instrumental in guiding the planning process, validating the literature that highlights the importance of visionary leadership in turbulent environments (Johnsen, 2023).

The study also demonstrated the value of discourse analysis in uncovering implicit strategic themes embedded in leadership communication. This methodological

innovation allowed the researchers to translate abstract aspirations into actionable strategic directions.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by the subjective interpretation of data, which was filtered through the perspectives of a small group of individuals. This introduces potential bias and restricts generalizability. Moreover, the intensity and duration of the intervention may not be feasible in all organizational contexts, particularly those with limited resources or planning maturity.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study advances the theoretical field by proposing a method that synthesizes classical and contemporary strategic management tools. By integrating SWOT analysis and strategic planning with the Balanced Scorecard framework, the research offers a hybrid approach that is both structured and adaptable. This methodological innovation contributes to the literature by providing a replicable model for strategic alignment in organizations.

The method's eight-step structure offers a systematic pathway for translating strategic intent into measurable outcomes. This aligns with the principles of design science research and contributes to the institutionalization of management control practices (Burns & Scapens, 2000).

Furthermore, the study enriches the discourse on action research in management accounting by demonstrating its dual contribution to theory and practice. It supports the view that accounting is an applied social science (Guerreiro, 2022), and that methodological rigor must be balanced with contextual relevance.

The use of discourse analysis to identify strategic themes represents a novel theoretical contribution. It bridges strategic management and organizational communication, suggesting that leadership rhetoric can be a valuable source of strategic insight. This opens avenues for interdisciplinary research that combines strategy and organizational behavior.

Moreover, the study invites future research on the adaptability of the method across different organizational sizes, sectors, and cultural contexts. Comparative studies could explore how strategic planning practices vary in SMEs, public institutions, and non-profit organizations, and how the proposed method can be tailored to these environments.

6.2 Practical Contributions

From a practical standpoint, the research demonstrates

the feasibility of applying the proposed method in a real-world organizational setting. The detailed account of the implementation process provides actionable insights for practitioners seeking to enhance strategic clarity and operational coherence.

The findings underscore the importance of involving managers at different levels, especially senior leadership, in the planning process. The participatory design of the intervention fostered engagement, ownership, and alignment, which are critical for successful strategy execution. The use of digital collaboration platforms (Miro) facilitated co-creation and transparency, enhancing the quality of group deliberations.

The study also offers practical recommendations for overcoming common challenges, such as achieving consensus, managing time constraints, and translating qualitative insights into measurable goals. The integration of SWOT analysis with the Balanced Scorecard enabled a seamless transition from diagnosis to action, ensuring strategic coherence.

Importantly, the method proved effective in organizations with limited prior experience in formal planning. This suggests its potential applicability in small and medium-sized enterprises, public institutions, and service-oriented businesses, where planning cultures are often underdeveloped.

The use of project model canvas to communicate strategic initiatives added clarity and structure to the implementation phase. It allowed managers to visualize the interdependencies among goals, resources, and timelines, thereby improving execution readiness. Finally, the study highlights the importance of post-intervention synthesis and validation. The consultants' role in consolidating inputs and aligning them with strategic themes ensured that the final strategy map was coherent, communicable, and actionable.

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