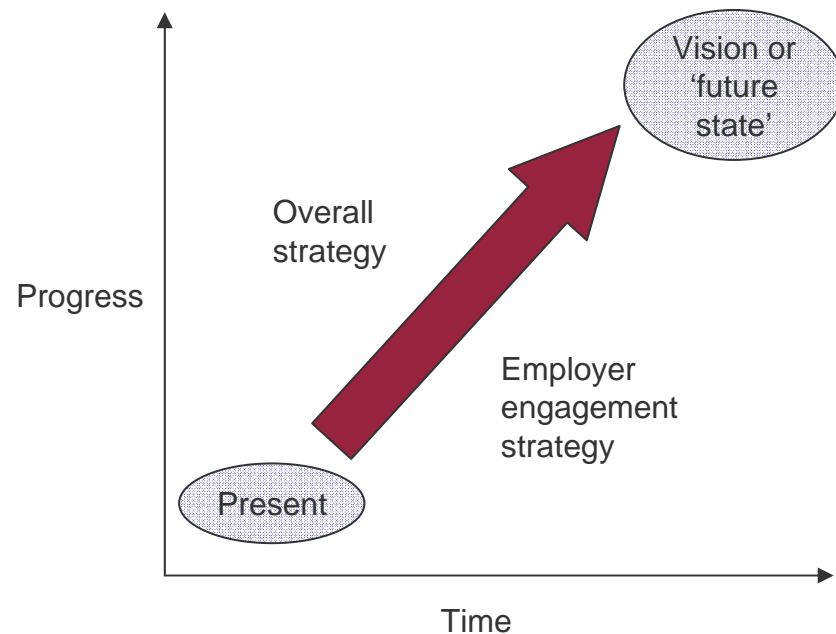




## Building an employer responsiveness strategy

## Strategy defines how to achieve your vision



“To choose a direction, a leader must first develop a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organisation. This image, which we call vision, may be as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal statement. The critical point is that Vision articulates a credible, realistic attractive future for the organisation”

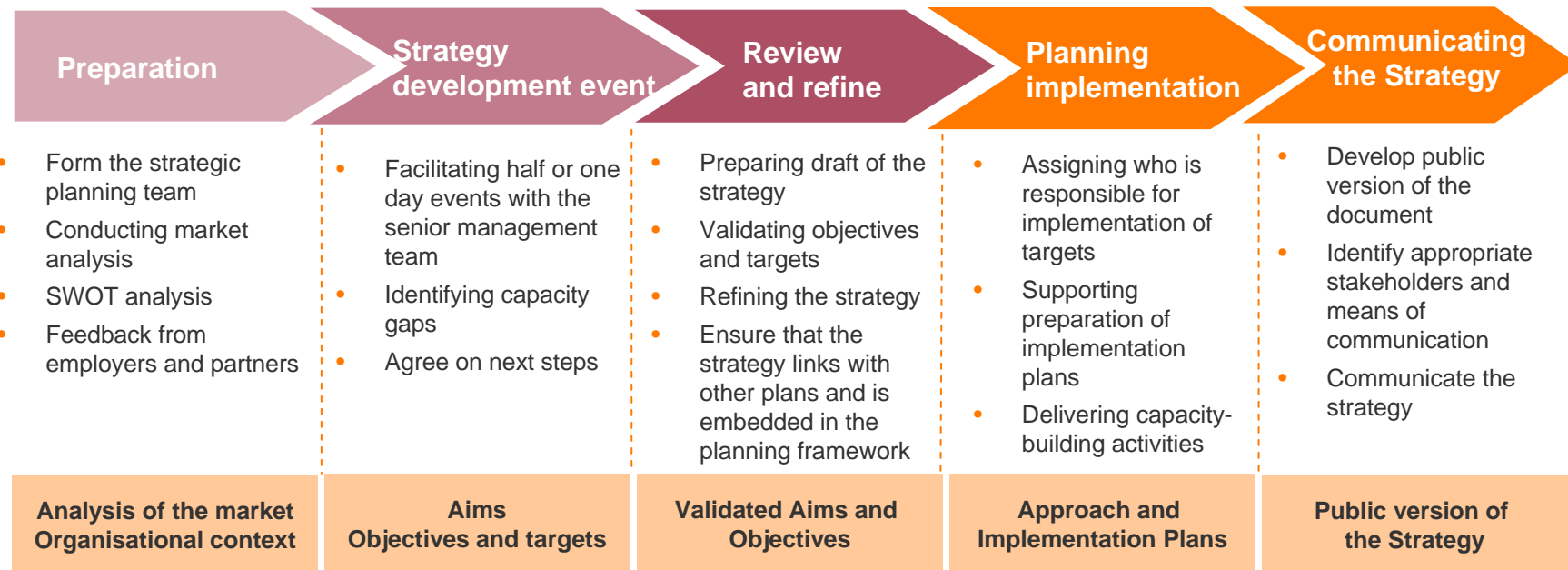
**Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus**

## Key components of the strategy



# Our approach to developing the strategy

Our proposed approach includes several stages that could be tailored according to the provider requirements and objectives of the strategy development. For example, the approach for smaller providers could be more straightforward and based around the strategy development event with the senior management team. For large independent training providers where there is a need to improve employer responsiveness at the operational level, there might be a need to organise an additional event during ‘planning implementation’ stage for those responsible for delivery to develop implementation plans.



## Key strategic choices

<p>Identity and purpose <i>(refer to organisation's overall strategy)</i></p>	<p>What do we want to be? What will we stand for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic aims</li> <li>• Strategic goals</li> <li>• Unifying theme(s)/practices</li> <li>• Principles/values/people philosophy/culture</li> <li>• Approach to stakeholders</li> </ul>
<p>Targets sectors and markets</p>	<p>Where will we compete?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What product/service offerings?</li> <li>• Targeted on which types of employers?</li> <li>• Against which primary competitors?</li> <li>• How will we differentiate ourselves? What would be our unique offer to employers?</li> <li>• Through which delivery models?</li> <li>• In which geographic areas?</li> </ul>

## Key strategic choices (continued)

Approach	How will we compete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will we engage with employers?</li> <li>• What brand experience do we want to create for employers?</li> <li>• How are we going to grow our business?</li> <li>• What activities will we outsource/insource/emphasise/eliminate?</li> <li>• What will be our core capabilities?</li> <li>• How will we promote/market ourselves?</li> <li>• Should we enter alliances, and with whom?</li> <li>• How will we sequence our initiatives?</li> </ul>
Performance	What will be our standards of performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What customer service quality will we aim to achieve?</li> <li>• How will we manage relationships with employers?</li> <li>• What level of employer satisfaction will we aim to achieve?</li> <li>• What will be our measures for success?</li> <li>• What will be our standards for quality of courses?</li> </ul>

## Employer responsive strategy – TQS Indicators

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“Strategy asks an applicant organisation to define why it is working with employers, what it understands its market to be, and what it intends to achieve... Then asks the organisation to set out how they put that strategy into operation.”  
**(TQS Assessment Guide and Evidence Framework)**

### Key elements:

- Contains analysis of market, key customer groups & sectors
- Defines aims & approaches which are communicated to appropriate stakeholders
- Contains specific, measureable & time bound objectives (SMART)
- Links to the marketing plans and other plans
- Performance against strategy is reviewed at an appropriate level

## TQS Scoring Assessment

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“The Strategy Criteria (A.0 and B.0) are not themselves scored directly; their impact on scoring is in how successfully the latter narrative of an application links back to the strategies.”

**(TQS Assessment Guide and Evidence Framework)**

### Scoring Assessment

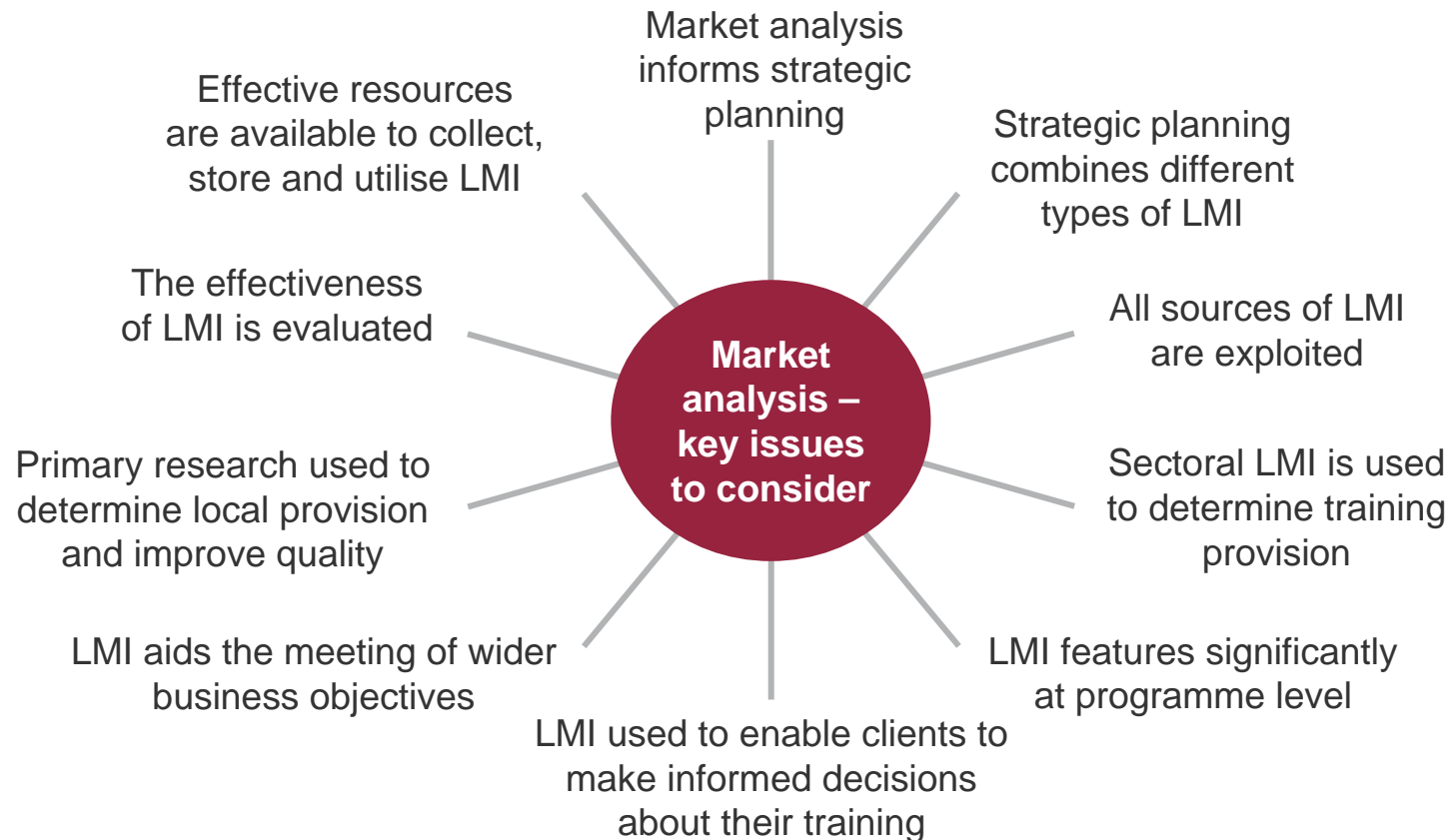
- Soundness of the approach – does the approach have a clear rationale that relates back to the strategy?
- Deployment – is the approach being used consistently across all areas of the organisation?
- Trends – is the organisation making sustained progress towards higher levels of performance?
- Targets – is the organisation setting appropriate targets and how consistently is it achieving them?
- Comparisons – is the organisation comparing its performance with others and is it consistently coming out well in those comparisons?
- Scope – are the results sought by the strategy being achieved?





## Stage 1 – Preparation

## Analysing the labour market information (LMI)



## Examples of market analysis

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### **National/Regional context**

National Apprenticeship Service

Sector Skills Councils

Framework for Excellence

What are the national/regional trends in the sectors and regions in which we operate ? (e.g. care, logistics, construction etc)

What developments are going on in the regions we operate in ? (e.g. regeneration, significant employer expansion, population change etc)

### **Local context**

What are our skills and specialisms now?

What experience do we have with our employers and how should this develop?

What are key employer customer groups and sectors?

What are the needs of key employer customer groups within different sectors?

Who are the main competitors within each sector?

## The outcome

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From the LMI work (as detailed in the group workshop) you should be able to identify a number of challenges that the organisation faces in the current climate. This can be supplemented by analysis of your own organisation (SWOT/PEST).

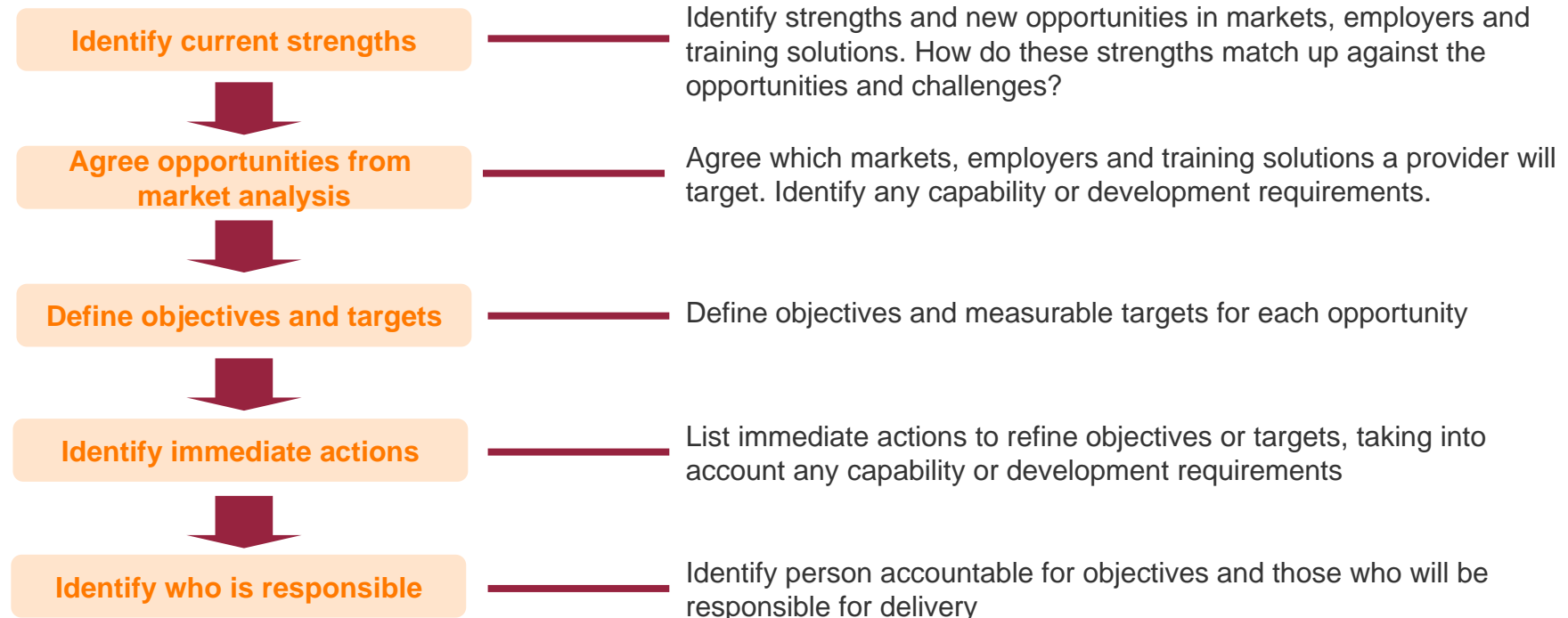
**The outcome of this stage should be a clear understanding of the challenges you will face and the opportunities which exist for your employer responsiveness activity.**



## Stage 2 – Strategy development

## Stage 2 – Strategy development event

The strategy development event can involve the senior management team in identifying and agreeing strategic objectives and targets based on the challenges and opportunities from the ‘preparation’ work. It might be possible to develop a strategy during one half-day event, or it might require follow-up events with those who are involved in the delivery. A sample structure of the event includes:



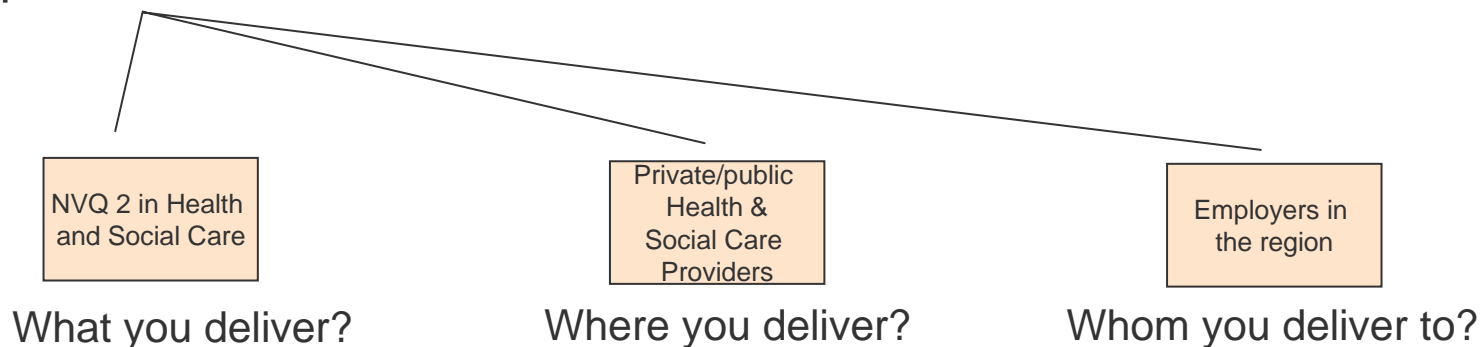
## Successes and strengths

This often involves the senior management team. The group can examine successes and strengths by capturing them on a flipchart. The task here is to think about the 'so what' factor i.e. we offer apprenticeships in x already. This is relevant to x sectors and therefore x will be key employer targets. The facilitator will capture the outputs from the discussions and build up a single picture of the areas where a provider is most successful and where potential new opportunities exist.

Note – if an analysis was conducted by the strategy team during stage 1 this exercise can provide a good sense check and may offer further ideas



### Example Post It Notes



## Agreed opportunities – which ones to carry forward?

The next task is to:

- Use the results from your analysis so far to identify a number of potential opportunities;
- Review potential targets and markets and using LMI information and their knowledge of industries, sectors and employers;
- Identify whether the provider has capability to deliver training solutions or whether investment and development is required; and
- Decide whether to pursue opportunity, conduct further research into opportunity or not pursue opportunity.

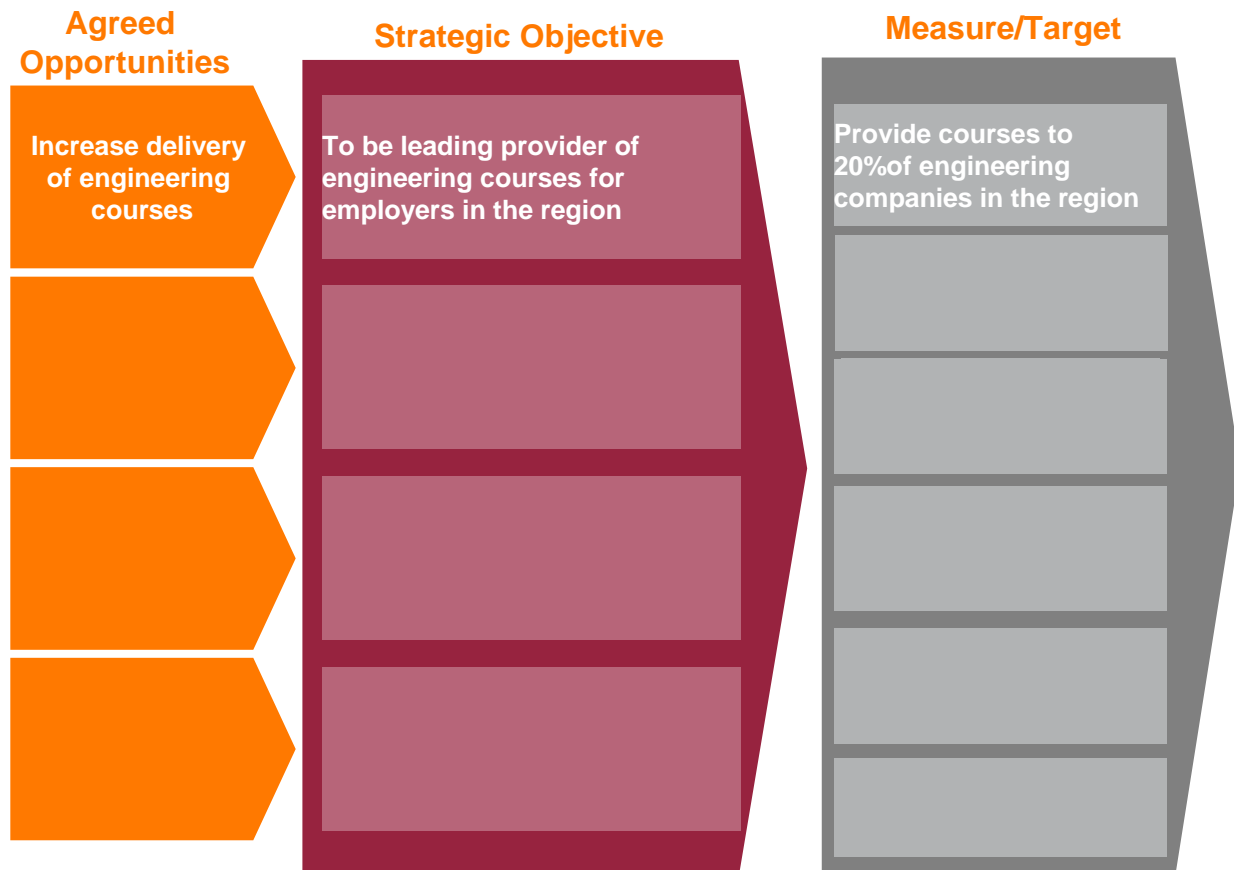
Opportunities from Market Analysis	Agreed Opportunity	Have capability or Development Required?
Growing demand for engineering skills.	Local demand is highest in electrical engineering and this was identified as a key strength and success in first session. Therefore the target is the provision of electrical engineering courses.	Not a strength and therefore investment is required.
Regulation in the logistics sector	Because of the regulation there will be high demand for courses within the logistic sector	Need to develop capability



## Define objectives

Having decided which of your opportunities you will take forward, the next step is to:

- Produce an objective for each target area; and
- Suggest measures for evaluating success in meeting objectives.
- There can be more than one measure or target for each objective but they should be SMART targets.



## Strategy development – typical priorities

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### **Examples of typical priorities from other providers – this can act as a double check list for your objectives**

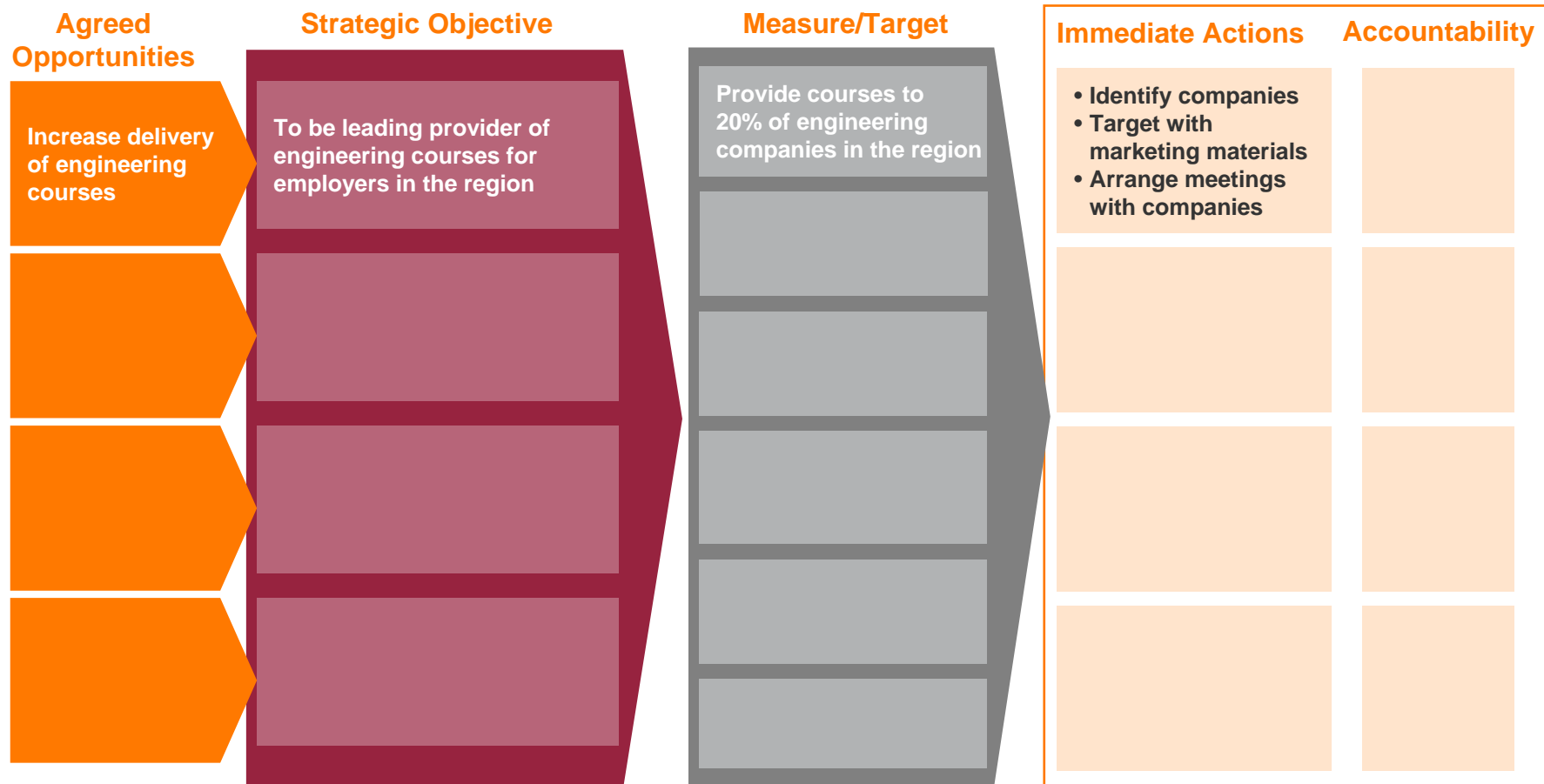
- Employers engaged – growth, repeat business, fee income etc
- Learners engaged – growth in starts Apprenticeships, full cost etc
- Diverse range of programmes
- Quality – Framework for Excellence, success rates, satisfaction, TQS
- Staff – culture of business development, performance, skills
- Employer Responsiveness e.g. identifying needs, relationships, response times
- Marketing/Communications e.g. market positioning, reputation
- Partnership/Stakeholder Engagement
- Critical capabilities e.g. CRM, Market Intelligence, IT, Resources and Facilities

## Examples of SMART targets

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- Increase the number of new employers with employees taking on apprenticeships by 10% per year.
- Increase amount of repeat business from existing customers by 5% each year.
- Improve timely completion by 5% of all apprenticeships.
- Improve positive employer feedback by 5% each year.
- Ensure all employers are responded to within 24 hours of receiving an enquiry.

## Agree who is responsible – add in the detail





## Stage 3 – Review and refine

## Stage 3 – Review and refine

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### The Format

The employer responsiveness strategy is drafted based on results of the stage 2 activity. Additional individual consultations and meetings might need to take place to clarify and refine strategic objectives related to a particular market/sector. A format of the strategy needs to be relevant to you and will need to take into account the following:

- Type and size of the provider (large FE College or small independent training provider);
- How will the employer responsiveness strategy be aligned with the corporate strategy?
- How will the strategy be monitored and reviewed?
- How will the strategy be communicated?

It is important that the employer responsiveness strategy is embedded in the organisation's planning framework.

## Example - Strategic objectives and targets

One of the key elements of the employer responsiveness strategy is defining strategic objectives and targets. The table below includes an example of presentation of strategic targets and objectives you may wish to use in the strategy design.

Strategic Objective	Market / Employer	Measure/Target	Who is responsible?
<b>Overall objective 1: To become the preferred training provider. Target: To achieve 200 Train to Gain starts through cooperation with employers in the following sectors</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To establish ourselves as a preferred training provider for the local government within the area</li> <li>To identify with the local government existing and new curriculum areas in which to develop apprenticeships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve 20% increase in Train to Gain starts for local government clients</li> <li>Develop and deliver 2 bespoke courses for the local government by the end of 2009</li> <li>Achieve 85% employer satisfaction</li> </ul>	Business Manager for local government
To become a preferred training provider for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electrical industries including CCTV, lighting and lifts</li> <li>Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Olympics &amp; Paralympics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve preferred trainer status to deliver training solutions for electrical industries and security</li> <li>Achieve 70 new starts for NVQs in Electrical industries</li> <li>Achieve 85% employer satisfaction</li> </ul>	Business Manager for Electrical engineering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To become a preferred training provider for the Primary Care Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare and Primary Care Trusts (PCT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver training in 2 new curriculum areas by end 2009</li> <li>To achieve 80 TTG starts</li> <li>Achieve 85% employer satisfaction</li> </ul>	Business Manager for Health and Social Care



## Stage 4 – Planning implementation



## Stage 4 - Planning implementation

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In order to support implementation of the employer responsiveness strategy, the provider will need to identify:

- Who will be responsible for implementation of specific objectives and targets?
- How will the progress be monitored?
- When will the strategy will be reviewed?
- Will the marketing plan need to be amended to reflect new strategic priorities?

There could be several options on how the organisation could support implementation of the strategy, including the development of business plans for each strategic objective that

will identify key employers and issues to focus on, planning development of working relationship and marketing activities and analysing competition. In addition, it could include relevant activities in an organisation's business plan and review the progress through the business-planning process.

**It is vitally important to make sure the ideas are properly implemented so you can make the most of the opportunities identified.**

Example of one-page Business Plan that could be developed for each strategic objective is enclosed. This will also need to be included 1-3 year targets and expenditures allocated for relevant marketing activities.



## Stage 5 – Communicating the strategy

## Stage 5 – Communicating the strategy

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### **Communicating the strategy to employees and partner organisations**

It is important that employees and partner organisations understand the organisation's strategy. Employees who understand the strategy will be able to make better day-to-day decisions when working with employers. Partners also need to understand the strategy to ensure that they achieve the same standard of service. It is important to consider how to effectively communicate the strategy to people outside of the strategic planning team. For instance, it may be undesirable to load employees with the task of thoroughly understanding all of your strategic planning documents when many employees only touch on one small operational area. Any communication and internal marketing material must be tailored.

Once the strategy is developed, you could prepare a summary document (similar to the example of an LMI overview we discussed in the group session on 14th Jan) to help inform staff about the strategy and the importance of employer responsiveness. This could be supplemented by informal meetings?

## Stage 5 – Communicating the strategy

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### **Communicating the Strategy to Employers**

Some providers find it useful to communicate their strategy to stakeholders and employers and use it as promotion material. This will involve some extra efforts to develop your strategy into a publicity document. As part of this process, it might be appropriate to "sanitise" the communication document. This involves looking at everything that might be shared and asking "will it hurt us if other people know this?" A very good example of something that's unlikely to hurt is sharing organisation's view of company's strategic competencies.

## Effective communications are critical

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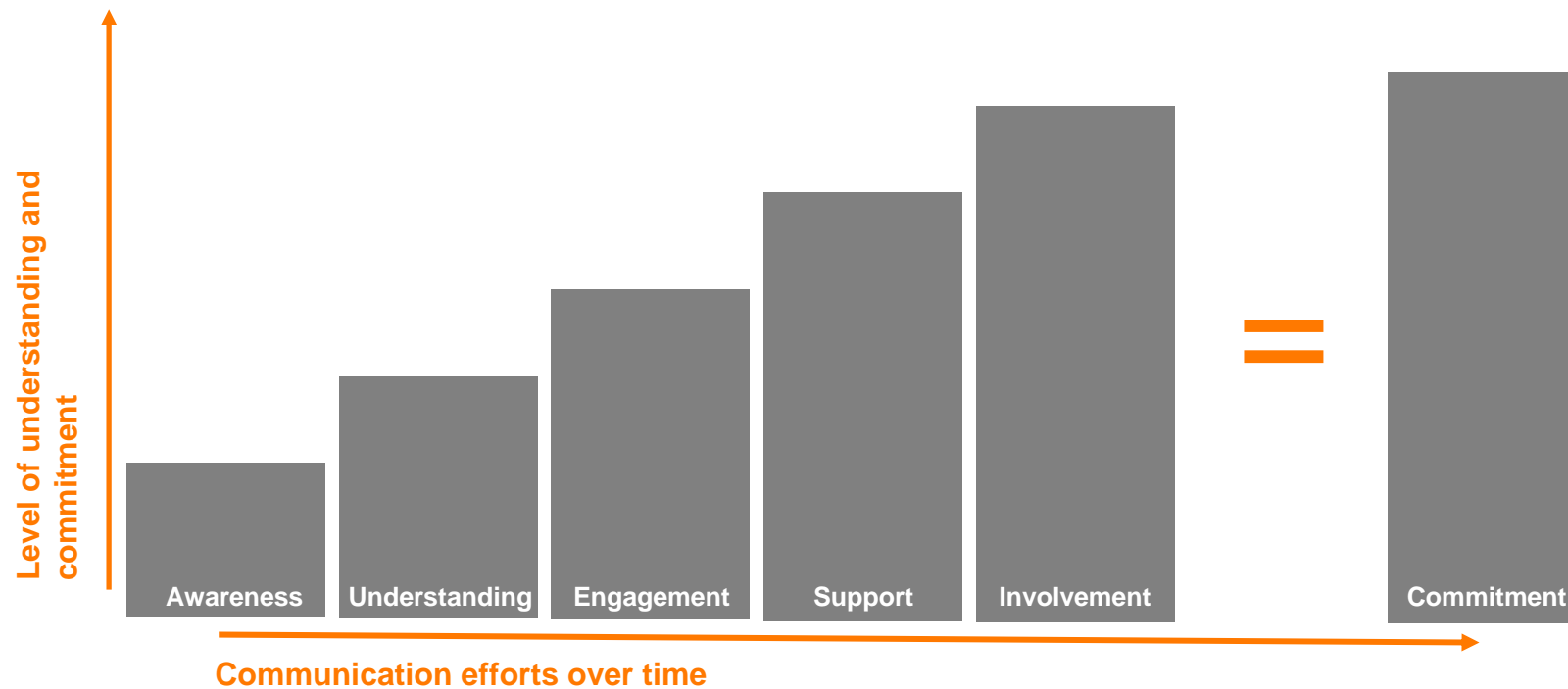
**Communication is an area in which is often neglected. It is critical to the engagement of your key stakeholders.**

### Some statistics:

- 100% of organisations rate good communications as a key success factor in implementing change.
- 70% of projects fail because there is ineffective communication.
- 34% of organisations rate poor communication as the key barrier to implementing change successfully.

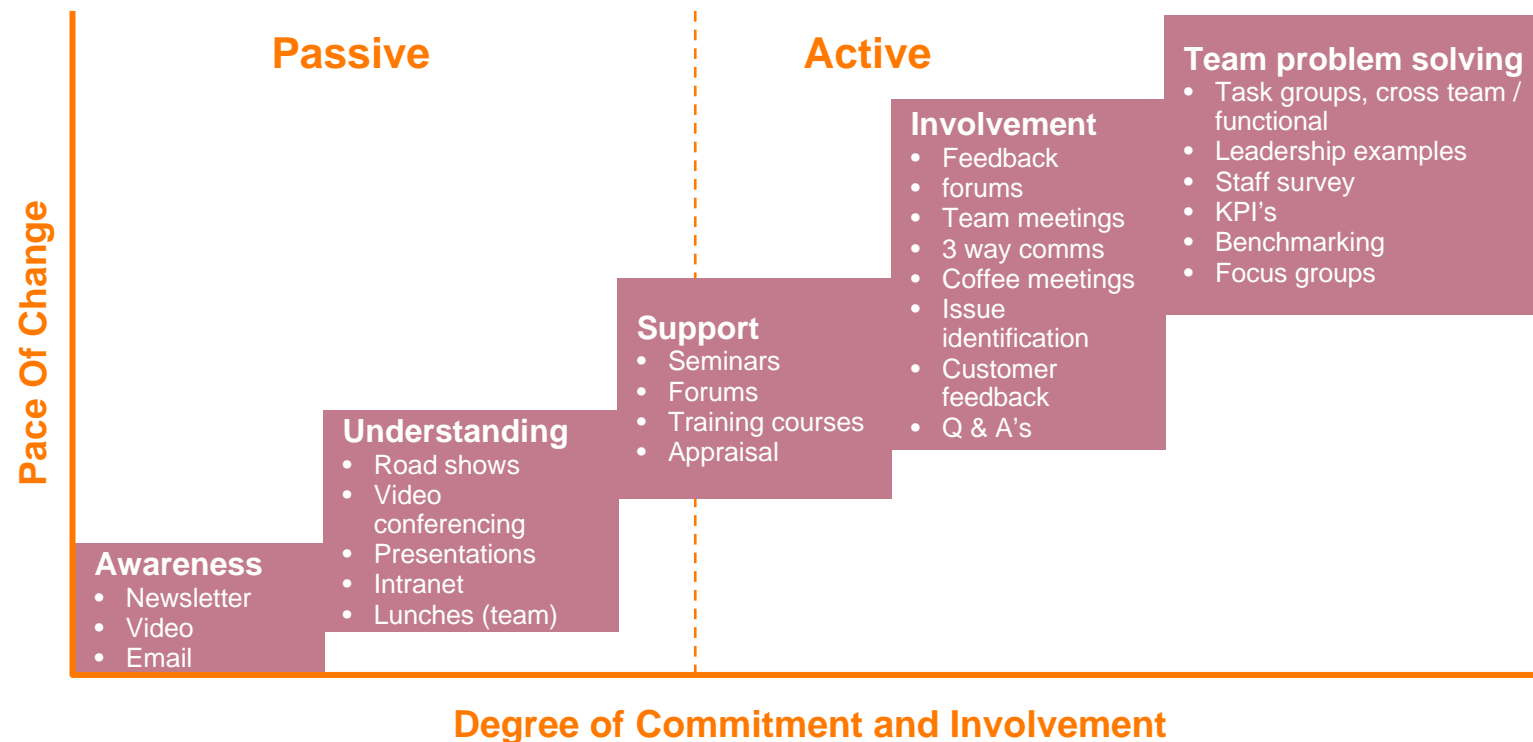
**Source: KPMG research**

## The different stages of the commitment curve



# Ways of communicating

Try to match communication methods with the appropriate stage on the commitment curve



## Communication plan – example

Timing	Audience	Channel	Key message	Objective	Delivered by	Next steps
May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to use a whole organisation approach to become more employer responsive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate ideas how the whole organisation can become more responsive to employers by involving all staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paul Smith (Principal)</li> </ul>	
June 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to enthuse and upskill staff so they become more employer responsive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To secure buy in of Senior managers/team leaders to cascade to and enthuse whole organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gerard Jones (Executive team member board)</li> </ul>	





## Summary

## Our approach to developing the strategy

