

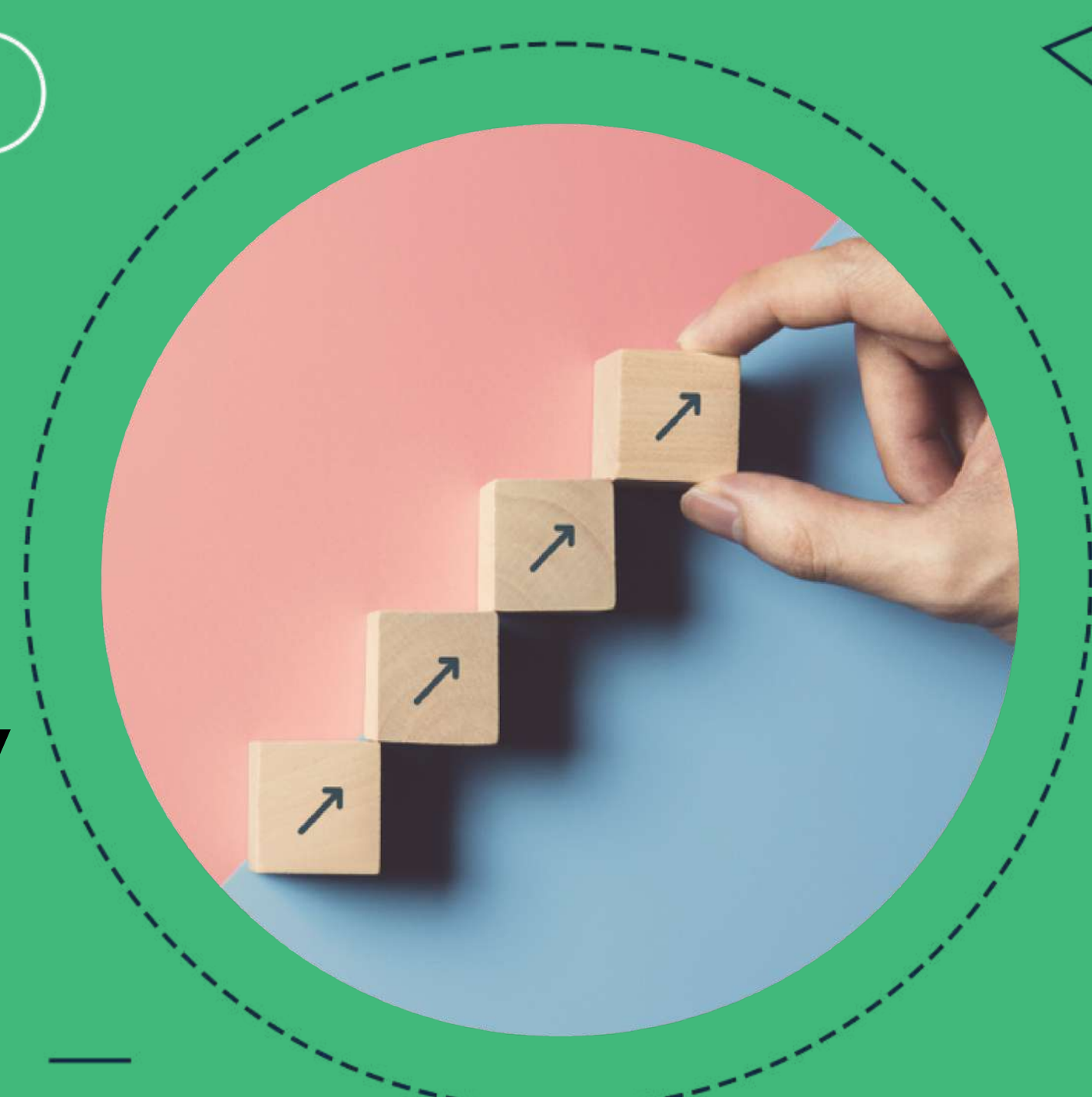
10 tips for running a

Successful executive strategy day

It is not uncommon for those involved to bemoan 'yet another strategy day'.

The reasons for this are many and varied, however done well, that lament can be changed to applause. Successful executive days are not achieved through happenstance.

To execute well on the day takes upfront clarity of your sponsor's desired outcomes, many hours of preparation and stakeholder engagement.



Encompass' top tips for hitting it out-of-the-park

on the day are highlighted below:

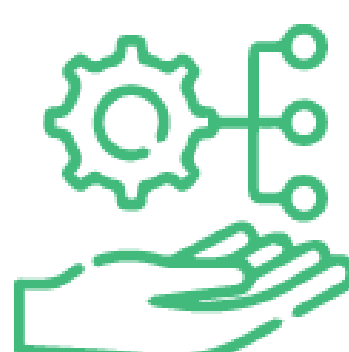
PREPARATION:



Executive Sponsor Alignment (Secretary or CEO)

this could take two or three conversations to really focus on what your Executive Sponsor needs from the day. This is not an extraction exercise; it is a two-way conversation to help and guide. Encourage pragmatism - resist the temptation to include too much on the agenda.

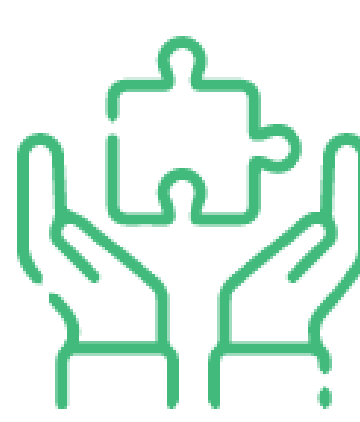
Alignment to strategic plan
whilst discussing with your Executive Sponsor, always have an eye on the strategic plan or goals. Can you draw a direct line back to them? Avoid abstract topics - anchor the day back to common or understood ground.



Interview with direct reports and attendees prior to the session

Laying the foundations prior to the day will pay dividends once the Executive session is in flight. Create a safe space for them and anonymise their responses. Ensure the interview questions relate to the agenda on the day and highlight any areas you think may be contentious beforehand. Create trust early and apply 'Chatham House' rule to responses.

If you want to present solutions
ensure these are socialised as part of the interview process and feedback captured accordingly. As a rule, people don't like to be surprised, least of all Executives. Thrusting solutions at people in the moment can lead to debate and negativity that may derail your day.



Summarise interview responses with Executive Sponsor

playback key 'themes' based on what you have heard in your interview sessions. Call out any potential flash points and offer options to fine tune the agenda. By this stage, all attendees should have a high understanding of the day, its objectives and key topic areas. They have time to process and consider their input prior to the session beginning.

ON THE DAY:

1 Do you really need an icebreaker?

Typically, the Executive/Senior Leadership team will know each other well. So, an icebreaker in the traditional sense is not necessarily needed. That said, these can be long and formal days, and imparting a bit of fun or distraction can go a long way to keeping attention and focus in the room. We like to use "2 Truths and a Lie", responses of which we harvest during the 1-2-1 interviews, and then distribute throughout the day. It takes two minutes, and the results are usually very enlightening!

2 Leverage tools that ensure all executives have an opportunity

to provide feedback and their say - as in recent times, being face to face to run these days is very challenging. Therefore, the choice of online collaboration tools (and preparation in their set up and use) is key to a positive collaborative experience. Take the time to read their posted messages that may have come up whilst others were talking and provide all the opportunity to be heard. Online facilitation is doubly challenging and requires practice, a dress rehearsal with your own team and preparation to be successful.

3 Encourage structured thinking on solutions

from multiple perspectives - we use De Bono thinking hats for a set period. Encourage all participants to wear the same-coloured hat before moving to the next. This prevents debate and chaos ascending, especially in an online environment.

4 Always agree the next steps,

solutions and executive sponsors on the day. Wherever possible do this at the end of each agenda point prior to moving on.

5 Follow up with structured communications and messaging

from the day - to avoid being 'just another Executive day', be diligent on the follow ups and communications out to the broader teams (they will know their Executives have met). Ensuring tangible action from the day will create credibility and likely present you with the opportunity for subsequent sessions.

ARE YOU READY FOR TRANSFORMATION?

Encompass Consulting Services partners with state government, federal government and corporates to develop tailored solutions that turn strategy into results. Successful organisational transformation begins from the top. It requires executives to lead by example and embrace the behavioural traits needed to effect change.

Encompass provides truth to power, drawing on data and experience to help leaders gain a true understanding of transformational challenges and the skills required to effectively lead through them. If you want to chat about facilitation of executive strategy days or broader executive coaching reach out to jamesalderson@encompassconsultingservices.com