The most successful businesses can connect the dots. We give you the tools to do just that.

So who should read the book? Anyone that is planning, designing, implementing, remediating and contributing to their businesses performance.

After reading this book you will?

- Be able to apply a proven commercially focussed consulting process for getting your business from where it is today to where it needs to be.
- Understand how your internal team can be your agents of change.
- Plan how to make your business competitive and enhance its differentiators.
- Drive the alignment of your key enablers; People, Technology, Process and Information to your strategy.
- Have a framework to help you deliver success.
- Gain improved insight into how to optimise your business.
Connecting
THE DOTS
The Blueprint for Strategically Aligned Business Performance

www.realisingpotential.com.au
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Preface

Over the last twenty years we have observed organisations that work well and optimise how they operate and others that need a lot of help. Our experiences are built from working with multi-nationals, large corporates, start-ups and privately owned small and medium sized businesses. We look back over these experiences and think “wow – there is enough experience to write a book.” So here it is. We would like to share that experience with you.

We have seen businesses that had a great concept, product or service and built the most robust of financial, investment and funding models. They created a viable start-up and yet failed to build the structures required to create and support sustainable success.

We have had the amazing opportunity to work with some great clients who have trusted us to deliver expertise and insight. All of these experiences have helped hone the framework to make it what it is today – Realising Success® a repeatable, proven method of getting an organisation from where it is today to where it needs and wants to be.

However a framework is just a framework and it’s what you do with it that counts. We have designed it in a way that allows organisations to understand, control and deliver their projects. It provides a proven structure that can enhance your business performance and differentiators.

Models and diagrams are part of the framework toolkit. We use them as they help to visualise information and help communicate the various elements of the framework and business architecture. You will see these used throughout the book. In our experience it is only the most successful organisations that can connect the dots.

So who should read the book? Anyone who is planning, designing, implementing, remediating and contributing to a business’s performance. We hope that you find the information useful, and most of all get value from it. Here is to you – realising your success.
Introduction

Getting from where you are now to where you want to be is never easy. More than ever businesses of all sizes need accurate real time information to make informed decisions and optimise ways of doing business. They need to drive and deliver increasing value to customers to remain relevant and the supplier or partner of choice. There are numerous ways you can do this. The secret is working out the best way.

If we combine our careers we can account for more than fifty years of experience across multiple continents, industries and companies. We have worked for large corporates, been entrepreneurial and started our own ventures and then came together to form our consulting practice. This has allowed us to look at how various business models, methodologies and frameworks contribute (or don’t) to an organisation’s success. After working with many clients for more than thirteen years, we thought it would be worth sharing some of our experiences and insights.

If you are about to start building a new business or reshaping an existing one, then you have the ideal opportunity to get the right structures, enablers and team in place. One of the key insights of this book is, that getting the company design and effective enablers right is essential. If you have an established business, there is great benefit to be realised in looking at improvement options. If you are in start-up mode, there is no harm in looking at how to build a sustainable, repeatable business. One thing is for sure: it is never too early or too late to start.

There are numerous business models, frameworks and methodologies available. Some are better than others. We often come across organisations using enterprise architecture frameworks that have an IT focus, with business and commercial elements as an afterthought. It is rare that businesses using these types of tools ever get the outcomes they want, and they spend a lot of money for little or no return. Others use systems thinking frameworks, again with little or no return as they have been allowed to turn into what is merely an academic exercise.
That’s why we have developed Realising Success®. Clients like the approach we use as it gets results. We see it as being a commercially focussed Strategic Performance Framework™. Why did we call it Realising Success®? Probably simply because our business name is Realising-Potential, and it sort of made sense to us.

When you ask people about success and what it means to them, they often find it hard to articulate. The word has an almost abstract element to it. Realising Success® to us means that the organisation’s objective or aim is achieved and it is sustainable.

Once you achieve success, maintaining it requires ongoing effort and focus. Most organisational strategies have a finite lifecycle, as do ways of doing things. Alignment is an ongoing process.

We believe sustainability and repeatability are supported by the positive disruption and alignment of people, process, systems, information and organisational capability. By capability we mean the ability to do something.

The first question we are often asked is “where do we start?” As with any strategic initiative, improvement project or transformation programme you need to define a starting point. This will be where the business is experiencing inefficiencies or poor performance impact. What are the strategic outcomes you need to achieve? These should be the performance drivers. Strategic objectives are not always about growth and profit, although these are important and what most organisations strive for. They can be about making something great, or as good as it can be. Or they can simply be about having a happy, engaged and productive team. Our assessment shows that an engaged and productive team is usually the by-product of building a great business.

We call the starting point the Baseline – what does the business need to achieve, where is it at today? What works and what doesn’t? What initiatives do we need to undertake?
As part of the baseline we look at the current organisational structures and capability, culture and governance processes. These multifaceted views enable you to assess the challenges the organisation faces and to determine the appropriate interventions. Defining a baseline position can identify any number of opportunities.

Once we have that baseline information we start looking at what improvements can be made, how structures can be optimised and identify the quickest way to get the results you need or are aiming for.

The book provides a framework for achieving improved performance. Commencing a project of this type can be a daunting task. We suggest you start with areas that improve customer value and cash management first. These are two of the great enablers of any business.

We have structured the book in a way that offers consulting know-how at a fraction of the cost of engaging consultants and in a way that will assist you to develop your own internal capability. You don’t need to read it from cover to cover, as you can simply use it as reference. However it will be beneficial if you do read it in its entirety, as you will get to understand why we do things the way we do and the most effective sequence.

The framework has four phases. We have covered each of these phases in the chapters as follows.

**CHAPTER 1** outlines the thoughts behind the framework.

**CHAPTER 2** covers the issues you need to consider when contemplating the implementation of a performance framework.

**CHAPTER 3** outlines the roles and responsibilities required to successfully manage and deliver the project outcomes.

**CHAPTER 4** provides a good starting point for those initiating a project.
CHAPTER 5 sets out the process for assessing your baseline or starting point and details a maturity assessment exercise you can use to measure your ongoing progress.

CHAPTER 6 defines efficient and effective operational process.

CHAPTER 7 helps you identify organisational structures that enable success.

CHAPTER 8 considers business differentiators and the importance of understanding what they are.

CHAPTER 9 provides a practical governance model.

CHAPTER 10 covers the all-important innovation process.

CHAPTER 11 is the process for defining the future state.

CHAPTER 12 looks at the growth of digital technologies and the impact on business.

CHAPTER 13 outlines how to build capability.

CHAPTER 14 goes through the steps of implementation.

CHAPTER 15 describes some of the measures you might find useful.

CHAPTER 16 is all about alignment of systems, process, people and information.

CHAPTER 17 outlines the importance of change management and connecting the dots.

CHAPTER 18 provides some thought provokers on creating a world-class business.

Let’s get started.

PRACTICAL TIP

It’s never too late to build better business structures and enablers.
CHAPTER 1
The Realising Success® Framework

We call Realising Success® a Strategic Performance Framework™ as it can be used to drive business improvement, agility and success. It outlines the steps that need to be taken to achieve strategy execution and alignment and to develop a practical approach to improved enabling structures within the business. It can help an organisation build business capability and define and improve the key elements that make or break a business, namely: technology, process, people and information. One good thing about it is that it is scalable and it helps you work through what is in place now and what the future state and opportunities can be.

Over many years and projects we have used various methods, both our own and those of others. This has helped us determine what works, what doesn’t and why. The outcome is the Realising Success® framework. We have used it to improve and transform numerous businesses. For enterprise-wide projects and initiatives to be successful, we believe the framework must be supported by strong leadership and a clear vision of the end state. Having an environment conducive to performance improvement is also beneficial.

We have included approaches and techniques which assist you to develop an understanding of the current state of the organisation. You will see that we use models and diagrams throughout the defined phases to aid understanding and communication. The models have various levels of abstraction, depending on the intended audience. We have found that models and diagrams contribute to the communication of the framework elements and the overall business objectives.

As part of the framework we have a defined key role that we call the Strategic Performance Architect. This is a role we have within our own organisation. This role works in conjunction with the executive team to deliver the agreed business outcomes. The responsibilities of the Strategic Performance Architect are outlined in Chapter 3.
As organisational strategies run their course and change on a regular basis, the framework is formulated to be adaptive, allowing the business to expand, contract and modify as required. Like most things, organisational strategy has evolved over time to become an adaptive model which needs to be interpreted and aligned with the business operations on a regular basis. Organisational strategy and the Realising Success® framework are, in our view, bound together. The strategy sets the objectives, the framework enables the organisation to achieve the required outcomes. We have provided a step by step approach, but you can use specific elements of the framework to address specific issues and opportunities.

Core elements of the framework are strategy, analysis, design, delivery and benefits realisation.

Using the Realising Success® framework can assist you to execute the strategy in a defined, measurable way. It provides a structured view of how systems, process, people and information can build and enable future capabilities whilst supporting the existing operations and differentiators.

Throughout the book you will see the term enterprise, which we use to describe the entire organisation and its relationships. In short, enterprise means end to end business.
This R-P model depicts the framework at an abstract level. It is useful for communicating the key elements without getting into too much detail. It stresses the importance of setting and understanding the strategy, how governance is required and that both are supported by the architecture. Performance is the outcome of having all three components aligned and effective. We find the model useful for putting the performance framework in context.

Over time, as the organisational strategy runs its course, the Strategic Performance Architect will need to be vigilant to ensure continual alignment of these four elements.

The framework comprises:

- a structured process for understanding what is currently in place
- planning, designing and implementing improved business performance
- models and artefacts to enable visualisation and communication
- guiding principles
- governance considerations
- a proven delivery methodology to connect the dots
- a number of additional tools available on our website.

Realising Success® is designed to help you with the transition of moving from vision to reality. It allows business enablers to be broken down to their various components so you can determine what is working, what isn’t and what needs to be improved.

Combining technology, process, people and information with improved capability provides an opportunity for every organisation to enhance or change its position. We believe that a commercially focussed framework is both relevant and necessary.
All too often organisations leap to technology solutions before fully understanding what they want and need. Maybe this explains why so many enterprise level system projects fail. It’s not the technology, it’s what organisations do with it – or better still what they don’t do with it. This was borne out during a conversation with a CEO who called us when he realised that his systems replacement project was off the rails. He expressed his frustration at having spent millions of dollars on IT infrastructure, enterprise resource planning systems and certification courses for staff. He felt it was a waste of time and money. He was right, it was a waste. An expensive waste in more ways than one.

Unfortunately for him, the core issue in this case was that the business initiative had an IT focus and not a business focus. The CEO failed to provide the necessary leadership, he only got involved when he realised he had a problem.

**The Framework**

The good thing about frameworks is: they are just that – frameworks. You can use specific elements of it or you can use it as a scripted process. How you use it will depend on your particular situation and where your business is in its particular lifecycle.

Our core framework follows the steps outlined in the methodology model on the next page.
We have used the Realising Success® framework to:

- Expand business and team capabilities
- Remediate poorly implemented systems and processes
- Define and manage projects and performance initiatives
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness
- Reduce costs
- Mitigate risk
- Improve operational performance
- Drive business benefits
- Build agility and sustainability
- Improve system integrity and quality
- Transition various businesses across various industries.

Even completing the baseline process alone can result in some tremendous improvements.

These are the types of cost reductions and other benefits you can typically realise from these types of initiatives:

- Improve cash flow through quicker billing and collection.
- Consolidate or outsource technology infrastructure to reduce running, support and maintenance costs.
- Improve information management processes to reduce the time people spend on managing and searching for information.
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational processes.
- Reduce customer churn through the delivery of value and improved experience.
- Reduce unplanned down-time.
- Achieve a greater understanding and deliver what customers want and need.
- Make it easy for the customer to deal with and buy from you.
- Improve capability.
- Improve performance and profitability.