

CASE STUDY

**A BIOTECHNOLOGY COMPANY
ACCELERATES AND PIVOTS TO A
NEW STRATEGY**

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Agile Strategy

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A biotechnology company accelerates and pivots to a new strategy

The challenge and issues

Between 2017 -2018 we were commissioned to undertake a project in a small entrepreneurial biotech company running two concurrent programmes to develop treatments for a rare genetic muscular disease and to develop a novel antibiotic for the treatment chronic diarrhoea associated with recurrent bacterial infection.

In 2009 the company had restructured and by the end of 2016 delivered clinical success in two programmes. A licensing deal brought investment to pursue their R&D programme and the board endorsed a significant phase shift from a research-based to late-stage development programme without big pharma support.

However, several problems remained unresolved:

- ☑ The executive team, whilst highly competent, needed to manage two concurrent clinical programmes
- ☑ The COO confirmed the need for greater strategic clarity throughout the organisation
- ☑ Enabling the R&D teams to act autonomously would require changes to the governance and operating model
- ☑ Shifting from Phase 2 to Phase 3 development would result in significant growth and increasingly complex challenges

Solutions

We designed and facilitated the implementation of an 'intent-based' operating model and coached delivery teams and leaders to operate and coordinate activities effectively with minimal central control. We also helped the company to weight its classic organisational matrix in favour of the project delivery teams.

The shift required everyone in the company to fully understand the company's intent and use it as the context for their actions. Operational decision-making was transferred to the lowest possible level of management, and simplified governance structures gave project delivery teams accountability for results and control over resources.

To support the new 'intent-based' operating model we also created a set of company values which described the way the company wanted to think and behave. We achieved this with an all-volunteer team and developed a facilitator package so that managers could take responsibility for delivering learning sessions in their teams.

- ☑ The redesigned operating and governance model supported accountability and empowerment
- ☑ Everyone in the company understood what success looked like

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- ☑ Decision-making delegated to the key project teams
 - ☑ Everyone in the company was aligned around common values and behaviours



Our intent-based operating model focused on the patient and teams which inspired folks to collaborate more effectively and made a real difference in developing treatments

R&D team project manager

Results

In mid-2018 there was a sudden and unexpected upset. One of the clinical trials announced negative results that meant abandoning the project. Whilst profoundly disappointing, the data were conclusive. However, the intent-based operating model enabled the company to re-orient at speed and pivot towards delivering a new set of novel antibiotics for unmet clinical needs.

The biggest effect of adopting leading through intent was that senior leaders had genuine clarity about the outcomes they wanted. The board and executive team were aligned and willing to let people figure out what they needed to do to deliver and trusted them to do so. A series of benefits were observed. They can be summarized as:

- > Increased speed of decision-making because of delegation to the most appropriate level, with single point accountability for programme delivery.
- > Every member of the team was aligned and empowered to make decisions within their own remit.
- > Productivity improvements resulting from greater clarity about what success looked like.
- > Successful delivery of key goals included on-time reporting of clinical trial study data to support effective decision-making, securing finance for the Phase 3 clinical programme and delivery of a comprehensive antibiotic research strategy.



Our lead clinical programme was an exemplar of leading through intent. Our autonomy ensured we delivered the Phase 2 programme on time and with the high-quality dataset needed to make the disappointing but necessary decision to terminate the research

R&D Programme Lead

As straightforward as it may seem to implement procedural changes to the way that strategy is developed, formulated, translated, and executed, the key challenges were cultural and behavioural. The cultural phenotype of an organisation can be hard to change but has a critical impact on implementation and results. In this case, the client actively recruited, developed, and supported people at every level to think and act like leaders. This resulted in:

- > A higher level of creative problem-solving at lower levels of the organisation.
- > Measurable improvements in alignment to company goals.
- > People understanding their role in delivering the company's strategic goals and felt personally responsible for the outcome.
- > Teams and individuals had greater satisfaction with the degrees of freedom they had and were confident they would be supported if they took decisions.



The biotech business lends itself to leading by intent – rapid alterations of tactical direction are required as biological data often surprises even from the most well planned programmes. This was an example of this and the ability of the teams to pivot was exceptional

COO and President of R&D