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Article

All aboard? How Line-of-Sight impacts the strategic commitment of nonprofit employees

Kenn Meyfroodt[1] and Sebastian Desmidt[1].

[1] Ghent University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Department of Marketing, Innovation, and Organization, Research cluster HRM and OB

Abstract

Line-of-Sight refers to an employee's (a) awareness and perceived importance of the organization's strategic priorities, (b) accurate understanding of how job tasks and roles contribute to the realization of these strategic priorities, and (c) perceived fit between these strategic priorities and his or her job. Line-of-Sight is assumed crucial for enhancing employee strategic commitment as a more accurate understanding of the strategic priorities can enhance employees' satisfaction with the strategic priorities, leading them to rate the overall quality of these priorities highly and commit to ensuring proper implementation. However, empirical evidence is scarce, making it hard to provide evidence-based recommendations. Therefore, we explore primary survey data from 128 frontline employees and the general director of a human service nonprofit organization to arrive at a set of crucial recommendations for nonprofit managers. Moreover, by shedding light on the motivational mechanism, drivers, and benefits of Line-of-Sight we hope to have paved the way and call for more research on Line-of-Sight. Our findings suggest that (a) Line-of-Sight's components matter for employees' strategic commitment, (b) information, training, and team leaders' visionary leadership are key to enhancing Line-of-Sight, but (c) not all employees may have similar levels of Line-of-Sight, necessitating targeted alignment efforts across the organization.

Key words

Line-of-Sight, alignment, strategic commitment, nonprofit organization.

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Extra information

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Line-of-Sight

We begin this article by discussing what Line-of-Sight is and why it warrants the attention of nonprofit managers. Subsequently, we introduce three guiding questions designed to assist nonprofit managers in contemplating Line-of-Sight within the context of their respective nonprofit organizations. We then analyze case data using a stepwise approach (aligned with the guiding questions) to highlight the importance of Line-of-Sight for nonprofit managers, the motivational mechanisms underlying Line-of-Sight, how to activate those mechanisms, and how to assess whether all employees are on board. The results of the different analytical steps contribute to formulating crucial recommendations and uncovering implications, which we present as three key managerial takeaways for nonprofit managers. In addition to its practical relevance, our approach provides empirical validation for the theoretical assumptions put forth. We hope that other researchers build on our findings to further explore and understand the topic of Line-of-Sight.

What is it (good for)?

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are complex entities operating in environments that are characterized by uncertainty, change and dynamism [1]. To be successful in such a demanding environment, NPO's not only need to capitalize on their employees' capabilities but also maximize employees' strategic commitment as strategic commitment will act as a motivational driver for employees' support for and pursuit of the organization's strategic priorities ([2], [3], [4], [5]). The literature states that such employee strategic commitment is fueled by a motivational mechanism named *Line-of-Sight* (LOS). LOS encompasses the extent to which employees (a) have an accurate understanding of the organization's strategic priorities, and (b) know how to contribute to the realization of these strategic priorities ([2], [6], [7]). For instance, for a particular NPO where having sustainable partner relationships with key stakeholder groups or specific institutes is listed as a strategic priority, employees should understand this and know that they, for example, can contribute by regularly sharing specific information with those partners.

While LOS does not necessarily equate with employees contributing to the organization's strategic priorities, it is considered a crucial motivational component: an accurate understanding of the organization's strategic priorities and how to contribute to them, is expected to increase the perceived fit between an employee's job (i.e., job tasks and roles) and the organization's strategic priorities ([2], [8]) which, in turn, should foster intentions to contribute to the realization of these strategic priorities and thus organizational success ([9], [10]). LOS is, hence, argued to consist of three interconnected elements (the examples are hypothetical):

- an employee's accurate understanding of the organization's strategic priorities: *LOS-strategic priorities* (e.g., correctly understanding that having sustainable partner relationships with key stakeholder groups or specific institutes is a strategic priority for their NPO),
- an employee's accurate understanding of how to contribute to the realization of the strategic priorities: *LOS-actions* (e.g., correctly understanding that regularly sharing specific information with specific partners supports the strategic priority),
- an employee's *perceived* fit between the organizational strategic priorities and their job (i.e., *Perceived strategic priorities/job fit*) (e.g., perceiving that generating reports as a job task supports the strategic priority of having sustainable partner-relationships with

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key stakeholder groups or specific institutes, because it facilitates sharing specific information with specific partners).

Despite the theoretical arguments underpinning these relationships [11], empirical insights are limited and many questions remain, to a large extent, unanswered. To what extent do employees understand the strategic priorities of their organization? To what extent do employees comprehend how specific actions align with this *bigger picture*? When employees know how to be effective contributors to the organization's strategic priorities, do they then perceive a better fit between the strategic priorities and their job, and are they, ultimately, more committed to realizing these strategic priorities?

Three guiding questions for nonprofit managers

Although the different LOS elements are conceptually rooted in the broader human resource management and organizational behavior literatures (e.g., [3], [11]), empirical research investigating (a) whether and how LOS works, (b) how organizations can support the motivational mechanism of LOS, and (c) if such approach ensures that all employees are on board is missing. Nevertheless, focusing on these three questions is crucial because the quality of decisions made by an NPO's frontline employees when delivering services –which determines for the public whether the NPO is working seriously and offering meaningful contributions– depends to large extent on whether decisions are aligned with the organization's strategic priorities ([4], [12]). Therefore, the present study uses *three Guiding Questions* (GQs) to offer practical recommendations for nonprofit managers and tackle the gap in the literature, based on empirical data:

- GQ 1. How to establish shared strategic priorities for decision-making for employees?
- GQ 2. How to activate the motivational mechanism underlying LOS?
- GQ 3. How to assess whether all employees are on board?

In what follows, we provide detailed explanations for GQs 1 to 3. Results are presented for each GQ in a stepwise manner, with each set of results building upon the previous one (the research setting, and data collection efforts are described under GQ 1 and applicable for the entire study). Following this, we offer three important managerial implications and recommendations based on the approach taken for GQs 1 to 3. Finally, we finish the study with a section addressing conclusions and limitations.

GQ 1. How to establish shared strategic priorities for decision-making for employees?

The importance of discretionary behavior and the ability to make independent decisions has increased for nonprofit employees and the NPOs they work in. At least two factors have expedited this tendency. Firstly, the job of a frontline nonprofit employee nowadays involves increasingly challenging tasks and diverse situations where personal discretion plays a crucial role and tasks require a wide range of professional skills [13]. Secondly, such complex roles now demand highly educated professionals who not only meet specific requirements and expectations but also hold ideologies on how societal issues should (not) be addressed. Given that the organizational values tied to the strategic priorities and related actions are crucial in shaping the employer–employee relationship [14], their "psychological contracts may contain ideological *currency* that is important to both parties" [15, p. 1152]. To avoid breaching these psychological contracts [16], it is essential to mitigate discrepancies between expectations and reality [17]. One approach to prevent breach-triggers is by establishing a shared set of the

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strategic priorities and associated values of the NPO [12]. Ideally, discretionary efforts and decision-making align with the core principles and priorities of the NPO [4].

Now, how does such motivational mechanism work? Drawing on self-determination theory, it can be argued that the internalization of strategic priorities and knowing how to contribute to these strategic priorities is largely dependent on competence ([18], [19], [20]). Employees are more likely to adhere to shared strategic priorities when they feel capable of applying them effectively ([21], [22], [23], [24]). In other words, being appropriately prepared and understanding the purpose of strategic priorities is crucial for its internalization. This argument not only aligns with Bandura's [21] self-efficacy theory, a center stone of self-determination theory, which posits that one's ability to contribute significantly influences behavior ([24], [25]), but also corresponds with empirical evidence. For instance, research has shown that nonprofit employees' self-efficacy is positively correlated with task engagement [26]. The underlying rationale is clear: higher levels of self-efficacy, reflecting a deep and accurate understanding of strategic priorities and a strong belief in one's ability to contribute effectively through the performance of actions, are associated with perceptions of empowerment and control ([21], [27]). Consequently, this helps to alleviate the perceived challenges of implementing strategic priorities. Moreover, self-efficacy not only influences individuals' choices but also determines the effort they are willing to invest and their persistence when facing difficulties ([21], [27]).

When shared strategic priorities exist and employees feel competent in realizing them, research suggests that employees are more likely to exert discretionary effort to support the strategic priorities of the NPO. This is because they understand the importance of the organization's strategic priorities, in turn, know how to contribute through their job tasks and roles, and, ultimately, perceive alignment between their job and the NPO's strategic priorities ([28], [29]). Consequently, it is argued that the perceived strategic priorities/job fit enhances employees' satisfaction with the NPO's strategic priorities, leading them to rate the overall quality of these priorities highly and commit to ensuring proper implementation ([13], [30]). Figure 1 visualizes the conceptual model for GQ 1, as described in this section, and unfolds in Hypotheses 1.1 to 1.4.

> *Hypothesis 1.1: LOS-strategic priorities has a positive direct relationship with perceived strategic priorities/job fit.*
>
> *Hypothesis 1.2: LOS-actions has a positive direct relationship with perceived strategic priorities/job fit.*
>
> *Hypothesis 1.3: LOS-strategic priorities has a positive indirect relationship with perceived strategic priorities/job fit, through the impact of LOS-actions.*
>
> *Hypothesis 1.4: Perceived strategic priorities/job fit has a positive direct relationship with employee strategic commitment.*

Setting and data collection efforts for GQs 1 to 3

We focus on a prominent Flemish (i.e., the northern region of Belgium) human service NPO operating in the field of social welfare and social services. The selected NPO has listed seven strategic priorities and a set of linked actions in its strategic plan. This case constitutes a suitable context to investigate how strategic commitment (i.e., the extent to which employees are satisfied with the NPO's strategic priorities when linked to their jobs, rate the overall quality of the strategic priorities as high, and are committed to ensuring proper implementation [30]) can

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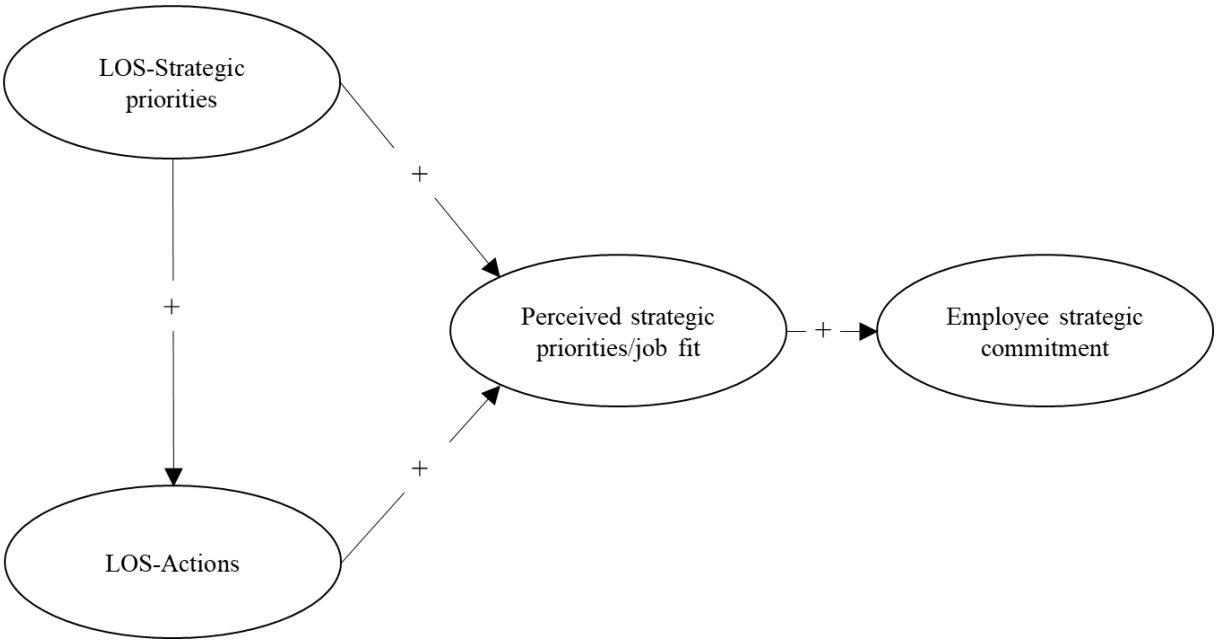
be achieved among nonprofit employees through LOS-strategic priorities, LOS-actions and perceived strategic priorities/job fit.

Figure 1: Conceptual model for GQ 1.



After initiation of the research project in October 2020, a series of both virtual and face-to-face meetings were scheduled with the senior management team. These meetings, held throughout 2021, involved the exchange and scrutiny of strategically relevant documents and information, such as internal protocols, and the organizational strategic priorities and actions, all serving as foundational inputs for the study. Subsequent meetings in 2022 were dedicated to deliberating over the preliminary survey draft and executing a pilot test, culminating in the refinement of the final survey instrument. By early 2023, a sampling frame comprising the email contacts of all 209 frontline staff members was acquired. Our aim was to obtain responses from at least 107 employees, because a prospective power analysis (using the inverse square root technique) indicated that such sample size would suffice to detect effects ranging from 0.16 to 0.24 at a five percent significance level, with an 80 percent power ([31], [32]).

In February 2023, electronic survey invitations were sent to all NPO employees and the general director of the NPO. Subsequently, two reminder emails were sent to non-respondents who had not opted out of the survey. Data collection concluded in May 2023, yielding 151 responses of employees. Respondents who declined participation or left significant portions unanswered were excluded from the dataset through listwise deletion, resulting in 129 valid responses from employees. Examination of the data indicated that only 0.25 percent of observed key variable values were absent. To mitigate any further reduction in respondent numbers, particularly given the random nature of the missing data (Little MCAR test Chi-square = 1,428.69, df = 1,350, p = 0.07), imputation at the item level was chosen for the latent variables. We used the expectation-maximization method of single imputation for this purpose. Given that for one respondent responses regarding LOS-actions –a focal variable of this study– were missing, the responses from this respondent were listwise deleted. This resulted in a usable sample of 128

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nonprofit employees (usable response rate of 61.24 percent) and responses from the general director of the NPO.

Regarding representativeness of the sample, 13.30 percent of the respondents are male, aligning with the gender distribution within the NPO (11.48 percent of the NPO's employees are male). Respondents are, on average, 38 years old (standard deviation = 9.77; range: 24 to 71), while the average tenure within the NPO is seven years (standard deviation = 6.81; range: 1 to 33). A majority of the respondents (57.50 percent of the sample) hold a university college degree.

Measures for GQ 1

All latent variable items are measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Detailed measurement information can be found in Table 1, while information regarding the convergent and discriminant validity of the key constructs is provided in Table 2.

Employee strategic commitment (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90) is measured as a reflective second-order construct comprehending a quality (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) and commitment dimension (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75), and is based on the work of Olson, Parayitam, and Bao [30]. Both dimensions consist of three items. An example item of the quality dimension is "The strategic priorities of the NPO will enhance the overall performance of the NPO", and of the commitment dimension is "The NPO's strategic priorities inspire me to work enthusiastically towards its realization".

Perceived strategic priorities/job fit (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92) is measured through three items and is based on the work of Oh, Ahn, and Kim [33] on perceived compatibility. An example item is "Using the NPO's strategic priorities is compatible with most aspects of my job".

To obtain measures of LOS-strategic priorities and LOS-actions, we followed the approach suggested by Boswell and Boudreau [37] in four steps. First, regarding LOS-strategic priorities, the seven strategic priorities of the NPO (The content of the strategic priorities is not reported in this study for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity of the NPO), as listed in its strategic plan, were provided to the general director, who was asked to rate each strategic priority based on how well they were suited to serve as blueprint for employee decision-making. A 7-point scale (ranging from "definitely not" to "definitely yes") was utilized. Second, employees completed the same survey of strategic priorities as the general director, serving as the reference frame. Third, a measure of LOS-strategic priorities was derived by calculating the absolute difference between an employee's response and the response given by the general director for each corresponding strategic priority, followed by summing across all strategic priorities. Fourth, these differences were then multiplied by -1 to indicate greater LOS with a higher score. LOS-actions were measured similarly to LOS-strategic priorities, using actions linked to strategic priorities (listed in the strategic plan) as items to be scored by both the general director and the employees. The content of the actions is not reported in this study for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity of the NPO.

To address the potential influence of third variables that may lead to spurious relationships, we also added two demographic control variables as covariates in the analyses: age (measured as a continuous variable in years) and gender (measured as a categorical variable).

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Table 1: Measurement information.

Construct and source	Dimension	Items
Employee strategic commitment (based on [30])	Quality	When considering the possible alternatives, I am satisfied with the choices presented by the strategic priorities of the NPO.
		The strategic priorities of the NPO will enhance the overall performance of the NPO.
		When considering all possible alternatives, it is evident that the strategic priorities of the NPO present the best options.
	Commitment	I am willing to make efforts to implement the strategic priorities of the NPO.
		The NPO's strategic priorities reflect my personal priorities.
		The NPO's strategic priorities inspire me to work enthusiastically towards their realization.
Perceived strategic priorities/job fit (based on [33])		Using the NPO's strategic priorities is compatible with most aspects of my job.
		The NPO's strategic priorities fit my work style within the NPO.
		Using the NPO's strategic priorities fits well with the way I want to work within the NPO.
Visionary leadership by the team leader (based on [34])		My team leader has a clear understanding of where we are going as NPO.
		My team leader has a clear sense of where s/he wants our team to be in 5 years.
		My team leader has no idea where the NPO is going (reverse)
Information (based on [35])	Oral	I have been informed in a timely manner orally about what the strategic priorities of my organization are.
		The oral information I received about the strategic priorities of my organization addresses my questions.
		I find the oral information I received about the strategic priorities of my organization to be relevant.
	Written	I have been informed in a timely manner in writing about what the strategic priorities of my organization are.
		The written information I received about the strategic priorities of my organization addresses my questions.
		I find the written information I received about the strategic priorities of my organization to be relevant.

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Training (based on [36])	I have participated in initiatives such as the Panorama Day. I attend offered information sessions (such as introduction days for new employees and regional meetings) where the strategic priorities of my organization are discussed. I have personally reviewed the strategic priorities of my organization.

Note: This table also includes information on visionary leadership (team leader), information, and training. These variables will be used and further discussed for GQ 2.

Results for GQ 1

We use the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis technique to test the hypotheses. Specifically, SEMinR [38], an R-package for PLS-SEM [31] is used. PLS-SEM integrates elements of regression models, structural equation models, and multiple table analysis. It is capable of generating reliable estimates, even when sample sizes are relatively small [39], and does not necessitate data to follow a normal distribution. Furthermore, PLS-SEM effectively handles models with multiple endogenous constructs and/or composite measures of emergent (i.e., formative) and latent (i.e., reflective) variables ([39], [40]). To assess the significance of estimated path coefficients, we employ a nonparametric bootstrap procedure ([31], [41]).

The assessment of the study's model involves a two-step evaluation process, aligning with the recommendations outlined by Hair and colleagues [31]. First, the measurement model is assessed. For the reflective part of the measurement model (needed for GQ 1), this entails (a) evaluating the reliability of indicators, (b) assessing internal consistency reliability, (c) establishing convergent validity, and (d) ensuring discriminant validity.

Second, the quality of the structural model is evaluated. This is done by (a) considering potential collinearity issues based on predictor construct scores, (b) examining the significance and relevance of relationships within the structural model, and (c) assessing the model's explanatory power.

Step 1. Measurement model

We start by evaluating the measurement model. Table 2 displays the results of the assessment of the reflective measurement model, adhering to the thresholds proposed by Hair and colleagues ([31], [42]). We observe that for GQ 1 (a) all loadings exceed the recommended value of 0.7, signifying reliability; (b) Rho_c scores fall within the advised range of ≥ 0.7 and ≤ 0.95, indicating composite reliability; and (c) the average variance extracted (AVE) scores surpass 0.5, indicating convergent validity. As a result, we can conclude that the latent variables used for GQ 1 sufficiently explain the variance in their observed variables.

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Table 2: Assessment of the indicators' reliability, collinearity, significance and relevance.

	Reflective measurement			Formative measurement		
	Indicator reliability	Composite reliability	Convergent validity	Indicator collinearity	Indicator weight - significance	Indicator loading - relevance
	Loadings	Rho_c	AVE	VIF	95% CI	T-stat.
Thresholds	>.7	≥.7 and ≤ .95	>.5	<.5		>1.96
Employee strategic commitment		.95	.91			
Commitment	.95	.86	.67			
SCC_1	.82					
SCC_2	.79					
SCC_3	.84					
Quality	.95	.91	.77			
SCQ_1	.90					
SCQ_2	.83					
SCQ_3	.90					
Perceived strategic priorities/job fit		.95	.87			
FIT_1	.93					
FIT_2	.93					
FIT_3	.92					
Visionary leadership (team leader)		.93	.86			
VL_1	.86					
VL_2	.85					
VL_3	.86					
Information		.93	.86			
Written information	.93	.92	.79			
INW_1	.85					
INW_2	.90					
INW_3	.91					
Oral information	.93	.92	.79			
INO_1	.87					
INO_2	.89					
INO_3	.91					
Training						
T_1				1.24	[.30; 1.03]	9.30
T_2				1.24	[-.07; .83]	4.82

Note: This table also includes information on visionary leadership (team leader), information, and training. These variables will be used and further discussed for GQ 2.

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Discriminant validity assessment [43] involves examining cross-loadings, Fornell-Larcker criterion values [44], and Heterotrait-Monotrait criterion (HTMT) values [45]. The examined constructs for GQ 1 exhibit distinctiveness because the loadings of indicators associated with a construct surpass those on any other construct, the AVE of each construct exceeds the squared correlation with any other construct, and the HTMT values (see Table 3) do not surpass 0.85 for any tuple.

Table 3: Assessment of the discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion.

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1.	Employee strategic commitment									
2.	Perceived strategic priorities/job fit	.81								
3.	LOS-actions	.25	.35							
4.	LOS-strategic priorities	.33	.33	.44						
5.	Visionary leadership (team leader)	.43	.52	.34	.39					
6.	Information	.56	.65	.30	.41	.49				
7.	Training	.76	.73	.46	.46	.53	.63			
8.	Age	.18	.32	.08	.03	.18	.18	.25		
9.	Gender	.01	.11	.04	.11	.090	.10	.09	.17	

Note: This table also includes information on visionary leadership (team leader), information, and training. These variables will be used and further discussed for GQ 2.

Step 2. Structural model

As second step in the evaluation process, we evaluate the structural model. The results indicate that collinearity among the predictor constructs and each endogenous construct is not a concern, as their Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below 0.5 [31]. Considering our developed theoretical model incorporates multiple mediations, we conducted an estimation of the structural model, encompassing the hypothesized indirect effects as well as the direct effects. The results indicate that there are significant direct relationships between the focal variables. Figure 2 shows the standardized coefficients, p-values, and 95 percent bootstrap confidence intervals of the PLS-SEM analysis.

LOS-strategic priorities, in support of Hypothesis 1.1, has a direct positive relationship with perceived strategic priorities/job fit ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.01$, CI[0.03, 0.38], f^2 effect size = 0.04). Also LOS-actions positively impacts perceived strategic priorities/job fit ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.02$, CI[0.01, 0.46], f^2 effect size = 0.06), which is in support of Hypothesis 1.2. Turning our attention to the indirect pathway (for Hypothesis 1.3), the results not only reveal that there is a significant direct positive relationship between LOS-strategic priorities and LOS-actions ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$, CI[0.08, 0.50], f^2 effect size = 0.10), but also that LOS-strategic priorities has a statistically significant positive indirect effect on perceived strategic priorities/job fit via LOS-actions (indirect effect = 0.08, CI[<0.01, 0.19]). Hence, we do find support for Hypothesis 1.3 as the null-hypothesis is rejected.

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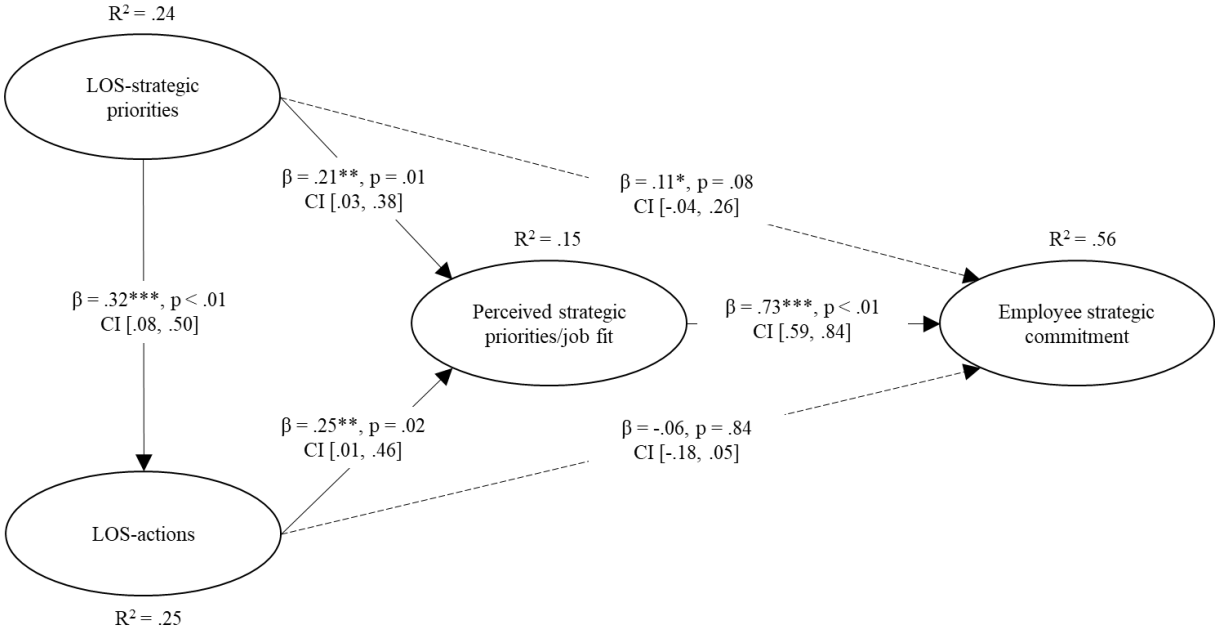
Figure 2: Results model for GQ 1.



*Note: n = 128; * p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01; Controls and the variables described in GQ 2 are included in the model, but not shown for reasons of clarity*

Regarding Hypothesis 1.4, we find support as perceived strategic priorities/job fit relates positively to employee strategic commitment (β = 0.73, p < 0.01, CI[0.59, 0.84], f^2 effect size = 0.99). Moreover, LOS-strategic priorities has a statistically significant positive indirect effect on employee strategic commitment mediated first by LOS-actions and second by perceived strategic priorities/job fit (indirect effect = 0.06, CI[<0.01, 0.14]). Also, the indirect relationship between LOS-actions and employee strategic commitment (i.e., via the impact of perceived strategic priorities/job fit) is statistically significant (indirect effect = 0.18, CI[0.01, 0.36]).

Following Shmueli and Koppius [46], and Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt [42] our structural model can be considered having a moderate explanatory power as the R^2 value linked to employee strategic commitment falls within the range of 25 to 75 percent. Specifically, 56 percent of the variance of employee strategic commitment is accounted for by its predictor variables. Regarding perceived strategic priorities/job fit, 15 percent of the variance is accounted for by it its predictors.

To recap, the results are in support of our conceptual model (Figure 1): LOS-strategic priorities positively impacts LOS-actions while both variables impact perceived strategic priorities/job fit. Perceived strategic priorities/job fit, in turn, has a positive relationship with employee strategic commitment. Additionally, the indirect relationships originating from LOS-strategic priorities are statistically significant.

GQ 2. How to activate the motivational mechanism underlying LOS?

Knowing how the motivational mechanism of LOS works, however, does not suffice to determine what management actions could help to activate this motivational mechanism. Specifically, as competence is viewed as a motivational mechanism fostering the adoption of shared strategic priorities for decision-making for the nonprofit employees, it is important to

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gain insights into the predictors of an individual's competence regarding the strategic priorities. Based on prior research, we selected three relevant predictors which are likely to foster an employee's accurate understanding of strategic priorities: (a) information about the strategic priorities, (b) training related to the strategic priorities and (c) visionary leadership by the team leader.

First, considering that strategic priorities are a complex decision-making aid or tool, providing accurate information to nonprofit employees about the strategic priorities and the linked actions can clarify how they can be utilized for individual decision-making ([23], [47], [48]). Supplying information about the strategic priorities, therefore, can serve as an organizational intervention that enhances nonprofit employees' self-efficacy in making aligned decisions [49]. Hence, we hypothesize:

> *Hypothesis 2.1: Information has a positive direct relationship with LOS-strategic priorities.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2.2: Information has a positive indirect relationship with LOS-actions.*

Secondly, training is expected to enhance competence and, consequently, assist nonprofit employees in navigating the complexity of strategic priorities for decision-making [47]. It serves as a source of information on the subject, highlighting requirements and consequences ([36], [50]). Therefore, akin to the hypotheses concerning information, we hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 2.3: Training has a positive direct relationship with LOS-strategic priorities.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2.4: Training has a positive indirect relationship with LOS-actions.*

Third, team leaders' visionary leadership, which centers around focusing on communicating the strategic priorities of the team and the NPO to encourage employee contribution to these priorities, is expected to influence employees' LOS-strategic priorities and LOS-actions ([34], [37]). Specifically, by communicating and clarifying the strategic priorities, team leaders facilitate employees' understanding of how they can contribute through their work tasks and roles [51]. As team leaders' visionary leadership is anticipated to foster a shared understanding of employees' contributions toward strategic priorities [52], we hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 2.5: Visionary leadership by the team leader has a positive direct relationship with LOS-strategic priorities.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2.6: Visionary leadership by the team leader has a positive indirect relationship with LOS-actions.*

Additional measures for GQ 2

In similar vein as for GQ 1, latent variable items are measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Again, detailed measurement information can be found in Table 1, while information regarding the convergent and discriminant validity of the key constructs is provided in Table 2 (see GQ 1).

Information is assessed through two dimensions (i.e., oral and written information related to the strategic priorities) as a reflective second-order construct. The decision to distinguish between these two dimensions, each evaluated using three items (and each having a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.87) adapted from Wright, Christensen, and Isett [35], and to integrate them into a single overarching construct stemmed from initial discussions within the organization

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regarding information processing within the NPO and the survey's pre-test. An example item for the oral dimension is "I have been informed in a timely manner orally about what the strategic priorities of my organization are". An example item for the written dimension is "The written information I received about the strategic priorities of my organization address my questions".

Training –treated as a formative construct– is evaluated through two items derived from Kroll and Moynihan's [36] work on training, but adjusted to fit the context. An example item is "I have participated in initiatives such as the Panorama Day". The Panorama Day is a training event focusing on different topics including the strategic priorities.

Visionary leadership by the team leader is measured through three items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82) and is based on the work of Ateş and colleagues [34]. An example item is "My team leader has a clear understanding of where we are going as NPO".

The continuation of results for GQ 2

We build further on the data analysis approach chosen for and results section of GQ 1.

Step 1. Measurement model

With regard to the reflective part of the measurement model, akin to GQ 1, we can conclude (a) that the latent variables in the study sufficiently explain the variance in their observed variables, and (b) that the examined constructs exhibit distinctiveness. Additionally, for GQ 2, an examination of the formative component of the measurement model is warranted, entailing (a) addressing potential collinearity issues within the formative part of the measurement model, and (b) evaluating the significance, statistical and theoretical relevance of the formative indicators while upholding content validity. In this regard, we note that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values do not surpass the threshold of 0.5, suggesting that potential issues linked to indicator collinearity are unlikely (see Table 2 [GQ 1]). The next step in assessing formatively measured constructs is examining the statistical significance and importance of the formative indicators. The results of the significance tests, which rely on a bootstrapping procedure (10,000 bootstrap samples), reveal that only the weight of the "I have read the NPO's strategic priorities myself" item within the training construct is not statistically significant at a 5% significance level. Nevertheless, the relevance of the loading of this item is supported by its t-value exceeding the threshold of 1.96.

The examined constructs for GQ 2 also exhibit distinctiveness (i.e., discriminant validity) because the loadings of indicators associated with a construct surpass those on any other construct, the AVE of each construct exceeds the squared correlation with any other construct, and the HTMT values (see Table 3 [GQ 1]) do not surpass 0.85 for any tuple.

Step 2. Structural model

With regard to GQ 2 and, thus, Hypotheses 2.1 to 2.6, we do observe several significant relationships: providing information ($\beta = 0.19$, CI[0.02, 0.38], f^2 effect size = 0.04), training ($\beta = 0.22$, CI[0.01, 0.42], f^2 effect size = 0.05), and visionary leadership by the team leader ($\beta = 0.21$, CI[0.05, 0.38], f^2 effect size = 0.05) significantly and positively impact LOS-strategic priorities. We do not observe significant relationships between providing information, training, and visionary leadership on the one hand, and LOS-actions on the other. Nevertheless, information and visionary leadership do have a significant indirect impact on LOS-actions

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through LOS-strategic priorities. Table 4 provides an overview of the Hypotheses 2.1 to 2.6 pertaining to GQ 2 and whether these hypotheses are supported by the results of this study.

Table 4: Hypotheses 2.1 to 2.6.

Hypothesis 2.1:	Information has a positive direct relationship with LOS-strategic priorities.	Supported by the results (i.e., the null-hypothesis is rejected)
Hypothesis 2.2:	Information has a positive indirect relationship with LOS-actions.	Supported by the results (i.e., the null-hypothesis is rejected)
Hypothesis 2.3:	Training has a positive direct relationship with LOS-strategic priorities.	Supported by the results (i.e., the null-hypothesis is rejected)
Hypothesis 2.4:	Training has a positive indirect relationship with LOS-actions.	Not supported by the results (i.e., we fail to reject the null-hypothesis)
Hypothesis 2.5:	Visionary leadership by the team leader has a positive direct relationship with LOS-strategic priorities.	Supported by the results (i.e., the null-hypothesis is rejected)
Hypothesis 2.6:	Visionary leadership by the team leader has a positive indirect relationship with LOS-actions.	Supported by the results (i.e., the null-hypothesis is rejected)

For LOS-actions and LOS-strategic priorities, respectively 25 and 24 percent of the variance is accounted for by its predictor variables.

GQ 3. How to assess whether all employees are on board?

Now, is everything solved when we understand the motivational mechanism of LOS and how to support it? We argue to be cautious as not all employees might be on board. Being motivated is one thing, but there is more to it. Specifically, LOS is not just whether employees *perceive* they are contributing effectively. It is whether employees are *accurate in that assessment* and truly understand how they contribute to the strategic priorities [2]. Therefore, LOS is determined by employee perceptions compared to a standard of accuracy (e.g., the general director, management team or leadership team) – a situation represented by the upper-right quadrant in Figure 3. The x-axis in Figure 3 indicates the level of LOS-actions, while the y-axis represents the level of LOS-strategic priorities.

Concretely, employees may understand (the importance of) an organization's strategic priorities and may believe they are effective contributors, yet they can be incorrect in their assessment of the latter (i.e., the upper-left quadrant in Figure 3). It is also possible that employees only have a vague understanding of the organization's strategic priorities and lack an accurate understanding of how to contribute (i.e., the lower-left quadrant in Figure 3), or that employees lack a clear understanding of the organization's strategic priorities yet somehow know how to contribute (i.e., the lower-right quadrant in Figure 3). The latter three situations are problematic and urge for action. However, to be able to assess whether employees are positioned in the LOS-quadrant or one of the three other quadrants, LOS-scores should be visualized.

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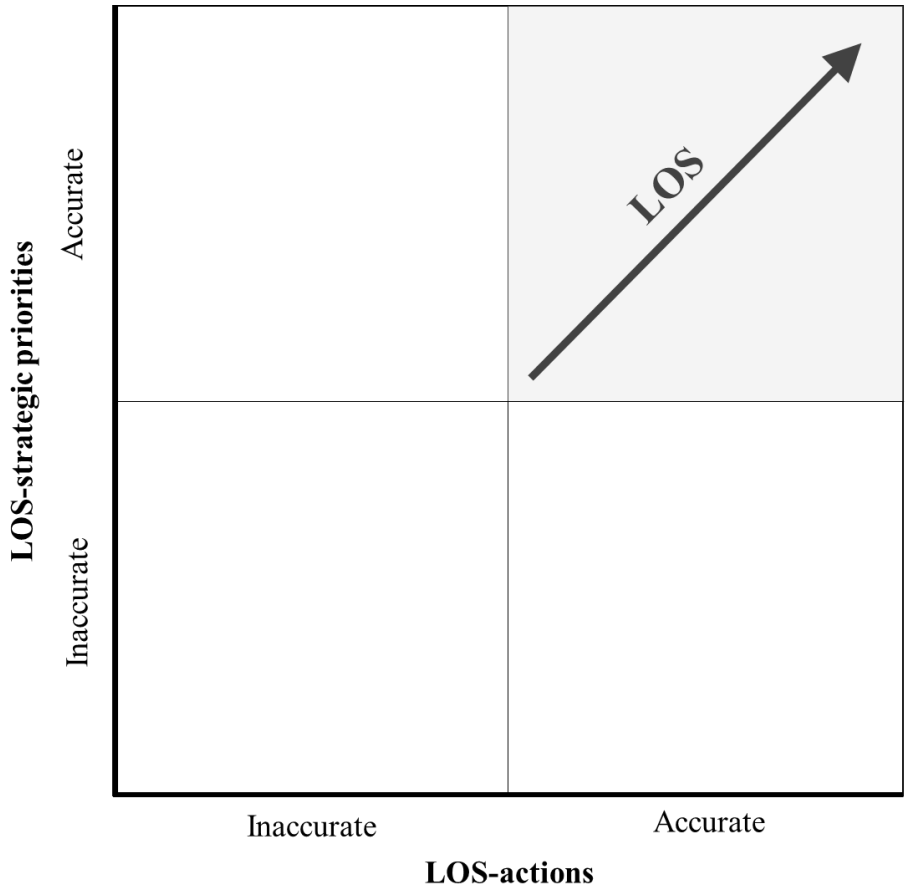
Figure 3: Line-of-Sight plotting for GQ 3.



Note: A perfect LOS score occurs when employees accurately understand both LOS-strategic priorities and LOS-actions. This situation is represented in the upper-right corner of the LOS quadrant indicated by the arrow.

Finetuning measures for GQ 3

Before plotting the LOS-strategic priorities and LOS-actions (as conceptually visualized in Figure 3) using our human service NPO case-data, we normalize both measures to range between 0 and 1 as it facilitates the interpretation and visualization. We achieve this normalization in the dataset by subtracting the theoretical minimum score for LOS-strategic priorities or LOS-actions from their actual score, and then dividing the result by the difference between the theoretical maximum score for LOS-strategic priorities or LOS-actions and their respective theoretical minimum score.

Results for GQ 3

Figure 4 displays the visualization of the LOS situation within the NPO. As is the case for Figure 3, the x-axis denotes the level of LOS-actions, whereas the y-axis represents the level of LOS-strategic priorities. The various circles represent the employees of the NPO, and darker borders of the circles indicate overlapping scores on both axes for employees. Some specific cases are highlighted by including the anonymized employee number.

The results of Figure 4 indicate that the vast majority of the NPO's employees (96 percent) are situated in the upper-right quadrant, representing a LOS situation. However, there is variation

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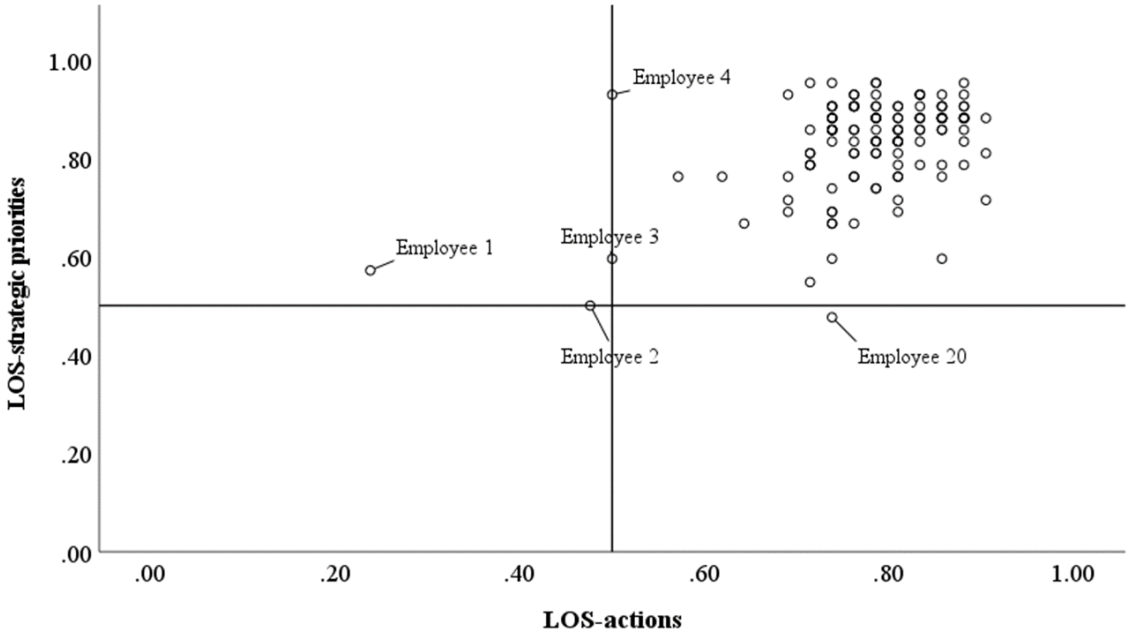
in their positioning within this quadrant. Based on visual interpretation –supporting an integral aspect of Hypothesis 1.3– higher scores on LOS-strategic priorities appear to be positively related to higher scores on LOS-actions. Nonetheless, not all NPO employees fall entirely within the LOS quadrant. We also observe that some employees (Employees 1, 2, 3, 4, and 20) are positioned in the upper-left quadrant, lower-right quadrant, or on the borders between quadrants.

Figure 4: Line-of-Sight plotting results for GQ 3 (n = 128).



In the upper-left quadrant, Employee 1 and Employees 3 and 4 (on the border) understand the NPO's strategic priorities, and may believe they are effective contributors yet they are wrong in that assessment. Moving to the lower-left quadrant Employee 2 (on the border) not only has a vague understanding of the NPO's strategic priorities, but also lacks an accurate understanding of how to contribute. In the lower-right quadrant, Employee 20 lacks a clear understanding of the NPO's strategic priorities, yet somehow knows how to contribute.

Three managerial takeaways

We highlight three important managerial implications. First, it is evident that aligning nonprofit employees with the NPO's strategic priorities (LOS-strategic priorities) is crucial for optimizing its human capital and achieving strategic success. Our findings suggest that communication efforts are beneficial (i.e., oral and written information and training), along with team leaders who have a clear understanding of the NPO's direction (i.e., visionary leadership). Therefore, providing regular updates on the organization's strategic priorities both orally and written, as well as offering training sessions to enhance employees' skills and knowledge regarding the strategic priorities and their meaning, can greatly contribute to LOS. Additionally, having team leaders who demonstrate visionary leadership by clearly articulating the NPO's direction and fostering a shared sense of purpose among team members can further enhance LOS and drive organizational success.

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Second, another critical factor is whether nonprofit employees comprehend how specific actions can contribute to those strategic priorities (i.e., LOS-actions). Understanding how to contribute holds equal importance compared to articulating the NPO's overarching strategic priorities. Our findings indicate that providing information input or training, as well as visionary leadership by the team leader, are not as effective for LOS-actions as having a deep and detailed understanding of the strategic priorities (i.e., LOS-strategic priorities). LOS-strategic priorities and LOS-actions are directly positively related, while information and visionary leadership have an indirect impact on LOS-actions through LOS-strategic priorities. Therefore, we recommend prioritizing helping employees understand the strategic priorities needed for their decision-making rather than concentrating efforts on explaining how they should contribute to these strategic priorities. This is particularly crucial in NPOs because excessive focus on training, information, and directives related to LOS-actions may lead to adverse effects. For example, employees may feel that their discretionary behavior, essential in NPOs, is restricted by their NPO or that independent decision-making, even if it aligns with the strategic priorities, is not encouraged.

A third crucial element is not to overlook certain employees. NPOs should not only target alignment efforts across the organization but also strategically focus on where it matters most. For example, Figure 4 illustrates that not all employees in this specific case have a high level of LOS. Efforts may include emphasizing the level of vertical alignment between the management team and direct supervisors or team leaders [34] to ensure accurate information is shared with all employees in all teams Another approach could involve having a one-on-one open discussion with employees scoring low on LOS-strategic priorities to clarify the strategic priorities and understand any differences in interpretation. Understanding the reasons for potential misinterpretations can help to more effectively target alignment efforts.

Conclusion, limitations, and call for more research efforts on LOS

This study underscores the relevance of LOS for a human service NPO. By elucidating the motivational mechanism of LOS –strategic priorities, actions, and perceived strategic priorities/job fit– we offer insights into how strategic commitment can be enhanced among employees. We identify clear information on strategic priorities, provision of training, and visionary leadership as crucial factors for promoting LOS-strategic priorities, while the latter is crucial for LOS-actions. Our findings also emphasize the importance of assessing and addressing disparities in LOS among employees. Moving forward, targeted alignment efforts across a NPO are crucial to assure that when shared strategic priorities exist, employees will feel competent in adopting them and are willing to exert discretionary effort to support the strategic priorities of the NPO. We hope that other researchers build on our findings to further explore and understand the topic of Line-of-Sight.

Evidently, this study also has limitations. First, the study relies on perceptual data obtained through electronic surveys, a method that may raise concerns regarding common method bias (CMB) [53]. Even though we (a) followed the recommendations outlined by Podsakoff and colleagues [54] to proactively address potential CMB issues and (b) the results of a post-hoc evaluation of potential negative impacts of CMB [55] by means of a collinearity assessment ([42], [56]) indicated that the VIF for each measurement of independent constructs is "lower than 3.3 […]" as recommended by Kock [57, p. 7], the presence of CMB can never be entirely excluded.

Second, a significant portion of the variance in the LOS variables remains unexplained. While future research could focus on, for instance, how communication can be better used as a driver [58], future research could also aim to identify additional predictors perhaps focusing more on (a) situational specificities that may influence the development and maintenance of LOS, or on (b) an empowering climate [59], or on (c) initiatives related to performance feedback, goal setting, and employee involvement [3]. Through the latter, for example, employees are connected to and given the opportunity to participate in the operations of their NPO.

Finally, while the conceptual model and the underlying hypotheses are theoretically grounded, we must acknowledge that reversed causality could pose an issue given our use of a cross-sectional research design.

Author bios

Kenn Meyfroodt is a postdoctoral researcher in organizational behavior in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Ghent University, Belgium. His research focuses on how the implementation of management systems, practices, and artifacts influences the perceptual, attribution, and sensemaking processes of individuals and groups within private, public, and nonprofit sector organizations.

ORCID 0000-0002-0587-1732

E-mail: kenn.meyfroodt@ugent.be

Sebastian Desmidt is associate professor of strategic management in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Ghent University, Belgium. His research focuses on the effectiveness of strategic management instruments and strategic planning processes, the determinants of strategic consensus, and the motivational power of mission valence in public and non-profit organizations.

E-mail: sebastian.desmidt@ugent.be

ORCID 0000-0002-5769-4440

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