

WHITE PAPER



THE SECRET TO
**ENTERPRISE
ADAPTABILITY**

How **Breakthrough Projects** align teams, accelerate results, and deliver on strategic objectives.



In a world where strategy often fails to move beyond the boardroom and most improvement efforts deliver only incremental gains, breakthrough projects stand out as a powerful vehicle for transformation. These projects have enabled organizations across industries to achieve results that were previously thought to be impossible—redefining what teams believe they are capable of and accelerating performance in ways that typical process-improvement approaches simply can't match.

Whether you're racing to cut product development timelines, integrate innovation across siloed departments, or rapidly align people around mission-critical objectives, breakthrough projects provide a disciplined, proven approach. Their value lies not only in what they deliver but in how they transform the thinking, culture, and accountability of an organization from within.

Why Organizations Use Breakthrough Projects

Organizations commission breakthrough projects when faced with a critical result (however the company defines success) that seems unlikely or impossible to achieve through current practices.

Breakthrough projects are uniquely adaptable to strategic objectives—whether they originate in product development, operations, customer experience, or M&A. Unlike rigid project management methodologies, the breakthrough approach is built to flex with shifting priorities and enterprise-level goals. Because these projects are outcome-driven rather than process-bound, they are ideal for dynamic business environments where strategy must evolve in real time.

Whether focused on market entry, cultural transformation, or long-range innovation, breakthrough projects equip teams to continually reorient around what matters most—ensuring execution stays tightly aligned with the enterprise's evolving strategic direction.

Consider, for example, Insigniam's work with a Fortune 100 company that urgently needed to accelerate its clinical trial process to secure FDA approval ahead of its competitors. Each day saved represented substantial revenue potential for the organization.

Insigniam partnered with the company's development team, challenging deeply held assumptions and transforming their approach to data management, report preparation, vendor coordination, and clinical site interactions.



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The team, previously mired in skepticism, committed to reducing their projected six-to-nine-month cycle down to an unprecedented ten weeks. Through innovative concurrent processes, collaborative vendor partnerships, and heightened team accountability, they achieved the seemingly impossible goal, dramatically cutting their development timeline.

This breakthrough resulted in significant internal recognition, leadership promotions, and widespread adoption of these groundbreaking practices across other development projects.

As is true in the example, breakthrough projects are pursued when the desired outcome is seen as unattainable at the outset, and existing methods and pace are insufficient to deliver the needed change. This holds true whether the objective is tactical or strategic.

While tactical projects often focus on short-term gains (e.g., within six to nine months) and address immediate organizational needs, strategic breakthroughs aim for long-term, sustainable competitive advantage.

A key differentiator is that tactical results are often short in duration and are unachievable given the organization's current way of working, whereas strategic results have a more lasting impact. The defining parameters are:

1. **Impossibility:** The desired outcome appears unattainable given the current context.
2. **Current Limitations:** Existing processes and ways of working are insufficient to produce the desired result.

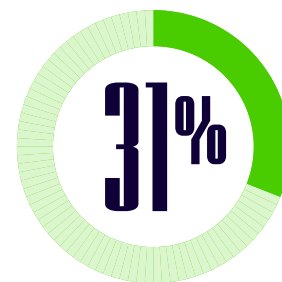
How Breakthrough Projects Are Structured

While mindset is critical, structure matters just as much. Breakthrough projects are effective because they are grounded in a set of clearly defined components that enable teams to function at an elevated level of performance and accountability.

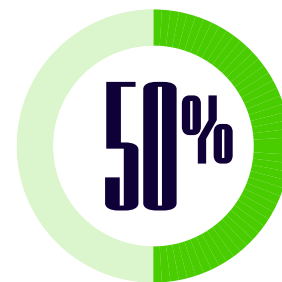
At the core of each project is outcome alignment—a specific, bold, and measurable result that the team commits to achieving within a one-year timeframe. This outcome is not just aspirational; it is essential to the organization and fully owned by the team responsible for delivering it.

Every breakthrough project is anchored by an executive champion, a senior leader who serves as the project's advocate across the enterprise. This leader ensures organizational alignment, removes barriers to progress, and provides the influence and visibility necessary for the project to gain traction and sustain momentum.

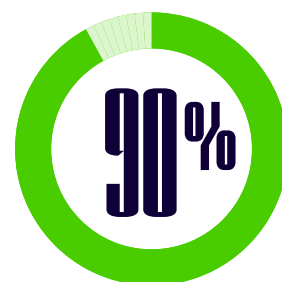
Equally important are defined boundaries that establish clarity around legal, operational, or political constraints.



A Breakthrough Project at Citi entailed redesigning its payments journey, which boosted its Net Promoter Score 31%, resulting in a more intuitive, seamless, cross-channel customer experience.¹



A global pharma company cut drug trial times by 50%—or five years—via a Breakthrough Project that streamlined five key processes and boosted team engagement.²



A global asset manager achieved 90%+ ESG process efficiency, 95% time reduction, and 91% accuracy using AI-driven solutions with Insigniam.³

Citations: ¹ Citi's Customer Experience Transformation, Insigniam; ² The Art and Science of Breakthrough Performance, Insigniam; ³ The Truth About Tech-Driven Innovation, Insigniam Quarterly.

By explicitly identifying what is “off the table” at the outset, teams are free to focus their creativity and problem-solving on viable, high-impact solutions—avoiding wasted energy and confusion.

Finally, the team structure is intentionally designed for agility and effectiveness. Teams typically consist of four to twelve members, with six being optimal. Members are selected not just for subject matter expertise, but for their ability to collaborate across departments and functions. Participation is voluntary, and each member takes full responsibility for the project’s overall success—not just their individual tasks. This shared accountability is a hallmark of breakthrough projects and a key reason they produce extraordinary results.

Case Studies in Strategic Breakthrough

A U.S.-based **multinational consumer goods company** spent over a decade struggling to commercialize biodegradable packaging. Internal misalignment and bureaucracy stifled progress—until a Breakthrough Project reframed the initiative. With support from Insigniam, the R&D team challenged long-held assumptions, enrolled senior executives, and repositioned the initiative as a companywide strategic priority. The project timeline advanced by two years, and the company emerged as a leader in sustainable packaging.

At a **global medical device company**, only one new product had launched in eight years. Breakthrough projects disrupted siloed thinking, instilled a culture of accountability, and empowered teams to take risks. Within months, a 12-product pipeline emerged, reversing years of stagnation and repositioning the company as an innovation leader.

At a **major U.S. airline**, station managers were held accountable for frontline operations but had no say in vendor selection—making it difficult to enforce service standards in areas like cleaning, food, and wheelchair services. With Insigniam’s support, managers across the country redefined their roles, fostering collaboration with corporate and vendors. They reframed vendor relationships as strategic partnerships, not transactions. The outcome: a new vendor handbook, dashboards, and compliance logs—tools 95% of managers said would boost accountability and service. By shifting mindsets and bridging silos, the airline set the stage for lasting operational excellence at 100+ stations.

Where and When to Leverage Breakthrough Projects

One of the most common—and most powerful—uses of a breakthrough project is to remove internal barriers that are stalling progress. In particular, their adaptability to changing strategic objectives makes them highly effective in enterprise-wide initiatives with multiple stakeholders and evolving success criteria.

Consider how many organizations experience gridlock when legacy systems, entrenched silos, or outdated assumptions prevent momentum on urgent business priorities.



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A breakthrough project mobilizes cross-functional teams around a shared commitment, enabling them to challenge the status quo, surface hidden constraints, and rapidly generate new pathways to results. The clarity and urgency built into the process empower teams to cut through bureaucracy and deliver tangible outcomes faster than would otherwise be possible.

Breakthrough projects also excel in environments where inter-divisional collaboration is essential to strategic success. When enterprise-wide initiatives require seamless coordination between business units or departments with historically disconnected goals, these projects offer a disciplined framework for alignment.

By orienting the team around a bold, measurable outcome and creating mutual accountability across functions, a breakthrough project replaces siloed behavior with unified, purpose-driven action.

Another high-leverage application is in aligning external partners and suppliers. In today's interconnected business environment, results often depend on seamless execution across organizational boundaries. Breakthrough projects enable companies and their external stakeholders to define shared objectives, align on commitments, and build trust-based partnerships that create competitive advantage. Whether in supplier innovation, go-to-market strategy, or operational integration, the methodology fosters clarity, transparency, and co-ownership of results.

You should consider launching a breakthrough project when the outcome your organization seeks cannot be achieved through current methods. If a strategic initiative is stuck—whether due to resistance, inertia, or lack of clarity—a breakthrough project offers a powerful reset. It is especially valuable when time is critical and the cost of delay is high. And when success depends on alignment across departments, geographies, or partners, the breakthrough approach becomes a force multiplier—generating not only results, but also transformation in how people engage and lead.

As Insigniam has long asserted, breakthroughs are not the result of doing more—they are the result of thinking differently, acting decisively, and working collaboratively in service of a future that did not previously seem possible.

Conclusion

Breakthrough projects deliver more than business results—they ignite transformation. By empowering people to think differently, act boldly, and work collaboratively, these projects unlock value that far exceeds the original objective.

In a market where agility, innovation, and alignment determine success, breakthrough projects offer a structured, scalable way to deliver what matters most—and do it faster than anyone thought possible.

Portions of this paper are derived from the work of Werner Erhard and are used with permission.

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ABOUT INSIGNIAM

In the face of complex problems and rapid change, business as usual is not enough. To succeed, leaders must breathe life into big ideas and bold commitments.

Over 35 years ago, Insigniam pioneered the field of organizational transformation. Today, Insigniam is a trusted partner to senior executives of the world's best-run companies for whom speed to transformation, breakthrough and innovation are imperatives.

By integrating our unique and potent methodology with end-to-end capabilities in terms of customer experience, strategy, AI and machine learning, data analytics, and digital optimization, we bring efficiencies and scale to clients in around the world, thereby delivering the very best that technology and being human can offer global enterprises.

We promise your people will think newly, act differently and deliver unprecedented results.®

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