

SPECIAL ISSUE

COMMANDING EXECUTION

**AN EXECUTIVE PLAYBOOK FOR TURNING INTENT INTO ACTION—AND
VISION INTO VELOCITY—IN 2026 AND BEYOND.**

BY SHIDEH SEDGH BINA

8 IQ INSIGNIAM QUARTERLY | Winter 2025

There is a moment every December when the energy inside an enterprise shifts.

Strategic plans stop moving across conference tables and begin moving

into the hands of the people expected to deliver them. The thinking is done. The intentions are clear. Now the question becomes whether the organization can turn those intentions into action with the speed the next year will demand.

In 2026, that demand will be fierce. The pace of business no longer resembles anything from three or even two years ago. Markets move faster. Competitors replicate quicker. Customers expect immediacy. AI compresses discovery, analysis, production, and distribution into cycles measured in days or hours. The external environment keeps accelerating, and the distance between strategy and execution keeps widening inside many enterprises. Vision has never been easier to articulate. Execution has never been more difficult to achieve. This issue exists for that reason alone.

ISTOCK

insigniam.com/quarterly-magazine | IQ INSIGNIAM QUARTERLY 9

Enterprises across industries are entering January with bold ambitions and a narrowing margin for error. They are stepping into a year shaped by geopolitical tension, technology that evolves in real time, persistent cost pressures, and talent dynamics that continue to shift under their feet. Under these conditions, the ability to execute is not simply another competency; it is the operating advantage that will separate the winners in 2026 from everyone else.

Most executives will recognize the familiar sources of breakdown: misaligned teams, slow decision rights, governance that prioritizes review over acceleration, cultures that tolerate missed commitments, and leadership teams that lose their first ninety days trying to diagnose problems instead of establishing tempo. Strategies fail not because leaders lack foresight, but because the machinery beneath the strategy cannot move fast enough or cleanly enough to make it real. The goal of this Winter 2025 issue is to close that gap.

In doing so, we return to the stories that defined *Insigniam Quarterly* over the last decade—the pieces that executives returned to again and again. These were the features that spread across boardrooms, executive retreats, and leadership off-sites; the ones downloaded, shared, quoted, and requested long after their publication. They earned that status because they revealed something deeper: not simply how organizations think, but how they act; not just how leaders plan, but how they deliver.

For this issue, we rebuilt those stories for a modern context. Each feature has been updated, remastered, and expanded with new research, new examples, fresh data, and sharper insight into what it takes to execute in 2026. The intent is not nostalgia. It is utility. The leaders like yourself who are reading this issue need a playbook that is both proven and current—a set of ideas and tools that can withstand the demands of a new year and the velocity of a new era.

This issue opens with an in-depth conversation

with Emmanuel Frenehard, the Chief Digital Officer of one of the world's leading biopharma companies. His work sits at the intersection of digital transformation, architecture, and enterprise speed. His perspective anchors a core truth of modern leadership: velocity is never accidental. It must be designed.

Alongside Mr. Frenehard's interview is a reframed exploration of organizational velocity itself—the mechanics beneath acceleration. Leaders speak often about moving fast; far fewer know what actually creates or kills momentum inside their organizations. This feature examines where speed originates, where it

leaks, and how leaders can intervene early enough to prevent drag from becoming decay.

Culture, too, plays an unmistakable role. The third feature examines culture not as a soft abstraction but as the organization's true operating system. It shows how language, unwritten rules, decision habits, and norms of responsibility directly determine whether a company executes well or struggles for consistency. Culture becomes the hidden architecture that either supports strategy or quietly undermines it.

From culture, the issue moves to governance—an area where many enterprises still rely on structures built for stability rather than speed. The updated governance feature illustrates how decision-making, authority, and risk management must evolve for organizations to move with clarity and conviction. Slow governance is slow execution,

and slow execution is a strategic liability.

Leadership is a thread running through every article, but it stands on its own in a feature dedicated to the first ninety days of a new executive's tenure. The early months of leadership are decisive. They set pace, tone, and alignment. This piece offers a path for leaders to establish rhythm quickly enough to avoid the drift that plagues so many transitions.

Execution is also tested in moments of organizational change, which is why this issue includes an updated exploration of M&A. Integration exposes every weakness and magnifies every strength; it is the ultimate execution stress

test. Done well, it accelerates value. Done poorly, it destroys it. This feature examines what has changed in the integration landscape and how leaders can increase the probability that a deal produces real, measurable results.

No conversation about execution in 2026 can avoid AI. Many organizations have pilots, proofs of concept, and pockets of experimentation, but very few have translated AI into material enterprise performance. The AI feature outlines what separates activity from execution and how leaders can structure AI programs that deliver outcomes, not presentations.

The issue concludes with a reframed look at innovation itself. Often celebrated as an act of invention or imagination, the concept inside high-performing organizations is something different. It is a *discipline*. The updated feature demonstrates how innovation can be embedded into an organization's operating rhythm, transforming new ideas into repeatable engines of growth rather than sporadic flashes of insight.

Across the following eight special features, a clear sequence emerges—one that defines the anatomy of execution in any enterprise. Vision sets direction. Alignment creates coherence. Accountability builds reliability. Operating rhythm establishes speed. Culture provides foundation. Governance shapes authority. Leadership sets the pattern. Innovation sustains momentum. AI extends reach. Together they form the architecture that allows an organization to deliver consistently on what it intends to achieve.

This issue is not meant to be read once and shelved. It is designed to be used, referenced, revisited, and put to work as leaders step into a year that will test their ability to act decisively. The next twelve months will not reward hesitation. They will reward clarity, conviction, and the willingness to establish a velocity that others cannot match.

Your strategy for 2026 is most likely complete. Your teams are preparing. The demands on your organization are not slowing down. The difference between aspiration and achievement—the difference between being prepared and being ready—will depend entirely on how effectively you execute.

That is the question this issue seeks to help you answer: how to close the gap between what you intend and what you deliver.

The year ahead will belong to the leaders who refuse to let execution falter. The ones who move when others hesitate. The ones who make their plans real. **IQ**

FOCUS AREAS

01

EXECUTION

A candid conversation with Sanofi's Emmanuel Frenehard, who reveals what it truly takes to build enterprise-wide velocity. **Page 12**

02

VELOCITY

The mechanics of organizational speed, and why momentum is never a coincidence but the result of deliberate design. **Page 24**

03

CULTURE

A look beneath the surface to the cultural operating system that determines whether strategy execution soars or stalls. **Page 30**

04

GOVERNANCE

How boardroom decision-making models must evolve for organizations to act with clarity and conviction. **Page 38**

05

LEADERSHIP

As each new year brings a wave of new CXO hires, a framework to turn the first 90 days into a launchpad for execution. **Page 44**

06

M&A

A new approach to the ultimate stress test of an organization's ability to align, integrate, and execute under pressure. **Page 52**

07

HUMAN-CENTRIC AI

As AI moves from promise to performance, learn what separates experimentation from real enterprise impact. **Page 60**

08

INNOVATION

Not as occasional invention, but as a disciplined operating rhythm that converts new ideas into sustained growth. **Page 70**