THE BOOK THAT STARTED ICR

Succesvol groeien doe je zo!

How to Grow Successfully

PROVEN PRINCIPLES TO BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION, ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND CREATE LASTING ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE

PAUL JOORE

with

Vic Tory

ICR

Clarity. Confidence. Peace of Mind.

OFFICIAL INTERNATIONAL EDITION (2026)

A Gift to Those Who Build Better Organizations

A Letter to the Reader

A Gift from Route ICR

This International Edition is offered as a complimentary gift to leaders, entrepreneurs, business coaches, consultants, accountants and trusted advisors who are committed to building stronger organizations.

When the original Dutch edition of *Succesvol groeien doe je zo!* was published in 2016, it marked the beginning of a journey that eventually evolved into the ICR Organizational Operating System.

Rather than updating or rewriting the original work, we chose to preserve it as it was written. Where appropriate, carefully selected *Editorial Notes (2026)* provide additional context and highlight how specific concepts evolved over time.

At the time, these ideas were introduced through a practical DIY coaching approach and an accompanying online platform. They later evolved into what is now known as the ICR Organizational Operating System.

This edition has been carefully translated from the original Dutch publication while preserving its historical context.

We hope this book inspires you to build organizations that create lasting value through greater clarity, alignment and continuous improvement.

Paul Joore
Founder of ICR
Clarity. Confidence. Peace of Mind.

Succesvol groeien doe je zo!

How to Grow Successfully

The Book That Started ICR

Vic Tory
Paul Joore

Original Dutch Edition

Title
Succesvol groeien doe je zo!

Author
Paul Joore

Illustrations
Extrafazant & Paul Joore

Cover Design
Extrafazant & Paul Joore

Original Publisher (2016)
Wolf Legal Publishers

Original Website
www.InControlRating.com

Original ISBN
9789462403123

Based on the original Dutch edition first published in 2016.

Editorial Note (2026)
At the time of publication, the accompanying online platform was called **InControlRating.com.** Today, it has evolved into the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, available through **RouteICR.com** and powering the **ICR Organizational Operating System**.

Foreword

"I am a successful entrepreneur building a growing business."

It sounds wonderful, but unfortunately not every entrepreneur can say that.

Without even realizing it, many small and medium-sized business owners underestimate the importance of organizing and structuring their businesses as a prerequisite for sustainable growth.

Without realizing it, they often lack the capabilities needed for sustainable growth.

Consequently, many entrepreneurs hesitate to set truly ambitious goals.

Yet ambitious goals are exactly what make growth possible.

With the philosophy that *learning comes through doing*, this book offers entrepreneurs a practical solution.

This DIY coaching approach allows you to improve your organization at your own pace, supported by practical guidance throughout the process.

Editorial Note (2026)
DIY Coaching was the original concept behind this book. Over time, it evolved into the **ICR Organizational Operating System**: a structured approach that combines self-guided improvement with digital support, proven methodologies, and collaboration with coaches, consultants and other trusted advisors.

It enables you to organize and structure your business in a clear and practical way.

The step-by-step approach gives you the clarity, insight and organizational guidance you need to lead your employees in the right direction.

After all, lasting success depends on your employees sharing your vision and working alongside you to achieve your goals.

By building an organization that is truly inControl, you create a competitive advantage while significantly increasing your chances of sustainable growth.

And who wouldn't want that?

I sincerely hope you enjoy this book and that it helps you build a stronger organization and a more successful business.

Tilburg, April 15, 2016

Paul Joore

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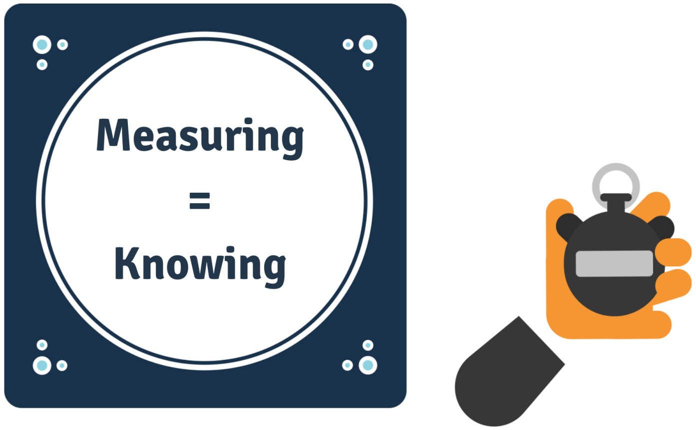
Introduction

In **How to Grow Successfully**, you will discover what you can do to significantly increase your chances of building a successful and growing business.

Along the way, you will quickly gain a clear understanding of what is expected of you as an entrepreneur from an organizational perspective.

Combined with the online tools available through **RouteICR.com**, this approach will help you progress rapidly from **unconsciously incompetent** to **consciously competent**.

In this book, growth means both **becoming better** and **becoming bigger**.



Stay fully informed so you can make conscious decisions.

To illustrate the importance of organizing and structuring your business, we begin by drawing a parallel between entrepreneurship and elite sports.

For both the athlete and the coach, the greatest challenge is turning ambition into reality.

That is why they leave nothing to chance. They continuously ensure that every element contributing to success remains aligned:

1. **before** beginning the long journey toward the next Olympic Games;
2. **during** that journey;
3. **afterwards**, by evaluating the results and learning how to perform even better next time.

Stay informed so you can make conscious decisions

As an entrepreneur, you are both the athlete and the coach.

But how do you:

1. develop expertise across so many different disciplines?
2. maintain a clear overview?
3. guide your employees in the right direction?
4. ensure that both your own decisions and those of your employees contribute to the success of your business?
5. maintain sufficient control to keep your business processes both effective and efficient?

In elite sports, discipline is one of the essential conditions for success.

The same applies to **DIY coaching**. Your own discipline as an entrepreneur is every bit as important as the discipline of a top athlete.

Do you have an excuse not to improve?

Throughout this book, we explain what you can do to increase your chances of sustainable growth.

You will quickly discover what is expected of you as an entrepreneur from an organizational perspective.

Route ICR Growth Circles has been specifically developed to guide you on your journey toward successful growth.

What's your excuse for not improving?

To make this journey practical and manageable, the book introduces a series of supporting tools.

As you work with the **Route ICR Growth Circles**, you will gain greater insight and overview, enabling you to make better decisions and making it easier to guide your employees in the desired direction.

The **Route ICR Growth Circles** encourage you to make **DIY coaching** part of your daily routine through consistent discipline.

As a result, you will develop from **unconsciously incompetent** to **consciously competent**, while becoming increasingly **inControl**.

And the more control you gain—and the better you become at guiding your employees—the greater your chances of achieving sustainable growth.

Before we continue, however, we first return to the fundamentals.

After all, every DIY coach begins by understanding his or her own strengths.

In Chapter 1, you will take an honest look at yourself to determine to what extent your personal qualities provide a solid foundation for successful growth.

In Chapter 2, we examine the consequences of having—or not having—the right people in your organization.

We also conclude that even the best people cannot everywhere at once.

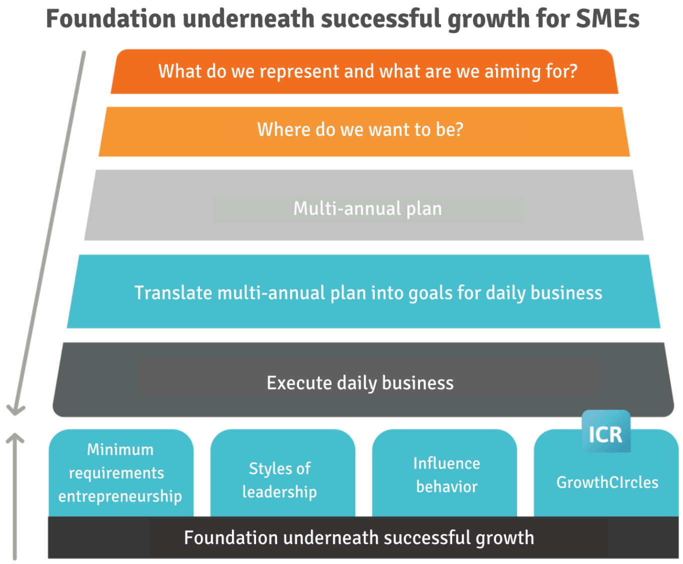
That is precisely why consciously influencing employee behaviour deserves your full attention.

The foundation for successful growth

In Chapter 3, we return to the fundamentals of influencing employee behaviour.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how structure and high-quality processes help guide people throughout your organization in the desired direction.

Chapter 5 introduces the **Route ICR Growth Circles**.



The Foundation for Successful Growth

The Growth Circles provide a practical framework that helps you organize, manage and continuously improve your business.

The final chapter offers additional practical suggestions to help you get started immediately.

Before you begin Chapter 1, I would like to emphasize one final point.

Insight and overview are essential prerequisites for making conscious decisions—every single day.

If you do not know where you stand, you cannot effectively guide the behaviour of your employees.

And if you cannot guide your employees in the right direction, you cannot significantly increase your chances of success.

So develop the discipline of a top athlete, activate the **DIY coach** within yourself, and grow rapidly from **unconsciously incompetent** to **consciously competent**.

In short: increase your chances of growing successfully.

1 Your Strength as an Entrepreneur

What qualities do you possess as an entrepreneur, and do you have what it takes to become successful?

In this chapter, we briefly consider the fundamental conditions that existing research identifies as essential to becoming a successful entrepreneur.

You may, of course, discover that you do not currently meet one or more of these requirements.

Look at that positively. As a DIY coach, you have immediately identified your first opportunity for improvement.

1.1 The Minimum Requirements for Successful Entrepreneurship

Caught up in the demands of daily business, we are probably not sufficiently aware of the minimum requirements we need to meet if we want to increase our chances of becoming successful entrepreneurs.

It is therefore extremely important to understand both your strengths and the qualities in which you are less strong.

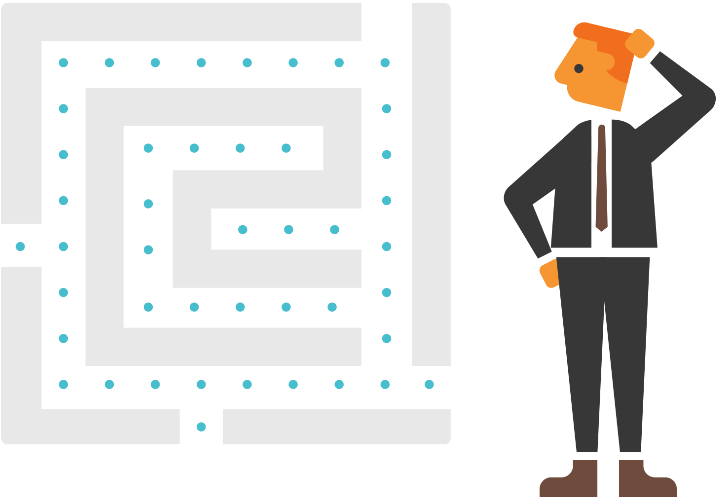
Existing research identifies several fundamental qualities required to become a successful entrepreneur.

We translate these qualities into requirements.

The specific circumstances determine which requirement—or combination of requirements—needs the greatest attention at any particular moment.

There are undoubtedly other qualities that may also be important.

For now, however, we want to keep things manageable and focus on the absolute minimum.



What are the minimum requirements for increasing your chances of successful entrepreneurship?

In the table on the next page, you can assess yourself against each quality.

Give yourself a score of **1** when you believe you perform at the lowest level and a score of **10** when you believe you perform exceptionally well.

Minimum requirements that increase your chances of successful entrepreneurship	**My self assessment**
1. Ambition & Drive You always strive for the best, remain determined to improve and continuously identify and pursue new opportunities.	
2. Mission, Vision, Core Values & strategic goals You create focus, visualize your desired destination and always know where your business stands.	
3. Enthusiasm & Passion You enjoy what you do and convey that enthusiasm to others.	
4. Financially Knowledgeable You apply financial risk management and remain conscious of costs.	
5. Determination & Perseverance You remain committed to your plan, refuse to be discouraged and are prepared to work long hours to make progress.	
6. Courage & Resilience You are prepared to take financial risks, remain effective under pressure, cope with setbacks and accept a loss when necessary.	
7. Self-Confidence & Self-Discipline You critically assess your strengths and weaknesses, are prepared to seek external help when necessary and recognize when the interests of the business must take precedence over your own.	
8. Persuasiveness & Networking You possess strong communication and social skills and know how to persuade the right people.	

Table 1 — Minimum Requirements for Increasing Your Chances of Successful Entrepreneurship

Later in this book, we will examine requirements 2—mission, vision and related elements—and 4—financial knowledge—in greater detail.

That may already help you improve your current score even further.

1.2 When the Minimum Requirements Are Present

Do you possess the minimum requirements to a sufficient degree?

Whenever I work through this list myself, it inspires me to continue developing.

To gain and maintain an honest view of yourself, it is valuable to hold up a mirror to yourself regularly.

During difficult periods, for example, greater perseverance may be required, together with the ability to cope with setbacks.

When business is progressing particularly well, ambition and drive become important in preventing complacency.

By remaining conscious of this, you are better able to accept the situation for what it is.

You can then adapt your behaviour to the circumstances and focus on the qualities that the situation requires most at that particular moment.

Naturally, you should do this without losing sight of the other qualities entirely.

1.3 When the Minimum Requirements Are Missing or Insufficient

When some of the minimum requirements are missing or insufficiently developed, this may inspire you to take action.

You can coach yourself to develop the qualities you need to meet the minimum requirements expected of an entrepreneur.

Naturally, you can also compensate for qualities you lack in other ways.

You can, for example, concentrate on your strengths and allow other people to contribute the qualities in which you are less strong.

Today, professionals can often be engaged flexibly and at an acceptable cost.

This creates ample opportunity to complement your own qualities with those of someone else.

1.4 Tips

You cannot influence everything. Luck also plays a part in determining whether or not you become a successful entrepreneur.

However, to minimize your dependence on luck, you should personally do everything reasonably possible to maximize your chances of success.

Therefore, address as many of the factors you can genuinely influence as possible—including your own personal development.

This book offers the inspiration and practical guidance you need, including when it comes to your employees.

In the next chapter, we begin by examining whether you have the best people working for you.

2 Your Employees

We assume that the minimum requirements for entrepreneurship discussed in the previous chapter are present to a sufficient degree.

Success means turning ambition into reality. From this point onward, that process takes centre stage.

We would also prefer success not to be a matter of chance. Instead, we want to influence the likelihood of success as positively as possible.

Before examining the practical organizational measures involved, we first consider the fact that, as an entrepreneur, you depend on other people.

How does the quality of your employees affect the skills required of you as an entrepreneur?

2.1 Having the Best People on Your Team

As an entrepreneur, you depend on other people.

In this book, we focus on the people who work for you and whom you therefore manage, either directly or indirectly.

Let us begin by acknowledging that we would all prefer to work with the best people.

The best people are intrinsically driven to continue developing and improving themselves.

By nature, they always strive for the best, remain determined to improve and continuously identify and pursue new opportunities.

As established in the previous chapter, these are important conditions for increasing the likelihood of success.

They take responsibility for their own happiness, act decisively and behave proactively.

That is an extremely positive attitude.

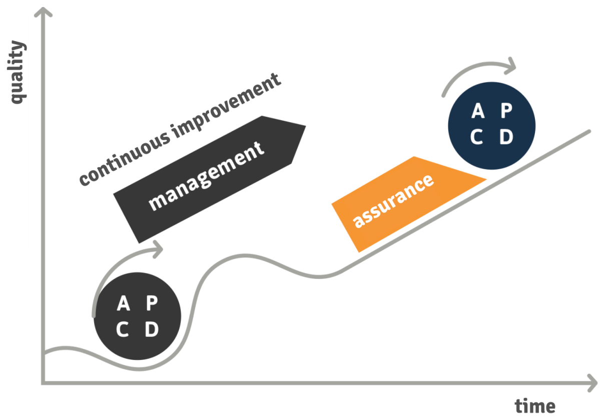
Unfortunately, the best people are scarce and are therefore not available to every business.

For entrepreneurs who employ only the best people, the most important thing is to trust them—and to demonstrate that trust.

Beyond that, you need only create an environment in which these people can develop themselves and the business to their fullest potential.

Having only the best people on your team means that you:

1. explicitly define the boundaries within which they may act;
2. give them your trust;
3. act consistently with that trust and allow them complete freedom within the established boundaries.



The best people drive continuous improvement themselves.

2.2 Having People Who Are Not Quite the Best

In practice, the best people cannot work everywhere at the same time.

There are simply very few of them, which automatically means that the other group is much larger.

In a positive spirit, let us refer to this much larger group as **people who are not quite the best**.

These people have less—or, in some cases, no—intrinsic drive and motivation to continue developing and improving themselves.

Their attitude may therefore be less positive than that of the very best people, but that does not make them inferior.

Above all, we should accept that people are naturally different: colourful and diverse, allowing us to create the right combination for success.

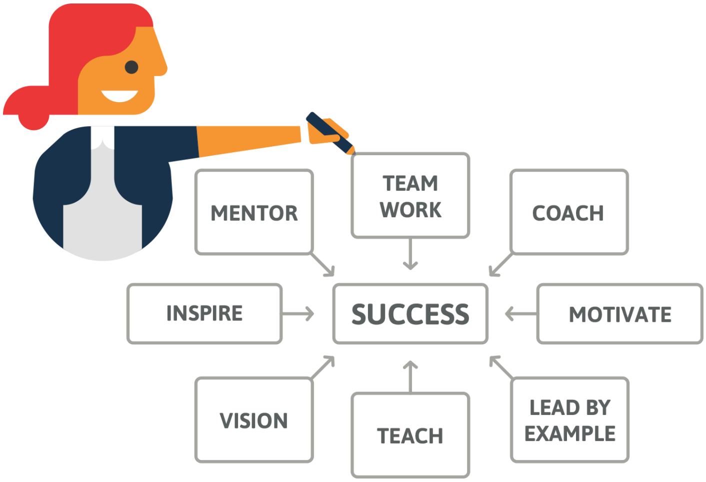
But what should you do when most of your employees belong to this group?

It then becomes essential to define the playing field of your business clearly and explicitly.

These employees need additional guidance to ensure that processes run smoothly and remain properly aligned.

By connecting organizational measures, methods and techniques, you can compensate to a considerable extent for what the best people do naturally.

So even when you do not employ the very best people, you can still use the power of appropriate measures and tools to increase your chances of success.



People who are not quite the best need attention and guidance.

Even reaching a small part of their intrinsic motivation creates an opening for more.

In one way or another, you need to appeal to their intrinsic sense of responsibility.

Although they may not demonstrate this naturally in the same way as the best people, it is still present.

With people who are not quite the best, it is simply hidden.

As a leader, you can bring it to the surface, but only by giving these people a great deal of genuine attention.

And that takes time.

In practice, directors and management teams often expect employees to change while continuing to follow their own old patterns.

That is not particularly effective. Always remember that your own behaviour sets an example for your employees.

2.3 Tips

The best people do not work everywhere at the same time.

That gives you even more reason to determine carefully which qualities your current and prospective employees need in order to contribute optimally to achieving your objectives.

It is also important to recognize and accept that most of your employees may belong to the group of people who are not quite the best.

Once you accept this, you will also recognize the importance of taking the appropriate organizational measures to encourage the desired behaviour.

This book will help you make progress with that.

Begin by making a thorough inventory of the qualities present among your current employees.

Make the most of these people's strengths, as these contribute to effective and efficient processes.

Compensate for their weaker areas—or opportunities for improvement—through appropriate organizational measures.

In the next chapter, we return to the fundamentals and go **back to basic**

3 Back to Basics

We have now reached the point where we know to what extent the minimum requirements for successful entrepreneurship are present, and where we have accepted that we do not employ only the very best people.

The next step is to organize and structure our business in such a way that both our own behavior and the behavior of our employees move—and continue moving—in the desired direction.

But what should we rely on to influence behavior day after day?

And how do we ensure that all the different elements remain properly connected and reinforce one another?

After all, every action and every decision should contribute to the success we aspire to achieve.

How do we accomplish that?

We do so by returning to the beginning...

Back to basics.

Back to the beginning... Back to Basics

3.1 Overview and Insight

Fortunately, most organizations possess a great deal of specialist knowledge and experience.

Too often, however, that knowledge is fragmented throughout the organization, resulting in little or no overall overview.

As a consequence, the connection between the available knowledge and experience is limited, and there is a lack of both insight and overview.

This quickly leads to organizational silos, causing the objectives of the organization as a whole to disappear, at least partly, from view.

The danger is therefore very real that an organization made up entirely of specialists eventually loses sight of the bigger picture.

Make sure you and your team stay fully informed so you can make conscious decisions.

As a result, an integrated management approach has become something that feels increasingly distant to many people.

Having a complete overview is essential for anticipating developments effectively and maintaining the right focus.

Without this foundation, guiding behavior in the desired direction becomes difficult, making the organization increasingly dependent on chance.

3.2 Influencing Behavior

In Chapter 2, we concluded that the very best people cannot be everywhere at once.

That makes influencing behavior one of the most important factors in increasing the likelihood of success.

Influencing behavior in the desired direction always begins with **leading by example**.

At the same time, we organize and structure our business because we want to be as independent as possible from coincidence on our journey toward success.

A well-designed structure helps you to:

1. **Manage expectations** by making it explicitly clear what you expect from your employees.
2. **Measure actual performance** and compare it with those expectations.
3. **Adjust when necessary** based on actual developments and the outcomes you want to achieve.

The combination of leading by example and the way an organization is designed and structured largely determines the culture of the business.

3.2.1 Managing Expectations

Managing expectations involves far more than simply telling people they need to work hard.

That may take very little time, but it rarely produces meaningful results. Investing in your employees requires time.

The good news is that a well-organized and well-structured business ultimately creates more time for exactly that investment.

Managing expectations also provides clarity and direction for both managers and employees.

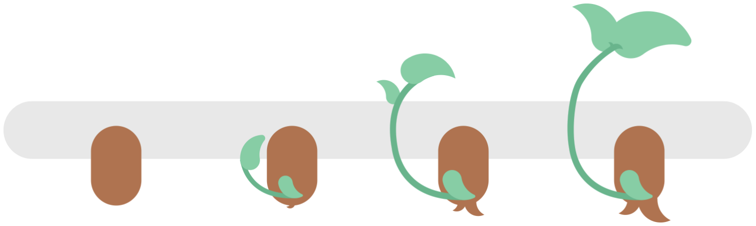
There is a well-known saying:

What you give attention to grows.

The same principle applies to the commitment you expect from your employees.

People naturally need attention—including attention from their manager.

And that has a direct positive impact on the results your organization achieves.



Everything you give attention to grows—even the things that remain invisible beneath the surface.

3.2.2 Measuring Actual Performance

Once expectations have been clearly established, it is time to get to work.

On the road to success, it is essential to continuously measure how your organization is actually performing.

Those actual results should then be compared with the expectations you originally established.

If reality differs significantly from those expectations, the next question is obvious:

What caused the difference?

Do we understand the underlying causes?

Can we influence them?

What needs to change to get back on the path we originally set?

Or have circumstances changed so fundamentally that we should reconsider our long-term direction altogether?

Every entrepreneur is familiar with maintaining financial records that eventually lead to annual financial statements.

Those figures allow you to compare your organization's performance with that of competitors.

For example:

- How much working capital do you require?
- How does that compare with similar organizations?
- What can you learn from those differences?

However, the figures in your accounting records are **not** the activities themselves.

They are merely the result of those activities.

Those figures are ultimately determined by the way your organization has been organized and structured.

More importantly, they reflect the degree to which those activities are actually under control.

This is what we refer to as being **inControl**.

In other words:

To what extent are you truly inControl of the success you are pursuing?

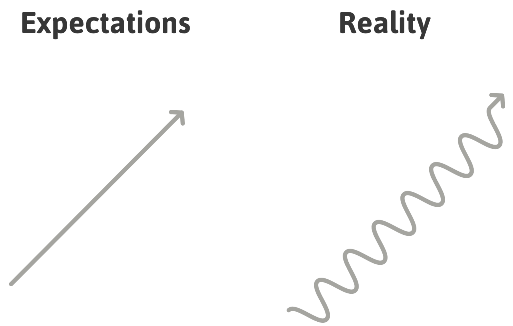
3.2.3 Adjusting to Actual Developments

No matter how carefully you prepare, there will always be factors beyond your control.

Circumstances in the world may change so significantly that the assumptions on which your long-term approach was based are no longer valid.

Fortunately, all the work you invested in managing expectations continues to provide clarity for both you as an entrepreneur and your employees.

The route toward your destination may change, but the common thread remains intact and continues to provide direction—even when unexpected setbacks occur.



That is why managing expectations is so important.

The key lesson from the coach and athlete introduced at the beginning of this book is that every decision they make on the road to the Olympic Games must first contribute to their mission and core values.

Their mission and core values provide direction for their daily actions (see also Section 5.2.1).

If a decision does not contribute—or contributes insufficiently—they look for a better solution.

3.3 The Importance of Trust

What role does trust play in achieving sustainable success?

How does trust influence the culture of your organization, and how does your organizational culture influence trust?

Could trust itself even be considered a leadership risk?

In other words, if employees do not trust their leader—the entrepreneur—does that ultimately reduce the performance of the organization?

Giving deliberate attention to trust is essential for building and maintaining successful relationships.

But how do you actually build trust?

How do you earn it?

And how do you give it?

Is the way you approach trust in your personal life different from the way you should approach it in a professional environment?

And is trust based primarily on intentions, or on actual behavior?

Trust Through Genuine Coaching and Guidance

We all know that trust is built largely on people's perceptions.

Every expression, action, or interaction creates a perception.

Those perceptions either strengthen trust or weaken it.

As human beings, we constantly interpret the signals we receive from others.

Those signals can have either a positive or a negative effect.

Being consciously aware of the impact your actions and communications have on trust can therefore produce significant benefits.

The same principle applies to the way your organization is designed.

It also applies to the way your organization deals with everyday challenges and decisions.

After all, that organizational environment is the source of many of the signals employees, customers, and suppliers experience.

And isn't the way we design our organization largely within our own control?

Don't we also have considerable influence over the culture we want to create?

This means we can consciously work on strengthening the trust experienced by employees, customers, and suppliers alike.

Trust is therefore not built solely by delivering the right end result.

It is equally determined by **the way in which that result is achieved**.

In other words, the underlying processes throughout your organization should consistently send positive signals.

Striving to do things right the first time reduces the likelihood of damaging trust.

It is also useful to relate this to the financial performance of your organization—or of individual business processes.

"Why?" you may ask.

The primary reason is to increase your employees' awareness.

When the consequences of decisions are expressed in **euros**, they become much more tangible.

Especially when employees are encouraged to ask themselves how they would deal with the same situation in their own personal lives.

How would they make their decisions?

How would they influence others?

Thinking in these terms becomes much easier when the impact can be translated into financial value.

3.4 What Type of Leader Are You?

The type of leader plays a crucial role in effectively guiding employees within an organization.

This applies in many ways, but especially to the influence of leading by example and the level of trust that exists throughout the organization.

The leadership style that produces the best results depends on the specific situation.

Because leadership has such a significant impact—and because it is often overshadowed by the demands of everyday business—we will briefly discuss eight different leadership styles.

What kind of leader are you?

3.4.1 Inspirational Style

An inspirational leader motivates and encourages others through self-confidence, courage, and clear communication.

3.4.2 Coaching Style

Employees generally regard this as the most desirable leadership style because it is characterized by genuine attention to people.

Leaders who adopt this style invest both time and energy in the development of their employees.

3.4.3 Participative Style

Management literature describes this style as one in which employees are actively involved in many organizational processes.

It gives people a meaningful voice, encourages self-management, and provides room for autonomy.

3.4.4 Permissive Style

Leaders who adopt this style are highly flexible when it comes to standards, rules, and interactions with employees.

As a result, they provide little real direction or leadership.

3.4.5 Withdrawn Style

This style is characterized by both personal and professional absence, combined with indecisiveness.

Employees may conclude that their manager lacks ambition or genuine interest.

3.4.6 Distrustful Style

Leaders who adopt this style often intervene too late when conflicts arise or operational problems develop.

They tend to question the motives of their employees and are hesitant and unclear about the direction they want the organization to take.

3.4.7 Authoritarian Style

This style is generally perceived more negatively because it focuses primarily on imposing decisions.

Anger, irritation, impatience, or other forms of confrontational behavior are characteristic of this leadership style.

3.4.8 Directive Style

Leaders who frequently use this style are often seen as pursuing personal success in a highly competitive manner.

They actively monitor and correct employees and regularly refer to rules, procedures, and formal standards.

3.4.9 Your Own Leadership Style

Use the following table to evaluate how you see your own leadership style.

It may also be worthwhile to consider which leadership style is actually most appropriate for the specific circumstances within your organization.

When conditions are favorable and your organization has momentum, there is generally less need for a dominant leadership approach.

However, when your organization is facing significant challenges or strong headwinds, you may need to provide closer guidance to minimize setbacks and losses.

The following table allows you to assess the composition of your leadership style.

Are you entirely inspirational, or are you a combination of two or more leadership styles?

Leadership styles	That is how I see myself					
	0%	***10%***	***25%***	***50%***	***75%***	***100%***
1. inspirational stylel						
2. coaching style						
3. participative style						
4. permissive style						
5. withdrawn style						
6. distrustful style						
7. authoritarian style						
8. directive style						

Table 2. What Type of Leader Am I? Or Am I a Combination of Leadership Styles?

3.5 Tips

Regularly ask yourself what type of leadership you are demonstrating and whether it is producing the effect you intend.

What are you trying to achieve?

And how does your approach encourage the behavior you want to see?

To influence behavior, you must first understand it.

Once you understand behavior, you become better able to predict it.

And when you can predict behavior, you gain a much clearer understanding of its likely impact on performance.

The final step is to deliberately influence behavior in the desired direction so that it results in the performance you are aiming to achieve.

Ultimately, almost everything revolves around behavior—your own and that of your employees.

Challenge yourself to increase the level of awareness—both your own and that of the people around you—from **unconscious** to **conscious**.

4 From Ambition to Realization

What is the relationship between **quality** and **structure**?

Structure is a tool that helps you pursue and achieve success in a controlled and manageable way.

In other words, structure supports the process of turning ambition and intentions into desired behavior and sustainable success.

It therefore forms an essential foundation for consistently achieving the minimum level of quality your organization requires.

When can something truly be considered 100% quality?

4.1 Quality Is More Than a Slogan

When entrepreneurs think about quality, they often immediately think of **ISO certification** and similar quality systems.As a result, the word *quality* is too often associated with procedure-driven organizations.

Unfortunately, this can create negative associations, even though quality itself is something entirely different.

According to the dictionary, **quality is the degree to which something is good**.

And that immediately raises an important question:

How good is your business, really?

Can you truly become successful if the quality of your products or services falls short of expectations?

The quality your customers experience is a direct reflection of the quality of the way your organization operates.

So another important question becomes:

What influence do your management capabilities have on the quality of your business operations?

When can we honestly say that something represents **100 percent quality**?

Most people would probably agree that quality applies to virtually everything we do.

Quality and success therefore cannot be separated.

Without quality, sustainable success simply does not exist.

But how do you determine what "good" actually means?

How do you decide what level of quality is acceptable?

The answer is that you establish clear **minimum quality standards**.

You define these standards for:

- your products;
- your services;
- and the organizational design of your business.

Those minimum standards should ultimately become part of the DNA of every employee.

They should flow through your organization like blood through the human body.

Everything that happens inside your organization should at least meet those minimum requirements.

Once that point has been reached, you can honestly say that your business is under control.

Or, stated differently:

You are inControl.

4.2 The Positive Effect of Structure

How do you ensure that all organizational elements remain connected and reinforce one another?

After all, every action and every decision should contribute to the success you want to achieve.

How can you make that happen?

In practice, we accomplish this by making activities **explicit, transparent and manageable**.

Simply put:

by introducing structure as a hygiene factor within your organization.

Without allowing that structure to evolve into unnecessary procedures and bureaucracy.

The key characteristics of a **good organizational structure** are that it:

1. creates clarity and direction for both you and your employees;
2. balances business processes, the organizational environment, historical experience and organizational objectives;
3. helps manage expectations at every level of the organization;
4. enables decisions to be made at the lowest appropriate level;
5. helps identify opportunities and threats as early as possible throughout the organization;
6. enables you to demonstrate that your organization is genuinely **inControl**, thereby increasing the likelihood of success.

Structure helps you understand where you are, where you want to go, and which route will get you there.

It is important to remember, however, that structure governs only the **formal** interaction between people.

It does not determine the informal relationships that naturally develop within every organization.

Those informal relationships depend on many factors, including:

- the challenges people face;
- the freedom they have to make decisions;
- their personal interests;
- and, perhaps most importantly, the example set by leadership.

For smaller organizations in particular, the entrepreneur's own behavior has an enormous influence.

Structure helps guide both your own behavior and that of your employees in the desired direction.

Of course, structure alone can never guarantee that every decision will be the correct one.

What it *does* provide is a much stronger foundation on which better decisions can be made.

It increases your awareness of the factors influencing those decisions.

Just as importantly, structure enables you to evaluate the consequences of those decisions much more quickly.

Did reality match your expectations?

Or did the expected results fail to materialize?

If you do not measure, you do not know.

And if you do not know, you cannot consciously adjust.

But once your organization measures actual performance, you can deliberately decide whether corrective action is needed.

4.3 Business Financing—Today and Tomorrow

Business financing continues to evolve toward reducing the credit risk for investors and lenders.

Whether financing growth or refinancing a business facing difficult circumstances, financiers increasingly expect objective evidence rather than intuition.

Startups and growing businesses are often inclined to pursue opportunities across too broad a playing field.

Investors generally dislike that approach.

Experienced entrepreneurs often sense instinctively when business performance is moving in the wrong direction.

But intuition alone offers little reassurance to a lender.

Integrity and an entrepreneur's intrinsic sense of responsibility therefore play a more important role than ever before.

And not only during difficult times.

Even when business is performing well, today's financiers demand greater certainty.

One of the strongest forms of certainty lies in **how well a business has been organized and structured**.

Increasingly, financiers and other stakeholders want to know to what extent an entrepreneur is genuinely **inControl**.

The **Route ICR Growth Circles**, introduced in the next chapter, make this considerably easier.

They have been designed to provide both overview and insight into your entire business.

Because only then can you effectively guide both your people and your organization.

And if you can clearly demonstrate that your organization consistently applies the principles of the Route ICR Growth

Circles, you substantially improve your chances of obtaining financing.

4.4 Tips

In practice, financiers first assess both the entrepreneur and the likelihood of success before deciding whether to provide funding.

That means **your own credibility** is at stake.

So how do you strengthen that credibility?

The answer is remarkably simple:

Show that you are inControl.

If you ever find yourself sitting across the table from financiers because your company's financial position has become unsustainable—or is about to become unsustainable (which can also happen during periods of rapid growth)—you should be able to explain your organization's situation with complete confidence.

If, in addition, you can support future projections using multiple realistic scenarios, you demonstrate genuine knowledge of both your market and your organization's position within it.

If you cannot substantiate your growth plans, your credibility quickly disappears.

And without credibility, even the most persuasive entrepreneur will struggle to convince investors.

In the next chapter, we introduce the **Route ICR Growth Circles**—a practical framework that helps you organize and structure your business while simultaneously strengthening your credibility.

5 Route ICR Growth Circles

We have seen that **structure** is essential for delivering the level of quality required on the journey toward successful entrepreneurship.

In other words:

Structure forms the foundation beneath success.

But where do you begin when you want to introduce structure into your organization?

And how do you make that practical?

When can you say that you have introduced **enough** structure?

After all, you want to remain lean—not become burdened by bureaucracy.

Although every organization and every situation is unique, the foundation for building a successful business is fundamentally the same.

It starts with clearly defining the playing field and making expectations explicit.

In practice, many entrepreneurs find this difficult.

As a result, this crucial step is often skipped or only partially completed.

The consequence is that the foundation beneath your journey toward success becomes fragile and unreliable.

Imagine building a new home for yourself and your family on an unreliable foundation.

You simply would not do it.

So why would you build your dream of a successful business on one?

Invest first in a solid foundation.

Route ICR has been specifically developed to help entrepreneurs build that foundation on the road to sustainable growth.

To make **Route ICR** tangible and practical, we use several supporting tools.

In this chapter, we introduce the **Route ICR Growth Circles**—a practical framework that brings structure to your organization and provides a solid foundation for sustainable success.

5.1 Looking Ahead Instead of Looking Back

When discussing the building blocks that together create a solid organizational foundation, we deliberately connect them to the day-to-day reality of entrepreneurs.

From that practical perspective, we gradually introduce the professional concepts that underpin them.

Our goal is to bridge the gap between the hands-on entrepreneur and the terminology used by professional advisors.

Through **RouteICR.com**, we therefore developed a professional reference framework that makes this bridge permanently available.

It is intended to become a common standard shared by the various professional disciplines involved in advising and supporting SMEs.

Above all, however, it is designed to provide entrepreneurs with accessible online tools that help them guide behavior throughout their organizations.

The first advisors are already using this professional standard.

For entrepreneurs, this creates much greater clarity and insight.

It also makes it easier to identify an advisor whose expertise truly matches their needs.

5.1.1 Future Performance

Wouldn't it be valuable if you had an indication of your organization's future performance?

And what if that indication could be expressed as a numerical score showing the extent to which your management environment contributes to achieving your objectives?

Such a score would have predictive value.

That is valuable not only for you as an entrepreneur, but also for financiers, investors, future employees and even customers.

Think of your accounting records and the financial statements they produce.

Those figures make it possible to compare organizations with one another.

However, they primarily describe the **past**.

5.1.1 FUTURE PERFORMANCE

Most management dashboards primarily look backward rather than forward.

If you want to gain insight into the future performance of your organization, it is much more useful to examine **how the organization itself has been designed and structured**.

In other words, evaluate the organizational design and the degree to which business processes are under control.

The quality of your management environment provides a forward-looking indication of future organizational performance.

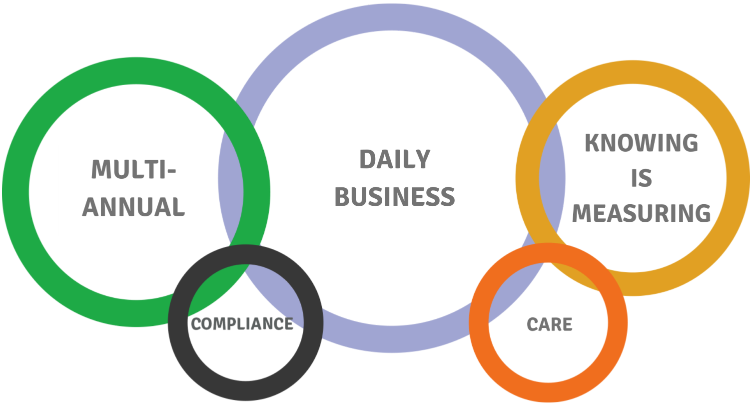
In most situations, the principle is straightforward:

The better you are inControl, the better you are able to guide your organization toward sustainable success.

This also provides valuable insight into whether your organization possesses a competitive advantage over others.

Ultimately, the question becomes:

Does your organizational approach—and the degree to which you are inControl—provide a competitive advantage?



The Route ICR Growth Circles provide an integrated view of your organization.

5.1.2 Route ICR Growth Circles

To make organizing and structuring your business easier, we use the **Route ICR Growth Circles**.

These Growth Circles make it much easier to keep your business processes under control.

Their strength lies in the fact that the circles are carefully aligned and continuously reinforce one another.

Below is a brief explanation of the purpose of each Growth Circle.

Multi-Year

This circle contains the areas of attention that are important from a long-term perspective, including:

- *what we stand for;*
- *what we aim to achieve;*
- *how we organize and design our business.*

Daily Operations

This circle contains the areas of attention that are important for the day-to-day operation of the business, including translating long-term objectives into what they mean for employees on the work floor.

Measurement

*This circle contains the areas of attention that are important for **measurement**, including how you have made it measurable that your organization is on track to achieve its objectives.*

Compliance

This circle contains the areas of attention that are important for complying with laws and regulations, including how your organization encourages employees to speak up and adopt an open and constructive attitude.

Care

The fifth circle contains the areas of attention that are important for taking good care of what you have built, including how you create an organization where people genuinely enjoy working.

In essence, the **Route ICR Growth Circles** symbolize organizing and structuring your business so that it can consistently deliver outstanding performance.

By giving each of the Growth Circles the attention it deserves, you significantly increase the likelihood of successful growth.

It is no coincidence that professional investors use comparable frameworks to help their investments grow in a structured and successful way.

The main difference is that individual investors typically use their own formats and areas of emphasis, whereas our approach aims to provide a **uniform framework**.

The objective is to arrive at measurable, numerical scores that allow you to compare your own performance over time.

An additional benefit is that the degree to which business processes are under control also becomes comparable across organizations.

This, in turn, creates opportunities to measure and improve your competitive position from an organizational perspective.

Above all, it enables you to demonstrate to customers, suppliers, and employees that you do everything possible—and leave nothing to chance—to be a reliable partner.

The remaining sections of this chapter discuss each of the **Route ICR Growth Circles** in more detail.

5.2 Multi-Year

When we talk about **Multi-Year**, we are referring to the matters that need to be defined for the years ahead.

The **Multi-Year Circle** consists of the following components:

- **The DNA of Our Organization**
- **Organizational Design**
- **The Importance of Soft Skills in Leadership**
- **The Management Cycle**

In professional terms, this circle is generally referred to as **strategy** or **strategic management**.

It sets the direction for all the other **Route ICR Growth Circles**.

We estimate that the **Multi-Year Circle** accounts for approximately **30%** of the influence on an organization's ability to achieve sustainable growth.

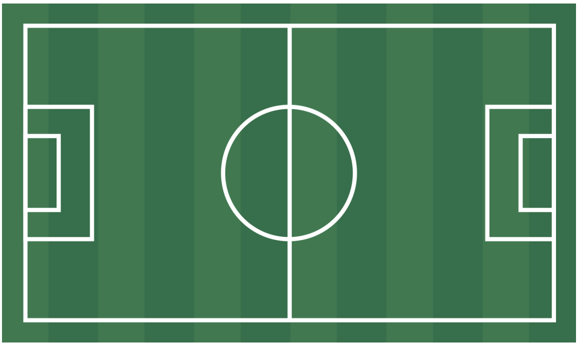
This means that if you neglect your strategic foundation, you reduce your chances of success by at least **30%**.

And that is only the direct effect.

The negative impact on the other Growth Circles comes on top of that.

The strategic choices your organization makes effectively define the playing field on which it will compete.

Just as you first assemble the border of a jigsaw puzzle before completing the rest, clearly defining your playing field provides direction and clarity for everything that follows.



Explicitly define your playing field.

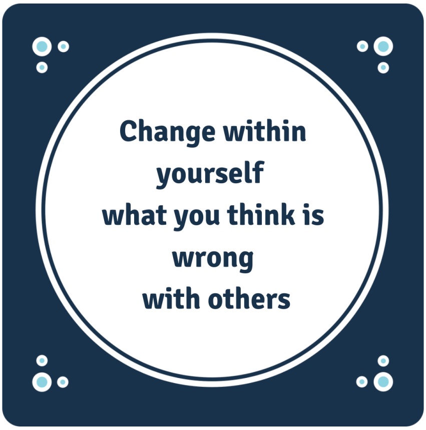
Once the playing field has been clearly defined, the next step is to communicate clearly what is expected from everyone within the organization.

To ensure that employees continue to follow the chosen direction—the strategy—the entrepreneur establishes a measurement system.

For most entrepreneurs, this also means introducing organizational measures that foster a culture of continuous improvement.

As we discussed in Section 1.1, continuously striving to improve is one of the key conditions for increasing the likelihood of success.

Especially in a world that is changing ever more rapidly.



This saying also applies to the way you run your organization.

If your organization is not proactive, you may suddenly find yourself left behind.

5.2.1 The DNA of Your Organization: How Do You Provide Direction?

I regularly hear entrepreneurs say that making plans is pointless because they never turn out as expected.

However, the primary reason for making plans is not to predict the future perfectly, but to ensure that you systematically think through as many aspects of your organization's future performance as possible. Only then can you make well-considered decisions.

Earlier, we established that **success is impossible without quality**.

But how do you ensure that your people consistently deliver the level of quality you expect?

One of the most important tools is to make **responsibilities and activities explicit, measurable, and verifiable**.

Of course, this should never result in unnecessary procedures or excessive bureaucracy.

The emphasis must always remain on **effective and efficient business operations**.

The foundation lies in creating mutual expectations and designing the organization around those expectations.

Just as an elite athlete and coach do before the actual execution of their training program begins.

The Olympic flame burns continuously in both the athlete and the coach.

Therefore, begin by finding the answers to the following questions:

1. What do we stand for, and what are we committed to?

In professional terms: our mission and core values.

2. Where do we want to go?

In professional terms: our vision and strategic goals.

The answers to these questions define the playing field for your organization.

They provide every employee with a clear framework for:

- carrying out their daily responsibilities;
- making decisions during their daily work.

For that reason, involve your employees from the very beginning in developing your organization's **mission** and **vision**.

Likewise, involve them in defining your **core values**.

Simple questions often produce the most meaningful answers, for example:

1. What would our customers miss if our company no longer existed?

2. What would I personally miss if I no longer worked here?

In other words:

What do we truly stand for?

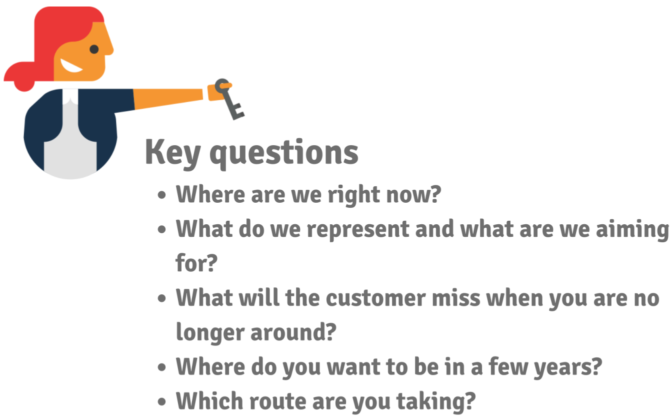
When answering these questions, focus primarily on the value your organization creates.

Try not to think in terms of products or services.

Instead, concentrate on the positive impact your organization has.

Once your mission, vision, and core values have been established, translate your vision into **measurable strategic goals**.

By doing so, you create the same situation as the athlete and coach who are preparing together for the Olympic Games.



The key questions that provide direction.

Measured from the end of one Olympic Games, their ultimate objective lies four years ahead—the next Olympic Games.

Their **mission**—what they stand for and are committed to—is to become successful in the sprint event at the next Olympic Games.

Their **core values**—the behavioral principles that define what they stand for—might include:

1. **Passion**
   Living for the sport because they genuinely enjoy it and consider it the greatest thing they can do.

2. **Perseverance and Performance**
   The absolute determination to win, to become the very best, to never give up, and to always keep improving.
3. **Professionalism**
   Maintaining a professional attitude and behavior at all times.

Their **vision** is that the athlete's talents are perfectly aligned with the future development of the sport, making a top performance—a place in the Olympic final—an achievable goal.

Their **strategic goal** is to win the gold medal.

The first milestones on the road to success have now been established.

The athlete and coach can then begin developing their **strategy**—the most effective and efficient route to achieving that strategic goal.

This includes decisions about training schedules, nutrition, training locations, competitions, performance targets, and guidance from specialized coaches and experts.

Because both the athlete and the coach fully embrace these milestones, they experience the daily effort required to achieve them much more intensely.

The challenge for every entrepreneur is to involve employees in exactly the same way.

Do not simply present them with the outcome of the process.

Instead, actively involve them in creating it.

When employees contribute to shaping the organization's direction, they experience the journey much more personally.

As a result, they are far more likely to act in the spirit of the organization's plans than if they are merely confronted with rules and procedures.

5.2.2 The DNA of Your Organization: How Do We Manage the Financial Side?

The considerations discussed in the previous section cannot be separated from the budget available to your organization—in other words, your financial resources.

Financial capital is deployed to seize opportunities, manage risks, and generate returns.

At the same time, the available budget requires you to make choices between the various organizational elements and the options available within each of them.

Allocating more—or fewer—resources to one element, or investing in it more intensively, continuously affects the financial resources available for other elements, assuming the overall budget remains unchanged.

Deploying financial resources—putting capital to work.

5.2.3 The DNA of Your Organization: What Is the Right Balance Between People and Technology?

To execute your strategy, you may decide to employ more—or fewer—people.

An alternative is to replace manual work with machinery or to automate processes in other ways.

How do we deploy our capacity: through people, technology, or a combination of both?

Here too, your vision should help you anticipate what the balance between people and technology (including automation and robotics) is likely to look like in your organization several years from now.

That also requires estimating both the quality and the quantity of the people and technology you will need.

Those choices, in turn, determine the investments required to achieve your strategic objectives.

5.2.4 The DNA of Your Organization: A Reliable Image and Branding

To ensure that both the athlete and the coach have sources of income, they seek one or more sponsors.

The athlete–coach team must present itself effectively—**build a strong brand**—to attract the attention of the sponsors they hope to work with.

After all, a sponsor will ask an important question:

Do we want to be associated with this athlete and coach?

Regardless of the amount a sponsor is willing to invest, they will naturally want to know to whom they are entrusting their good name.

The image of both the athlete and the coach must therefore be transparent and must never have a negative impact on the sponsor's own reputation.

Your image largely determines the value of your company or brand.

In practice, transparency enables customers to form a clear picture of the organization with which they intend to do business.

The same applies to employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

Increasingly, a lack of transparency is interpreted as a lack of reliability—with all the consequences that may follow.

For example, a preferred supplier may choose to work with one of your competitors instead, or may only be willing to supply you under unfavorable terms.

Or you may struggle to attract highly qualified employees because they are unable to form a positive impression of your organization.

As we discussed earlier in **Section 3.3**, trust is built not only by delivering an excellent final product, but also by **the way in which that result is achieved**.

This means that your organization's entire operating process should be designed to send positive signals.

The confidence of your stakeholders should be reinforced wherever possible.

The amount of information available continues to grow, making organizations increasingly transparent and easier to compare.

At the same time, customers have become more vocal and are more easily heard through the many communication channels and social media platforms available today.

As a result, societal expectations of organizations continue to rise.

Transparency therefore creates opportunities to distinguish yourself in the marketplace.

Because transparency—and therefore reliability—is something you communicate through everything you do.

And ultimately, what you communicate must be reflected in the way you deliver your products and services.

For that reason, it is becoming increasingly valuable to use transparency as a means of creating and maintaining a strong and trustworthy image.

At the same time, external communications quickly lose credibility when the internal organization does not operate according to the same philosophy.

The principle should therefore be:

The outside reflects the inside.

In other words, your organization must be designed internally to match the promises you make externally.

From that moment onward, transparency becomes a defining element of your organizational culture.

Also realize that today your organization can receive widespread negative publicity—not only through traditional media, but just as easily through social media.

That is yet another reason to be well prepared for anything that could affect your reputation and image.

5.2.5 The DNA of Your Organization: Designing Your Organization

How do you actually go about designing your organization?

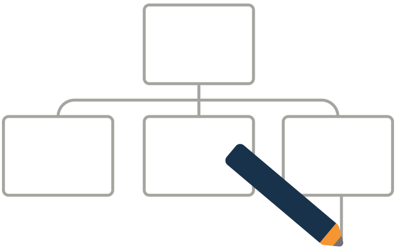
Assuming, of course, that your objective is to create **effective and efficient processes**.

Which areas of responsibility do you need?

And who should you appoint to take ownership of those responsibilities?

How do you prevent your organization from developing isolated silos and instead encourage an integrated way of working in which entire value chains take center stage?

How far should you go in defining processes and procedures to ensure that your strategy is followed and that your organization remains on course?



Designing your organization.

5.2.6 The Importance of Soft Skills in Leadership

What role do **soft skills** play, in your opinion, in leading your organization?

And how important do you believe leading by example really is?

When people think about management, the emphasis is often placed on **hard skills**—the technical capabilities required to perform a job effectively.

However, when managing people, the primary challenge is guiding behavior.

And that is precisely where **soft skills** become critically important.

Soft skills include, for example:

- your personal qualities;
- your social and communication skills;
- your language and communication abilities;
- your personal habits;
- your friendliness;
- your optimism;
- the way you shape your relationships with others.

The final point—**the way you shape your relationships with others**—is particularly important when influencing the behavior of your employees.

Every individual is different.

Depending on the specific situation, a different combination of soft skills is required.

The objective always remains the same:

to guide people's behavior in the desired direction.

5.2.7 The Periodic Management Cycle

How do you ensure that you receive timely information confirming that you are still on track to achieve your strategic objectives?

In practice, many organizations use the **PDCA Cycle (Deming)**, in which the continuous improvement of processes is the central principle.

This enables you to monitor whether you remain on course to achieve your multi-year plans while simultaneously improving the processes within your organization.

PLAN

First, examine how the current activities within the process are being carried out.

Next, develop a plan to improve those activities so they lead to better process performance.

Finally, define measurable objectives so the improvements can be evaluated.

DO

Implement the planned process improvements.

CHECK

Verify whether everything has proceeded according to plan by measuring the results of the improvements.

Compare the new situation with the original one and determine whether the improvements have achieved the intended objectives.

ACT

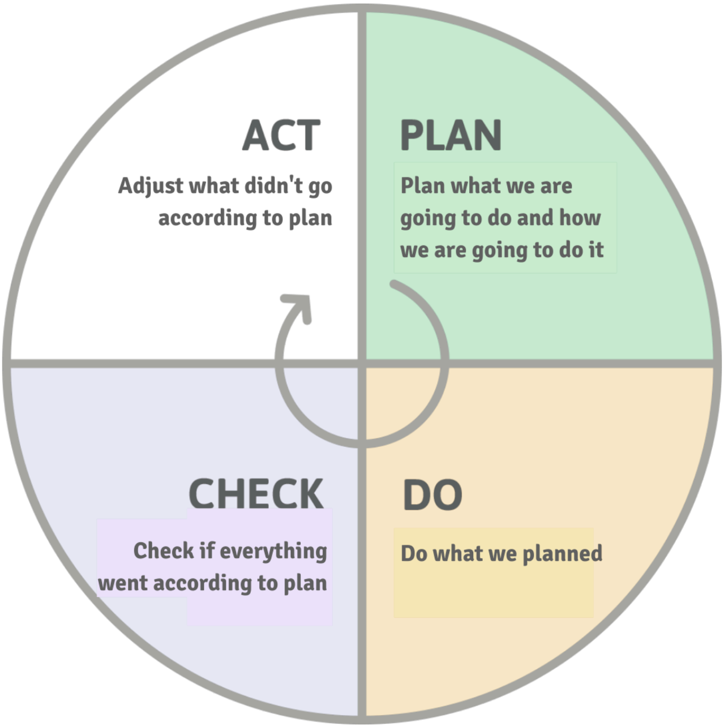
Based on the findings from the previous step, adjust the process wherever deviations have been identified.

Within the PDCA Cycle, senior management is responsible for the highest level at which organizational processes are directed.

Management forms the bridge between that highest organizational level and the employees performing the work.

After all, the essence of the PDCA Cycle is that every employee—and every participant in a process—should, in principle, be capable of evaluating and improving the way they work.

Ultimately, the activities carried out by an individual employee represent a subprocess derived from the organization's overall processes.



The Plan–Do–Check–Act Cycle: a periodic management cycle focused on continuous improvement.

5.3 Daily Operations

When we speak of **Daily Operations**, we are referring to the activities that shape your organization's day-to-day business.

The **Daily Operations Growth Circle** consists of the following areas:

1. Translating the Multi-Year Plan into Daily Operational Goals
2. Marketing & Sales
3. Information & Communication Technology (ICT)
4. Human Resources
5. Purchasing
6. Core Operational Processes
7. Investments
8. Quality Assurance

What these areas have in common is that each of them, in one way or another, is connected to the other Growth Circles: **Multi-Year, Measurement, Compliance, and Care**.

The strength of those relationships depends on factors such as the nature of your business and the stage of development your organization has reached.

The following sections briefly explain each area.

5.3.1 Translating the Multi-Year Plan into Daily Operational Goals

The primary objective is to ensure that your organization's short-term activities are fully aligned with its long-term objectives and long-term organizational design.

In other words, you create a bridge between the long term and the short term.

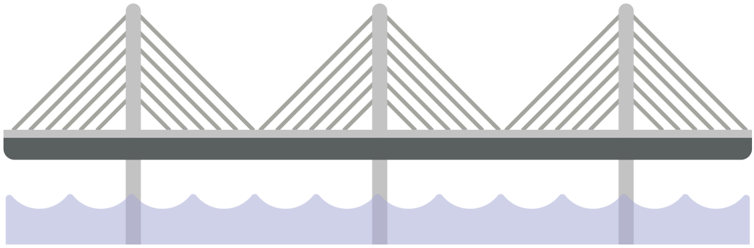
For every long-term objective, it must be clear what needs to be accomplished today.

These are the intermediate steps that ultimately lead to the higher-level objective.

In practice, this is often where organizations struggle.

Even when entrepreneurs have clearly defined their strategic direction, they frequently find it difficult to translate that strategy into concrete operational targets.

Yet this translation is precisely what connects the strategy to the employees who ultimately have to carry it out.



Build a bridge between the long term and the short term.

When expectations are insufficiently clear, effectiveness and efficiency are quickly lost.

And with them, results and profitability.

Employees are simply unable—or insufficiently able—to follow the direction intended by the entrepreneur.

As a consequence, achieving the strategy and its objectives soon comes under pressure.

Within the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, you can immediately put these principles into practice.

5.3.2 Marketing & Sales

You have already determined what is important for the long term with regard to branding and building a trustworthy image.

The next step is to translate those ambitions into concrete marketing and sales activities and measurable short-term objectives.

For example:

- How well do you understand the needs of your current and prospective customers?
- Are your pricing strategies appropriate?
- Are you using the right distribution channels?

Connect marketing and sales.

It is equally important to define the quality requirements you expect from your customers.

In other words, what characteristics should your ideal customers possess?

You may, for example, work with preferred customer categories.

Also consider how all available marketing instruments can help make your organization—and its products or services—more visible in the marketplace.

In practice, this is another area where specialist expertise is often valuable.

5.3.3 Information & Communication Technology (ICT)

What role does ICT play within your organization today?

And how do you expect that role to develop in the years ahead?

ICT can help automate many of your business processes.

As a result, productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency can increase significantly.

Naturally, these investments come at a cost.

They also require employees to work in different ways.

For example, instead of performing a task manually, an employee may increasingly supervise or manage automated systems or robots.

It is entirely possible that employees who currently perform operational work are not the right people to manage automated technologies.

That is why you need to gain this insight in time.

Once you have done so, you must determine how this part of your organization should evolve.

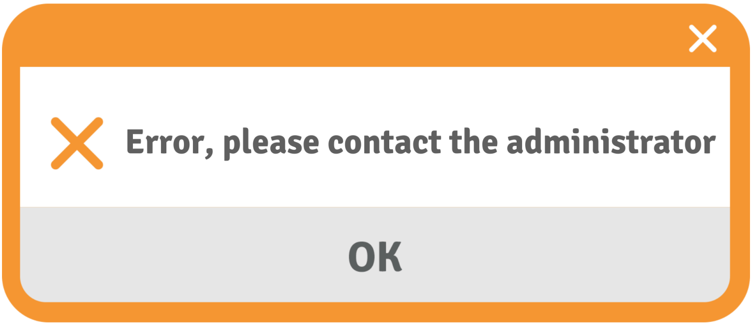
If certain roles disappear, you will need to decide whether those employees can be redeployed elsewhere within the organization or whether you will have to part ways with them.

That immediately introduces a range of legal and employment-related considerations.

Attracting the right new people then becomes a challenge for **Human Resources**.

This example clearly illustrates that ICT is closely connected with finance, Human Resources, operational processes, and legal matters.

These issues therefore need to be addressed from an **integrated management perspective**, rather than as isolated disciplines.



ICT has become indispensable—and its importance will only continue to grow.

5.3.4 Human Resources

What role do your employees play within your organization, and how do you see that role developing over the longer term?

How do you support the personal and professional development of your people?

People make the difference—and your organization is no exception.

But do you also have a long-term vision for how you want to deploy your people in order to achieve your objectives?

Are you making the best possible use of your employees' talents, or do you not fully understand what those talents are?

Ideally, you would like your employees to be just as enthusiastic about your organization as you are.

You want them to arrive on Monday morning genuinely looking forward to the week ahead after a relaxing weekend.

You want them to behave in ways that consistently exceed your customers' expectations.

What qualities should these people possess to make the greatest possible contribution?

How strong is your employees' commitment?

Can your current mix of employees deliver your strategic objectives?

Do people actively want to work for your organization?

What reputation does your organization have in the employment market?

How likely is it that tasks and processes will become increasingly automated in the near future?

If greater automation is introduced, what impact will it have on your current workforce?

And how will you address those changes in a legally responsible manner?

5.3.5 Purchasing

Purchasing goods and services represents a substantial outgoing cash flow for most organizations.

Close coordination with the organization's other processes is therefore essential.

For example, what are the consequences of purchasing a lower-cost raw material for your production process?

Will it increase manufacturing costs elsewhere, ultimately eliminating the financial benefit of buying a cheaper material?

Or are you willing to accept a lower product quality—and the accompanying risk that customers become dissatisfied or even leave?

And this does not even include indirect or facility-related purchasing, where organizations often pay unnecessarily high prices because they fail to benefit from economies of scale.

Examples include:

- energy;
- telecommunications;
- catering;
- cleaning services;
- printers and copiers;
- maintenance contracts.

Is purchasing a strategic discipline—or merely an administrative task?

5.3.6 Executing Core Business Processes

This section probably requires little explanation, as it concerns the execution of your organization's core business processes.

For many entrepreneurs, this is where it all began.

It is the area in which their passion lies.

Today, however, it is increasingly important to understand developments across the entire value chain of which your organization is a part.

More and more integration is taking place, resulting in fewer links within the overall chain.

Are your core business processes properly aligned with the rest of your organization?

If this is an area that currently receives little or no attention, it is worthwhile becoming aware of its importance.

Then, together with your employees, look for practical ways to strengthen this alignment.

5.3.7 Investment

Investing your capital—the financial resources available for investment—should always be done carefully and deliberately.

Do not simply decide to purchase new machinery.

Instead, make a well-founded estimate of the revenue those machines are expected to generate, while also considering the total costs involved.

These costs include not only the purchase price, but also maintenance, tooling, molds, and other ongoing expenses.

This evaluation is commonly referred to as building a **business case**.

Investing is about creating value.

5.3.8 Quality Management

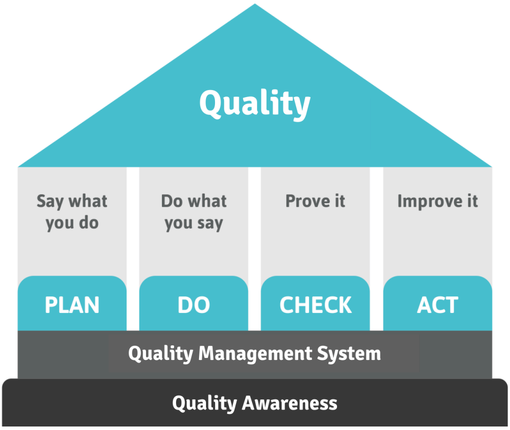
As discussed earlier in **Section 4.1**, quality is one of the most important prerequisites for success.

Giving explicit attention to quality management is therefore strongly recommended.

For example:

- Do you regularly measure employee satisfaction?
- How often do you measure customer satisfaction?
- More importantly, what do you actually do with the results?

Quality only creates value when measurement leads to improvement.



Quality management as an integral part of the management cycle.

5.4 Measurement

Both your **Multi-Year Plan** and your **Daily Operations** depend on one fundamental principle:

What gets measured gets managed.

Simple measurements within your various business processes can significantly increase awareness while also helping safeguard the quality of your organization and its internal processes.

As discussed in **Section 3.3**, it is valuable to connect these measurements to the financial performance of your organization—or of individual business processes.

The primary reason is to increase employees' awareness.

Once results are expressed in **euros**, people immediately gain a much clearer understanding of their impact.

In addition, objectives should be defined as **SMART goals**.

Because the SMART concept is interpreted in different ways, the following definitions are used throughout this book.

SMART Goals

1. Specific
Is the objective clearly defined? Is it immediately obvious what is meant?

2. Measurable
Under which measurable or observable conditions can the objective be considered achieved?

3. Acceptable
Is the objective acceptable to the target group and/or management? In other words, does it contribute to the success of the organization?

4. Realistic
Is the objective achievable, so that people genuinely believe it can be accomplished?

5. Time-Bound
By when should the objective be achieved?

Value creation follows naturally when every decision contributes to your organization's mission.

Once objectives have been formulated as SMART goals, the next step is to determine the actual results that have been achieved.

For your most important **Critical Success Factors**, measurements should be recorded that reflect actual performance.

These measurements can then be reported periodically and compared with the expectations established at the beginning of the reporting period.

Depending on the outcome, corrective action can be taken whenever necessary to ensure the organization returns to the intended course and achieves its objectives.

Within the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, you can immediately put these principles into practice.

5.5 Compliance

For many entrepreneurs, **compliance**—complying with laws and regulations—feels like a necessary burden.

Nevertheless, compliance is essential for both the long term and the day-to-day operation of your organization.

Failure to comply with applicable laws and regulations can lead to negative publicity.

For that reason alone, compliance deserves explicit attention as one of the minimum requirements for maintaining a well-managed organization.

If your reputation suffers because of negative publicity, the value of your organization will inevitably decline.

Since our objective is to create value rather than destroy it, it is essential that relevant laws and regulations are continuously monitored and assessed in light of your organization's specific circumstances.

Complying with laws and regulations is everyone's responsibility.

5.6 Care

Care—taking good care of what you have built—extends far beyond protecting financial assets.

It includes everything that clearly represents value and appears on your balance sheet, but equally the valuable assets that cannot easily be seen.

Think, for example, of the relationships you have built with customers and prospective customers, suppliers, government authorities, employees, and many others.

Safeguarding these values is essential for both the short term and the long term.

Protect every form of value in the broadest possible sense.

As a business owner or manager, it is particularly important to lead by example in this area.

People naturally tend to copy the behavior they observe in others.

Unfortunately, they often imitate behavior that requires **less effort** far more quickly than behavior that demands greater commitment.

Employees who are merely "almost the best" are generally less inclined to embrace the more ambitious examples you set.

Taking care of what you have goes far beyond protecting money.

5.7 Tips

If your organization does not yet fully reflect the principles discussed in this chapter, there is no reason to panic.

However, it is wise to get started.

Give deliberate attention to each of the **Route ICR Growth Circles** and continue improving them over time.

Determine your priorities carefully.

It is better to implement one improvement thoroughly than to address several areas only superficially.

And if you are uncertain about the best approach, do not hesitate to ask your trusted advisor for guidance.

6 Getting Started

Now that you have seen how relatively simple it is to take practical steps to guide both your own behavior and that of your employees in the desired direction, we conclude with a number of practical suggestions to help you get started.

Editorial Note (2026)
This chapter describes the original online platform as it was available in 2016. While the underlying principles remain the same, the platform, subscription model and terminology have evolved. References to the Route ICR Tool in this chapter refer to what is now the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, powering the ICR Organizational Operating System. The original free version has been replaced by the accessible **Ambition Refresher** subscription.

6.1 Start Using the InControlRating.com Tool for Free

Every business is unique.

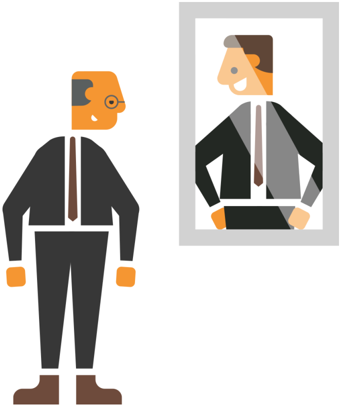
However, the foundation for building a successful organization is fundamentally the same everywhere.

That is why **RouteICR.com** shares this foundation through an online framework.

With **RouteICR.com**, you are your own coach—24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You do **not** have to expose yourself to a third party.

Instead, you can make anonymous use of professional guidance and support.



How objectively do you look at yourself?

Using this framework, you can:

always see where your business currently stands;use a practical framework to organize your daily management activities;replace scattered notes and disconnected documents with one structured and secure online environment within **RouteICR.com**.

In other words, it is an online platform designed to help your business meet the minimum requirements for increasing the likelihood of successful growth.

Wherever you have an internet connection, you can continue organizing and structuring your business.

Within the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, you can immediately put these principles into practice.

6.1.1 How Does RouteICR.com Work?

The **Route Dashboard** quickly shows you where your business currently stands.

It begins by providing an overall picture of your organization.

You then gain insight into both the long-term and the day-to-day aspects of your business.

The dashboard also shows how effectively you apply the principles of **Measurement**, **Compliance**, and **Care**.

Are all important areas receiving sufficient attention?

Or do improvements need to be made to ensure that your objectives will be achieved?

You therefore work systematically with the five **Route ICR Growth Circles** that together form the foundation of the **Route ICR Dashboard**:

1. Multi-Year
2. Daily Operations
3. Measurement
4. Compliance
5. Care

By doing so, you consciously—and often unconsciously—introduce structure into your organization simply by applying professional standards in a practical way.

You receive online feedback that helps you improve your organization's performance.

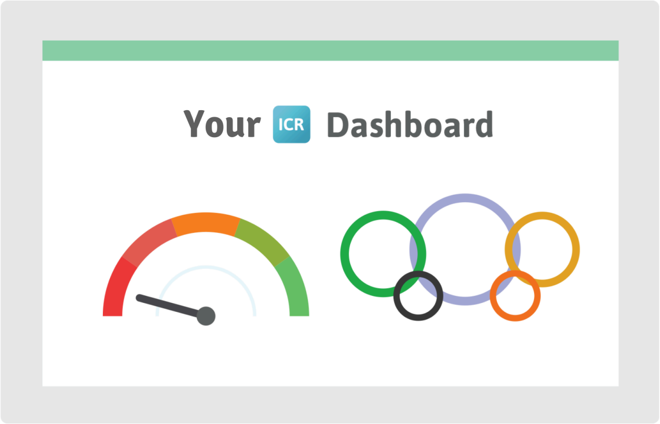
And you can do so without immediately relying on what is often an expensive external advisor.

In addition, you can compare your score with those of anonymous fellow entrepreneurs.

Strong scores may also help when applying for financing.

Under normal circumstances, a good score has a positive influence on your company's creditworthiness.

Especially when you can demonstrate that you actually do what you say you do.



Your Route Dashboard

How do you currently increase your chances of successful growth?

How do you determine whether you devote sufficient attention to every important aspect of entrepreneurship?

How do you actually know?

What reference framework—or standard—do you use?

Do you know in which areas you may unknowingly be reducing your chances of success?

Ultimately, you want to guide the behavior of your employees while simultaneously predicting the quality of the performance you can reasonably expect.

That is exactly why we provide a unique professional reference framework.

You then measure how actual performance contributes to the overall performance of your business.

After all:

Processes should strengthen one another—not weaken one another.

RouteICR.com shows whether the foundation of your business meets the minimum requirements for successful entrepreneurship.

The **InControlRating** follows the same principle as existing financial rating systems, where **1 represents the highest possible score**.

For example, an **InControlRating of 1** indicates that your business strongly promotes the likelihood of sustainable success.

In other words:

Your organization is highly **inControl**.

With an InControlRating of 1, your organization strongly increases its chances of successful growth.

An **InControlRating of 5** represents the exact opposite.

RouteICR.com is based on a professionally designed reference framework that has been successfully validated in practice.

In only two steps, you define your organization and demonstrate:

1. how you have implemented the minimum organizational requirements and corresponding organizational measures;
2. the quality of that implementation.

This helps you continuously challenge both yourself and your organization.

When answering the second question, it may be valuable to seek specialist expertise.

Fortunately, **Vic**, the virtual business coach within **RouteICR.com**, assists you online wherever possible.

For more specific questions, you can also seek support from a certified **RouteICR.com coach**.

Editorial Note (2026)
Originally introduced as a virtual business coach, Vic Tory has since evolved into the Online Assistant of Team ICR. Today, Vic helps organizations get the most from the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, powering the **ICR Organizational Operating System**. When additional expertise is needed, organizations can work with certified ICR partners and advisors.

With InControlRating in your hands, you have the tools to significantly increase your chances of successful growth.

6.1.2 A Dynamic Business Plan with ICR

A business plan is often incomplete, usually static, and therefore provides an insufficient foundation for the day-to-day challenges of running your business.

Through the digital highway, **RouteICR.com** transforms that foundation into a dynamic one and provides the tools needed to support it.

It serves as your permanent **wake-up call**, helping you verify that every important aspect of your business receives at least the minimum attention required to become a successful and growing entrepreneur.

And when the quality of your expected performance meets those minimum standards, you can have a high degree of confidence that your financial results will also be sound.

By this we mean that your financial performance is expected to achieve at least a defined minimum level.

RouteICR.com provides that insight—not only when you first get started, but also as a permanent watchdog that helps you establish and maintain the quality of your business processes at the level you choose.

Because that level is yours to determine.

It is **your route to success**.

With **RouteICR.com**, you truly become your own **DIY business coach**.

Finally, the information you record within the **Route** environment forms a substantial part of your overall business plan.

That, in turn, strengthens the quality of any financing application you may submit.

6.2 Involve Your Pillars of Support

Whether you have an executive team, a management team, or both, when you decide to move forward, do it together.

Adopt the mindset:

"You don't have to be sick to get better."

Together, invest deliberately in the development of both your organization and yourselves.

Remember to involve your employees in this process—gradually and appropriately.

That way, they help management build the organization's future together.

After all:

People rarely tear down something they have built themselves.

The same is true for your employees.

What they help create, they are far more likely to support and protect.

Imagine every employee enthusiastically translating your company's mission and vision into results-oriented behavior every single day.

If everything succeeds, you have a luxury problem that only a few organizations ever experience.

6.3 Credibility and Persuasiveness

Always manage expectations carefully between the executive team, the management team, and your employees.

Take the time to understand how people throughout the organization experience the way the business is managed and organized.

Maintain regular contact with employees across every part of the organization.

Ask about their experiences.

Ask for their ideas.

Ask how things can be improved.

Above all, your employees must trust you.

And credibility plays a decisive role in earning that trust.

Without credibility, people are unlikely to place their confidence in you.

With credibility, however, you gain the persuasive power to bring people along with your vision.

A well-designed organizational structure and appropriate organizational measures can be invaluable in achieving exactly that.

6.4 Tips

By now, you will hopefully realize that **insight and overview** are essential prerequisites for making conscious decisions—every single day.

Because if you do not know where you stand, you cannot effectively guide the behavior of your employees.

And if you do not guide that behavior in the right direction, you cannot increase your chances of success.

Therefore, develop the discipline of a top athlete.

Activate the **DIY coach** within yourself.

And progress rapidly from **U.I. (Unconsciously Incompetent)** to **C.C. (Consciously Competent).**

Register today at **RouteICR.com** and discover free DIY coaching for SMEs.

In short:

Increase your chances of growing successfully.

About the Authors

Paul Joore (born 1970) is a highly experienced business advisor, entrepreneur, and ambitious professional who strongly believes in sharing knowledge and experience.

After all, sharing knowledge and experience helps people become more aware of the consequences of the decisions they make—both in business and in their personal lives.

Greater awareness generally leads to better decisions and increases the likelihood of success.

Paul earned his pre-university (VWO) diploma at **Sint Odulphuslyceum** in Tilburg before graduating from **Tilburg University**, first with a degree in Business Economics and later qualifying as a Registered Accountant (RA).

He laid a solid foundation for his professional career at the accounting division of **Arthur Andersen** at the end of the twentieth century.

He subsequently held a variety of (interim) management positions within both publicly listed companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Over the years, he has developed into a growth coach for SMEs as well as an on-the-job trainer.

This broad background enables him to connect business disciplines and see the bigger picture.

More importantly, however, he is driven by the desire to make that expertise accessible to the entrepreneurs who form the backbone of the SME sector.

Especially in light of major societal developments such as globalization and digitalization.

These developments require a different way of communicating, because customers have become better informed—and therefore more demanding.

> *"Entrepreneurs must understand what the growing demand for transparency means for the way they position themselves. They need to explore the new opportunities digitalization offers for marketing their products. At the same time, they must keep up with the laws and regulations that apply to their industry. Entrepreneurs who want to grow must understand what is happening around them—and, above all, know exactly where they stand."*

Paul observed that SMEs still made far too little use of the methods and tools that had been developed over the years to increase the likelihood of sustainable business success through better organization and structure.

He therefore set himself the goal of making this knowledge—and the accompanying practical tools—available to entrepreneurs in an accessible and affordable way.

His ambition is to transform uncertainty into awareness, enabling entrepreneurs to make more effective use of both their own talents and those of their employees.

"It is essential that entrepreneurs understand their figures, their processes, and their company culture. How do all these elements fit together, and how do we guide employee behavior in the desired direction? Entrepreneurs themselves decide where they want to take their business. Once that destination is clear, the time has come to introduce the organizational measures that make processes measurable, manageable, and ultimately continuously improvable."

By doing so, the likelihood that entrepreneurs will achieve their goals and grow successfully increases significantly.

That vision ultimately led to the creation of **InControlRating.com.**

An additional benefit is that better-informed SMEs are likely to achieve greater focus and therefore waste less time, energy, and resources.

In that way, stronger governance within SMEs also contributes to a more sustainable world.

Editorial Note (2026)
At the time of publication, the accompanying online platform was called **InControlRating.com.** Today, it has evolved into the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, available through **RouteICR.com** and powering the **ICR Organizational Operating System**.

Vic Tory came to life in 2016.

That was the year she became the virtual growth coach of **InControlRating.com.**

Her passion is helping ambitious SME entrepreneurs move forward.

Service is therefore the core value that guides everything she does.

As a trusted companion, she helps entrepreneurs answer questions, monitor their **Route Dashboard**, and provides best practices and practical templates.

For example, Vic regularly reminds entrepreneurs to follow up on improvement actions or to review their dashboard to ensure they remain on track.

In this way, she helps entrepreneurs work with greater discipline on improving the organization and structure of their businesses.

In short, Vic is always ready to help increase your organization's chances of successful growth.

Editorial Note (2026)
At the time of publication, the accompanying online platform was called **InControlRating.com.** Today, it has evolved into the **ICR Growth & Success SaaS Platform**, available through **RouteICR.com** and powering the **ICR Organizational Operating System**.

References

To improve the readability of this book, I deliberately chose **not** to include source references throughout the main text.

Instead, below is an overview of the sources that were consulted and whose ideas or excerpts have been gratefully incorporated into this book.

1. onlinetalentmanager.nl
2. sprout.nl
3. zakelijk.infonu.nl
4. twynstraguddekennisbank.nl
5. perco.be
6. **Jan van Setten** – *How Do I Get Them on Board?*
7. coso.org

Mmm, hold on tight to your dream
Then hold on tight to your dream
When you see your ship go sailin'
When you feel your heart is breakin'
Hold on tight, to your dream, hmm

Electric Light Orchestra - Hold On Tight

Acknowledgements

Whether or not my dream of contributing to the successful growth of SMEs ultimately comes true, my most important dream has already been a reality for many years.

Dear **Margo, Fabienne, Tijn, and Huub**, thank you so much for your love, support, and understanding throughout the writing of this book.

And dear **Mom and Dad**, thank you for the confidence you have always given me to pursue my dream and make it a reality.

Editorial Notes (2026)

This edition contains a limited number of Editorial Notes (2026).

These notes have been added only where additional context helps today's reader understand how specific terminology, concepts or the accompanying platform evolved after the original Dutch publication in 2016.

The original text itself has intentionally been preserved.

COMPLIMENTARY INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Shared by Route ICR as an introduction to the principles that inspired the ICR Organizational Operating System.

Sustainable organizational success is not created by chance. It is designed.

When the original Dutch edition of *How to Grow Successfully* was published in 2016, it introduced a practical way of thinking about organizational growth—one that went beyond strategy alone and focused on creating organizations that are structured, aligned and built for long-term success.

Over the years, these ideas continued to evolve. They ultimately became the foundation of the **ICR Organizational Operating System**: an integrated framework that helps organizations translate ambition into predictable results by making strategy, responsibilities, decision-making and continuous improvement explicit and connected.

This International Edition preserves the original text while adding carefully selected **Editorial Notes (2026)** that place the book in today's context. Although written nearly a decade ago, the underlying principles remain remarkably relevant for leaders, entrepreneurs, consultants, accountants and everyone involved in building stronger organizations.

EARLY ENDORSEMENT FROM THE ORIGINAL DUTCH EDITION (2016)

“*Paul has made accessible what was previously beyond the reach of many entrepreneurs. During my years at EY and EYInovation, I saw many growing businesses struggle to organize and structure their operations. As a result, successful market expansion and the achievement of strategic goals often remained out of reach. By applying the principles described in this book—and the accompanying online platform—organizations can significantly improve their chances of sustainable success.*”

Patrick Gabriëls MSc
Chair of the Executive Board & Country Managing Partner
EY Netherlands

Paul Joore
Founder of ICR
Author of *How to Grow Successfully*

Route ICR
Clarity. Confidence. Peace of Mind.

LEARN MORE
Discover how these principles evolved into the ICR Organizational Operating System.
routeicr.com/icr-framework