What is a tech strategy anyway?

YOW! Tech Leaders Summit 2023

Tomas Varsavsky

It's the CTO*'s #1 job
Top 5 results for "CTO" job search on LinkedIn

"...will develop, plan, and implement an information technology strategy"

"...responsible for developing and maintaining the overall technology strategy for the company"

"...primary responsibility will be to oversee and drive the strategy and operations for the organisation"

"...will create the strategy for all technology systems in support of business operations"

"...responsible for providing the enterprise technical strategy"

"**Strategy is a general plan** to achieve one or more **long-term goals** under conditions of **uncertainty.**"

— https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategy

"A **Technology Strategy** is a plan to achieve long term organisational goals with technology."

— **Me**

What makes a good tech strategy?

Connected to the business and customers

- Well connected to the business strategy

- Grounded on current reality of the business

- Speaks to how it solves customer problems

- Has buy in from the organisation

TIPS

- Build on the corporate strategy with clear referencing

- Follow the strategy / planning process of your organisation

- Include executives, stakeholders and partners in the strategy development process

- Make it accessible to non techies

Visionary, but specific and practical

- Defines a north star for technology within the organisation

- Describes the steps required to get there

- Mobilises the technology team towards the north star

- Helps make day to day tactical decisions

TIPS

- Choose a timeframe appropriate to the state of your business

- Provide higher precision for the near term

- Balance of "futurism" and "realism"

- Reference business, customer and technology metrics

Cover all aspects of technology

Technology	People	Process
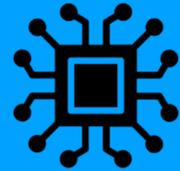
Technology

Architecture

Tooling

Infrastructure

Legacy Management
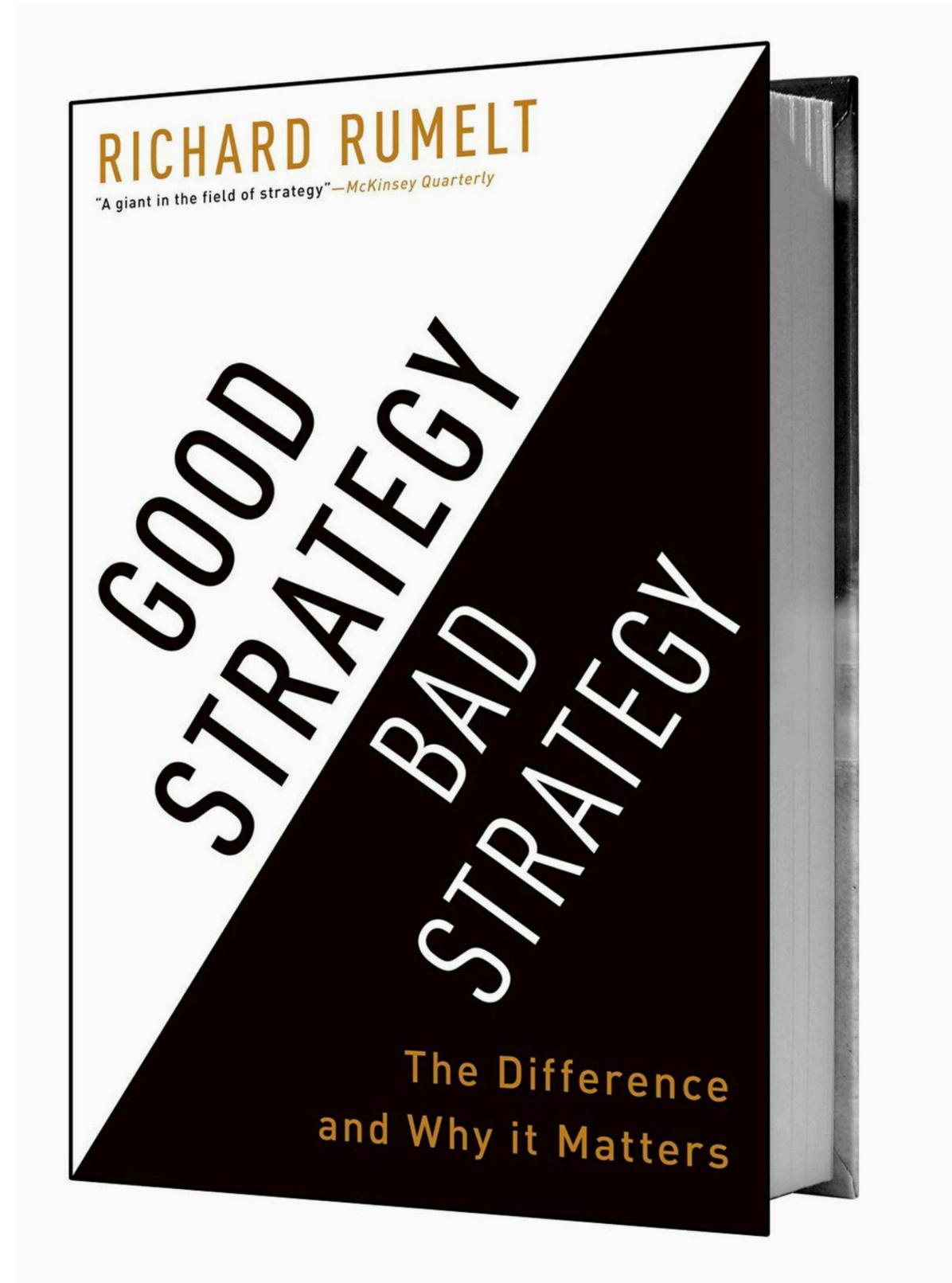
Data

Security

Build vs Buy

People

Culture

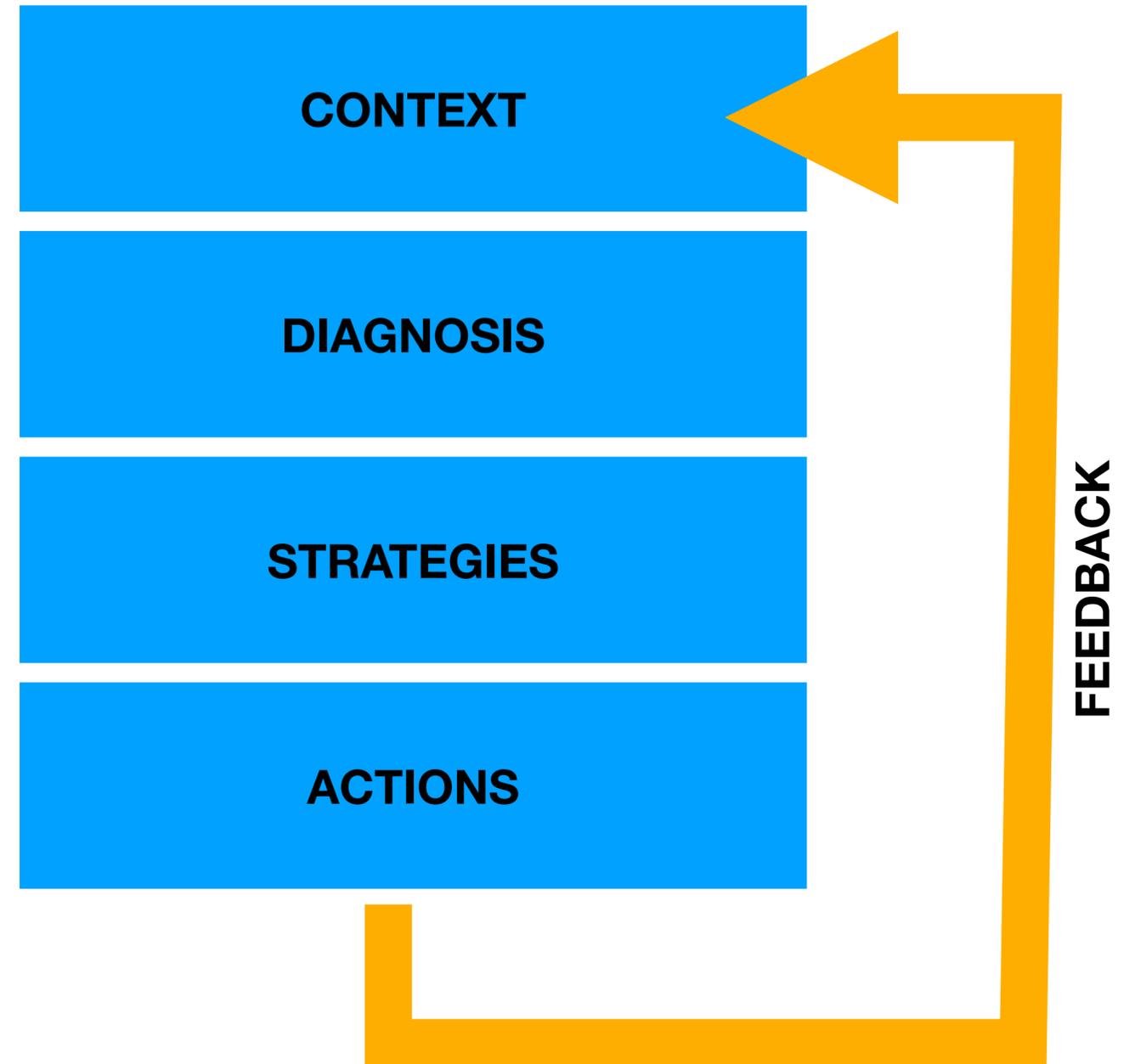Org design

Scale

Offshoring

Partners

Employment Brand

Process

System of Work

Software Lifecycle

Program Management

Interfaces

Performance Management

Framework for a tech strategy

CONTEXT

DIAGNOSIS

STRATEGIES

ACTIONS

FEEDBACK

Context

Where have we been, where are we at and where are we going?

	Business	**Tech**
External	Industry trends Competitor landscape Consumer trends Societal trends Economic cycle Funding landscape Regulatory trends	Global tech trends Global data trends Vendors Threat landscape Peer company insights Employment market
Internal	Corporate strategy Product strategy Business financials Customer metrics Product performance metrics Org structure	Progress to date Current architecture Operational metrics Productivity metrics People metrics Tech org structure Technology budget

Context — How?

Techniques	Tools	Resources
Interviews	SWAT analysis	Internal documents
Gemba walk	Anchors and Engines	Internal data
Surveys	Mindmaps	Customer feedback
Retrospectives	Value stream maps	Research reports
Archeology	Analytics	Media

Diagnosis

What is going on here? What are the problems holding us back?

- 2-5 key challenges

- Deep insight based on data

- Opinionated judgement

- Provide clarity, make the complex simple

EXAMPLE

Good: Poor customer data management

Better: Fragmented customer data is causing issues with customers

Best: Fragmented customer data caused by an outdated CRM resulted in 5000 calls to the call centre last month. Customers are expected to double in the next 12 months and CRM issues will result in exponential growth in customer calls.

Diagnosis — How?

Techniques	Tools	Resources
Hard thinking	Root cause analysis	Your team
Workshops	Five Whys	Your stakeholders
Prioritisation	Fishbone diagrams	Consultants
	Impact analysis	Industry experts
	Quadrant diagrams	

Strategies

How generally are we going to address the problems?

- 2-5 guiding strategies

- Describe the method for overcoming the challenges

- Strategy is always a choice

- Engage stakeholders in making the choice

- Best strategies compliment each other

EXAMPLE
Option 1: Improve customer data by replacing the CRM
Option 2: Improve customer data by building a customer data warehouse
Option 3: Make tactical improvements to the call centre using chat bots and RPA
Option 4: Increase staff levels in the call centre
Option 5: etc…

Strategies — How?

Techniques	Tools	Resources
Hard thinking	Options analysis	Your team
Workshops	Wardley maps	Your stakeholders
Prioritisation	Six thinking hats	Consultants
	Financial models	Industry experts

Actions

What specifically are we doing, who's doing it and when?

- Strategic roadmap or "the plan"

- Specific initiatives (SMART)

- Apply resource and time constraints

- High fidelity in near term actions

- Assign owners to actions (RACI)

EXAMPLE

Strategy: Improve customer data by replacing the CRM. Make quick tactical improvements to the call centre to buy time.

Action 1: Implement 5 tactical improvements to the call centre technology in Q1 that reduce call volumes and handling time

Action 2: Spike 3 leading CRMs to build knowledge and experience in Q1

Action 3: Build a fully costed plan for a CRM

Actions — How?

Techniques	Tools	Resources
Estimating	Roadmaps	Planners in your organisation
Planning	Horizons	Finance department
Budgeting	OKRs	
	Prioritisation frameworks	
	Dependency maps	
	RACI	

Example — Scale Up

- Rapidly expanding business and team with good product / market fit
- Technology has grown haphazardly through the startup-up phase and showing signs of stress — downtime, bugs, productivity trending badly
- Tech employee engagement survey highlighting many issues

DIAGNOSIS	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
The technology is no longer fit for purpose	Re-platform core APIs over time using a strangler pattern approach	Assemble small team to replace 1st API & establish re-platform pattern
Size of the team needs to double in 18 months to deliver the strategy	Develop a leading employee value proposition to attract and retain top quartile talent in Melbourne	Develop a career framework for technology staff Implement an employee referral bonus policy
Lack of mechanisms to coordinate the team are causing confusion, frustration and waste	Improve delivery by implementing better portfolio governance processes	Develop company OKRs Train team members on OKRs

What next?

- Write it down

- Communicate it far and wide

- Put it into action

- Review and update it regularly
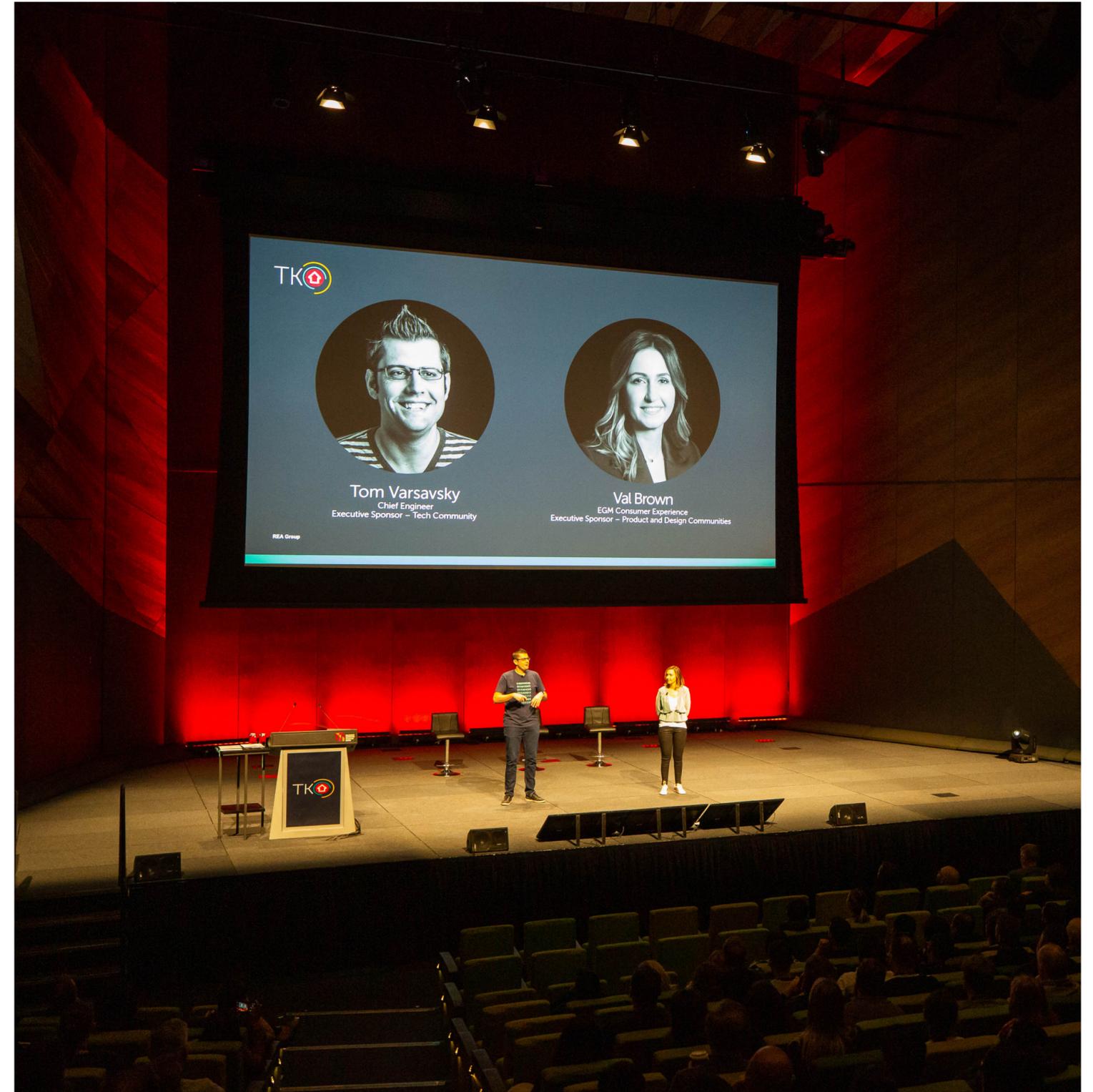
Tech Strategy takeaways

1

DEFINITION

"A Technology Strategy is a plan to achieve long term organisational goals with technology."

2

GOOD STRATEGIES

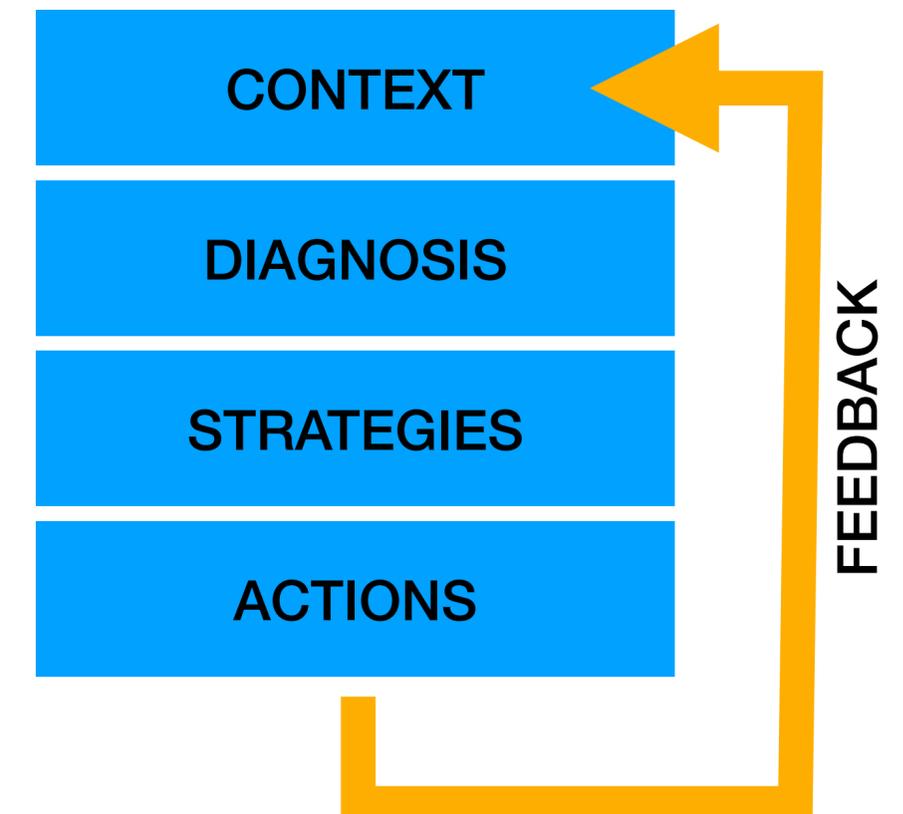Are connected to the business and customers

Are visionary, but specific and practical

Cover all aspects of technology

3

FRAMEWORK

CONTEXT
DIAGNOSIS
STRATEGIES
ACTIONS

FEEDBACK

Thank you!

Tomas Varsavsky

𝕏 *tvars*

in *tomasvarsavsky*

✉ *tom@varsas.net*