



## Aspiration in Action, Finally

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For more than 40 years, some of the world's most powerful energy companies have tried and failed to meet this challenge: developing a vast deep-water gas field in a remote location far offshore. With difficult geology the closest land mass more than 400 kilometers away, and vocal state and national interests, developing the asset has become known as one of the world's most complex capital projects.



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## The Challenge

After a recent high-profile development attempt was scrapped, five joint venture partners resolved to pursue a new, breakthrough concept. The multi-billion effort will extract the gas and process it using technology pioneered by one of the joint venture partners.

The initial commercial negotiations required before launching into front-end engineering and design were fraught with contention. The operating partner called in JMW to help. Attempts had been made to create a structure for viewing all of the venture's moving parts from a strategic perspective, but this work essentially "lived on a shelf."

The operating partner and the partner who owned the technology had agreed to operate as an "integrated delivery team" to deliver the FEED and Execution phases of the project. There was also a separate business unit leadership team, and across the board, there was complexity and a lack of consensus on the pathways to project success. With billions of dollars on the line and pressure to move quickly, there was an urgent need for alignment and clarity about how to generate momentum and who was accountable for what in this high-stakes enterprise.

## The Work

There had to be a way to frame the work and people's relationship to it that could make the project's objectives meaningful to all involved. With a shared aspiration to develop the major field backed up by the right strategic framework, delivering on the bold plan would be possible, and the project could proceed from planning to engineering and design, through assurance, to the crucial final investment decision and into project execution.

Time was short. There was only a year allotted for the front-end engineering and design phase, which would typically require 24 months to complete. In order to wrap up planning and successfully and rapidly transition to the FEED phase with momentum, there would have to be greater clarity about what had to be accomplished, cohesive leadership capability throughout the venture and confidence in how people would work together.

JMW began working with leaders from the business unit, as well as the integrated delivery team as they struggled to conclude the planning phase. There was an immediate objective of consistently raising the focus of conversation to longer term, yet still getting the necessary tasks accomplished for any given day or week.





An initial point of traction occurred when the leaders agreed to a set of strategic imperatives, all under the umbrella of a mutual aspiration of creating a proud legacy and accomplishing something never done before. Looking through this lens, the leadership began sorting out accountabilities. JMW's consultants worked with the leadership groups—both from the business unit and the designated integrated development team—to articulate what exactly these imperatives meant to the project. Another way to state it is that the leadership group began to identify what was of Fundamental Importance to the project and to the collected stakeholders.

Through this process, five key areas of Fundamental Importance—or “strategic enablers”—were identified. Armed with this perspective, the team's relationship to critical objectives, like delivery of primary approvals to support a final investment decision, producing targeted cost savings and improving project value, and ultimately delivering first cargo began to take a holistic form rather than as a stand-alone set of things to do. These objectives could only be achieved on the shoulders of the strategic enablers articulated by the team:

- Effective stakeholder relationships
- Comprehensive strategic planning
- Continuous value enhancement
- Outstanding phase transitions
- Reliable delivery culture

In retrospect, this served as an “a-ha” juncture for many involved as the leaders realized that the foundational concerns cut across the entire venture—on all levels, but also across the various leadership groups. It became clear that accountability for stakeholder relationships, for example, would be accomplished not as the purview of the business unit leadership team, but would require a concerted and integrated effort throughout the project team. Likewise, strategic planning, value enhancement, phase transitions, and a reliable delivery culture were cross-cutting matters of shared accountability and interest.

More progress flowed from there. In relatively short order, the team was able to articulate and agree on specific future states that would constitute unquestionable success in each of the strategic enablers. This took the form of a Strategic Cascade starting at the strategic enablers, subordinant Outcomes in each area and pathways constituted by specific, measured

Results that would demonstrate success in achieving the Outcomes, and the precise actions that would produce those Results.

## The Results

The work described occurred over the course of approximately 18 months, which saw the successful conclusion of the planning phase and the implementation of the Front-End Engineering and Design (FEED) phase.

By all accounts, the project was in jeopardy before leaders of this complex joint venture were able to (1) manage the multitude of relationships within the joint venture, (2) establish the shared accountabilities of the integrated delivery team and the business unit leadership team, (3) articulate the specific performance expected at every juncture of the process, and (4) build the leadership capability needed for that performance to be delivered.

These things became possible as the agreed-upon foundational areas of Fundamental Importance served to ground discussions around the planning and execution of the work. If any Outcome, Result, or Action articulated wasn't ultimately in service of fulfilling a particular strategic enabler, it did not become part of the work plan, period. This served not only to bring potency to leadership conversations, but also to focus and streamline the work currently underway, and the work that lies ahead on the path to a positive final investment decision.

As the project stays on pace, leaders report the following:

- Clear accountabilities at all levels of the enterprise
- Increased employee engagement
- Reduced waste—actions not needed and their costs eliminated
- Elimination of counter productive actions and behaviors
- Alignment between individual and organizational performance

Finally, and most significantly, they now report being on a viable path to their collective aspiration, and achieving something that's never been achieved before.

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