



**OBEYA**  
association

# STRATEGY EXECUTION WITH OBEYA-DRIVEN PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT



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# STRATEGY EXECUTION WITH OBEYA-DRIVEN PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Many organizations are pursuing ambitious goals in an increasingly complex change landscape. Technological developments, evolving regulations, and sharper strategic objectives lead to a continuous influx of initiatives and projects. In practice, this often results in fragmentation: numerous initiatives run simultaneously, while capacity and change capability are limited. Employees work on multiple priorities at the same time, similar initiatives emerge in parallel, and overall coherence is lacking. As a result, strategic value is realized more slowly, and projects struggle to reach completion.

Portfolio management is frequently introduced to gain control over this complexity by creating oversight of projects, budgets, and progress. In many organizations, however, this function primarily takes on a controlling and reporting role. While this provides transparency, it rarely leads to sharp strategic choices. Organizations gain visibility, but fail to actively steer. This is precisely why a different approach is needed: strategic portfolio management that is not centered on reporting, but on deliberate choices regarding priorities, focus, and the allocation of scarce capacity.



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Felice Davies (Manager Digital Transformation at KPMG), Jelger Haanstra (Change Agent at DUO) and Sanya Berkhout (Senior Consultant Digital Transformation at KPMG) bring extensive experience in Agile and Obeya. Having collaborated at DUO, they focus on connecting strategy and execution, strengthening collaboration, and enabling aligned decision-making and value delivery.

In this article, we demonstrate how Obeya can reconnect strategy and execution in a meaningful way.

# COMPANY CASE: DIENST UITVOERING ONDERWIJS



## DUO, Groningen, the Netherlands

DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs) is the Dutch government organization responsible for implementing education policy. It provides services to students, educational institutions, and employers across the Netherlands.

During the session we will zoom in on the challenges DUO faces implementing Obeya as a strategic portfolio management steering mechanism.



Public sector



Around 3,500 employees



Groningen (HQ) & The Hague



Traditional hierarchy combined with network organization

# FROM TRADITIONAL TO STRATEGIC PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

## Traditional vs. Strategic portfolio management

- Traditional portfolio management emerged from the need for control. It helps organizations manage budgets, resources, and risks, but increasingly fails to align with a reality in which strategy is constantly evolving and value creation can no longer be captured in clearly delineated projects.
- Strategic portfolio management therefore shifts the focus from control to steering: the continuous making and reassessment of choices about where organizations invest their attention and capacity.

## Portfolio is not fixed but dynamic

- The portfolio evolves from a static list of projects to a dynamic set of strategic themes.
- Focus shifts from managing initiatives to guiding execution through clear priorities.
- Decision-making becomes continuous, instead of periodic and retrospective.
- Emphasis moves from reporting progress to actively steering outcomes.
- Choices on initiatives, sequencing, and capacity are made explicitly and consistently.
- Transparency is used as a basis for action, not as an end in itself.
- Portfolio management shifts from coordination to enabling strategic dialogue and decisions.

## STRATEGIC PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Strategic Portfolio Management is not primarily about selecting and controlling projects. It is about continuously steering toward strategic objectives by making deliberate choices about where an organization allocates its scarce capacity and attention. In doing so, Strategic Portfolio Management connects strategy to execution by constantly determining which initiatives within the operation truly matter. The portfolio is therefore not a static list of initiatives, but a dynamic composition of strategic themes, change objectives, and improvement initiatives that together contribute to achieving the organization's goals.

# OBEYA AS A CONNECTING STEERING MECHANISM



- Portfolio overviews exist, but lack a context for real choices.
- Obeya connects strategy, portfolio, and execution in one shared governance setting.
- It shifts the focus from “what is running?” to “what drives strategic value?”.
- This enables clear prioritization, reprioritization, and stopping low-impact work.
- The portfolio is steered as one coherent whole, not as fragmented initiatives.
- Continuous dialogue and cadence enable fast, informed decision-making.
- The real value lies in shared understanding that drives action—not in the data itself.



## Implemented

Developed as part of ongoing portfolio management transformation efforts



## Purpose & Scope

To reconnect strategy and execution by enabling strategic portfolio steering through Obeya, focusing on prioritization, capacity allocation, and decision-making across the portfolio



## Type

Conceptual case / applied thought leadership on strategic portfolio management and Obeya governance

# SCALING OBEYA AS A STRATEGIC ENABLER

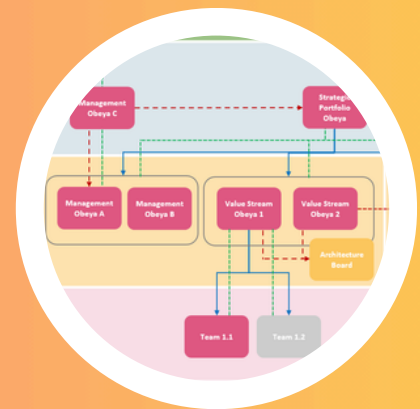


## SCALING APPROACH

- Strategically aligned Obeya's at portfolio and execution levels, each with a clear role in the governance chain
- Cascading of strategic objectives into portfolios, programs, and teams through connected Obeya layers
- Structured integration of local and strategic Obeya's to enable alignment on priorities, dependencies, and capacity

## DECISION-MAKING FLOW

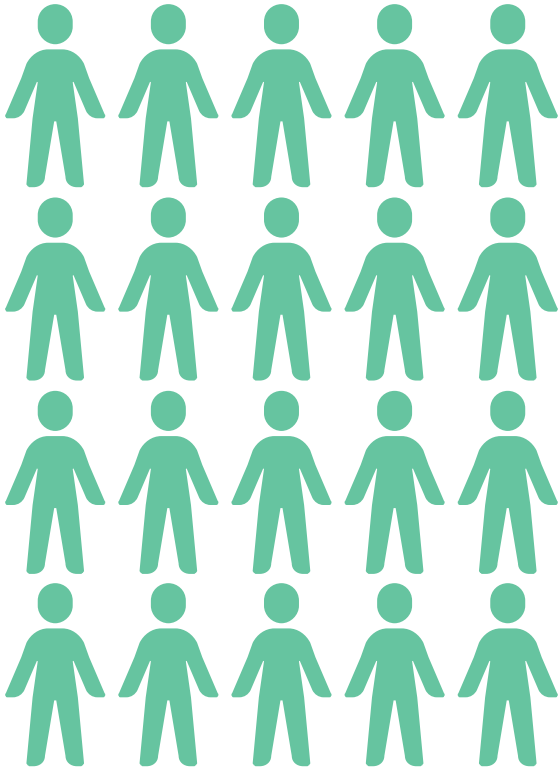
- Strategy and priorities cascade down into execution
- Insights, dependencies, and constraints flow upward
- Enables continuous, informed strategic decision-making



## VALUE DELIVERED

- Reconnects strategy and execution in practice
- Turns strategy into a continuous, adaptive dialogue
- Enables dynamic steering based on real-time insights

# OUTCOMES & VALUE (ROI)



## From visibility to true strategic steering

- Enables integrated steering across strategy, portfolio, and execution.
- Makes priorities, trade-offs, and capacity constraints explicit.
- Improves focus by enabling clear choices and stopping low-value work.
- Increases responsiveness through continuous, data-informed adjustments.
- Delivers real value when applied as a connected, scaled system.

The key question is not whether Obeya works, but whether organizations are willing to use it as an integrated steering mechanism.