*Corresponding Author's Email: nikhiljarunde24@gmail.com
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Where Numbers Meet People: Defining and Leading the Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI)

Natalie Runoff

BuzzCodex, Canada

Abstract

Persistent gaps between strategic intent and coordinated action (execution) have intensified as work becomes more interdependent, digitally mediated, and distributed across organizational boundaries. Adjacent literatures explain parts of this challenge: strategy process examines how strategies emerge and evolve; implementation science focuses on adoption and fidelity; relational coordination emphasizes communication and relationships; OKR/OKRops practice provides alignment tooling; and operations visibility foregrounds flow and performance metrics. Yet these streams leave under-theorized how translation is governed at the boundary between strategy and execution: the recurring work of converting strategic intent into interdependent commitments, boundary objects, and feedback loops that enable coordinated action despite differences in meaning, authority, and information. This paper advances the Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI) as a meta-architecture of coherence integrating three dimensions - structural, relational, and translational, across three levers - accountability, communication, and visibility, forming a 3×3 matrix of diagnosable cells and actionable interventions. The paper theorizes two dynamic failure patterns - drift and breakpoints, illustrated through multi-context vignettes (healthcare pathways, product platforms, public services), and advances testable hypotheses (H1-H7) with an empirical design combining existing multi-source surveys and digital trace data to estimate moderated mediation models and identify drift and breakpoint dynamics.

Keywords: strategy-execution; organizational interfaces; translation; drift; breakpoints

1. Introduction

The strategy-execution gap persists despite decades of investment in planning, analytics, and performance management. It has intensified under digital transformation, rising interdependence, and uncertainty (Chandler, 1962; Porter, 1985; Bansal et al., 2025). Contemporary initiatives span multiple units, roles, and decision arenas, making execution less a function of plans or hierarchy and more a problem of cross-boundary coordination (Zhang et al., 2024; Berntzen et al., 2023). Existing approaches, including structural alignment tools, adaptive systems perspectives, and leadership sensemaking, address important dimensions of this challenge but often operate in isolation, inadvertently widening the gap they seek to close (Beer, 1985; Senge, 1990; Weick, 1995; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Simons, 2013). Under conditions of interdependence and dynamism, strategic intent frequently fails to convert into binding coordination artifacts and feedback mechanisms that sustain action.

This paper advances a conceptual integration with testable claims by formalizing the organization as the Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI) and identifying translation - the governed conversion of strategic intent into coordinated commitments, boundary objects, and feedback loops as its core mechanism (Carlile, 2004; Tietze et al., 2022). Whereas alignment denotes fit among goals, metrics, and structures, SEI defines coherence as alignment plus the relational and translational governance required to sustain coordinated action under interdependence and change. SEI contributes in three ways. First, it shifts the unit of analysis from episodic implementation to the cell-level architecture that governs ongoing coordination. Second, it specifies translation as a distinct mechanism rather than reducing execution to sensemaking or control. Third, it theorizes execution failure dynamically through drift and breakpoints - observable patterns of architectural strain and threshold crossings that precede performance decline (Denis et al., 2012; Puranam, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

2. Theoretical Background and Contribution

Organizational research has generated valuable insights across several traditions. Structural alignment approaches engineer fit among strategy, structure, and controls, excelling at role clarity and measurement but often under-attending to adaptive and interpretive dynamics in turbulent contexts (Chandler, 1962; Porter, 1985; Galbraith, 2014). Systems and adaptive perspectives view organizations as learning systems shaped by feedback and emergence yet frequently leave unspecified how emergent coherence stabilizes within institutional and accountability boundaries (Beer, 1985; Senge, 1990; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Leadership and sensemaking research locate coherence in shared meaning and interpretive processes, advancing trust and dialogue as foundations for coordination but often decoupling these from the structural mechanisms required for scale (Weick, 1995; Edmondson, 2019; Gittell, 2016; Tietze et al., 2022).

Pursued largely in parallel, these traditions generate enduring fragmentation. Structural, relational, and interpretive interventions improve local conditions yet frequently produce drift, restricted visibility across “hard” and “soft” elements, and a paradox of effort in which fixes in one domain create failures in another (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015; Simons, 2013; Zhang et al., 2024, Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). What remains undertheorized is not strategy or execution per se, but the interface logic through which intent is converted into coordinated action and sustained over time.

SEI complements established methodologies by providing the interface logic that coordinates them, while unifying structural, relational, and interpretive perspectives into a single architecture with testable hypotheses and an operational SEI Coherence Index (SEI-CI) (Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011; Lynham, 2002; Cornelissen, 2017). Table 1 clarifies these distinctions.

Table 1. Positioning SEI relative to adjacent literature and practices

Stream	Core question	Typical unit	What "translation" means here	SEI novelty / boundary
Strategy process / strategy-as-practice	How strategies form, change, and are enacted over time	Episodes, practices, actors	Interpreting and negotiating strategic meaning	SEI shifts focus from episodic interpretation to ongoing interface governance that converts strategy into interdependent commitments, boundary objects, and feedback loops
Balanced Scorecard	How strategy is aligned to measures and targets	Organization / business units	Translating strategy into performance indicators	SEI explains why measures fail to drive execution when translation across boundaries is weak; metrics require complementary accountability, relational, and visibility mechanisms to shape coordinated action
Levers of Control	How managers balance control and innovation	Organization / business units	Translating strategy into monitored behaviors	SEI extends beyond control systems to govern cross-boundary translation, showing where control amplifies or undermines coordination under interdependence
Relational Coordination	How relationships enable performance under interdependence	Cross-role relational ties	Relational alignment to coordinate work	SEI integrates relational coherence with structural and translational coherence, and specifies decision rights, translation artifacts, and visibility metrics as distinct, jointly necessary governance levers at the interface
Complexity / Adaptive Leadership	How organizations adapt under uncertainty and emergence	System context, adaptive space	Translating signals from emergence into adaptive response	SEI specifies the structural and translational mechanisms through which emergent insights stabilize into coordinated action at scale, addressing the "stabilization gap"
OKR / OKRops practice	How goals, structure, accountability, and cadence aligned	Teams, cycles / quarters	Making goals legible and reviewable	SEI situates OKRs as partial solutions (primarily structural-communication and translational-accountability cells) that require complementary relational and visibility mechanisms to avoid OKR gaming and overload
Operations visibility / flow metrics	How to measure and manage flow, throughput, and bottlenecks	Processes, value streams	Making work progress observable	SEI treats visibility as a governance lever rather than an end state; breakpoints arise when signals are visible, but accountability structures and relational capacity cannot absorb or translate them
Implementation science	How evidence-based interventions are adopted, adapted, and sustained with fidelity	Programs, sites, implementers	Adapting prescribed interventions to local contexts	SEI generalizes beyond program implementation to ongoing interface governance across interdependent units, emphasizing the translation of strategy into commitments, boundary objects, and feedback loops rather than fidelity to predefined interventions

Note. Implementation science provides robust frameworks for adoption and fidelity at the program level, such as CFIR 2.0 (Damschroder et al., 2022), yet largely treats translation as adaptation to predefined interventions rather than as ongoing interface governance across interdependent units.
Source: Author's conceptual model.

3. Methodology and Approach

This study is a conceptual synthesis that reconfigures existing theories to surface a missing integrative logic of coherence (Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011; Cornelissen, 2017). The

development process followed three steps: (1) reviewing foundational and contemporary literatures to identify recurring patterns and conceptual gaps; (2) mapping relationships across paradigms to reveal structural, relational, and translational disconnects; and (3) abductively constructing the Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI) as an integrative meta-architecture oriented to dynamic translation rather than alignment (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Lynham, 2002).

Practical observation informed, but did not determine, the model (Author, 2025). Conceptual validity derives from theoretical convergence, internal consistency, and explanatory power, consistent with established criteria for rigor in conceptual research (Lynham, 2002; Jaakkola, 2020).

Boundary conditions. SEI is relevant across organizational contexts because the translation of strategic meaning into coordinated action is a recurring organizational challenge. Its significance becomes most critical in environments with substantial external and internal dynamism, interdependence or uncertainty; in simpler or tightly coupled settings, classical coherence mechanisms may suffice, and SEI may operate largely implicitly (Puranam, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Section 9 elaborates these boundary conditions across different task environments.

4. Conceptualizing the Strategy-Execution Interface

The Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI) is defined as an organizational meta-architecture (Figure 1) that governs how strategic intent is reliably converted into coordinated, interdependent action across organizational boundaries over time (Puranam, 2018). SEI is not a discrete meeting, artifact, role, or organizational layer; it is a patterned and coherent configuration of structures, relationships, and translational mechanisms that shapes how decisions, commitments, and information move across units. Execution failures therefore originate less within isolated teams than in the absence or breakdown of interface architecture, particularly under conditions of high interdependence, uncertainty and limited local control (Weick, 1995; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015; Zhang et al., 2024).

4.1 Translation as the Core Mechanism in SEI

In this paper, translation is the governed, cross-boundary conversion of strategic intent into (1) assignable commitments (clear ownership and authority), (2) shared boundary objects that stabilize meaning across specialties (e.g., roadmaps, clinical pathways, service blueprints, API contracts), and (3) feedback loops that recalibrate decisions when assumptions diverge from observed signals (Carlile, 2004; Tietze et al., 2022).

Construct boundaries. Translation is present only when cross-boundary interpretive work results in a binding coordination move[1] (a commitment, a revised boundary object, or an explicit decision rule) that is recognized across boundaries. It excludes: (a) sensemaking that remains interpretive without commitments or boundary objects; (b) control that monitors compliance to predefined targets without renegotiating meaning or interdependence; and (c) information sharing that increases visibility without decision rights or follow-through. Empirically, translation is observed through changes to ownership maps, boundary objects, and decision or handoff records, rather than being inferred from execution performance alone.

4.2 Three Dimensions of Coherence

SEI conceptualizes coherence as multidimensional.

[1] Borderline cases*:* (a) cross-unit sensemaking that produces shared understanding without changes to decision rights or boundary objects = not translation; (b) a forum that revises ownership, a decision rule, or a shared artifact recognized across units = translation.

Structural Coherence concerns the extent to which decision rights, roles, routines, and resource allocations fit the interdependencies created by strategy (Galbraith, 2014).

Relational Coherence concerns whether relationships across units support coordination through shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect (Gittell, 2016; Edmondson, 2019).

Translational Coherence concerns the degree of reliability with which meaning and information traverse boundaries via boundary objects; interface roles (e.g., product owners, care coordinators, program integrators, or middle managers and project leaders explicitly tasked with translating strategic intent into cross-unit commitments); and feedback infrastructures, such as digital traces and process metrics (Carlile, 2004; Tietze et al., 2022; Christie & Tippmann, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Because this reliability varies across units and over time, translational coherence is best understood as a dynamic capacity rather than a fixed state.

While moderate dominance of one coherence dimension may be functional and contextually appropriate, dispersion across dimensions can accumulate over time and create execution risk when interface coherence is not actively governed (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015), as elaborated in section 4.5.

4.3 Three Levers of Interface Governance

Across these dimensions, SEI is enacted through three governance levers: accountability, communication, and visibility.

Accountability specifies ownership and authority for cross-boundary work, including escalation pathways (Ouchi, 1979; Simons, 2013; Galbraith, 2014; Zhang et al., 2024).

Communication comprises cadences, routines, and forums that enable timely interaction across roles and units (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Weick, 1995; Gittell, 2016; Edmondson, 2019). **Visibility** includes shared metrics, trace data, and artifacts that make work-in-process, dependencies, and outcomes observable (Bernstein et al., 2020; Simons, 2013; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015; Zhang et al., 2024). Visibility is not synonymous with control**.** Research on digitalized organizations indicates that increased visibility can generate new interpretive, and coordination demands rather than simplify oversight (Justesen & Plesner, 2023). Similarly, communication visibility in digital platforms can support coordination by enabling knowledge seeking and psychological safety in distributed work (Keppler & Leonardi, 2023). Together, these findings support the premise that visibility must be translated into coordinated action through complementary accountability, relational mechanisms, and feedback loops.

4.4 SEI 3×3 Architecture and SEI Cells as Unit of Analysis

The SEI architecture defines the unit of analysis as the SEI cell, specified as the intersection of a coherence dimension (structural, relational, translational) and a governance lever (accountability, communication, visibility). Cell-level analysis enables both targeted intervention and empirical measurement (Zhang et al., 2024) and allows execution breakdowns to be diagnosed as localized interface failures rather than generalized alignment or performance problems. For example, teams may exhibit strong structural accountability but weak translational visibility, or strong relational communication but weak structural accountability in a form of decision authority, producing recurring escalation and “decision ping-pong” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). When the nine cells operate as an integrated system, organizations sustain coordinated adaptation without fragmentation (Gittell, 2016; Simons, 2013; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

4.5 Operational Indicators and Example Thresholds

To guide empirical work, Table 2 presents observable indicators for drift and breakpoints at the interface. In empirical applications, thresholds may be specified *ex ante* (e.g., pre-registered) and calibrated to context using historical baselines and risk tolerance. This supports systematic and non-tautological operationalization of interface dynamics.

Table 2 Observable indicators for drift and breakpoints (illustrative thresholds)

Drift mechanism (trend)	SEI cell(s) implicated	Breakpoint / breakdown indicator (threshold)	Illustrative data sources
Structural drift - rule accretion / over-structuring	S×A, S×V (with weak R×A, T×A)	Decision latency ≥30% above baseline or required approvals increase ≥25%	Governance documents; approval matrices; workflow logs
Translational drift - shared artifacts multiply, fragment, or fall out of use	T×A, T×V (with weak T×C)	≥3 parallel artifacts for the same dependency or ≥20% rework within 30 days	Issue trackers; documentation repositories; process mining
Relational drift - over-relationalization	R×C, R×A (with weak S×A, T×A)	Same issue revisited ≥3 cycles without ownership commitment	Meeting logs; decision records; coordination surveys
Structural breakdown - escalation cascades	S×A, S×C	≥3 escalation loops for the same decision or priority decisions exceed 10 business days	Escalation logs; ticket routing histories
Translational breakdown - rework loops	T×C, T×V (often amplified by weak R×A, R×C)	≥2 re-specifications for the same deliverable or reopen rate ≥20%	Issue trackers (e.g., Jira); change logs; process mining
Relational breakdown - trust erosion	R×C, R×A	Relational coordination score decreases ≥0.5 (1-5 scale) or spike in conflict incidents	Surveys; HR/incident logs; retrospective notes

Note. *Relational avoidance or loyalty can amplify rework loops; however, translational breakdowns are distinguished by the failure to convert intent and performance signals into binding commitments, resulting in repeated reinterpretation rather than resolution.*
Source: Author's conceptual model.

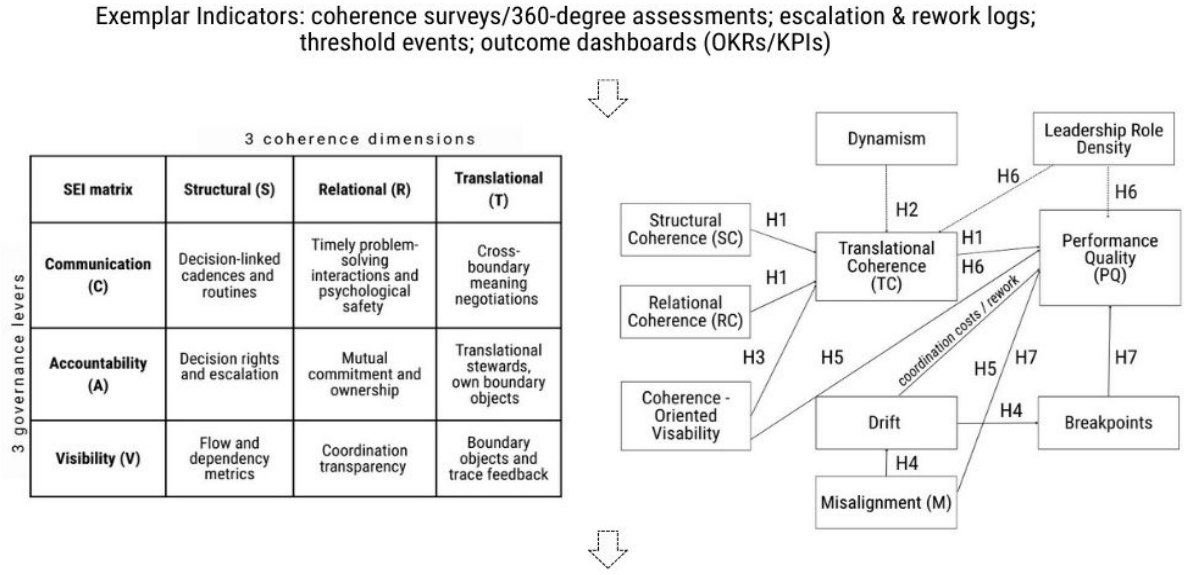

Figure 1. SEI overview linking cells, levers, hypotheses, indicators, and exemplary interventions
Source: Author's conceptual model.

4.6 Drift and Breakpoints: From Static Fit to Dynamic Coherence

SEI is inherently dynamic. Even when interface coherence is well designed at time t_0, organizations evolve as priorities shift, roles change, dependencies multiply, and digitally mediated systems intensify coordination signals and execution visibility. Coherence therefore cannot be treated as a static fit but must be sustained through ongoing adjustment and learning (Weick, 1995; Senge, 1990; Simons, 2013). SEI theorizes two observable interface dynamics - **drift** and **breakpoints** -defined on coordination-process signals and threshold crossings that can be specified *ex ante* to anticipate downstream execution quality.

Drift refers to change in dimensional dominance over time: a growing dispersion among structural, relational, and translational coherence relative to a unit's baseline. While such dominance may be stable and contextually appropriate (e.g., industry- or situation-specific), execution risk arises when its magnitude exceeds interface coherence capacity. In these cases, organizations may engage in compensatory coordination that strains capacity without proportional gains (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). Operationally, drift is observed as increasing misalignment (M) across repeated assessments of SC, RC, and TC, or inferred from longitudinal coordination traces corroborated by signals such as rising rework, escalation frequency, handoff reversals, or proliferation of parallel artifacts.

Breakpoints are discrete interface events in which coordination strain becomes acute and persistent. They occur when coordination-process signals associated with specific interface functions exceed pre-specified thresholds and remain elevated over a defined persistence window[2], specified *ex ante* by the researcher or organization based on task cadence, historical baselines, and risk tolerance, rather than reflecting transient fluctuations (e.g., escalation loops, reopen rates, or fragmentation of shared boundary objects; Table 2).

Breakpoints are theorized at the interface (unit) level but manifest through localized failures in specific SEI cells, where accountability, relational capacity, or translational mechanisms can no longer absorb coordination demands. Operationally, breakpoints are defined on coordination-process signals rather than downstream performance quality (PQ): breakpoint indicators are analytically distinct from PQ and derived exclusively from coordination processes, while PQ is measured using downstream operational or service outcomes (e.g., cycle time, quality, service reliability). In digitally mediated work, breakpoints can be identified through workflow trace data, where abrupt and persistent shifts in execution pathways indicate threshold crossings (Nogueira & Zenha-Rela, 2024; Berntzen et al., 2023).

5. Multi-Context Vignettes: Cell-Level Intervention

SEI is granular: when execution falters, leaders intervene at specific interface cells rather than relying on cultural slogans or generic controls. The vignettes below illustrate how drift and breakpoints emerge and how targeted SEI interventions restore coordinated action.

Healthcare pathway. A hospital introduces a care pathway to reduce heart-failure readmissions. Execution spans emergency, inpatient, pharmacy, discharge, and community interfaces. After initial improvement, drift appears as medication-reconciliation delays rise without clear authority to adjust handoff protocols. Informal workarounds proliferate, culminating in delayed discharges and emergency department overflow. A cell-level response targets T×A (appointing a pathway integrator with cross-unit authority), S×C (daily cross-role huddles with explicit escalation rules), and T×V (process-mined pathway views to localize delay points).

[2] Persistence windows are specified ex ante (e.g., ≥2 sprints or ≥4 weeks), calibrated to task cadence and historical baselines.

Product platform. A software firm shifts to a platform model separating shared services and feature teams. Early OKR structural alignment improves clarity, but drift emerges as dependencies multiply and feature teams build "shadow" services. A release failure triggered by incompatible API changes marks a breakpoint. Intervention targets S×A (clarifying API authority and escalation rights), T×C (formal interface review rituals translating roadmap intent into binding contracts), and S×V/T×V (dependency maps and lead-time metrics that surface cross-team bottlenecks).

Public service process. A municipal agency redesigns a housing-benefit workflow. Increased digitization improves backlog visibility, yet ambiguous exceptions require cross-unit interpretation. Drift arises as eligibility rules evolve faster than decision guides, producing inconsistent adjudication. A breakpoint occurs when unresolved exceptions accumulate and escalate. Response focuses on T×V (shared decision playbooks linked to portal exceptions), R×C (cross-unit case clinics to build shared knowledge), and S×A (clear exception ownership with time-bound escalation).

6. Hypotheses (H1-H7) and Causal Logic

Building on the SEI meta-architecture, the hypotheses specify testable relationships linking structural (SC), relational (RC), and translational coherence (TC) to performance quality (PQ). SC, RC, and TC are estimated via the SEI Coherence Index (SEI-CI) and aggregated to the interdependent work unit. To preclude tautological inference, drift and breakpoints are modeled as intermediate interface dynamics specified independently of PQ: drift captures changes in dimensional dominance across SC, RC, and TC over time, while breakpoints are identified through trace-based threshold crossings in coordination-process indicators (Table 2). These dynamics are then used to predict subsequent PQ (Figure 1).

Translational mediation. Structural and relational coherence enable execution primarily by supporting translation through boundary objects, interface roles, and feedback loops. When translation weakens, even structurally and relationally coherent arrangements are insufficient to sustain coordinated action. **H1** predicts that TC mediates the relationship between SC/RC and PQ.

Contextual contingency (moderated mediation). Under high environmental dynamism and interdependence, translation becomes increasingly critical for coordinated execution. **H2** predicts that environmental dynamism strengthens the indirect effect of SC/RC on PQ via TC.

Lever complementarity. Accountability, communication, and visibility operate as complementary governance levers at the interface; strengthening any one in isolation yields limited benefits. **H3** predicts that the positive association between any single lever and TC is stronger when the other two levers are also high.

Dimensional dominance and drift. Many task environments (dictated by industry standards or situations) exhibit stable dominance of one coherence dimension (SC, RC or TC). Drift arises when the magnitude of such dominance increases over time and exceeds coherence capacity, increasing coordination costs and rework. **H4** predicts that greater dominance of any one dimension is positively associated with drift and rework.

Visibility quality. Outcome-only dashboards often fail to support translation, whereas coherence-oriented visibility (e.g., dependency maps, flow metrics) directly enables coordinated action. **H5** predicts that coherence-oriented visibility is more strongly associated with PQ than outcome-only visibility, even when holding structural coherence constant.

Interface roles and leadership density. Translation is carried by interface roles (e.g., product owners, integrators, boundary spanners), who perform critical relational and integrative work

across organizational boundaries (Satheesh et al., 2024). **H6** predicts that higher leadership density in these roles strengthens the TC-PQ relationship and reduces the likelihood that structural accountability escalates into drift.

Coherence capacity principle. SEI predicts that performance quality (PQ) is maximized when interface coherence is strong and dimensional dominance remains within the interface coherence capacity. Dominance is operationalized as misalignment (M), defined as the standard deviation of standardized structural, relational, and translational coherence scores (M = SD [zSC, zRC, zTC]). H7 predicts an inverted-U relationship between M and PQ: very low dispersion reflects over-coupled, rigid interfaces, whereas high dispersion indicates dominance exceeding coherence capacity and elevates drift and breakpoint risk. Performance is expected to peak at modest dispersion (e.g., ≈0.5 SD), with the inflection determined by interface coherence capacity (the ability of the interface to absorb dimensional dominance without inducing drift) and expected to vary with task interdependence.

7. Future Research Design and Analytic Pathways

Empirical design. SEI is specified for empirical testing using multi-unit, multilevel designs, with interdependent work units as the focal unit. Analyses examine translational mediation and moderated mediation (H1-H2), lever complementarity (H3), drift, misalignment, and breakpoint dynamics (H4, H7), the incremental role of coherence-oriented visibility (H5), and moderation by leadership density in interface roles (H6).

Measurement. SEI-CI items are deductively derived from the 3×3 SEI architecture (≈6-8 items per cell), refined through expert-panel validation, and piloted across interdependent units[3]. Scale purification proceeds via exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, retaining items with acceptable reliability ($\omega/\alpha \geq .70$) and convergent/discriminant validity. Measurement invariance across contexts is assessed using configural, metric, and scalar tests.

Outcomes and dynamics. Performance quality (PQ) is measured independently using downstream operational or service outcomes. Drift is defined as change in misalignment across structural, relational, and translational coherence over time, and breakpoints as threshold crossings in coordination-process signals predicting subsequent PQ.

Causal identification. The default specification is a three-wave panel with temporal separation (SC/RC/TC at T1; drift/breakpoints at T2; PQ at T3), estimated using cross-lagged panel models and unit fixed effects to mitigate endogeneity. Where exogenous interface changes are available, difference-in-differences, event-study, or instrumental-variable approaches provide complementary identification.

Data ethics. Visibility and trace data are analyzed at the aggregated unit level, consistent with principles of purpose limitation, data minimization, and safeguards against individual surveillance.

8. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI) reframes coherence as a governable interface architecture rather than a static alignment property. The 3×3 architecture makes coordination failures diagnosable: leaders can locate weak cells, detect drift, and target interventions that restore coherence. This contributes to organization theory by (a) specifying translation as a distinct mechanism linking structures, relationships, and coherence-oriented visibility to

[3] Item wording follows directly from each SEI cell (e.g., accountability clarity for cross-unit decisions [S×A], shared understanding of interdependencies across roles [R×C], reliability of boundary objects and feedback loops [T×V]). Items are aggregated to the unit level using within-unit agreement and reliability statistics (e.g., rwg, ICC(1), ICC(2)).

coordinated action; (b) linking cell-level conditions to execution outcomes via testable mediated and moderated pathways; and (c) defining drift and breakpoints as measurable dynamics of coherence rather than post hoc labels.

For practice, SEI offers an alternative to adding control or calling for "alignment." Many execution failures are neither motivational nor informational alone; they reflect weak translation and induce compensatory coordination (extra meetings, escalations, workarounds) that drains capacity. Practical implications include: (1) designing interface roles with authority over boundary objects (T×A); (2) pairing visibility dashboards with decision routines and escalation paths (S×V + S×A); (3) prioritizing coherence-oriented visibility (flow and dependency metrics) over outcome-only dashboards when coordination is the bottleneck (T×V); and (4) treating OKR/OKRops practice as a partial solution (Doerr, 2018) that must be complemented by relational and translational mechanisms to avoid overload and gaming.

SEI enables joint measurement of structural mechanisms, relational capabilities, and coordination dynamics, integrating "hard" and "soft" elements in one analytical framework and providing a pre-intervention diagnostic of where capacity is diverted into compensation. In doing so, it connects personal accountability across roles with system-level responsibility, reducing blame dynamics and dependence on individual heroics.

9. Boundary Conditions and Limitations

SEI is most valuable in settings with high task interdependence, uncertainty, and cross-boundary coupling. In low-coupling environments, the full architecture may create unnecessary overhead. A second boundary condition concerns data maturity: T×V interventions are easier when digital traces and workflow logs exist, but SEI can also be operationalized with qualitative artifacts (e.g., pathway maps, handoff checklists). Third, visibility has ethical and behavioral risks. Increased visibility can intensify surveillance perceptions and require deliberate 'visibility management' work by leaders (Justesen & Plesner, 2023). SEI therefore treats visibility as a lever to be governed rather than maximized, with drift and breakpoints serving as diagnostic signals of misalignment rather than indicators of individual failure.

This paper is conceptual and proposes an empirical program. While it provides operational indicators and illustrative thresholds, calibration and validation require domain-specific studies. Finally, proceedings format limits detail on measurement development; future work should validate SEI-CI scales and test invariance across contexts.

10. Conclusion

Where strategy meets execution, numbers meet people: metrics, dashboards, and plans confront the realities of distributed expertise, authority, and meaning. The Strategy-Execution Interface (SEI) explains execution as governed translation across structural, relational, and translational dimensions using accountability, communication, and visibility levers. By operationalizing drift and breakpoints and providing cell-level intervention logic, SEI converts a persistent managerial complaint (we can't execute') into a measurable, testable, and designable agenda for research and practice.

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