CHECKLIST

Checklist – do you actually have a strategy?

15 quick questions to test whether what you're calling strategy holds up to Rumelt's kernel, or is really just a well-worded wish list.

This checklist is meant to be used against an existing strategy document, presentation, or plan — read through it with the document in front of you and count how many questions you can actually answer yes to. Builds on the kernel from What is a strategy, really? (https://terbis.se/en/articles/vad-ar-egentligen-en-strategi) and From Vision to Advantages (https://terbis.se/en/articles/fran-vision-till-fordelar).

DIAGNOSIS

- [ ] Can we state in a single sentence what the biggest obstacle is — specifically, not generally?
- [ ] Is the diagnosis based on what's actually been observed, not just a general description of "the market" or "competition"?
- [ ] Have we ruled out alternative explanations, or did we just settle on the first explanation that felt plausible?
- [ ] Would someone outside the leadership team, reading the diagnosis, understand exactly what's in the way — without us explaining it verbally?

GUIDING CONDITIONS

- [ ] Does our guiding policy actually rule out some courses of action, or does it in practice permit everything?
- [ ] Can we point to at least one plausible initiative we deliberately chose not to pursue because of the guiding policy?
- [ ] Is the policy concrete enough that an employee could use it to make a decision without asking leadership first?
- [ ] Have we avoided phrasing the guiding policy as a goal ("become market leader") instead of a direction ("concentrate investment on X rather than Y")?

COHERENT ACTION

- [ ] Do our planned initiatives reinforce each other, or would they work just as well on their own?
- [ ] Is there a clear order between the actions (what must happen before what), or is it a list with no interdependencies?
- [ ] Have we allocated actual resources (time, budget, people) to the actions, not just written that they should happen?
- [ ] If we removed one of the actions, would the others lose much of their effect? (If the answer is no, the actions are probably not coherent enough.)

COMMON TRAPS TO CHECK FOR

- [ ] The fluff test: can every sentence in the strategy be translated into plain language without becoming empty or self-evident?
- [ ] The goal-confusion test: have we separated what we want to achieve (goal) from how we get there (strategy) — or is the document just a list of goals?

- [ ] The prioritization test: if two initiatives in the plan compete for the same limited resource, do we know which one wins — or would that spark a new debate every time?

IF THE VISION PRODUCES SEVERAL ADVANTAGES

- [ ] Have we named the specific competitive advantages the vision requires — no more than a handful?
- [ ] Does each advantage have its own diagnosis, guiding condition, and coherent action — or do they share one general description?

How to read the result

This isn't meant as a strict scoring system, but as a rule of thumb: 11 out of 15 or more — the strategy likely holds up to Rumelt's kernel. 6–10 — the basic structure is there, but the diagnosis or guiding policy needs sharpening before the actions are locked in. Below 6 — what exists is probably a vision or a wish list rather than a strategy; worth going back to article one and starting from the diagnosis.