

STRATEGY HQ

Q2 2014

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Strategy in the Digital Age: No One Left Behind

By Rohan Rodney

High-Performing organizations directly link leadership strategy to business strategy. The traditional view of leadership has always been about taking command and seizing control of an environment and dictating the direction that others must follow. However, strategic leaders do not invent an organization's path or purpose in isolation. With no input from the leader's support team, it is highly probable that a less than desirable outcome may be realized. A leader must draw a path that resonates with the capabilities and desires of the employees as well as the nature of the existing business. All too often, the strategic direction lacks a clear connection to the organization's structure, which does little to generate internal excitement, and instead builds uncertainty amongst the ranks.

By encouraging collaboration and open communication every step of the way, strategic leaders can ensure everyone is progressing along a common path at the proper pace. There will always be a need to adjust course or even backtrack, but when all stakeholders are aligned, it is easier to

avoid the misalignment or mistiming of deliverables. Other divisions with dependencies on these deliverables will be adequately prepared if, and almost always when, anything goes astray.

Good strategic leaders inspire their team and help create the vision that will bring success. They concentrate on building effective teams. Leadership should be about setting the vision and establishing the core beliefs of the organization. Creating this structure and setting guidelines allows others to focus concentration on developing strategies that move the organization forward. With proper communication and continuous reinforcement of these strategies, minimization of missteps can be achieved.

Leadership needs to move in a way that demonstrates the embodiment of the strategy, but not get involved in the day-to-day activities. There are other sub-leadership positions that are responsible for the completion of day-to-day activities. The overall business strategy development always takes precedence over carrying out the actual tactical steps. The business strategy is strongest when

the leadership is seen as the symbolic figure that turns ideas into action points and properly motivates others to work on them.

With today's digital tools, leadership has the ability to both disseminate strategic communication as well as gather feedback from the organization. Real-time activity streams provided on internal corporate touchscreen dashboards and the intranet homepage help communicate the here and now of the business via a social media-type interface. They should also display the corporate vision to illustrate how the daily operations tie into the long-term vision. Real-time tracking of website visitors adds the element of humanity to the daily/weekly/monthly analytics reports. Finally, in this age of video, we understand that communication works best when visual elements are attached to it. Recorded messages and even live video chat software will ensure high-quality and highly engaged communication is enabled. The digital age enables leadership to continuously deliver business strategy to the organization so that no one is left behind...especially the leader.



Driving Your Strategy: Are You Licensed?

By G.A. Bivens

My eldest son recently turned sixteen and with that came the words that many parents anticipate...“ when can I start driving”? With that simple question came a rush of emotions, anxieties and the acceptance that I too am getting old. But as has been the custom in our household, we would use this as an opportunity, among many others, to teach our son about privileges and responsibility.

We decided that we would take the opportunity to teach him about the role that planning plays in any responsible individual's life. I explained to him that he was not the recipient of a life financed by happenstance, much to his frustration. I explained how each of the important decisions he witnessed us make were the results of planning and that we wanted the same for him.

We then had a discussion (me talking and him listening) about what happens from the moment one gets their learner's permit. The progression was this:

1. Research the requirements to obtain a driver's license in his home state
2. Obtain materials to study for the learner's permit examination
3. Enroll in course for preparation for driver orientation
4. Have access to a vehicle to drive
5. Take learner's permit examination
6. Secure learner's permit
7. Accumulate behind the wheel experience
8. Within 6 months of obtaining permit, per our insurance carrier, must be added to insurance and begin paying premium
9. Take driver's license examination
10. Obtain provisional driver's license until 18 years of age

With that realistic list of prerequisite steps I dashed his hopes of getting his license, well not exactly. He felt that I was over complicating the process. So I gave him the opportunity to put together a plan for how he would get to step 6. There also had to be a plan for how he was going to have a meaningful part in step 8 with the expectation of a simplified business plan.

So how is this personal story related to strategy and planning you might ask? Strategy is about asking, and answering the right questions. My son posed the question “when can I start driving” but the correct question is “what do I need to do to obtain my driver's license?” Understanding the individual's or organization's actual objective is essential to success.

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Quick Facts

About Leadership's Strategy
& Decision Making

The percentage of employees who can currently identify the company's strategy among six multiple choice options.

29

7 out of 10

The number of employees who are unknowingly misaligned with the company's strategic direction.

Strategy: Put on Your Business Armor Before The Battle

By David Cooper

In June 2014, Tesla Motors shocked the world by agreeing to give away its entire intellectual property portfolio in hope of speeding up the development of electric cars. Really? Tesla was willing to give its competitors what many consider to be the company's key point of differentiation? Many were confused, appalled and angered. Why would you give away a competitive advantage?

The pundits changed their position when Tesla's CEO Elon Musk shared his rationale. Musk believed that open source sharing of technology would greatly benefit the electric car industry. By lowering the barriers of entry,



other manufacturers could fast forward product research and development, providing an incredible tailwind for industry growth. That's noble, right?

Shortly after the "free" technology announcement, Tesla shared that



it was looking to build a \$5 billion battery factory with Panasonic. Tesla also disclosed competitive inquiries regarding purchasing batteries, the potential use of solar energy, etc. So Tesla technology would become the platform? Is this noble? Not so much. Strategic? Talk about seeing the big picture.

With this announcement, I was reminded of a couple of quotes by Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*:

1. "All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved." The probability of triumph is determined long before combat. History has chronicled successes when superior strategy overcomes inferior resources. Leaders must have a larger view: a championship strategy from which they have

prepared their team to execute – and dominate.

2. "The general who wins the battle makes many calculations in his temple before the battle is fought. The general who loses makes but few calculations beforehand." The impactful tactics are never

Tesla is willing to give its competitors ... the company's key point of differentiation?

coincidence. They are the result of a winning strategy that is developed long before battle, not during or after. Leaders cannot be so anxious to "win" that they do not outline the path to victory. The competitive landscape is far too turbulent and disruptive to develop a meaningful plan on the fly. Sending the troops into battle without a real strategy is the antithesis of success.

What did we learn from Tesla?

- The importance of a strategy that, despite popular opinion, works toward building a long-term competitive moat that extends beyond a single brand. Don't just think linearly. Burn the box! (See Strategy HQ: Burn the Box)
- Vision is the starting point for a sensible strategy. Knowing the industry's needs and direction is invaluable insight. Being the

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Next Q: Disruption

What is Disruption? Where is Disruption?

It's indescribable! It's ubiquitous!

Your organization's perception of disruption determines its viability. Do you create disruption for a competitive advantage? Do you find your organization in chaos with every disturbance?

Pick your position – Will you be a victor or a victim?

catalyst for the industry's success is a strategy full of disruption - and incredible ROI potential.

Every leader believes he or she sends troops (team) into battle

(marketplace) prepared, armed with the resources (strategy) necessary to be successful. In reality, many lack a holistic, multidimensional plan that is useful and understandable. Make sure your team is properly equipped

with the assets for victory, not just combat. Finally, be certain everyone takes the strategy with him or her - as they leave the boardroom.

Driving Your Strategy: Are You Licensed? *from page 3*

In some ways a corporation is like a family. The traditions, or guiding principles, to a family are much like the corporate strategy to a corporation. It determines how the corporation as a whole supports and enhances the value of the business units within it. It also answers the question, "How do we arrange the overall organization, so that its value as a unit is more than the sum of its individual parts?"

The family structure is then divided into different units. For example, there are the parents and the children, and sometimes extended family members living in the home. Each business unit within the organization will then have a business unit strategy, which its leadership will use to determine how it will compete in its targeted markets.

The units within a family can be further divided into teams (or individuals). For example, the unit (father, sister, etc.) possesses unique traits and goals. In an organization, each team should have its own strategy to ensure that its day-to-day operations contribute - moving the organization in the desired trajectory.

In many families there are periodic misalignments of objectives. Sometimes the individual members may begin acting more in their own interest than in that of the group. Many individuals and organizations get caught in a focus on tactics/operations as opposed to executing a strategy. When the individual teams align their tactics around the corporate strategy, everyone benefits.

The socialization of the overall strategy is a critical component in any organization. Whether planning

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to obtain a driver's license or contemplating entering a new market, one must have vision to the end goal. When victory is in focus, it becomes easy to ascertain what moves you toward the desired state and what moves you further away.