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Are you a STRATEGIC THINKER?

August 2023



What's the difference?

There are a lot of people who are strong thinkers. They think about all kinds of things, all the time. They think through details and often have great ideas. A **STRATEGIC THINKER** is someone who focuses their thinking with **TARGETED CRITERIA!** What I mean by that is that strategic thinking is putting your energy into that which will get you to or move you towards your goals and vision with efficiency, effectiveness, minimum effort and resources and maximum impact.

Here are a few sayings I've learned through the years that might say it just as well:

If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else.

You can be incredibly efficient and be totally ineffective. Because...



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Strategic
thinking rarely
occurs
spontaneously

Professor
Michael Porter
Harvard
Business School

You can be maximizing efficiency at doing the wrong things (those that will not move you toward your objective.)

Strategic thinking considers a variety of things as your thinking proceeds, such as:

- What are the long-range goals?
- What are the short-range goals?
- Will this idea that will move us closer to our short-range goal also feed into the long-range goal or side-track us away from the ultimate goal?
- How do we need to slow down and plan ahead to get it right now so that we won't be having to back-track later and potentially slow us down exponentially?
- What's the cost vs. benefit of doing this?
- What's the cost of not doing this?
- Where are the gaps in what we need and what we have?
- What kind of gaps do we have; efficiency, cost-effectiveness, bottlenecks, supply-chain, lack of personnel, etc.?
- What processes and procedures need to be improved? Some might be improved, but what gains will we experience from their improvement? Are there other places to spend our resources that will have a greater benefit?
- In whatever we take on, is the cost (including people time, dollars and other resources) worth the results - money/time we will save or the capacity or growth we will experience by improving this?
- Can a proposed idea be shared and thus the cost shared among multiple departments? Who else could make use of the same idea, new purchase, investment of IT time to design some new system, etc.?
- How can you eliminate "insanity" – defined by Albert Einstein's as "Doing the same thing over and over and expecting to get different results." What's not working well?

Strategic thinking also requires looking beyond one layer of implications. What will happen if you do this? Then what will be the implications of that result, and the implications of that next result? It is important to look at multiply layers to

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I'm here to build something for the long-term. Anything else is a distraction.

Mark Zuckerberg

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When your mind is full of assumptions, conclusions, and beliefs, it has no penetration; it just repeats past impressions.

Sadhguru

see the true impact. For example, if you change a process that improves efficiency, but it causes a bottleneck in another department because they don't have the capacity to handle your increased output, you need to know that will be an implication of your idea to decide whether to proceed. An additional consideration then might be, even if it doesn't increase speed, does it nevertheless provide additional time for your department to take on additional tasks that help reach other goals you otherwise wouldn't have time to do? Or, is there a way to collaborate collaborate with the next department down the line for them to also increase capacity?

Here's an example that could have been catastrophic – a company, years ago, was considering its personal digital assistant, or PDA. The personal digital assistant was a handheld device that was essentially a working person's calendar, address book, email etc. prior to the age of smartphones. In going through a process called an “implications wheel”, the first implication was that people would carry these devices around with them. The next implication was that they would sometimes leave them in the car. The third level was that the heat in the car could cause the battery they intended to use to explode. Needless to say, the implications wheel process saved them. They used a different battery and avoided catastrophic results.

I once worked with a strategic team to the C-suite of an organization. The team was considering various areas in which they could improve their own team's performance. They identified a list of options. They ultimately chose, not the option which would result in the most significant improvement, but rather the option that met the biggest need of the C-Suite whom they served. They were being strategic in deciding where the greatest impact would be not just to them, but to those they served and to the strategic plan of their company.

As you consider improvements, always look to the strategic plan of your organization. That plan has already identified the most important direction to move and the most important things to accomplish. It will be much easier to reach those goals if everyone in the organization is pulling in the same direction. How can you choose goals, improve upon processes or systems, reduce costs or otherwise make improvements that serve to

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Strategy is a style
of thinking, a
conscious and
deliberate
process, an
intensive
implementation
system, the
science of
insuring success.

—
Pete Johnson

“
The essence of
strategy is
choosing what
not to do.

—
Professor
Michael Porter
Harvard
Business School

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move the organization closer to its strategic goals? That is the essence of strategic thinking. How you approach your job must align with that strategic plan, otherwise, you may be very good and very efficient at doing the wrong things and cause a distraction from those goals - move on!

There are exceptions and things that impact strategic goals indirectly. Improving work flow and communications, for example, may improve employee satisfaction, reduce stress levels and improve culture and morale with a result being an exponentially positive impact in achieving goals.

Step back and look at your work through a strategic lens and see what you discover. Good luck!

Do you need help thinking something through or would you like to know more or have facilitation help with an Implications Wheel Process?

Reach out and I'll be glad to share more.

Joy Conley Kacik

Joy is a conference speaker, team and leadership development consultant, customized trainer and facilitator and a Certified Professional Coach with expertise in personal career coaching, job offer and salary negotiations and leadership coaching.

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