

# Strategic Thinking



# Strategic Thinking

## Speaker

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# Presentation and Discussion Objectives

- We will discuss understanding strategic thinking **AND** how to be strategic with your thinking
- We will enhance your understanding of **strategy & strategic thinking**
- We will develop an understanding of the **diversity** of thinking skills and how to use them
- We will conduct a self-assessment your current state of thinking **skills** by using an inventory exercise
- We will discuss the difference between **strategy & tactics**



## Mental warm-up

What do you  
**think** strategic  
thinking is?



## Quote

If you want to know what the future is, be part of its development.

—Peter Drucker



## Definition

Strategic thinking is a **process** that defines the manner in which people think about, assess, view, and create the future for themselves and others.

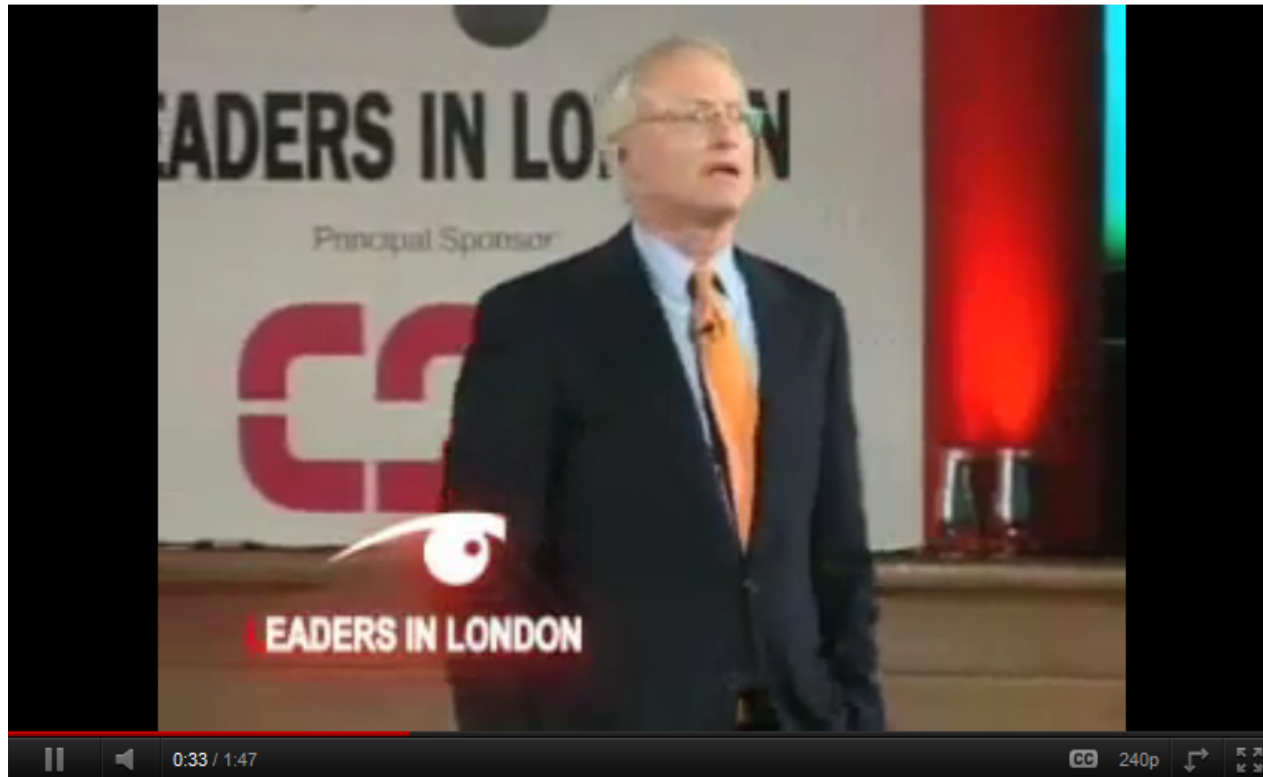
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# Video: What is Strategy?

## Michael Porter, Harvard Business School

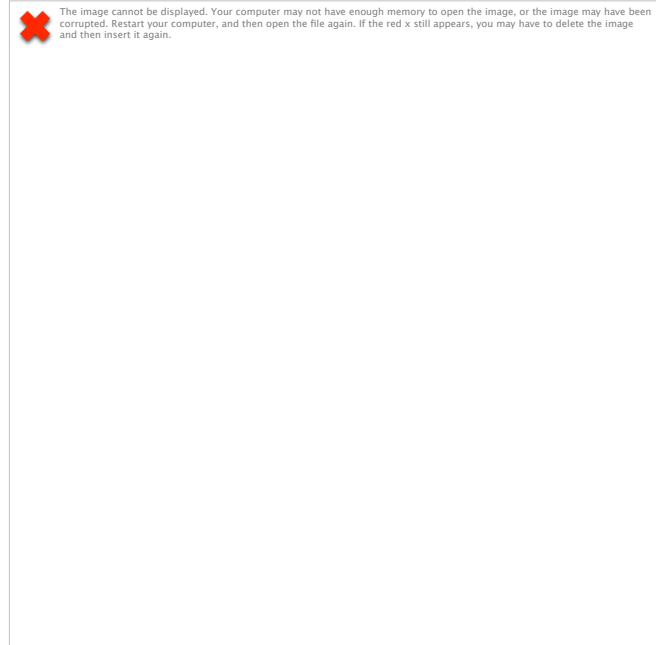


[https://www.dropbox.com/s/o2nvnwezrysrrib/What%20is%20Strategy\\_.avi?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/o2nvnwezrysrrib/What%20is%20Strategy_.avi?dl=0)



# Porter's Key Questions

1. What will make us unique?
2. What will give us a competitive advantage?
3. What will sustain us over time?
4. Why are you doing this?

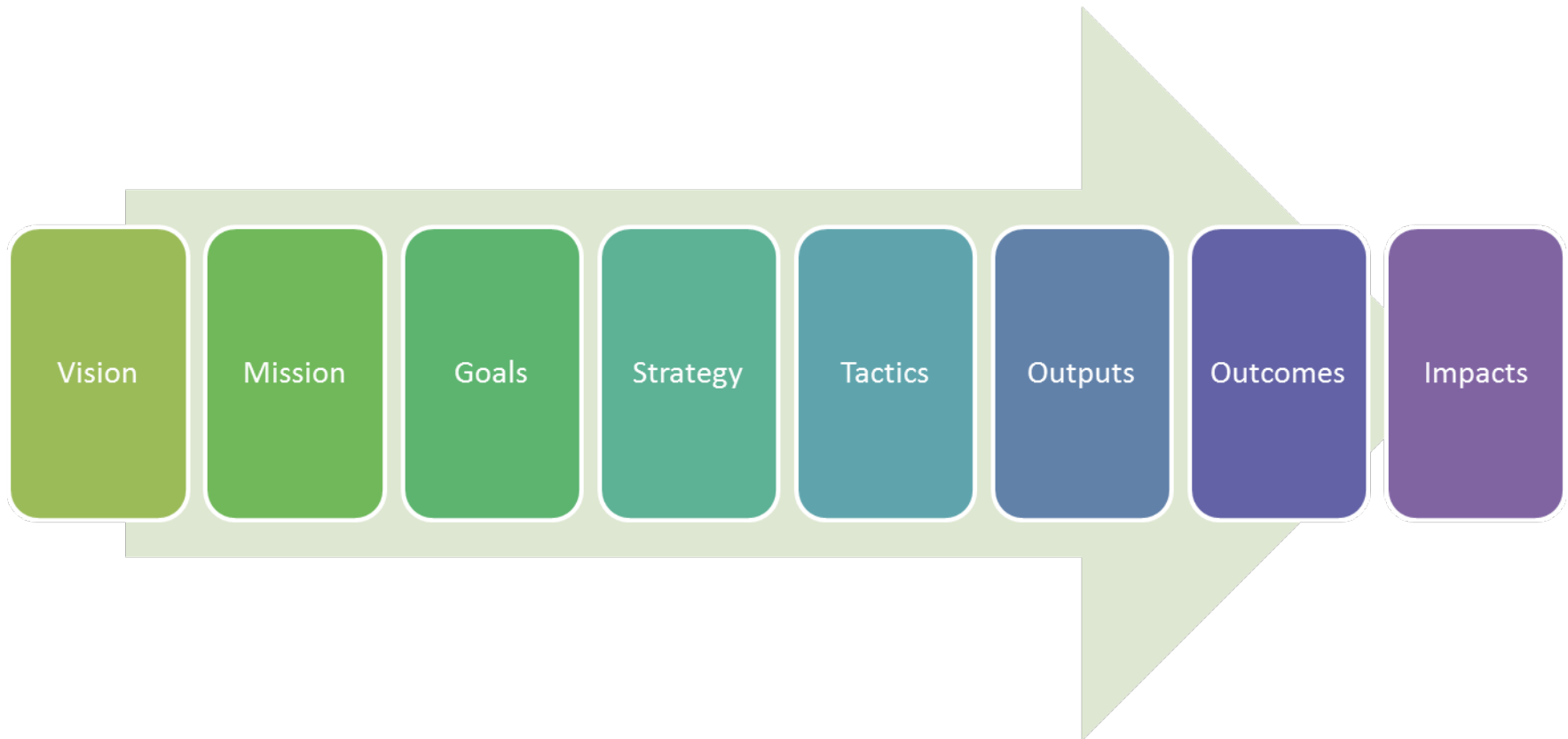


Michael Porter

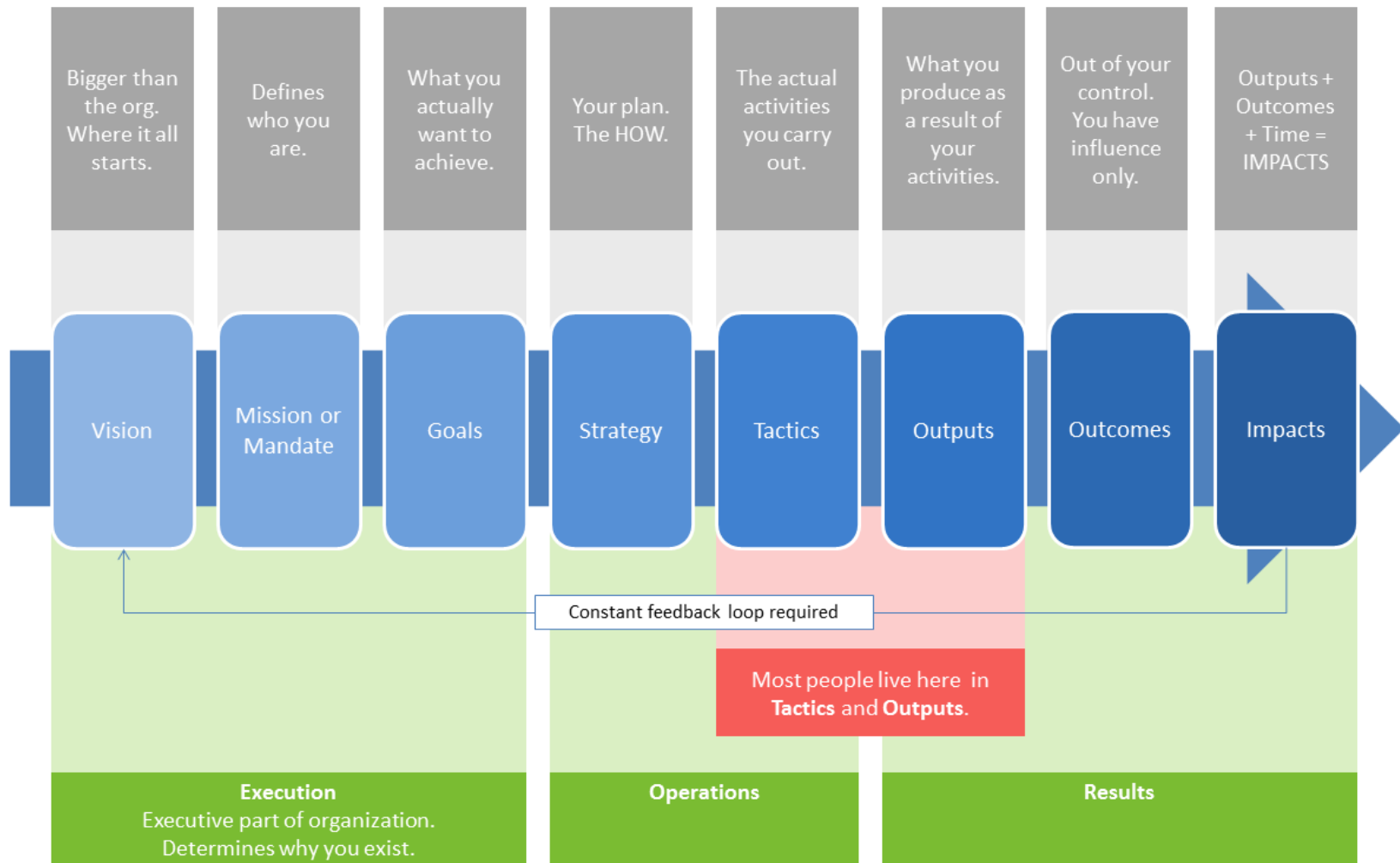




# Discussion: Where does Strategy fit?



# Discussion: A system of ideas



# What is Strategic Thinking?

The capacity to let go of today's issues and place oneself into the future

- What is the ideal future for yourself or your organization?
- How to think “heads-up”?

Letting go of today is difficult

- Success is often tied to operational problem solving **TODAY**
- Thinking “heads-down”



# What is Strategic Thinking?

Because many of us do not have opportunities to do it

- We lack the comfort and skills with strategic thinking
- We are uncomfortable with going too far forward – unpredictable

Thinking 5-10-15-20 years out

- Needed systems, education, infrastructure, etc.
- Constant, ongoing process



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #1:

The ability to use both the left (logical) and right (creative) sides of their brain.

This skill takes practice as well as confidence and can be tremendously valuable.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #2:

The ability to develop a clearly defined and focused business vision and personal vision.

The skill of both thinking with a strategic purpose as well as creating a visioning process.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #3:

The ability to clearly define objectives and develop a strategic action plan with each objective broken down into tasks and each task having a list of needed resources and a specific timeline.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #4:

The ability to design flexibility into plans by creating benchmarks for thinking to review progress. Then use those benchmarks to as a guide and recognize the opportunity to revise plans as needed. The ability to be proactive and anticipate change, rather than being reactive to changes after they occur.





# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #5:

Awareness and perception. Recognize internal and external clues, often subtle, to help guide future direction and realize opportunities for individuals and organizations.

Great strategic thinkers will listen, hear and understand what is said and will read and observe whatever they can so that they will have very helpful and strategic information to guide them.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #6:

Committed lifelong learning. Learn from each experience. Use experiences to enable better thinking on strategic issues.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #7:

The best and greatest strategic thinkers take time out for themselves. Their time out may be in the form of a retreat; a walk in a special environment; relaxing in a comfortable chair in the lobby of an historic hotel; or an afternoon in a quiet place with a blank sheet of paper or their lap top computer with their thinking caps on.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #8:

Seek advice from others. Use a coach, a mentor, a peer advisory group or some other group that you confide in and offer up ideas for feedback.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

Critical Skill #9:

Realistic Optimists. The ability to balance tremendous amount of creativity with a sense of realism and honesty about what is achievable in the longer term.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

## Critical Skill #10:

The ability to be non-judgmental. Not allowing being held back or restricted by judging their own thinking or the thinking of others when ideas are initially being developed and shared.

This is especially true during any brainstorming exercises to ensure a flow of great ideas.



# 11 Critical Skills for Strategic Thinking

Critical Skill #11:

The ability to be patient and to not rush to conclusions and judgments.

Great ideas and thoughts require time to develop into great successes in the future to reach your defined vision.



# Why Thinking Skills are Important?

Strategic planning requires:

- Members of an organization to envision its future and to develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future

Strategic planning groups that are most adept at using a full range of thinking skills and applying them efficiently, achieve:

- Better results
- Develop more ownership
- Have higher returns on investments of time and energy

Most managers spend most of their time and energy putting out brush fires – operating tactically or short-term

- They often have little training or experience in thinking or acting strategically





# What are your strengths?

As noted above in the 11 Critical Skills of Strategic Thinking, there are links to:

- Creative thinking
- Down-board thinking
- Critical thinking
- Synthesis thinking
- Focused thinking
- Framing and reframing skills
- Visionary thinking
- Scanning and interpreting skills
- Fluidity of thinking
- Intuitive thinking
- Complexity in thinking
- Systems thinking
- Broad view thinking
- Analytical thinking
- Meta-cognition (or thinking about thinking)



# Thinking Skills Assessment

Thinking Skills 91

## Thinking Skills Inventory

As you seek to provide strategic leadership during challenging times, several thinking skills contribute to your success in the process of identifying, understanding, interpreting, and developing solutions to challenges. Examine the thinking skills listed below, rate yourself on each using the following scale, and make any notes to yourself about why you chose the rating you did, how you might continue to develop that skill, when you use it, and so on.

- 1 = Highly accomplished . . . a major strength
- 2 = Competent
- 3 = Emerging competence
- 4 = New to me . . . to be explored

\_\_\_ 1. Creative . . . the ability to generate a number of unique ideas in response to an identified need.

Comments:

\_\_\_ 2. Down-board . . . similar to a world-class chess player, the ability to pre-think consequences of a particular action, several moves ahead.

Comments:

\_\_\_ 3. Critical . . . the ability to discriminate among key components of a given situation, to make sense of it, to make choices.

Comments:

\_\_\_ 4. Synthesis . . . the ability to combine critical pieces of an idea into a new result.

Comments:

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Go to Handout 1:  
Thinking Skills Inventory

Rank yourself on each of  
the skills:

1. Highly accomplished
2. Competent
3. Emerging competence
4. New to me

Make notes to self about  
why you answered and how  
to improve

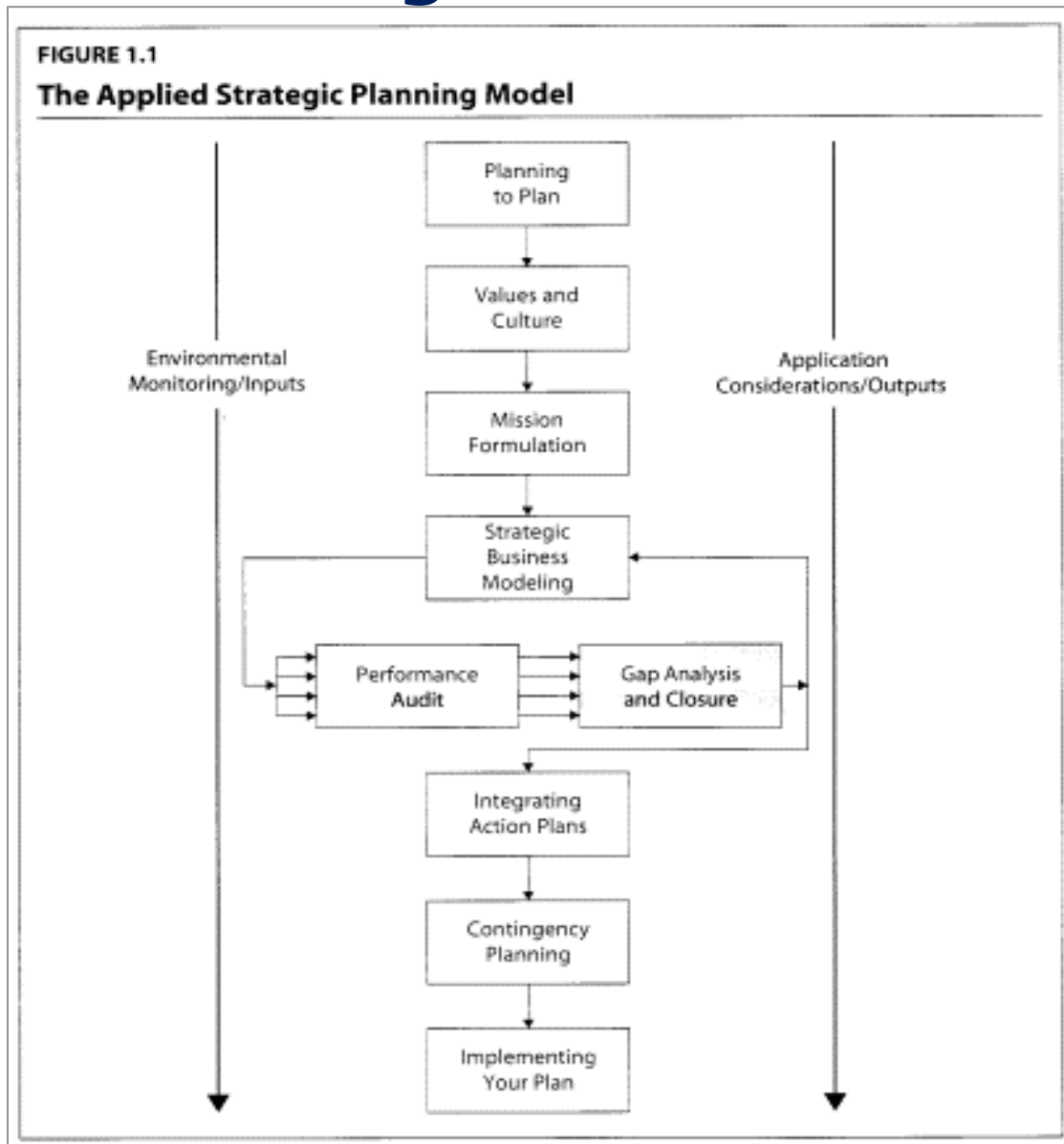


# Natural and Learned Skills

- One or more of these skills will “naturally” resonate with each of you
- Natural styles tend to be hard-wired as a personality variable
- We normally use a variety but one will be dominant
- Our preferences change over time
- People can -and do - learn to think in different ways, but to do so they need at least 3 things:
  - A knowledge of the **possibilities**
  - A safe environment within which to **explore** new ways of thinking
  - A structure that **encourages** them to do so



# How does Strategic Thinking fit with Strategic Planning?



# Strategic Thinking Exercise

Read: Handout 2 - **Five Questions to Build a Strategy** by Roger Martin

Answer the following 5 questions:

1. What are the broad aspirations for our organization and the concrete goals against which we can measure our progress?
2. Across the potential field available to us, where will we choose to play and not play?
3. In our chosen place to play, how will we choose to win against the competitors there?
4. What capabilities are necessary to build and maintain, to win in our chosen manner?
5. What management systems are necessary to operate to build and maintain the key capabilities?

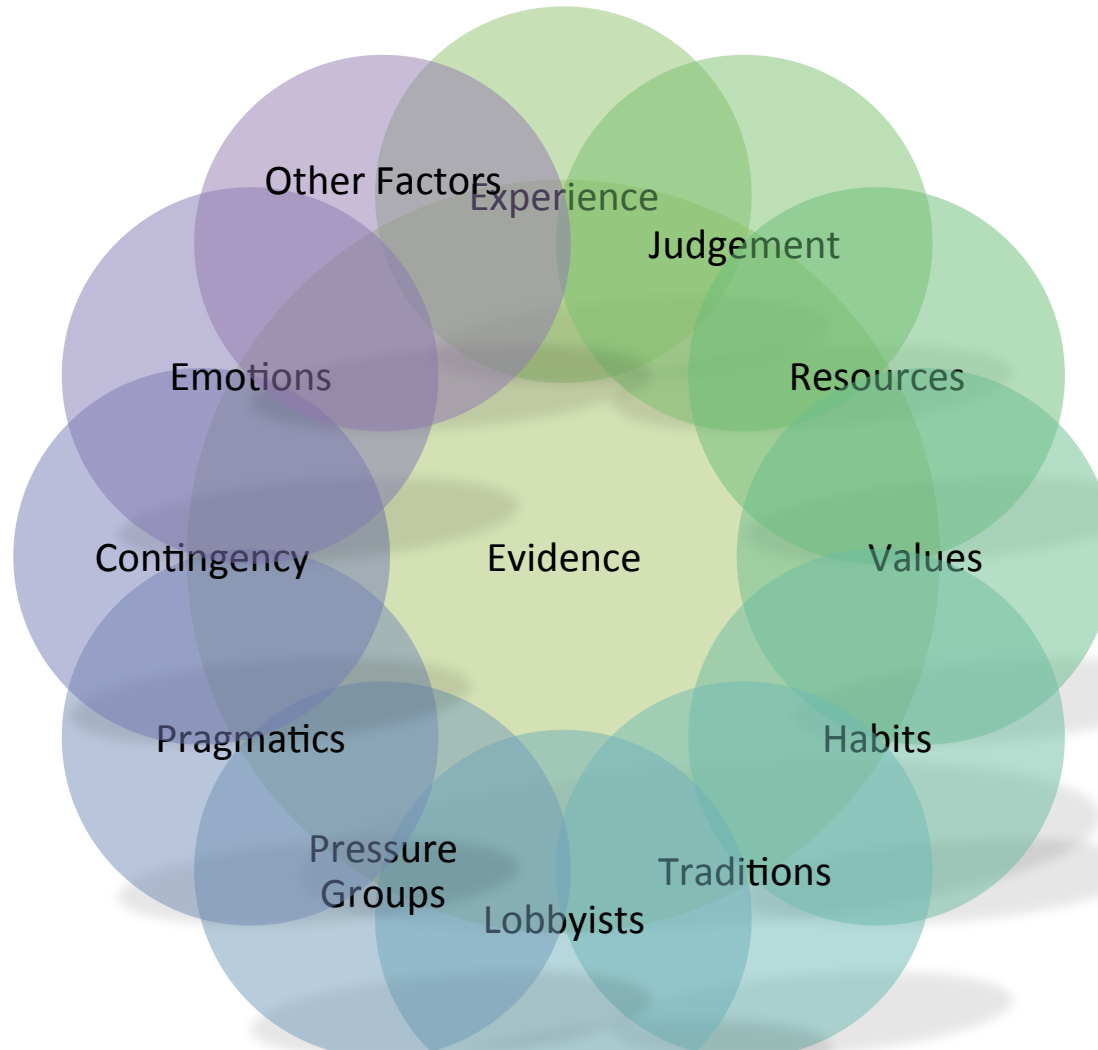
15 minutes

Use the notes page in the manual or a blank sheet of paper





# Decisions are a complex calculus



Philip Davies, Is Evidence-Based Government Possible?  
Jerry Lee Lecture 2004, Washington, DC

# Summary

## Strategic thinkers are . . .

**Future-based:** They anticipate change and look for opportunities that may arise.

**Curious:** They are interested in what is going on throughout their department, organization, industry, and the larger business environment.

**Long-term focus:** They are willing to invest today to gain a better outcome tomorrow.

**Willing to Take Risks:** They aren't limited to past or current thinking and are willing to try new methods.

## Conventional thinkers are . . .

**Reactive:** They rarely initiate ideas and wait to be told what to do or what actions to take.

**Isolated:** They typically work without input from others or without understanding others' goals and objectives.

**Short-term focus:** They often do not consider the potential impact of an action on long-term goals.

**Cautious:** They fear changing or challenging the status quo.





# Summary

## Strategic thinkers are . . .

**Able to prioritize:** They do not equate being busy with being effective. They place a high value on projects with the potential for great impact and return.

**Nimble:** They are able to adjust and modify their approaches.

**Life-Long Learner:** They proactively seek knowledge and skills and are willing to teach others.

**Creative:** They consider unorthodox ideas.

## Conventional thinkers are . . .

**Unable to prioritize:** They often treat all tasks equally without regard to impact.

**Inflexible:** They may be unwilling to alter their plans even when adjustments could yield a better return.

**Satisfied:** They normally are not interested in learning new things or methods, and are content with their current capabilities.

**Predictable:** They often stick with familiar paths.



# Meta-cognition – Thinking about Thinking

Ability to identify which thinking skill is needed from individuals or groups as they approach certain tasks

The ability to understand one's own thinking skills and to identify the thinking skills present in members of a group

Critical in the process of strategic planning – to decide which skills are needed and when.



# Meta-cognition – Thinking about Thinking

Discussion:

- Post workshop: Revisit the Thinking Skills Inventory
- Are there skills that you need to develop more?
- Are there skills missing in your group?
- How can you develop them?



# Resources

## **How the brain learns. 4th ed.**

David A. Sousa. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2011.

» This fourth edition integrates current developments in neuroscience, education and psychology. Includes new information on memory systems, updated research on how technology may be affecting the brain, revised sections on hemispheric specialization, and an expanded resource section. Includes brain-friendly teaching strategies.

## **The information diet: a case for conscious consumption.**

Clay A. Johnson. Beijing: O'Reilly Media, 2012.

» This book looks at how to handle the information glut that is now readily available from a variety of sources. It contends that junk information is just as damaging as junk food and shows what to look for, what to avoid, and how to be selective.

## **Is the Internet changing the way you think? The net's impact on our minds and future. 1st ed.**

Edited by John Brockman. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011.

» Examines the way the Internet has affected society and the way people think and poses the title question to various writers, scientists, artists and other influential thinkers who contribute short essays on the subject.



# Resources

## **Jump start the adult learner: how to engage and motivate adults using brain-compatible strategies.**

Laurie Materna. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2007.

» Background information on adult learning styles, memory and how the brain learns accompanies techniques and strategies for classrooms or workshops, including graphic organizers, music energizers, exercise activities, and self-assessments.

## **Learning in adulthood: a comprehensive guide. 3rd ed.**

Sharan B. Merriam, Rosemary S. Caffarella, Lisa M. Baumgartner. New York: John Wiley, 2007.

» Includes a chapter on memory, cognition and the brain.

## **Learning to think, learning to learn: what the science of thinking and learning has to offer adult education.**

By Jennifer Cromley. Jennifer Cromley and the National Institute for Literacy, 2000.

» Teaching means teaching students to think. Learning is a process of coming to understand the world. This report highlights the importance of teaching all students to think critically.



# Thank you – Merci



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