

Strategy? “Why bother?” – **Well, you want to win, don’t you?**

“Good morning; before we start can I ask you to close your eyes, stand up and point towards Paris. Thank you; you can open your eyes now”.

There’s a problem; twenty people in the room and there are **twenty different directions**. What’s worse, not one of them is actually pointing towards Paris! Well, it could be worse; *one* person might know the direction, but not be believed or be able to communicate assertively that they know.

This is what it feels like to be in a Business without a clearly defined and communicated strategy:-

- Where are we going?
- What am I supposed to be doing?
- What do you need from me?
- Why do we duplicate effort or leave gaps?
- Who are our competitors?
- Have we asked our customers, recently, what they really want?
- What do we *really* need to buy and from who?

The list could go on!

Strategy is often devalued by being seen as “high level” and without any action orientation. In fact, **nothing could be further from the truth for a good strategy** – it should *galvanise* a Business. The purpose of the ‘whole’ should be clear and the parts of the individuals precisely and compatibly mapped.

Is strategy ‘difficult’? I don’t think so, but it can be horrendously over-complicated. Documents an inch thick are unlikely to galvanise Businesses – more likely to constipate them!

There are two important pre-requisites for a successful *working* strategy. Firstly, a *thorough* situation analysis looking at all the internal and external factors that impact the Businesses opportunity to make money. This will help to identify the positioning of the Business (and its tactics) to look attractively different in the market. Much of this ‘analysis’ should be done *before* any strategy meeting, not left to chance as part of the agenda. Does,

- “It’s about....”
 - “We’ve got around....”
 - “That will do for now”,
 - “I’ll ask when I’m back in the office”,
- Ring a bell?

There will always be some subjectivity (for example in market sizing), but too much is a strategy killer and leads, inevitably, to problems with the *second* important pre-requisite; **the requirement for absolute buy-in across the Organisation.**

If you have a politically fractured Business, then you're on a sticky wicket to start with; even here, good strategy can limit the damage! But in an Organisation with a positive culture, ensuring a broad cross-functional input, healthy debate and ultimate agreement, will ensure complete synergy across the Business and lead to money-making success in an enjoyable environment.

History has shown that, be it in Warfare or Business, those with a good strategy prevail and prosper!