

Strategic Thinking Mistakes: The Story of the Blind Men and the Elephant



Once upon a time, there were four blind men who lived in a village. One day, it was announced there was an elephant in the village and everyone should come and see. Not knowing what the elephant looked like, the blind men chose to feel the animal. “The elephant is a pillar,” states the blind man who feels a leg. “Oh no,” says the man who touches the tail, “It is like a rope.” “You are both wrong,” says the third, who touches the trunk, “This animal is like a thick branch of a tree.” “No, no! An elephant is a big fan,” states the fourth, who touches the ear.

Of course, all of the men were correct. They suffered from the three common mistakes that impede strategic thinking:

- Uneven accessibility-not having all the information one needs to think strategically.
- Lack of self-monitoring-making decisions based on first look.
- Framing effects-our thinking is affected because of the context or delivery of information.

So how can you avoid these common mistakes and become better at strategic thinking?

- Work outside your silo. Work to understand what others

in the organization do. What are their goals? How do they relate to your teams’ goals and the organization’s goals?

- Be a patient decision maker. Avoid jumping to conclusions on first look. Rather, step back and look at the big picture.
- Consider the context. What led us to this point? What are the other factors to take into consideration?
- Exercise your brain. Strategic planning involves logic, rational, linear thinking-the left side of the brain. Strategic thinking requires innovation, creativity and the ability to examine possibilities-the right side of the brain. Schedule a few minutes each week on your calendar to work on creative exercises that will exercise the right side of your brain.

Strategic thinking is about synthesis, about using innovation and creativity to formulate an integrated perspective, a vision of where the organization should be heading. Strategic thinkers do not walk into situations blind. Rather, a strategic thinker envisions the future and thinks of ways the organization can thrive. 🧠

Did you know?...

Notable strategic thinkers

Henry Ford.

Ford recognized a need and an opportunity to make motorized vehicles accessible to the masses. After the introduction of the assembly line style of production, half of all the cars in America were Ford Model Ts.

Mark Zuckerberg.

Zuckerberg has helped revolutionize the way people interact and connect with each other online. Facebook is the top ranked social networking site on the internet and has only been available to the public for six years.

Albert Einstein.

At the age of 26, Einstein made major contributions to the theory of relativity by re-conceptualizing ideas of time, space and gravitation.

Theodore Roosevelt.

While in the military, Roosevelt helped draft strategic plans to keep the Americans one step ahead of the game. His part in the Monroe Doctrine was a staple point in history and is still foundational in American foreign policy.

Sam M. Walton.

Walton brought discount stores to rural areas, leading to the world's largest retail chain.

Dwight D. Eisenhower.

During Eisenhower's tenure as President, both the Interstate Highway System and NASA were created.

C. K. Prahalad.

In conjunction with Gary Hamel, Prahalad developed core competencies, the idea that businesses should define themselves based on their key abilities rather than their specific service or product.

Upcoming Consortium Sessions:

March 8: Recognizing Your Leadership Style

April 12: Leading Change

For more information, please visit our website at www.mitchcommgroup.com, call 479-443-4673 or email tommye.johnson@mitchcommgroup.com

Be a Patient Decision Maker:

When making decisions it is often tempting to act on instinct alone. Before trusting an initial impulse though, take a moment and weigh the situation and your response against these four measures:

1. **Has this situation happened before?** If it has and the results were positive, go with your gut. If not, carefully assess the situation and move from there.
2. **How was the decision received in past similar situations?** Learn from good decisions and bad decisions you have made in the past.
3. **Are you too emotionally involved in this decision?** If so, step back and consider it from a fresh perspective.
4. **Do you have a personal investment in this decision?** Ground your decision in facts as opposed to your feelings surrounding a situation.

Congratulations to Blake Woolsey!


She received her recertification as a Certified Master Facilitator (CMF) by the International Institute for Facilitation to maintain her credential.

What is facilitation?

Facilitation is a process used when a team or organization is concerned not only with the decision that is made, but also with the way the decision is made.

How can it be helpful to organizations? Facilitation and training tend to be used in the same context, but actually, they are very different in what is required and what facilitation accomplishes. Most of us have attended a training, but we may have never experienced facilitation.

What does a facilitator do? It is the job of the facilitator to make it easier for the group to do its work. By providing non-directive leadership, the facilitator guides the group and helps arrive at the decisions using a process of information exchange.

When is it best to use a facilitator? Meetings, strategic planning, mission and vision creation, conflict resolution, retreats, identifying top action priorities for the year. 



The Trusted Advisor

By David Maister, Charles Green and Robert Galford

An interview with Richie Henderson, Vice President of Marketing Strategy, J.B. Hunt

The Trusted Advisor is a timeless read for anyone in the business of serving others. The book is packed with anecdotes of successes and failures; and comes with a handy compilation of tips in the back. We recently caught up with Richie Henderson, Vice President of Marketing Strategy for J.B. Hunt, to talk about why he is a fan of the book.

Profound: Why is it important to be a trusted advisor?

Richie Henderson: Without trust, you cannot have long-lasting relationships. Step one in our process with a customer is to understand and listen. We customize solutions and in order to do that, we have to understand what a customer's needs are.

The principles that Maister talks about in his book, we apply each day. We try to focus on:

- Growing our business;
- Retaining customers.

For us, retaining key customers relies heavily on communication. We can't meet our goals without trust because it is a huge component of selling and building relationships.

P: What ideas in the book stood out to you most?

RH: Trust is earned and deserved. Trust is an activity that can be managed and improved. It is not readily apparent at the onset of a relationship. There has to be evidence that you produce that then helps grow the relationship.

One of the things I like about the book is it makes the idea of trust tangible and quantitative by introducing an equation:

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-orientation}}$$

Credibility, Reliability and Intimacy are additives that build on one another. And then the denominator causes you to think about if you are focused on yourself or the

customer. Ultimately, you could rank yourself within each of the elements to see how you are doing.

P: What is challenging about being a trusted advisor?

RH:

1. **Commitment** - To build and maintain long-term relationships, you have to have the commitment to transfer those relationships from team to team.
2. **Culture** - The company has to have a cultural basis for maintaining trust.
3. **How you respond to recovery situations** - When things go bad. How does your organization respond to the customer? How do you deliver bad news? You want to make sure you understand what is best for the customer.


P: Who would you recommend read this book?

RH: The ideas are timeless and can be applied personally, too, so it has a broad reach. General tenets of growing a business could be enriched with the content of the book.

Also, Maister created a practical resource in the back of the book – a pocket guide for how to stay on track. These lists can help anyone put the ideas into practice.

P: How will this book help you in the future?

RH: As we look toward understanding generational marketing, especially the millennium generation, we want to understand the vehicles that different generations prefer to use for communication.

Maister states in his book the burden is on the advisor to understand preferred style of interaction. Knowing the millennials will be our customers soon, we want to ensure we understand their preferred methods. 



For more information about training, facilitation and coaching provided by the Division of Organizational and Leadership Development, contact Blake Woolsey, CMF, Vice President of Organizational and Leadership Development at 479.443.4673 or e-mail blake@mitchcommgroup.com



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