



5 Minute Strategic Mindset

Your weekly dose of subtle questioning



Here's my list of what I'm enjoying, or is inspiring me this week.

A quote that made me think

The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.
Ralph Nader, consumer activist.

A question I enjoyed answering

Last week, I was asked, "What critical skills do all senior executives need, but some don't ever learn?" Here's my top 3.

1. Sales skills

Few people in government or non-profits see themselves as salespeople. Yet they're nearly always selling: public policy, partnerships, investments, and services and products. Yet, very few have cut their teeth on articulating benefits (aka value), targeting customers, and cultivating prospects.

2. Presenting skills

Some of the best executives possess a strong presence whether they're with 3 people, 30 or 300. Yet, I'd rate less than one-third of my clients as excellent public speakers, who can tell stories, thematise a message, and use voice tonality to draw people in.

3. Rapport building

When I watch executives engaging with partners, funders or staff, I often see lapses of attention, clumsy body language, poor listening and reflecting. These are utterly basic skill gaps that, once a person hits the C-Suite are very hard for others to bring to their attention.

Question: What critical skills are executives around you missing? If asked, how would others rate your ability on these three?

A book I'm loving

I'm working with a client this month on 'flatter structures'. They're a traditional, hierarchical organisation that is wanting to (i) spend less money on layers of leaders; (ii) empower their people; and (iii) respond faster. I'm therefore revisiting General Stanley McChrystal's "*Team of Teams*" in which he tells of his time in Iraq fighting Al Queda and how command structures simply don't work where there is huge tactical complexity. Instead, McChrystal describes the 'team of teams' approach where groups are bound together with trust and purpose, and can rapidly adjust and cooperate. The military focus really helps his case, as it possibly requires the most pragmatic, concrete and do-or-die mindsets of any sector — in other words, if this degree of adaptive self-management can work in the Army, it can work anywhere. While I'm skeptical of some of his propositions (e.g., how easy is it really to get speed and certainty of execution scaled across numerous teams?) It's a provocative read.

Question: "What's one thing you could do to 'flatten' one part of your organisation?"

An idea that I've been pondering this week

Neurodiversity. One of my government clients does all the foundational land mapping in my state: yes, think surveying, but also digital mapping. Their 200+ staff require capabilities such as large-scale data analysis, pattern detection and quantitative reasoning. These are not just well suited to people with autism but are areas where people with autism have an advantage. As a result, the Strategic Land Assessment and Information group are actively recruiting 'neuro-diverse' spatial experts. They have three on staff with autism as we speak and looking for more.

Question: "What splinter skills are required in your business that neurodiversity could assist with?"

And, please send me your feedback by email to ah@workwell.com.au
Which bullet above is your favourite? What do you want more or less of?
Other suggestions? Let me know!

Have a wonderful weekend.

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