



5 Minute Strategic Mindset

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity." Dorothy Parker



Is this a Coronavirus edition?

Yes — and no. I've been observing my clients, businesses I'm a customer of, and my community -- with great curiosity — this past week. I'm preaching level-headedness and confidence to my clients as I'm noticing those doing best who practice three things. Here they are. Let me know if you agree.

And, there's an offer of assistance at the bottom of this page, so scroll down.

Normalcy

Many, many things have changed this week. But overwhelmingly, things remain the same. Small businesses of all sorts around me are working hard at normalcy. Here's the sign on the door of Sonido, a Columbian cafe just a few doors up from me.



Sonido's regular clientele is a mix of hipster Fitzroyites and staff from the nearby St Vincent's Hospital (another client of mine). They are experimenting with the idea of delivering meals right into the hospital for staff who won't easily be able to leave. That's a win-win for Sonido and St Vincents.

Question: "What normalcy are you emphasizing?"

Focus

A consulting colleague, Nicole, told me a shocking story yesterday. She helps companies dramatically improve their sales performance, and one of her clients, in a panic about cashflow, dismissed several staff. Because of a 'last in, first out' policy they removed the one person whom Nicole believes could single-handedly rescue them: a hugely talented salesperson, capable of great relationships, agility and perseverance. Instead, they're left with a denuded sales team who are sitting at home base complaining about lack of prospects to make calls to. Contrast this with **Swedish-based airline SAS** who, forced to layoff 90% of its 10,000 staff as flying within Scandinavia has almost totally ceased, is offering to rapidly retrain them in soon-to-be-needed health care assisting roles. These are precisely the sorts of concierge, patient information and support tasks that will free doctors and nurses up to do what they do best, while former airline staff do what they're exceptional at: delivering great customer service, under strong time constraints, in a highly systematised and safe manner. So, for now, focus on understanding the capabilities that will help you move forward now, and later and --- vitally --- think creatively about how to scale them up, not down.

Question: "What capabilities are of most value to you right now? Are they the same or different to your BAU capabilities?"

Positivity

I was talking to the CEO of a very large public institution, with whom I'm working to develop their next 5 Year Strategy. I asked her, "What's the climate amongst leadership here right now?" She replied, "They're working to the objective of surviving to the end of the year". I suggested that survivalism is not the most helpful mindset for her senior leaders, but that instead, we should work together to instil a different view altogether. That mindset should be this: that they are fortunate to be developing their strategy now, in parallel with these unprecedented circumstances. Why? Because, strategy is, as I define it, "a set of insights from which we build a framework to guide future decision-making". Typical strategic insight sought are on questions like "Who do we want to be in 5 years?" and "What truly differentiates us?" I commented that during this year, they'll learn more about who they really are, what they stand for, what their core capabilities are, and how they can pull together as a team, than they would have otherwise. The CEO grinned, and said, "You're absolutely right Andrew, and I can already think of three things that this will test us on, in a good way". So, when I say "be positive" I don't mean it in a cheesy, rose-tinted-glasses, silver lining way but, rather, with a genuinely deep seated feeling that this is a learning opportunity like no other. We should be grateful for it.

Question: "What are you grateful for right now?"

Are you having unprecedented conversations?

Most of my clients are finding themselves having conversations they've never had to have before. Some examples:

1. A cemetery trust: "What demand scenarios should we plan for?"
2. A large metropolitan hospital: "How do we deal with a significant percentage of nursing staff who say they're not willing to work during a COVID-19 outbreak?"
3. A national educational institution: "How do we ensure student retention, as we convert to wholly digital delivery?"

I'm assisting many clients with our regular strategic conversations, which aren't stopping, while many are seeking assistance with these 'new' conversations, ensuring problems are well defined, conversations occur productively, and agreements are reached with people well-aligned.

I'm therefore making an offer to ANY of my clients -- current or former. If there's a specific conversation you want help thinking through, designing and facilitating, I'm here to help, without cost, without obligation. Just contact me at ah@workwell.com.au and let's talk to see how I can assist.

Andrew Hollo wins the international award for the Society for the Advancement of Consulting's **Consultant of the Year 2020**



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