



5 Minute Strategic Mindset

“Humanity has advanced not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature.” **Tom Robbins**



Does love have a place in a strategic plan?

Not long ago on LinkedIn I wrote about the increase in kindness that one CEO had noticed amongst her 3000 staff during the lockdown. It got me thinking about the time last year where I helped an organisation recognise that they were in the business of love. Let me explain.

My client was a disability agency providing service to people with spinal cord injury. Our work on purpose and value proposition helped them realise their ideal customer was someone who had had a catastrophic life event that seriously reduced mobility — or intellectual functioning.

This means more than providing home-based care, or wheelchairs. It means helping people experience meaning, quality of life, connection — and yes, love. Many people post-injury and during recovery have lost a lot — not just their physical abilities, but often their job, sometimes their family and friends.

So, in this organisation’s strategic plan, you’ll find a value proposition about love, specifically, about people’s desire to be valued by, and connected to, people around them.

Question: What primary emotions are part of your value proposition, explicitly, or implied?

60 Second Dysfunctionality Test

COVID lockdown has confirmed for me the single most revealing diagnostic question for organisations. How your people respond to this question signals both your improvement potential, and where people put their locus of control over change.

That question is this: "What would you like to do differently around here, but which you haven't had the opportunity to do?" There are three types of answers:

1. Improvement-driven organisations respond with practical suggestions: "Our clients need us to do more of X" or "We need more capability in X". Tick. Discuss further, then get to work.
2. Blaming organisations respond with: "We're under-resourced as it is now" or "Even if I had good ideas, there's not a lot we can influence at our level"
3. Shrugging and prevarication: "I don't know" or "I think we're doing OK, really, I guess".

The last two responses (showing that locus of control is external) spark in me an immediate recommendation. Get the leaders around a table and ask THEM a simple question, "What do you want that you don't have now?"

If they're open to this, then there's hope -- if not, then scuttle the ship.

Your challenge: Don't assume how your people will respond -- actually try this out by asking 10 people around you.

Getting strategy to stick

Formulating strategy is easy; executing on it is where organisations don't do so well. A CEO to whom I pitched a strategy project asked me a great question as part of his qualification process: “Andrew, once we have our strategy, what do I and my team have to be able to do so we implement it well?”

I wanted to say, “If you ask questions like that, you will!” But instead I told him he and his team need to do four things:

- (i) Tell the story of your strategy - in your own words. Over and over. All of you
- (ii) Ask yourselves, “What do we need to understand better?”.
- (iii) Ask yourselves, and your people, “What do we now have to do differently?”

Finally,

- (iv) Debate furiously, this question: “What’s the hardest part?”

That last question will give rise to a discussion about your sacred cows, your ‘elephants in rooms’ and will, by itself, transform the quality of conversation in your leadership circle.

A bonus fifth question that truly separates the strategically able from everyone else:

- (v) “When we are successful, what new problems will we have to solve?”

Question: In your experience, what prevents good strategy from being implemented?

And, please send me your feedback by email to ww@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, all.

Andrew

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



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