

Strategic Planning

Making strategic decisions based on insight

Planning for the future...

Even the most seasoned of management teams can feel the pressure when deciding on strategic matters. As circumstances change quickly and swift action is required, the consequences of not doing the right thing can make decision making a daunting task. There are two main reasons why organisations are often rightly worried about 'getting it wrong'.

...prepare for the potential impact of uncertainties and

Firstly organisations seldom prepare for the potential impact of uncertainties, i.e. events of which we do not know the outcome. We tend to occupy ourselves second-guessing the likelihood of an event, instead of spending time answering the more important question "what will I do *if* that happens?". It appears we actually

"I think there is a world market for about five computers"
Thomas J. Watson
chairman of IBM, 1943

prefer the *perception* of certainty to accepting the fact that we cannot know all, giving us false comfort in decision making. And reality of course, has a tendency to prove us wrong and unfold exactly that which we labelled 'highly unlikely'.

...know what you truly aspire to become.

A second reason for concern about 'getting it wrong', is that it is often not clear whether a strategic decision is actually in line with the organisation's ambitions. This might be because the opportunities and consequences of this decision are uncertain, but in many cases it is because organisations are not familiar with their own deepest ambitions. In other words: "we can do this, but is this what we really *aspire* to?".

Stratix and strategic planning

Stratix helps organisations in strategic planning by exploring the future. For this, Stratix combines two well-known complementary tools: scenario planning and visioning. The combined and balanced use of these tools provides a systematic approach to strategic planning incorporating both sober analysis and creativity. Through the use of *backcasting*, the Stratix approach produces more challenging and valuable explorations of the future than can be achieved with traditional forecasting tools. It enables organisations to build robust strategic plans based on a shared vision on both the organisation's aspirations and its alternative future contexts.

Scenario planning focuses on exploring and preparing for future environments. By challenging common beliefs and assumptions and pushing to think the unthinkable, scenario planning broadens the scope and deepens the grasp of an organisation's strategic options and the volatile context in which it operates.

Main benefits of scenario planning:

- Provides a systematic approach to strategic planning resulting in concrete action plans
- Creates a shared and deep understanding of the organisation's strategic options
- Guides decision making in a volatile context
- Filters out common beliefs and assumptions that obstruct strategic awareness and potential
- Strengthens the internal strategic conversation and organisational learning capabilities

Visioning focuses on building a shared future self-image: 'who and what do we really wish to be?' Visioning is based on the common known observation that the more people share a relevant and valuable vision of the future, the bigger chances are that this vision is realised. John F. Kennedy's "A man on the moon in 10 years" is perhaps one of the most powerful examples of a shared vision leading to great achievements.

Main benefits of visioning are:

- Rallies collective will-power based on people's aspirations
- Inspires by providing focus and common goals
- Strengthens the organisation's identity, internally and externally

