Systems Thinking & Strategic Thinking

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Workshop Objectives

Create a conceptual map of the systems that compose your work environment so that you can make business decisions grounded in your organization's broader context and strategy.

Learn to use a variety of lenses or models for viewing and making intentional changes in your work world

Consider the pros and cons of your current approach – both strategic and tactical — in light of your intended impact.

Create options for actions you might take at different "levels of system" to enhance your effectiveness.

Action Plan

Systems and strategic thinking

- Using systems and processes to manage and measure work; understanding organizational dynamics and structure as well as the systemic advantages and disadvantages inherent in them.
- Always have the context in mind. This can mean the general business environment in which the company operates or the knowledge that a change in one area can have ripple effects throughout the organization.
- Excel at connecting the dots between efforts in multiple departments or between seemingly unrelated work streams.

What aspects of this competency have you mastered?

What aspect of this competency do you want to further develop in yourself?

Stop	Start	Continue

Notes on Definitions

Systems thinking

Strategic thinking

Strategy

Tactics

Strategic planning

Strategic management

Levels of system

Mentalizing

Mindfulness

Scenario

The president of one company worked with her chief of staff to restructure the business, which meant laying off some employees. The CoS worked with key departments like HR, legal, and communications. In addition, he proactively set up special channels of communication for people who had questions and even coached the “survivors” through the disruptive change to their work and personal lives. Finally, on his own time he scheduled coffee and happy hours with some of the people laid off, to share resources & contacts for future jobs. The company’s “employment brand” did not take a big hit & they received fewer negative reviews on Glassdoor than they had expected.

Self-Reflection Exercise

Individually, take 15 minutes to reflect on and respond to the questions below. Then form a group of three and discuss your responses to the questions (25 min.)

What is the primary focus of your chief of staff role?

How/where do you identify systemic, strategic and tactical issues in your work?
What % of your time is spent on each?

Map or diagram the key strategic & tactical playing components of your exec's world.
What key systems are in play?

Map or diagram the key strategic & tactical components of your chief of staff focus.
What key systems are in play?

What do you want to explore more?

Chief of Staff Competency Assessment

Competency	Importance high-med-low	High Effectiveness	Medium Effectiveness	Low Effectiveness	Developmental Priority 1-8
Results orientation					
Systems and process thinking					
Anticipation					
Political savvy					
Coaching					
Managed ego or servant leadership					
Adaptability and flexibility					
Interpretation or translation					

Results orientation: The ability to manage work until it's completed and afterward to measure success and make adjustments in future work.

Systems and process thinking: Using systems and processes to manage and measure work; understanding organizational dynamics and structure as well as the systemic advantages and disadvantages inherent in them.

Anticipation: Thinking forward and understanding where the industry, your company, and you are headed; accurately connecting the dots between disparate parts of the organization. (This also includes anticipating your individual needs.)

Political savvy: Understanding formal and informal power in the organization and how to use these to further your vision or get work done.

Coaching: Questioning assumptions or challenging the status quo; helping others see what they haven't yet seen; asking powerful questions that expand others' thinking or feelings; understanding resistance to change and helping people work through it.

Managed ego or servant leadership: Balancing positional power that the chief of staff wields and his or her personal influence in the organization to reach the outcomes you seek.

Adaptability and flexibility: The ability to shift gears rapidly from one subject to another, multiple times a day; to weather change; to tolerate and successfully navigate ambiguity; and to demonstrate resourcefulness.

Interpretation or translation: Helping others understand your vision so that they can act, and understanding others' visions and problems so you make better decisions.

Level of Systems Exercise

Levels of system are another lens through which you can view organizations & environments. It is like drawing boundary lines that helps us distinguish people & groups in the larger ecosystem & the organization.

- Self w/self (intra-psychic)
- Dyad
- 1: 1
- 1: group
- group: group
- group: organization
- 1: organization
- organization: organization

Resources

Systems Thinking

Books & Articles

- Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (USA: Currency/Doubleday: 1990,2006)

- Barry Oshry, *Seeing Systems: Unlocking the Mysteries of Organizational Life* (San Francisco: Barrett-Kohler: 2007)

- Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks: Sage: 2006)

Multimedia

- The Power Lab, *Living In New Hope* (USA: Power & Systems, Inc: 2017) http://store.powerandsystems.com/Living-in-New-Hope-A-Power-Lab-Documentary-DVD-with-Viewers-Guide_p_25.html Documentary and viewers guide following the lives of nineteen executives, managers, educators and consultants who came to The Power Lab to enhance their competency as leaders, with commentary by Barry Oshry.

Strategic Thinking

Books & Articles

- Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Barrett-Kohler: 2006)

- Jeffrey Schwartz, Josie Thomson, and Art Kleiner, "The Neuroscience of Strategic Leadership," Strategy Business.com (December 5, 2016) http://www.strategy-business.com/article/The-Neuroscience-of-Strategic-Leadership

- Ron Carucci, "Make Strategic Thinking Part of Your Job," Harvard Business Review (October 26, 2016) https://hbr.org/2016/10/make-strategic-thinking-part-of-your-job

Strategic Planning and Strategic Management, Strategy vs. Tactics

Books & Articles

- Adam Gale, "Managing uncertainty: a post-Brexit guide for leaders," Management Today (December 15, 2016) http://www.managementtoday.co.uk/managing-uncertainty-post-brexit-guide-leaders/leadership-lessons/article/1418984

- Robin Camarote. "How to focus when the future of your business is unknown," Inc.com. <Date> http://www.inc.com/robin-camarote/how-to-focus-when-the-future-of-your-business-is-unknown

- Mark E. Mendenhall. Revised by Mildred Golden Pryor. "*Strategic Planning Failure*," ReferenceforBusiness.com. http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Sc-Str/Strategic-Planning-Failure.html This is a lengthy treatise on why strategic planning efforts fail, but it contains a dated yet terrific HP case study showing why strategic thinking (not just a planning process) is needed to survive today's business climate of constant technological change, globalization, etc.

- Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez, "How to Prioritize Your Company's Projects," Harvard Business Review (December 13, 2016) https://hbr.org/2016/12/how-to-prioritize-your-companys-projects

- James Allen, "How the Best CEOs Get the Most Important Work Done," Harvard Business Review (September 27, 2016) https://hbr.org/2016/09/how-the-best-ceos-get-the-important-work-done

Multimedia

- Harbir Singh and Mike Useem, "Management 101: The Marriage of Strategy and Leadership," Knowledge @ Wharton (October 11, 2016) http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/management-101-the-marriage-of-strategy-and-leadership/

- Greg Lang, "5 Questions to Answer When Building a Roadmap," LinkedIn Pulse, 2016 https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-questions-answer-when-building-roadmap-greg-lang

Resources for Current Market/External Trend

AI/Machine Learning

- Anthony Goldbloom, "The jobs we'll lose to machines – and the ones we won't," TED.com (Feb 2016) http://www.ted.com/talks/anthony_goldbloom_the_jobs_we_ll_lose_to_machines_and_the_ones_we_won_t

- Kevin Kelly, "How AI can bring on a second Industrial Revolution," TED.com (Dec 2016) http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_kelly_how_ai_can_bring_on_a_second_industrial_revolution/transcript?language=en.

Analytics

- Wharton Customer Analytics Initiative, http://wcai.wharton.upenn.edu/ News and events on analytics, applied to marketing, customer relationships, public policy/elections, and other applications

Geo-Political Landscape

- "Political Risk Map 2017: Global Geopolitical Risk Concerns for Businesses," Marsh.com (February, 2017) https://www.marsh.com/us/campaigns/political-risk-map-2017.html

Human Resources

- CEB HR, "How to Design a HIPO Strategy in an Era of Constant Change," CEB Global HR Blog https://www.cebglobal.com/blogs/high-potential-employees-how-to-design-a-hipo-strategy-in-an-era-of-constant-change/

General

Books & Articles

- Martin Reeves & Georg Wittenburg, "Games Can Make You a Better Strategist," Harvard Business Review (September 7, 2015) https://hbr.org/2015/09/games-can-make-you-a-better-strategist

- Eton Lawrence, "Strategic Thinking: A Discussion Paper," Public Service Commission of Canada (April 27, 1999) https://www.hrbartender.com/images/thinking.pdf

- Thomas H. Davenport, "How to 'Connect the Dots' in Your Business," Harvard Business Review (January 26, 2010) https://hbr.org/2010/01/eight-steps-to-connecting-the

- http://www.adaquest.com/strategy-execution-software/ Overview of Think-Act-Deliver (TAD) software and methodology

- David H. Freedman, *Corps Business: The 30 Management Principles of the United States Marines* (New York: Harper Business: 2000)

- Liz Wiseman, *Multipliers* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010).