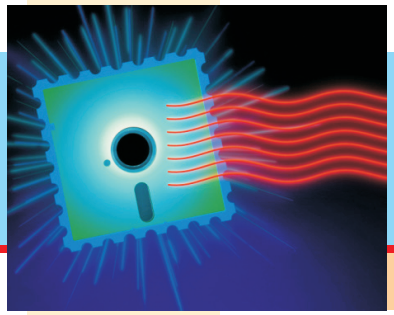


Mercuri Mail

The India Journal of Mercuri International: Jan - March 2015

It is remarkable how the same lessons need to be rediscovered again and again. Sun Tzu dealt with the confusion between a warrior's adaptive strategy in dealing with competing people and long-term planning in dealing with objects. We are still dealing with it today.

In this 1973 book, "Management Tasks and Responsibilities", Peter Drucker, found the same problem in the confusion, that management had about planning for objects and planning for people. He listed four misconceptions arising from the term "Strategic Planning." He said:

1. Strategic planning is not a box of tricks or a bundle of techniques.
2. Strategic planning is not forecasting.
3. Strategic planning does not deal with future decisions.
4. Strategic planning is not an attempt to eliminate risk.

While there are techniques in Competitive strategy, as there are in manufacturing, they work very differently. Competitive techniques always depend on the big picture. As opposed to "a bundle of techniques," Drucker describes Strategy from a warrior's perspective of "analytical thinking and commitment of resources to action." He describes attempts at predicting the future as "foolish," because it is of little use to people who seek to "innovate and change the ways in which people work and live."

Drucker saw strategy in terms of the decisions we make today, about a future, that is inherently uncertain. This is the realm of unpredictable people, not predictable objects. Most importantly, Drucker recognized that strategy cannot eliminate risks and because we cannot predict the future, risks must be taken. The purpose of strategy is to not to eliminate risk, but in Drucker's words, to take the "right risks." Innovation is, at it's core, an act of discovery, in which we must embrace the uncertainty of the environment, exploring it for opportunities.

Drucker's definition of "Strategic Planning" is what we simply call "Sun Tzu's Rules".

"Strategic Planning is the continuous process of making present entrepreneurial (risk-taking) decisions systematically and with the greatest knowledge of their futurity; organizing systematically, the efforts needed to carry out these decisions and measuring the results of these decisions against the expectations, through organized & systematic feedback."

In other words, it is the science of making good decisions about the future.

In his analysis, Drucker covers several of key factors, first identified by Sun Tzu. Agreeing with Sun Tzu, he says, that it "starts with the mission of the organization." After that, strategy must consider the climate - what is changing. He describes decision-making as "a time machine which synchronizes into the present, a great number of divergent time spans." His focus on decision-making is about the warrior as an active element. In describing the specific methods of strategy, he even touches on Sun Tzu's idea of analysis, being an act of relative comparison.

"Some of the most important questions in strategic planning can be phrased only in terms such as 'larger' or 'smaller,' sooner' or 'later,' and some equally important areas cannot be quantified at all. They can be handled only as restraints or parameters, but not as factors, in the equation itself."

Like Sun Tzu, Drucker also saw this decision making as a process of Innovation. The key is what we choose to do differently. Drucker described the essential questions as, "What new and different things do we have to do, and when?" And that it wasn't only about what we decide about doing but about what we fail to decide to do.

"It is meaningless to speak of short-range and long-range plans. There are plans that lead to action today - and they are true plans, true strategic decisions. And there are plans that talk about action tomorrow - they are dreams, if not pretexts for non-thinking, non-planning, no doing."

With Sun Tzu's Rules, we seek to move Strategy 2.0, firmly into the area of doing, rather than planning.

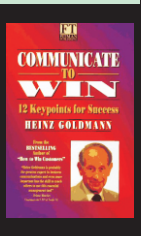
Our Thoughts

Vintage – Explains why Strategic Planning should focus on Action rather than just Planning.

Must Read – Reviews the road-map for and importance of, "Effective Communication".

Focus – Find out how Planning & Managing effectively, are inter-dependent.

Must Read



Title: Communicate To Win (Financial Times)

Publisher: Pitman Publishing
Date: May 1995
Pages: 224
Price: US$ 3.99

Heinz Goldmann was a business leader, and a renowned expert in sales, marketing and effective communication. In his illustrative career, he has personally trained over 450,000 top executives spread over 35 countries. He was the founder of Mercuri International Group, an international organisation that trains executives in communication and sales all over the world. He is the bestselling author of "How to Win Customers", " Communicate to Win", and numerous articles in the international business press.

In his book 'COMMUNICATE TO WIN', Heinz addresses the art and science of communication, and clearly outlines 12 keypoints that every executive must follow in order to effectively communicate with and motivate employees, participants, and customers alike.

To quote Goldmann in the introductory chapter, 'What is important is not what the speaker wants, but what the participant wants'. He talks about finding the common denominator to engage the target audience and win them over with outstanding results. The book provides a treasure of practical, simple yet powerful tools that one can employ to achieve one of the most important yet neglected duties of an executive in the corporate world : Communication.

Goldmann lays out the route for effective speeches in the following ways:

* How to prepare for a speech.
* How to open big.
* How to keep the audience's attention.
* How to control expression.
* How to manage stage fright.
* How to categorize speeches into different types and deal with each circumstance.
* How to close compellingly.
* How to handle tricky questions.
* How to motivate and get the desired results.

He also delves into some detail about the common pitfalls to avoid while making presentations.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, each one dealing in detail with one key point. Each chapter begins with 4 real- world questions for the reader to solve, before moving on to the subject matter. The author manages to maintain brevity while still packing it with chunky bits of information, that would justify a topic as wide's communication.

Goldmann prescribes Patience, Persistence and Hard work to reach your communication goals and provides the insights and tools you will need to boost yourself through the journey and come out on the other side with outstanding results. A must read for all Sales Persons.

Happy Reading!

Gautamm writes for Ravi's Corner

Rise-and-Shine

Often the last key in the bunch, is the one which opens the lock,
Plodding on with a smile, is what, will make us rock..
The stress, the pain, how well we absorb the hit,
Bouncing back stronger, when life dumps you in the pit..

Lot to learn and mimic from the nature around us,
Just watch the humble ants carrying on without a fuss..
Destroy their colonies, throw them off the track,
Communicating with each other, they will continue crawling back..

I love you, Oh! Life, with all your pains, troubles and cries,
Blessed with nerves of steel, I promise, I will rise..
Stronger and Wise..!!

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS - TIM BERRY

In my experience, leading dozens of business planning workshops in countries all over the world, I'd say only about 10% to 15% of teams I've encountered have an effective business planning process. Sounds low, doesn't it? What many business owners fail to understand is that good planning equals good management.

Let me explain. Planning is about managing resources and priorities in an organized way. Management is related to leadership and it's related to productivity.

Here are three steps to get you planning better and in turn, improving your management.

1. Devise a plan. As the business owner, you start by writing important details down. You don't need to sweat every detail of creating a long document. Instead, jot down essential points as bullets and tables and bare explanations. The strategy element of planning, is to focus on what you're good at, what matters, which people are most important to you and what you can do for them. It's about positioning, determining your target market and product focus. It's important to document these details in order to communicate your vision to employees. If you don't have a team, there's value in referring back to your original thoughts regarding the path for your business and comparing them to actual results.

2. Define success. In order to chart your path, you'll need to define long-term goals. Think broadly about how you see your business in several years.

From there, get specific. You'll want to establish Milestones for when you want to accomplish certain goals, and know who you will want to carry them out. Go beyond sales, costs and expenses, and look at what really drives your business. It might be conversions, page views, clicks, meals, trips, presentations, seminars and other engagements.

Then, establish a review schedule -- when you and your team review changed assumptions, track results and make changes as necessary.

3. Put it in motion. Can you see the management brewing? Tracking and analysing numbers can help you manage the work behind the numbers. You'll be in a better place to recognize and highlight what's working and what isn't working for your business and your team. Suppose traffic is up, but conversions are down. You collect your data, review it with your team and develop a plan to make changes toward reaching your goals. That's management.

Managing your business successfully requires more than just praise and pats on the back. Sometimes, it means focusing attention on problems, helping people solve them if possible, discussing and embracing mistakes and and in the worst case, weeding out people who don't care about bad results. This can all be accomplished more efficiently, when you have a plan in place.

Either way, whether results are better than expected or worse, the planning and tracking makes your follow up easier. The process itself adds commitment and peer pressure on the team. Highlighting good performance is easier when there are agreed-on numbers to define it. And, probably most importantly, dealing with poor performance is always hard, but not quite as hard when you can focus on the specific numbers instead of personalities or office politics.

Which brings me back to where I began: Planning is Management. Without planning, your management is at a real disadvantage.

Notes from all over

"90% of life is about remaining calm."
- Dr. Chris Feudtner

"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."
- Maya Angelou

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle."
- Plato

"Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot; but make it hot by striking."
- William Butler Yeats

"Two things define you: your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything."
- Unknown

"Few people are mind readers. Let them know they matter."
- Dr. Chris Peterson

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."
- Gandhi

"It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves."
- Sir Edmund Hillary

"In the midst of winter, I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer."
- Albert Camus

The Farmer and the Donkey

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway-it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all of his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up.

As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off, and take a step up.

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