

---

# Strategy is social

Strategy is a big word. It conjures up different things for different people. For some people it's about "blue sky thinking", going after that big idea, developing the grand vision. For others it's more about the analysis - which product? which market? which approach? For us though, we think of creating strategy as first and foremost being a social process.

What do we mean by that? Well we think that if you want to develop a good strategy, one that will be successfully executed, the first thing you need to think about is your people – who needs to be involved and how.

Put simply, strategy development is about groups of people reaching good quality decisions in such a way that they can - and will - act on those decisions to deliver valuable and lasting results.

The text books on strategy nearly always focus on the models and techniques for analysis – for assessing the market, for segmenting, for understanding competitive position, for identifying synergies, etc. And yet, whilst analysis is necessary to underpin the choices that must be made, in our experience the hardest part of strategy is to achieve ownership – to ensure that the key players who need to execute the strategy are squarely behind the proposals.

Many organisations fail to grasp the need to involve the management team who will ultimately have to deliver the strategy. They themselves should be the core team – supplemented by others to provide structure and management of the process, external challenge or specific expertise – but only supplemented, never replaced. They must be on the inside, working through the ideas and options for themselves and thinking through what it will take to deliver, rather than being on the receiving end of a recommendation.

Sometimes your strategic choices may have significant personal implications – an executive may need to change their role, or to re-locate. Sometimes they may just involve a subtle re-focussing of effort or shift in behaviours. But whatever the extent of the change, to make it actually happen requires ownership of the ideas – an understanding not just of the conclusion but of how it was reached. Otherwise, as we all know, and have probably experienced, the execution will fail because of the power of 'not invented here' syndrome. After all, how can people get behind a strategy they played no part in creating?

So, if you want to develop a good strategy, one that will be successfully executed, think first about your people – who needs to be involved and how - and only second about the analysis that will be required.