

## **Strategic Action Over Theory and Talk: How to Enact a Better Future**

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*Many have perceived the need for agility in future-proofing workforces as globally disruptive technologies reshape work (Saran, 2018). Eason, et al, comprehensively addressed the teaching and learning components of these reshaped strategic imperatives (2019). Now with Covid-19 realities, the necessity to show 'how' to manage, lead and do strategy in order to stress that critical concept of 'innovative adaptation' has hit hard. Saran's warning has collided with 2020 shocks to demand the current research question: 'How can academicians and practitioners assure workforces can have sustainable strategic success given the new deeply embedded, yet ever changing competitive, ecological and global imperatives?'*

*Keywords: strategy, strategic guides, innovative strategy, strategic mindsets, doing strategy*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 2020 coronavirus crisis and renewed American racial strife starkly reminds people of the need to adapt and prepare for business and personal continuity under dire situations. We are witnessing how quickly so many face life or death and total financial ruin. At this point, the American government has spent about \$4 trillion dollars on saving an estimated million lives. It should be noted, that that is a cost of \$4 million a life (recall a trillion is a million million). Of course, life has an un-calculable value, but no country in the history of the world could afford to spend that much to save everyone. The renewal success of the world of commerce will determine to a large degree health outcomes, and totally dictate financial recovery. The quality of the strategic actions (governmental, organizational and personal) taken now will be key. Governments do not generate money; they collect it from the most productive. An important reminder is that 'new' timeframes will not be as most individuals and organizations wish nor as they have been under recent history: we now must adapt to the 'new slow.' Only through innovation and change, can we survive yet alone prosper. We must move forward realizing that strategy involves purposeful actions based on probabilistic futures and those likely scenarios can change in a flash.

As you proceed through this manuscript, keep in mind the following overriding rules. Rule #1- **Observe** the familiar anew while paying particular attention to the unusual always **seeking useful concepts** as you oblige different people in unfamiliar places and situations (Charan, 2015). Rule #2- **Think**, re-think **ask**, ask, ask, **listen** and **act** with strategic intent to enact a successful future (Abernathy & Utterback, 1988). Rule #3- **Perfection is impossible**, shoot to make principled, purposeful progress in all you do. And, finally Rule #4- **When new situations arise adapt and change with them, or enact a new situation.**

A recent report stating that an artificially intelligent Google system could be better at spotting breast cancer than expert radiologists, (Griffin, 2020) should put us on notice of the lurking disruptive IT changes. We see much hope in tele-medicine and the power of computers to analyze data and genetics profiles to control unknowns smoothing the impact of unexpected issues as globalization makes the world open to many yet unknown or modified challenges. Along with these wake-up calls, we see through our teaching, consulting, research and experience (in and outside of academia) that the assertions in the *Academy of Management Learning and Education Journal* (2018) about the necessity to revise management education at the highest levels show clearly management researchers and practitioners are at a critical juncture. If we continue to teach and research on how it has been, we will lose the future. We must shift our emphasis toward innovation and change under adaptability.

The current climate of disruptive change has rendered much of business education's usefulness obsolete – if not already dead (Powell, 2017 & Priem, 2018). This reality mandates different approaches to the realities of leadership, management, strategy, and adaptive thinking (Bennis, 1989; Bhardwaj, et al, 2018; & Fisher, et al, 2017). Thus, the intent of this manuscript is to illustrate contemporary issues in business practice that emphasize the need for continued innovation and how strategy must evolve to be useful. The current authors' decades of management experience plus decades of teaching and consulting leads us to one firm conclusion: The only thing we know for sure is that *we might be wrong, particularly if we are relying on "experts."* Stop seeking confirming evidence and ask instead, 'What if I am wrong?' Look how wrong many world leaders were as they said COVID-19 would not strike here or there as bad as it did in China, Italy, or New York. Early on, we saw even health care leaders stressing continuation of comingling in our large commercial hubs. Notice how lax organizations and individuals were as we put ourselves in the situation of not having several months' cash on hand to handle emergencies that we know under historical probability will occur. These simple self-reflective and self-deprecating statements lead us to a lesson from Management 101: An "okay" plan vigorously executed tends to beat a poorly or tentatively implemented 'better' plan and if it can happen, it will happen (Rumsfeld, 2013). And, the plans change when the first shots are fired or that virus hits. *The Great Influenza* clearly states the need to find and share truth: "For there is a single dominant lesson from 1918, it's that governments need to tell the truth in a crisis. . . . You don't manage the truth. You tell the truth (Barry, 2018)." In this must read work Barry says the same for a press that sought to influence not inform. Politicians worldwide and the American press continued the 1918 'managed truths' (and even lie) during our Covid-19 crisis.

Our goal is to give readers ideas to contemplate in order to spur engaging thought on 'the' two sustainable organizational and individual success imperatives. The first imperative dictates managers and organizational leaders understand their "why." That is, why would someone do business with them or their organization? And, second, managers and leaders at all levels must learn to become and remain innovative both organizationally and personally (Barney, all dates; Berg, 2016; & Service, 2006). Progress requires action, not just words (Christensen, Hall, Dillon and Duncan, 2017). Think how your why and how will change under varied scenarios such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the racial issues that re-re-arose in America during the pandemic.

Before we proceed, we offer this note as a warning and promise. In this manuscript we shift all around topics of interest that are dedicated to progress before pursuing one specific direction. Reflect and generalize in all that you do. When you see, meet, hear, read, write, discuss, and so on, do so with these underlying thoughts: So **what** - is there something of use? So **why** - could it matter? So **how** – is there a way to do it? and that all important So **now** - what are your first steps and ultimate goals as you mind the

gap between where you are now and where you need to be in the future? Do your homework, and realize math (numbers-stats) and realistic probabilities matter.

The intent of this manuscript is to cause more broad and deep thinking because, by thinking to learn, we learn to think. Remember, telling or disagreeing is not doing and only when we do something can we know what to adjust. Thus, while we cover much ground in a seemingly less organized manner, never forget that in all we do, we need to work with a passion for purposeful principled progress.

### **Thoughts to Spur Deeper Thoughts**

Mindsets direct all thinking and human cognitions are understandably linked to one's perceived truth. All of our thinking is limited by the who, what, where, when, why, and how of our composite past histories (Brooks, 2011; & Chopra & Mlodinow, 2011). The following is a necessary aside to ensure that we clarify our thinking. See Figure 1 (all Figures are in the Appendix following the References) to see if you are biased and study the Dobelli chart in Figure 2 for an overall summary of clear-thinking blocks and biases before you proceed.

A recent NPR Ted Talk program (2019) about biases and preconceptions was a good and thoughtful reminder that we are all biased with preconceived notions about ourselves, others, the world in general, and the quality of ideas. In effective strategic thoughts and actions, strategic moves are determined by our understanding of ourselves, others, situations, and all ideas (Haidt, 2012). Once we address our biases, a next step would be to consider Dorner's (1996) seminal work on failure and how we can learn from it. Then, consideration of biases and failures must take place in light of Robson's proclamation that: "Understanding why a program works (or why it is ineffective) appears to be rarely considered a priority . . . in the running and management of programs. . . . devoting some time and effort to the 'why' question can . . . [improve] . . . effectiveness (2017: p. 15)." The actions resulting from considering failed changes and biases enables us to meet the world where it is going not where it has been (skating to where the puck will be). Yet, we still need to realize that an individual's biases determine all of their assumptions and expectations as they guide behavioral habits, strategic plans and actions (Dorner, 1996; Robson, 2017 & Ted Talk, 2019). Conclusions directing our strategic views and ultimate actions are "logical consequences" of our biased assumptions and experiences (Eason, et al, 2019, and Sowell, 2007: p. 253 ). Simply put, the clearest thinking among us that learns from failures will be the most successful at effective strategic actions. Do not forget that 'NOT' all biases are bad; some are in fact good: think!

Determining 'the' most commonly held perceptions (biases) about the state of 'things' most often dictates strategic moves that might succeed (Drucker, all dates). In that vein, we must realize that most accounts called news mislead the reader into thinking they know the truth, when in fact, the reader simply knows what the writer or commentator wishes for them to know (Service & Loudon, 2015). Of every account of anything, there are often some facts, some fantasies, some truths, and some wants and desires which result in an individual's perceptions (Blair, 2010; Bush, 2010; Calero, et al, 2018; Obama, 2006; & Wood & Randall, 2018). All individual perceptions change over time as the perceiver's beliefs, feelings, knowledge, recollections, needs, desires and interest change. The goal of all businesses is to provide something of value to customers (Barney, and Drucker, all dates). This requires understanding the perceptions of customers and potential customers as well as the realization perceptions and desires change over very short time frames (Hall, 2011). "But nothing is harder for [humans] than to face facts that threaten to undermine strongly held beliefs (Clarke, 2010: p. 16)."

### **MANY PERSPECTIVES - AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In a word, strategy is intentionality: purposeful moves and actions made to do what we want to do. In the case of an organization, strategy is toward becoming more effective in meeting the organization's mission (Porter, all dates). In the case of individuals, strategy is purposeful moves and actions we make to accomplish our given purposes. Strategy is minding your gaps. It starts with defining where you are and where you might, can, want, ought, and need to be at some time in the future (Service & Reburn, 2014). Strategy then becomes the moves and the actions that get you to that desired future state. Strategy must

start and end with the most complex component—humans (Eason, et al., 2019 and; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). How we manage ‘them’ (and ourselves) determines organizational and personal effectiveness (Tjan, 2017 & Welch, 2001).

Since strategy revolves around choices, our biases—preconceptions—determine whom we listen to, how we listen to them, what facts we pick or exclude, why we listen or not, to what purpose we listen or exclude, and so on. But it ultimately revolves around which and whose ‘facts’ key decision makers hear, what they ‘make’ of those ‘facts’ and, ultimately, which actions are taken toward what aim. Always stress statistics for discovery over confirmation.

As the referenced TED Talk states, humans suffer from ‘cognitive dissonance.’ That is, we all have inconsistent thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that ultimately decide our feelings and behaviors—resulting in strategic actions. Given the differing natures and nurturing of all humans, we are simply incapable of discerning the ‘real and total’ truth most useful in developing useful ‘strategic’ facts (Broom, et al, 2014a & b). The point would be to improve effectiveness of meeting end goals. We have to listen closely for ideas that might not appeal to us because of our human biases and related preconceptions. Yes, humans categorize and stereotype as we only learn by linking to existing understandings. Because of the amount of information and conflicting ‘facts’ we simply do not have the capacity not to link new knowledge to preconceptions of new information. Humans are incapable of total objectivity and complete consideration of all data (Sternberg, all). Yet, ultimately, we have to act on ‘our’ understandings as we build that desired (hopefully better) future.

During in-depth discussions of current affairs, the authors are often told (as an aspiring young black professional, and two old white guys raised in the Deep South) ‘you can’t possibly know how it is to be or do’ . . . . Yes, those are possibly valid thoughts. Another cannot totally know how it is to be whatever someone else is, but those labels do not indicate that someone’s thoughts or counters to those thoughts are worthless or to any degree incorrect or correct. Each individual has perspectives, and no one can completely understand their own perspectives, yet alone, another’s. Perspectives are views not facts and they are wrong or right in part or overall. ‘It depends,’ so listen carefully. From experience, the Ted Talk, Dobelli’s 99 and most of the sources cited in this manuscript, we establish the following principles under which one needs to ‘think’ in order to ‘learn’ and then ‘do’ strategy better:

1. Wisdom is impossible without reflection; tailored generalizations are keys.
2. Innovation requires ‘what if’ curiosity: notice what is not there. Ask, why not?
3. Mutuality is required for lasting relationships: relationships rule.
4. To make progress in any group requires mutual engagement: collaboration is necessary.
5. Leadership requires a shared destination and common goals: influence.
6. Mobilization of followers determines effectiveness of leadership: effective leadership is relative.
7. Individuals go from change to transfiguring one’s self: some problems can’t be solved by others.
8. In all you do of importance be fully present: watch what’s labelled important. ‘Be here now.’
9. At some point in life narrow your focus and do ‘it’ and stop doing the other ‘it/s.’
10. Be sure you understand what ‘it’ is plus what ‘it’ is becoming!
11. Nothing works unless we do: The world’s top musicians and athletes are far beyond talented.
12. Humor is great but take care in using it: knowing when and how is EQ+.
13. Blame game gets you nowhere: focus on what ‘you’ can control.
14. My view is just that; ‘my’ facts determine and show ‘my’ views: perceptions are reality.
15. Biases and preconceptions rule all human thoughts: realize and reconsider your views.

Yes, your personal history and associated biases change how you might use each of the statements above. Our individualized slants impact our strategic views: could be good or bad! Think! *Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand’s fiction (1957) exemplifies human nature and makes a common-sense understanding point when one of the characters says:

people don't want to think. And the deeper they get into trouble, the less they want to think. But by some sort of instinct, they feel that they ought to and it makes them feel guilty. So, they'll bless and follow anyone who gives them a justification for not thinking (1957: p. 346).

Perhaps this statement exemplifies why Americans accept what we hear from politicians and so-called journalists? It is clear that the concept of *thinking to learn* must become the overriding mantra to successful actions, especially to such human activities as innovative strategic learning, formulation, and implementation. As Carucci (2018) so aptly stated, "Learning is a consequence of thinking, not teaching. It happens when people reflect on and choose a new behavior. . . . [It only works if] There is commitment to change." Similarly, Schwartz & Pines (2018) ponder why leaders do not embrace the needed skills they must have to shape a better future:

The primary challenge most large companies now face is disruption, the response to which requires a new strategy, new processes, and a new set of behaviors. But if employees have long been valued and rewarded for behaviors such as practicality, consistency, self-reliance, and prudence, why wouldn't they find it uncomfortable to suddenly embrace behaviors such as innovation, agility, collaboration, and boldness? . . . development is about progressively seeing more.

*Introspection, reflection, and considered generalization* are better foundations of effective leadership than much of what is found in management texts or 'how great I am' leadership books. Mintzberg et al. debunks much of what we teach about organizational success:

[B]e careful; great stories can be dangerous ones (p. 8). . . The management textbooks contend that well-defined policies [strategies] are the sine qua non of a well-managed company. My research does not bear out this contention (p. 196). . . [Excellent managers' and leaders'] most significant contribution may be . . . [to] . . . see relationships which no one else has seen (p. 197). . . [Most effective managers] proceeded by trial and error, constantly revising their strategy in light of new experiences . . . "logical incrementalism" (p. 22). . . [And they understood well that] Hard information is often limited in scope, lacking richness (p. 114). . . [It often] arrives too late to be of use in strategy making (p. 115). . . Hard information can be no better and is oftentimes far worse than soft information (p. 116). . . Quantitative measures. . . are only "surrogates" for reality (P. 117). . . Words on paper do not transform a company (2005: p. 141).

We can learn from others and from anything if we are ready and willing, but many classic university business 'lessons' do not match what a learner needs and are always incomplete (Powell, 2017; and Priem, 2018). Indeed, only when a student is ready does a teacher and appropriate lesson appear. Real, topical cases are easy to find, and they attempt to point doers, readers/students (strategists one and all) in the right direction for a solution. The reality is that there is far more information and noise surrounding the case than what is found on a case's pages. By necessity, much relevant information is omitted from a case (or any account), and "the solution" is never as easy as applying some rule of thumb. What seems obvious on paper in a case study, book, or news account is never as clear-cut in the real murky, confusing world of commerce, (Eason, et al, 2019).

On his accounts in his book, retired U.S. General Stanly McChrystal said, "As we deconstructed events, we discovered that even where my recollections were accurate, they were stunningly incomplete accounts of history. I was often unaware of the actions, decisions, and drama that had actually driven outcomes (2018: p. xii)." As one reads any case study, media account, or recollection of an event, what we can know is that anything a human produces is based on a perception. Yes, the current authors' biases and preconceptions are key in this manuscript—if one thinks otherwise of their own work, 'get real!'

Purposeful or otherwise, perceptions are nonetheless stories, and we must learn to read and study cases, accounts, text or whatever with an eye toward causal ambiguity, unintended consequences, preconceptions, misdirecting assumptions, directive framing, and confirmation and inferential biases. A famous economist reportedly said, “I could not predict the past, so I started predicting the future.” As much as we hate to admit it, many in the profession teach because they cannot do, haven’t done in a long time, haven’t attempted to do, or don’t fully understand from a practical perspective. Moreover, we definitely teach what has happened in the past and not necessarily what the future requires (Bell, et al, 2018; & Bennis & O’Toole, 2005). Is it time we shifted our teaching and doing strategy approaches?

Fiction can actually provide particularly useful lessons on dealing with people (Lukits, 2016). And, dealing with people is the heart of effective strategic leadership and action. Relating to fiction, contemplate the words of researcher Steven Pinker:

Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellowman beyond the grounds of our personal lot (p. 589). . . . The . . . story comes from taking a character’s vantage point and in comparing the view to that from other vantage points, such as those of the other characters, of the narrator, and of the reader . . . a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves (Pinker, 2011: p. 588).

We often talk with those that say they only read non-fiction such as biographies and history. We feel that in many ways non-fiction can be dangerous as we are led to believe (or choose to) we now understand the ‘facts’ and ‘truth.’ Remember that non-fiction is still a view and there simply is always more to a story than one can tell. In fact, few realize that just before WWII started that Joseph Stalin had killed more people than Hitler by a factor of 1,000. Yet Churchill and Roosevelt chose to side with ‘Uncle Joe.’

A seminal work from an Oxford Professor of Strategy suggests that the strategic methods and analysis of old are becoming less and less useful because “Economics-based methods neglect the human and behavioral realities of strategic management, and they are poorly adapted to environments characterized by social complexity, political uncertainty, and economic inefficiency (p. 180). . . [What should strategy be?] It is not a checklist of factors, or a boxes-and-arrows system (Powell, 2017; p. 181).”

Moschieri and Santalo (2018) state that intellectual engagement is key to learning and being a good teacher; and all good strategic leaders are teachers.

Business school facilities simply must rediscover the practice of business. We cannot imagine a professor of surgery who has never seen a patient, or a piano teacher who doesn’t play the instrument, and yet today’s business schools are packed with intelligent, highly skilled faculty with little or no managerial experience. As a result, they can’t identify the most important problems facing executives and don’t know how to analyze the indirect and long-term implications of complex business decisions (Bennis & O’Tool in Moschieri & Santalo, 2018: p. 6).

Scholarly publishing is ridiculously competitive with accrediting agencies demanding publication counts in many different ways under the frequent dysfunctionality of tenure. Yet there continues to be a lack of connection between scholarship, pedagogy, and practice (Bell et al., 2018; Mintzberg, all dates; Priem, 2018; & Powell, 2017). Our current academic reward systems seldom move academic researchers to engage in innovative or usefully applicable research. The current academic tenure system all too often keeps us in the safe and known with a focus on comfortably restricted views of problems, opportunities, and threats, and, thus, impedes truly impactful scholarship (Service and Reburn, 2016 for numerous supporting citations). Essentially zero practitioners turn to our academic journals for insights in improving their operational practices or personal skills (Shapiro & Kirkman, 2018). To remain (or become) relevant requires that academicians begin researching and writing about what those in practice

are actually concerned about. Empirical studies can be effective. But they are not gospel, infrequently applicable to a practitioner's needs, and sometimes even harmful when missing important caveats. It is worth noting that most management science empirical studies cannot be replicated (Wood & Randall, 2018).

Business school academic research today is lagging what is going on in the practice of commerce (See the *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, special edition on revising teaching and doing strategy, 2018). Also, as we note throughout, little use is found for nonacademic organizational leaders in our academic publications. As an example, a recent article that could be of use to a person teaching organizational strategy, provided that person knew nothing about the realities of strategy or commerce, shows some six tables with 10 items each as a guide to a competitive profile matrix. This article could only be useful to a practicing strategist if it were simply a list of possible concerns (Capps, et al, 2019). Tellingly, that article represents most academic articles (we've published a number of them) and their lack of usefulness to any form of doing strategy. This non-applicability to any form of reality away from academia has to change if universities are to remain viable in a time of so much open information. Fail fast is the new mantra of business; so must it become for academia (Manzoni, & Barsoux, 2002). Meaningful and useful reward systems must reflect and direct that shift (Service & Loudon, 2015). Further, systematic excellence in academic research could solve many societal and competitive issues if we addressed critical issues of the day in academic research (Asmus, 2013). At the core of this change are relational and innovative mindsets that need to rule in practice and theory (Drucker, Mintzberg, Peters, Powell, Priem & others). The mindsets of individuals (known or unknown) surround every decision as viruses of the mind facilitating or impeding effective development and actions.

Relating to the imperative of innovation in adaptability and survival, we see clearly that perspectives are most often spontaneously generated within the known and seldom lead to the new and different (Cronin and Loewenstein, 2018). Here we are asking academic readers to broaden their perspectives and look anew at directing academic publications toward the new and the different, not the model tweaking or more theoretically pure works of the past. Ultimately application and its practitioners matter as they continue to use non-academic frame-breaking, stimulating works over normal academic theory-centric, modelistic, baby-step 'behind the curve' research.

A revolutionary shift in what commerce-related 'strategy' should be occurred in 1995 with Mintzberg's *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Management*; but academicians were slow on the uptake and practitioners took little note of an 'academic' work. If one were to seek 'the' author to help them meet the future of strategy (learning and application), Mintzberg (all dates) would be that reference. For this manuscript's second author, the journey to innovation in commerce started with his reading of Burns and Stalker's, 1961, *The Management of Innovation* while he was a working manager and part time MBA student in the early 1970s. This recognition of the need to innovate and manage the process enabled this author to go on to a successful non-academic executive career and ultimately obtaining his Ph.D. and shifting to academia in 1993. Innovation has been at the core of all the current authors' careers in management, leadership, consulting, writing, teaching, and life-long study. Note that serious 'strategists' must do significant study, especially if strategic education used the models of the last 30 years. We recommend Brooks, Covey, Dobelli, Drucker, Freidman, Gladwell, Goleman, Isaacson, Levitt and Dubner, Maxwell, Mendenhall, et al, Mintzberg, Sinek [see YouTube as well] and Sternberg as practical supplement strategic texts; Xu provides an excellent academic view.

Continually reassess your distinctive as it is and needs to become, stressing an underlying mindset of strategic innovative leadership: personal and organizational (Albrecht, 2013). Everyone who wants to sustainably lead needs to develop Strategic Intelligence—SQ:

SQ is defined as “the ability to interpret cues and develop appropriate strategies for addressing the future impact of these cues (Service, 2006: p. 61)” . . . The notion of SQ leads to strategic excellence . . . Strategy is a journey of planning, implementing, evaluating and adjusting while paying attention and focusing on the “right” things. Strategy does not deal with future decisions—it deals with decisions for the future.

Executives must progress from strategic planning, to strategic thinking to [innovative] strategic leadership through developing better SQ. In the past, strategy [was] too much of a mechanical process and should shift away from a process-centered to a people-centered approach of thinking. . . . The first step is for executives to recognize that SQ exists and its importance for their organization (in Xu, 2007: p. 88 citing Service, 2006).

Always seek to understand from ‘their’ view why someone would do business with you or your organization. Distinctives are normally not blockbuster ‘things’ but a combination of subtle differences. These distinguishing features facilitate selling products, services, yourself—advancing effectiveness or efficiencies. Shift thinking toward innovation as you improve SQ.

We are now at a juncture where a perfect storm of academic, practical, and popular press works is calling for a change from stodgy formulaic strategy methods of the past to fail-fast, AI-based, ‘just do’ it models (Mims, 2018). Though it may seem otherwise, our intent is not to cause a total change in direction or to disregard the countless contributions continuing to be made to the knowledge bases in our fields of strategy, marketing, management, and leadership. In fact, it is good for students and those in practice to be exposed to facilitators with differing approaches in order to prepare them for the variety of perspectives they will experience from their co-workers and managers in the world of commerce. In doing so, strategic learners and doers must adapt and think about how to engage as many as possible in desired strategic plans and actions. Only by *thinking to learn* can we learn to think. And, critical thinking and creativity are required to meet the continual changes of the business landscape (Gladwell, 2005; and Data-driven, 2017). Just as life does not follow a scripted sequence, teaching and learning must come closer to emulating how things actually work for acquired knowledge to be of use (Christensen et al, 2012).

Another brief aside. Too often people think of AI as being unbiased, but it is not. To develop a learning model one has to evaluate results and use that judgement in system learning. Humans decide which way a model learns and humans are all biased.

A recent survey by PayScale Inc. showed 50% of employers complain that college graduates they hire are not ready for the workplace. Their chief complaint was poor critical-reasoning skills. Employers complain that college graduates are “lacking in interpersonal skills, problem solving, effective writing and oral communication, and the ability to think critically and analytically” . . . *The Wall Street Journal* reviewed the results from numerous CLA+ (College Learning Assessment Plus) exams given at about 200 universities and colleges. In more than 50% of those institutions of higher education, at least a third of seniors “were unable to make a cohesive argument, assess the quality of evidence in a document or interpret data in a table” (Friedman, 2018; p. 21). These findings and the evaluations of practitioners will not improve if we only teach simplistic cookbook-style, step-by-step processes for addressing complex business problems. Business educators and researchers must prioritize pursuits that can be useful for a critical mass of practitioners (Blinder, 2018). Ultimately, relevance matters, and it is hard to argue that something is relevant if it does not spur action. Keynes, often labeled as the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most influential economist, said clearly of economic theories and thought, “the bare bones of economic theory are not worth much in themselves, except in so far as they yield practical conclusion. The whole point lies in applying them to the interpretations of current economic life” (Keynes in Clarke, 2010: p. 49).

The theories and frameworks detailed in the more popular textbooks were developed thirty or more years ago (Bhardwaj et al., 2018) when the internet was only a closely held idea, when we used modems as data went down analog lines, a terabyte of storage was science fiction, and so on. While business environments changed immensely, developments in business education and associated prescripts for application have not kept up. We think that clearly management and leadership pedagogies and theories have outlived their usefulness as models for application with their series of terms, frameworks, and checklists. These concepts do not deliver to students a useful idea about developing better organizational managers and strategists. We suggest replacing these models with reality where strategic models and methods will result in the innovation that is necessary to raise the living standard of everyone. In this manuscript, we present an overview of the guides and concepts necessary to elevate organizations to levels yet unseen in our worldwide economy. By design we are forwarding concepts that require one to



think and apply under the knowledge they have with ‘their’ particular organization: re-re think, adjust and apply (Landsburg, 1993).

We believe most academics (self-reflectively) can all acknowledge that new business methods and processes rarely come from academia – even though we publish thousands of “new” articles each month. The “filling a gap in the literature” approach that makes for a fine dissertation does not muster the same enthusiasm in the boardroom. Organizational research in schools of business needs to recognize that commercial organizations are ‘doing it’ as ‘it’ becomes the core of societal progress. Our academy has relinquished its leadership role. Individuals inside and outside academia have been demanding change for too long. This disconnect between the business world and business education must be rectified. Waiting on practitioners will result in academy declining to the point of irrelevance. Teaching, learning and using the same theories under the same frameworks based on overpriced, example-only, updated textbooks and situationally-focused cases using an ‘I told you and tested you’ pedagogical approach removes ingenuity. All recognize the constant innovation in the workplace, yet ‘we’ business educators largely fail to innovate in our own teaching and learning. Innovation alone can continue to provide expanding improving futures (Olsen, 2012; & Service & McEwen, 2015). If new strategic leaders have the same backgrounds and exposures to scripted thoughts, firms will not develop creative new business solutions to long-standing and emerging problems (Cronin and Loewenstein, 2018). Be reminded that many of the founders and CEOs of the most successful organizations in the world are not MBAs and a few have no college degrees.

That primary reason that people choose to do business with a firm is what is often considered the firm’s distinctive competency – things that separate the organization from its competition. All organizations and individuals that must compete need to re-re-define their distinctive competency and competitive advantage – both what it has been and what it is becoming. Further, it is essential that an organization understand these distinctives from the perspective of their customers and the public.

Sustainability requires open minds, proper mindsets, passions, habits and the practice of “purposeful” incremental and radical innovation. The application of innovation requires focus, attention, intention, articulation, visions and ultimately selling ideas and concepts (Felsenthal & Pine, 2018). Innovation starts with clear mostly unbiased thinking resulting in constant attempting and trying, thus much failure. Persuasion is a key for any would-be innovator and one must start by persuading themselves of the perseverance and preparation required to sell the new and different (Blane, 2017).

Management guru of gurus this past century, Peter F. Drucker, said that about a third of business decisions he observed turned out to have been right, another third turned out to be minimally effective, and another third were outright failures. So there is a two-thirds chance that what we have decided is incorrect or of little value. Success requires innovatively implementing our organizational and personal imperatives: trying and adjusting.

the successful ones [innovations], result from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities (p. 144). . . . Above all, innovation is work rather than genius. It requires knowledge. It often requires ingenuity. And it requires focus. . . . innovation is both conceptual and perceptual (p. 155). . . . If diligence, persistence, and commitment are lacking, talent, ingenuity, and knowledge are of no avail (Drucker, 2013; p. 156).

The *strategy* of innovation, shown in focused hard work, is more important than the specifics of any innovation (Blane, 2017). Further, the cost of an innovation must be measured against the ultimate cost of not innovating ([the most important CBA] Buford, 2014, on Drucker). Let us look at academic views before we shift to practicality where the rubber meets the road and either grips or starts sliding.

### **Academic Views**

Here we will present a quick view about historical academics and what it says about strategy. We start with Michael Porter and his works that are mostly lists of considerations and moves to make (we eventually mimic Porter to a degree in this work) as he clearly defines what strategy entails. Porter’s

seminal contribution, the five forces model, centers on understanding one's own industry and the suppliers and buyers within that and related industries. This model also stresses looking at possible imitations and new entrants and the difficulty of a competitor disrupting one's organizational domain. One key is to lock up and help suppliers and customers and be the one in control. The next key is to continue to maintain a distinctive that will ensure you remain in a strong market position via existing and potential competitors. Closely related to the five-forces model is the value chain view of a firm. In simplified terms this model shows the firm's primary business as inputs, processes, and outputs:  $I > P > O$ . Going into extreme detail on the value chain would involve everything from the moment one considers what their organization's raw inputs might be all the way to sales, service, and obtaining repeat sales. Understanding every little point of one's value chain can point to areas of efficiency and effectiveness that can continually redefine one's comparative advantage before a competitor or new entrant does. Many of Porter's conceptions of how industries compete will be included within lists as we present the many and varied ways of innovatively developing and keeping a competitive edge.

J. Barney is another classic strategy academic theorist very often cited in academic works. Barney's principles look at firms from resource-based views stressing that a competitive distinctive requires something of value to the consumer, something that is rare and something that has no substitutes or imitations. After Porter and Barney, we see the trend-setting work of Drucker, Mintzberg, Priem and Powell. The most used strategic texts all depend on these sources enhanced with more current cases and examples. We find that these texts are of use for undergraduate courses but see little value in them for advanced degree courses and almost no value for the working strategist. For effective application, one needs to internalize the few paragraphs shown above and mix that with the other pronouncements detailed here.

The meaning of our message to this point is simple: To be a successful strategy maker, teacher, learner, manager, or leader, individuals must closely observe, note, analyze, collaborate, adjust and, re-adjust their biases and understandings of diverse people, cultures, situations, and environments as they fail forward fast (Chadha, 2018; & Service, et al, 2019): think and learn. The mantra should be 'passion for purposeful, principled, progress.' Let us now look at the usefulness of all concepts. In all cases, think "being" over "doing"! In other words, *become* the example don't just *tell* about the example, live as a strategic leader, don't just talk as one, and so on.

### **Irrefutable Laws for a Strategic, Innovative Life**

Findings in religion, psychology, science, theology, business, academia and in life, have led to the development of guiding principles for remaining 'strategically' innovative. In this area, the more academic-minded reader needs to review Xu which is often aptly labeled as the "Premier Reference Source (2007: title page)."

1. Be certain you might be wrong; but start with an answer you should attempt to disprove.
2. We learn from questions allowed to stay with us; those questions teach the most in life.
3. The answers to larger questions? Most frequently are more questions.
4. Don't stay wrong long. You always start from where you are, so be sure where that is!
5. The best correct answers will not stay best long. Failing to fail is the worst of failures.
6. Seeing beyond the obvious requires more than the eyes.
7. Think and act long term, making it easy to change and harder not too.
8. Form mental pictures of the future to enact what is envisioned. Thought experiments.
9. Realize and use the capabilities of yourself and others: character makes or breaks.
10. Have a strategy for all important things; assume it is important; it may be in the end.

Character, the foundation for successful strategy, leadership, and management, is built, not given (Miller, 2018). "True inspirational leadership is more a matter of character than achievement (Nielsen, & Sirkel, 2017; p. 7)." "The annals of war are loaded with examples which prove that incompetence is (most of the time) not due to a failure of intelligence but character. . . . wooden-headedness . . . in terms of preconceived fixed ideas [biases!] (Durschmied, 2016: Location 106)."

Yes, the perfect storm of disconcerting academic and collective issues are combining with “global weirding” of vocations enabled by rapid changes with artificial intelligence, newly re-arising societal issues, and a wide-open internet’s zettabyte of data accessible on demand. These advancements show no sign of slowing. Use of “cobots” (robots that collaborate) in innovative endeavors is here (Steinberg, 2017; p. 76). These shifts are more and more progressive. We are on the brink of linking human thinking with the look-up power of all search engines combined. This might indeed make obsolete traditional intellect and education (Service & Reburn, 2016). All too often higher education is becoming an expensive way to isolate our youth from realities of the world: safe spaces should not be used to avoid hearing others’ opinions—if opinions are out there we need to know them in order to properly address the conceptions. And, yes science fiction is rapidly becoming reality, extending firm and individual capabilities. We all must work and change to meet the new and coming future where *it* is as opposed to where we are (Furmans, 2018; & Gilley, et al, 2009).

Innovation is discovering new combinations and transformations for concepts and things that already exist: what worked or did not work in one context becomes a solution in another context. Strategists must make a habit of looking at issues, problems, and opportunities from many angles and be encouraged to simplify by forming multiple analogies in order to re-redirect thinking. In reality, humans have never created anything; we merely rearranged things, as Leonardo da Vinci indicated when he said of his *Pieta* that it was there in the stone and that he just removed the part that was *not* it. Many ‘things’ will work out in a way we never considered. In an old TV show, a robot changed the channel on a TV, no one had thought of the idea of a ‘remote’ at that time.

Relationships are critical, and multi-tasking is not good for relationships. Clearly, multi-tasking can work to get more done in an ‘almost sufficient’ manner, but where one’s best work is called for, avoid multi-tasking. Focused, intentional engagement is key, and people get engaged when they buy into a purpose, realize what is in it for them or loved ones, are given autonomy, and they master an area of interest.

Google’s 8 innovation principles provide a foundational start to ever more innovation: 1) focus on the user, 2) share it all, 3) look for and take ideas from anywhere, 4) think big but start and act small, 5) never fear failure, 6) spark imagination and fuel it with data, 7) be the platform, and 8) have a mission that matters. A basic lesson for innovation surrounding Google’s principles is to **stay focused** and another is **don’t stay too focused** (Diamandis & Kotler, 2015). Regardless of one’s reality, we must work with the reality that the critical mass of our constituents perceives as *their* reality.

## STRATEGIC INNOVATIVE THINKING EXEMPLIFIED BY ATTENTIVE CURIOSITY

Build, maintain and use in practice, a mindset of continuous improvement for managing, leading, learning, teaching, working—strategizing, etc. (Blanchard, 2007). If a small percent of the world figured that out, we would be much closer to solving major issues. “[E]very company is now a tech company” so do not underestimate the increasing role AI will play in jobs and innovation (Mims, 2018: R5).

Here, we provide educational background concepts in their more simplified forms as we list precepts of success in management and leadership. The main intent is to introduce simplified concepts for academic and non-academic contemplation toward useful strategic mindsets and practice: think to learn. The ultimate usage of this comprehensive list is as a platform for dialogue (or internal consideration) toward greater mutual understandings.

### Simplified Applications from Education and Experience

Here we present a comprehensive list of abbreviated concepts that will serve aspiring or existing managers, leaders, or employees well toward improving their career. In all cases, we realize that we are giving concepts that require thinking and figuring out how these stereotypical pronouncements can be helpful to enhancing innovative strategic mindsets that are at the core of assuring sustainable success. We leave it to the reader to study this list and think about meanings and uses for them in their situation with their constituents. Moreover, Figure 3 is a one-page MBA overview useful as foundational knowledge for

our many precept lists. When thinking ‘on’ the provided guides remember the overriding concepts behind appropriate balance, fit, and yes, “it depends.” When applying any of these precepts, do not forget that all big things are made up of small things. As you study Figure 3 realize that it requires judgement, many texts, academic publications, experience, close observation, and a lot of thoughtful consideration to prove any insight to be of use: wisdom comes with time, study, and intentionality. Contemplate a Napoleon dictate that proved true in the Battle of Waterloo: “The fate of battle is all in a single moment, a single thought . . . the single moment arrives and the smallest reserve settles the matter (location 1407-later we’ll say a bit more about this). . . . Oh, but for a few headless nails and some hammers (Durschmied, 2016: location 1537).” Understanding these concepts is a foundation for practicing managers, whether an MBA or not. (Figure 3 used Kaufman’s 2010, *The Personal MBA: Master the Art of Business* to assure that we included items not found in MBA curricula).

After understanding useful concepts of Figure 3, the question quickly becomes, how do we actually do a strategically innovative project, and specifically what variables can the manager/leader use? It was said that Martin Luther developed his 95 theses as comments designed to spur theological academic debate (McChrystal, et al, 2018). With full realization that our academic and practical precepts list is not nearly as important or impactful, its intent remains as Martin Luther’s.

### **Managing and Leading Strategic Innovation**

Humanistic influences are the core of all effective sustainability. People and relationships are of utmost importance. Helping people realize and use more of their abilities toward accomplishing shared goals is key to organizational effectiveness. Organizational success, in turn, requires effective managers and leaders, for managing and leading are, at their core, about human connections (Livermore, 2015). When managers make those connections and help others work effectively and efficiently to mutual benefit, they are exhibiting leadership wisdom. We too often first look for systems, methods, models, guides—the ways that connections can be made for us. Systems and methods are only effective if people work and connect.

### **If Innovation Is the Key to the Future, Why and How?**

Stability and control ruled management in the not-too-distant past, but innovation has replaced that with many automated systems providing much of the needed stability and more than enough procedural control. Innovation has become the only sustainable action and becoming and remaining innovative is that distinctive (Baumohl, 2005). Innovation is actualized by **restless curiosity**, optimism, accepting repeated failures, a persistent work ethic, and a mindset that encourages action on ideas.

The five mindset laws of innovation are: 1) Provide superior value-considering perceived benefits, features, and needs satisfaction; 2) Rethink stability of the existing - lessen the psychological status quo bias; 3) Decrease fear of new alternatives noting start-up costs - insure discomfort in ‘not’ adopting and transitioning; 4) Reduce outside independent influences to stay the course; and 5) Overcome bias in search and choice realizing that we will all have some form of confirmation or inferential bias - even when we find all the right information we will not always use it properly. With these overriding principles, the following are steps to realizing innovation.

### **Steps in Innovation**

1. Start with the basic form of the ‘thing’ being addressed; put it in simple vocabulary.
2. Build a vision to the point you can envision it: writing thoughts gives them meaning.
3. Use thought experiments to make your own formula or model.
4. Define your assumptions, asking why not—back to basics versus manifested complaints.
5. Consider jumping the curve, breaking or bending the frame—radical or incremental.
6. Reinterpret meta-mega-mini data, fads, trends, rules, assumptions, impossibilities to reframe and refocus on new ‘fundamentals’ and truths: re-re-re . . . .
7. Know your disciplines of thought, education and experiences: do not be limited by them.
8. Solve, address or generate a need.

9. Come up with multiple alternatives: status quo is simply ‘an’ alternative.
10. Select a heart + mind alternative, go for ‘it’ with gusto: think might, can, want, ought, NEED!
11. Define, publicize, and measure it: identify support groups, networks and linkages.
12. Adapt and adjust it: define and redefine ‘it’ over and over.

Observe everything with an eye toward ‘what ifs and only ifs,’ ‘whys and why nots,’ ‘how can we and why can’t we,’ and ‘how could we?’ Think to redefine competitive edges, exploit new opportunities, solve problems, create needs, negate threats, use new capabilities, expand or contract, repurposing everything and everyone. Polaroid came from a child asking, ‘why can’t I see it now;’ radar because someone said, I can’t destroy a plane with it, but I can tell you where it is; post-it notes came about because the glue was weak; someone spilled scotch guard on their shoe; antibiotics came from a noticed accident; many of Einstein’s theories came from thought experiments about trains and clocks. In fact, a great habit is to think through a strategic action or move before you attempt it: thought experiments work (Service, 2009)! Gates was exposed to computers early, the Beatles had to play 20 hours a day, Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo because of the lack of a few headless nails (the smallest reserves might not even be people: understand the prior comments now?).

Keep on looking, noticing, focusing, rethinking and redoing all the 12 prior steps. Activity is key—which is followed by trying ‘it’ toward fail fast learning, “Almost any fitness program will get results if a person actually does the work, and no fitness program will get results if they do not (Powell, 2017; p. 166).” Think multiplicative versus additive, complementary versus standalone, and contributory versus self-edifying for all activities. Lastly, understand your biases and preference, which shape all understandings and strategies. Everyone’s biases are their internal frame of reference (internal mental map-GPS). Too many of these personal maps are in need of updating: try following roadmaps just a few years old! Lastly, as you move forward realize how people simply think with emotions over logic (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009) in areas of love, money, politics, religion (sports in the U.S. south) and their primary vocational proficiency under the limits of their personal mental map.

### **Innovate Strategic Distinctiveness Through Actions that Center on:**

1. relational aspects: relationships rule - all relational aspects,
2. self-awareness coupled with development - organizational learning,
3. applied Reality, Emotional, Successful, Knowledge=intellectual wisdom,
4. new products/services or processes (R&D),
5. best or better quality (TQM)—service or products, better-best procurement (JIT),
6. most, new, different or better features, new or varied aspects of functionality,
7. price - considering price performance relationships,
8. fitness of use from many views; include multi-faceted uses,
9. locational aspects - where and convenience; and varied cultural considerations,
10. delivery characteristics and alternatives,
11. liability shifting arrangements,
12. new ways to build, buy or rent - co-create,
13. Tech-AI, cobots, apps, expanded telecom, linking, unlinking,
14. status perceived or otherwise, compared to substitutes - imitations—other choices: value,
15. perceptions - marketing and fads,
16. cost benefit analysis changes - opportunity costs, trade-offs or shifts,
17. appearance, perceived and otherwise—for fitness of use,
18. character, ethics, trust, truth, trustworthiness, truthfulness,
19. leadership & management - policies, rules, mindsets, views; HRM,
20. flexible strategic fit, balance, appropriateness.

Overall everything works better when people care, are engaged, and take action. Fail fast experimentation and redefining normal for any of the 20 possibilities shown above can work. Moreover, look to develop combinations, permutations, sub-set, super-set of all of the above as you seek additive, divisional, multiplicative, exponential, factor, factorial, etc. manipulations. Competitive advantages come

through the prior precepts intertwined with intangibles to form a sustainable distinctive. The key is value as the *customer* defines it. Seek input from all constituents, prospective and actual, ending every encounter by asking: **“Is there anything at all I can help you with or do for you?”**

### **Now Do It**

- 1) Execute strategic moves—differentiate tactics, strategies, actions, responses: who, what, where, when, how, and always why.
- 2) Monitor, evaluate, adapt and adjust.
- 3) Remain open to any and all possibilities—no matter the source.
- 4) Revise as new situations, knowledge, capabilities, and opportunities arise.

What can you provide, change, or adjust to make successful innovations? Let us now consider what variables you can use to implement your innovation.

### **Variables That Can Be Manipulated to Realize Strategic Results**

1. Organizational culture and climate.
2. Environments. Adapt or enact new environmental directions or structures.
3. People - All constituents that have a stake in the organization: very broad indeed.
4. HR practices—subsystems, policies, procedures, guidelines, Hire, Train, Reward.
5. Characteristics of the products and services: fit within or to org’s distinctive.
6. Management→Leadership – attention and focus of TMT (Top Management Team).
7. Structure and spans of control.
8. Markets and Marketing - for individual market the product of yourself and your ideas.
9. Systems. Beyond ‘automation’ to include all organizationally related systems.
10. Policies, procedures and rules.
11. Technology use and level of sophistication.
12. Factors that it takes to fit in with a balanced approach before standing out.

All of these controllable variables are allowed by mediating variables: a) felt necessity, b) exhibited commitment, c) realized communication, and d) desire of the organizational members – engaged caring and buy-in. Strength and form of relationship to success are changed by moderating variables: a) organizational type – i.e. governmental, for profit, charity, even personal, etc. b) organizational size – this could refer to market cap, assets, number of employees, sales, or locations, c) level of automation – for both production and doing business and d) other industry and societal norms – competition, distinctives, etc. (see Kerlinger, 1986 for a discussion of mediating and moderating variables).

“Sometimes it’s just good to set an impossible target, and get obsessed about nailing it (Alsop, 2008: p. 94).” Mindsets rule. Watch yours as well as those of the people you interact with. One last set of principles show how to work on the efforts of others; that is management and leadership. Suppose you are doing an innovation for another company or changing the basics of your existing organization distinctive; how should one modify their approach?

### **Consulting Hints**

Start by understanding the client or a new industry and position within as you detail value chains looking for disconnects. ‘They’ usually know what is needed, but are often too close to home to accept: I met the enemy and it was me! Many clients just want you to reaffirm what they want to do. It takes a lot of time to understand needs.

1. See if formal and informal org reporting structures match - if you do not go to a given department manager to find out about their department, it’s a mismatch to be examined.
2. Understand  $I \rightarrow P \rightarrow O$  extrapolated as finely as possible - look at most important elements.
3. Understand metrics and data; measure it, ‘it’ improves—define, measure, and use properly—from mission, distinctive, through performance reviews and even post-exit interviews.
4. Why and how people care, buy-in and understand their part in mission, vision, values + fit. . .
5. Understand fitting in before standing out - culture and climate.

6. Understand distinctive - as it has been and it might need to be: ask, why not outsource non-critical or non-distinctive functions?
7. Level and number of people in org that have analytical, creative, practical mindsets; and are they in position to use? Can people do what they do best every day?
8. Are all invested in innovative thought and implementation.
9. Level of trust, truth and character of top management team means the most: examples matter: treat people as individuals with uniformity; understand key people's replacement and exit strategies.
10. Do key players have a strategic innovative mindset?
11. Does the image and culture of the org match its external image and exemplified missions, visions, and values?
12. Are trust and trustworthiness embedded in the culture and climate? Character matters.
13. Master the art of asking the client thought-provoking questions, rather than providing the answers.
14. Understand the environmental constraints (i.e. market valuation) and organizational assets (i.e. human capital) that constrain the organization's core business and strategic decision-making.
15. Are the organization's key projects and initiatives aligned with the strategic plan goals, priorities and objectives so that benefits can be attributed and realized?
16. Avoid canned answers and tailor your work.

We skip one last time to a list that overrides most of what we have discussed here (see Service, et al, 2017). For truly if you do not have a fulfilling life . . . what else matters?

#### **Life Hints - How Will You Measure Your Life?**

Keys are—appropriate, balance, and fit toward persistent strategically innovative mindsets:

1. Exhibited confidence-empathy-love-humor-respect.
2. Curiosity-with care-taking calculated risks.
3. Decisive yet flexible-under your true north (read George and Sims, 2007).
4. Views-perceptions-optimistically.
5. Successful Intellect through life-long learning.
6. Self-awareness-internal locus of control.
7. Other-centric thoughts and actions.
8. Imagine your name represents-perseverance.
9. Listener-attentive to the needs of others
10. Tolerant-respectful, not judgmental, able to sympathize
11. Committed to growth – personally and professionally
12. Love, laugh and live for impact.

#### **CONCLUSION**

***"Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly and get on with improving your other innovations." Steve Jobs***

When you look closely at the lists about how to become and remain innovative (the only sustainable distinctive) within this manuscript, you can see much value in education if it is about adapting, deeper and broader understandings, and doing whatever it takes (Bedwell, et al, 2018; Bell, et al, 2018; & Shinn, 2011). Information herein can be used in a department meeting or class to start or extend a discussion. And, it can be used personally to think more broadly and deeply about issues you have not seen in your own education or experience. As educators, students, friends, parents, managers, leaders, or any type of influencer, remember to make sure whatever you do leads toward enabling the other person to be the best

versions of themselves possible. Use an education, but don't be limited by it. Mark Twain said, "I never let my schooling interfere with my education." Education is what you make of it and do with it.

Multi-billionaire, 87-year-old ex-heavy smoker and 20+ year cancer survivor, Herb Kelleher (co-founder of Southwest Airlines), said during his time as CEO, "We have a strategic plan, it's called doing things." Kelleher's legacy is that he made airline travel available to more of the masses. He started it all as he wrote his original plan on the back of a napkin at lunch. His guiding principle was: "Do whatever you feel comfortable doing for a customer and we'll take care of you." Many Southwest employees took people home, babysat, took people shopping, saved peoples' lives, and so on. One even rented a helicopter to get someone to a critical situation ("Southwest Airlines," 2019 and personal experience). One lesson here is that only you are in charge of your learning: think and act as if 'I'm up to me.' Because you are, as are we. A second is that success with innovative strategy leadership is more about what you do and the commitment behind it than what you plan to do or say you will do (Mahoney, 2005).

A business educator or strategist seeking to innovate in his or her own life's work should be asking a number of questions. How do I get better at thinking and behaving like it is necessary to do many things differently for improved teaching, learning, and doing? How do I proceed with the realization that I have to write my own personal formula for leadership and innovativeness? How do I stay out of the weeds long enough to make innovative progress that I know is possible? What do I want in the next 2-5 years, and how will I get there? What do my customers want that they are not presently getting from my businesses? What do I envision getting and giving (and will accept) from my current job? Regardless of your answers, **our value is doing it better** than others that do it. Great leaders provide experiences. To lead better, learn as you internalize. So, get out there and try. And, if you do not have the inclination to seek further education study Kaufman's 2010, *The Personal MBA*.

Start by totally accepting that innovation is the way to ensure the future by recreating it (*HBR's 10 Must Reads on Innovation*, 2013). And then, address the "**how**," always paying attention to how it could be (Hashmi, 2016). Identify who will be involved. The more one commits to the systematic practice of innovation in life, the more successful they will be. And finally, end all **learning, questions, problems, opportunities, or threats by asking: So what, so why, so how?** Once those questions are clear, ask 'so now?' In other words, what are you going to do about 'it' now? Do not let the limitations of this or any study, story, or situation keep you from learning. Our COVID-19 crisis will pass and those that work through it to be ready to jump start under the realization that they need to be prepared for the next interruption will come out ahead of those that spend the crisis worrying. Be concerned and vigilant, but do not fail to make planned, purposeful, principled progress. Get on with getting what you can out of each and everything you encounter or cause in life!

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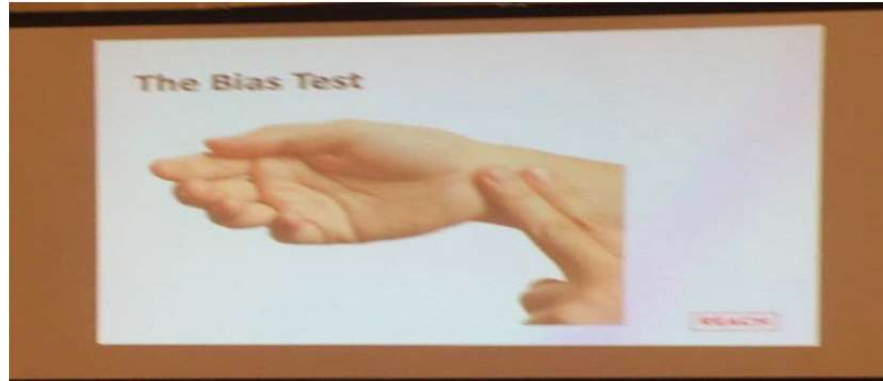
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APPENDIX

**FIGURE 1  
CHECK TO SEE IF YOU ARE BIASED!**



**FIGURE 2  
NORMAL BIASES  
(MODIFIED DIRECTLY FROM DOBELLI'S (2013) 99 COGNITIVE BIASES)**

<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Math-arithmetic</b>
1. Survivorship-the example	1. Swimmer's body-born not made	<b>1. Sunk cost-reevaluate base 0</b>
2. Authority-not outside expertise	2. Clustering-look for patterns	<b>2. Contrast-2 for one or 50%?</b>
3. Story-is incomplete or slanted	3. Social proof-everyone does it	<b>3. Regression to the mean</b>
4. Hindsight-not 20-20	4. Reciprocity-seek equality	<b>4. Neglect of probability</b>
5. Outcomes-exception not rule	5. Confirmation-to support mind	<b>5. Gambler's fallacy independent</b>
6. Coincidence-they happen	6. Availability-easy to get	<b>6. Exponential-grows so much more</b>
7. Scarcity-not always of value	7. No-pain, no-gain	<b>7. Averages can be skewed</b>
8. Base rate neglect-hear the good	8. Story-want it to be true	<b>8. Improve averages-extremes do</b>
9. Anchor-to dates, times, places	9. Overconfidence-reasons?	<b>9. Law of small numbers</b>
10. Induction-may not continue	10. Chauffer knowledge-superficial	<b>10. The implausible happens</b>
11. Winners' circle-not always again	11. Illusion of control	<b>11. Missing matters more than there</b>
12. Fundamental attribution error	12. Super response to incentives	<b>12. Forecast on straight lines</b>
13. False causality	13. Paradox of too many choices	<b>13. Cheery picking-what you want</b>
14. Alternatives-no to path not taken	14. Liking & likability	<b>14. Single variable</b>
15. Forecast illusion	15. Endowment-clinging to things	

Cognitive	Psychological	Math-arithmetic
16. Alternative with less conditions 17. Framing-distorted 18. Action preference 19. Self-serving selection-Associat. 20. Beginners luck 21. Value the immediate 22. Decision fatigue-many choices 23. Amount of information 24. Value new or different 25. Alternatives-create dichotomies 26. Primacy & recency effects 27. Domain-not between disciplines 28. Saliency effect-noticeable, main, 29. Illusion of attention 30. Hot air misrepresentation 31. Overthinking 32. Planning-take on too much 33. News allusion-may not be right 34. Falsification of history 35. Ambiguity aversion-may be 36. Take the default 37. Illusion of skill 38. Simple over complex	16. Coincidence-want it to be 17. Group think 18. Lose aversion-over winning 19. Social loafing-catching 20. Halo effect-attractive 21. Hedonic treadmill-what you wish 22. Self selection-why me 23. Cognitive dissonance-retrospect 24. Because-addicted to because 25. Contagion-it's associated with 26. Motivation crowding-too many 27. Twaddle-jabber to disguise 28. Effort-worked so hard, but. 29. Expectations-not real & fail 30. Exposing charlatan-astrology! 31. Volunteers' folly-takes job/pay 32. Puppets to emptions 33. Introspective-can be right or not 34. Inability to close doors 35. Sleeper effect-propaganda works 36. Social comparison-against betters 37. Not invented here 38. False consensus 39. In-out groups 40. Fear or regret 41. Procrastination 42. Envy 43. Personification-representative? 44. Opinion of persona-more than	<b>causes</b> <b>15. Overlooks other angles</b> <b>16. House money-not mine</b>

**FIGURE 3**  
**CONCEPTS FROM EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE - ONE PAGE MBA!**

**Major concepts - stick to these realizing that mindsets matter; you are your habits and choices**

**Realities** = perceptions. Reality = planning but, muddling with a purpose or not.

**Your realities** = use critical mass of constituents. Compliance with power = unless illegal or immoral.

**Power** = earned, elected, expert, position, norms, etc. Mission = framing the Visions = allows envisioning.

Complying with norms & authority = the wisdom of success.

How you do anything = **predicts** how you do everything. Views = not always fact or fiction; both.

Where you put time & money = you, **not what you say**. Think you cannot = then you won't.

**Art** = highlights humanistic & contextual feelings, pictures, stories.

**Success** & failure accounts = stories-perspectives; purposeful or not.

**Learning** = from any, everywhere if you notice. Developing people = more effective human capital.

**Innovation** = only sustainable way to survive change. Differentiation = competitive advantage.

**Sustainability** = level of adaptability. Value = fitness of use according to user.

**Professionalism** = tools in their mind.

**Values** = *to be lived*. Care = level predicts level of success: you & it matter.

**Mindsets** - theoretical, practical, analytical, collaborative, cosmopolitan, creative for fast incremental innovation

**MBA topics - know and do**

**Marketing** = convincing by making it worth hearing. **Sales** = show them how 'it' meets/make a need.

**Strategy** = intentionality of moves & actions: mind gaps. Synergy =  $2 + 2 = 5$ , most often  $2 + 2 = 3$  or less!

**HR** = right, right, right—hire, train, reward . . . Apprising = feedback rich environment-no surprises.

**Operations** = efficiency extrapolate value chain + systems. Value chain = expanded I→P→O-effectiveness.

**Accounting** = accurate revenue, costs, all spending, what if. **Finance** = effective in obtaining resources.

**Economics** = spent here, can't be spent there, came from somewhere. Incentives matter.

**Management** = doing things right—stability & control. **Leadership** = doing right things—into the future; enact.

**IS/IT** = not tech, what & how used. **Communications** = data>info>shared meanings: lifeblood of orgs.

**Teamwork** = use only if needed; not hide poor performers. Effective if done right, seldom done well.

**Measures - for fit + use**

**Statistics/analytics** = misleading-right data & right stat. Correlation not causation = causal ambiguity abounds.

**Ratios & margins** = know & understand implications. Risk = bold or reckless depending on success or failure.

**Social sciences** = quantify qualitative-true meaning. Empirical studies = not gospel, limited replicability.

**Qualitative research** = make intangible more tangible. Anecdotal evidence = what you make of it.

**Systems/processes** = not systems but use; people > process! Checklist = always done it-blocks re-thinking.

Consider **consequences** = unintended consequences will astound. Biases abound-consider all unintended.



**Humanness - accept and use-others don't value what you do, when they do they don't value it the same way**

**Human nature** = incentives matter, comparisons, attributions, biases. Nature first draft = then nature + nurture.

**Character** of leadership = sustainable leadership. Good people overcome bad systems = systems don't.

**Engagement** = other centric focus. Connecting without disrespecting = mutuality of lasting relationships.

**Opinions** = all have, mine are 'my' reality. Biases = abound/astound: know & adjust-dis-confirming evidence.

**Truth** = from who's perspectives? Facts = which ones and whose?

Never miss-estimate average person's understanding. **Selective** ignorance, care or not, engaged = truth.

**Common sense - so often uncommon? Develop a passion for purposeful progress!**

**Planning** = not going to do what you have not planned. Successful decisions = make them, commit & adapt.

**Measure it** = then it will improve: be sure what 'it' is. Better decisions = reduce uncertainty.

**What, what, why** = management **coaching model**. Dealing with difficult people = often just sit there.

**Decision** = choice under varying degrees of uncertainty. No decision is a decision = often the worst.

**Learning** = not them or material, but you: lifelong! What got you here = won't get you there.

**Actions**-content-methods-speak so loudly = can't hear what's said; might, can, want, ought, need = know.

**Wisdom - know what is appropriate, balancing, fitting in before standing out: it depends, but not exactly.**