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## NEW STRATEGIC THINKING

Leaders believe there must be a better and bolder way. They are tired and frustrated of the status quo—the same old “fight for a larger piece of the competitive pie”—and they want to seize new opportunities and create a different future. They begin by discarding the archaic strategic planning process that they have endured throughout their career, and they start adopting a strategic thinking process that will challenge and accelerate their learning and working *together*.

Which one of these describes what happens in your organization:

- Leaders don't plan together; they're too busy running their business.
- Leaders go through a monotonous, well-intentioned process; there are few changes.
- Leaders eagerly engage in a robust, intense, provocative process to think, plan, and innovate.

General Eisenhower once said, while preparing for battle, that “plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.” Planning is essential and reflects the strategic thinking it takes to create a plan that will be continually adaptable. If the plan is to be robust and responsive, that plan needs to be able to adapt to the challenges, opportunities, markets, and customer needs that arise. Robust planning provides the future direction for the organization.

The purpose of this section is to help leaders differentiate between creating a plan that goes stale—or one that creates improvements, innovation, a competitive edge, growth, collaboration, and success.

Traditional planning often engages people in limited discussions and few challenging questions. There are lots of pats on the back by well-meaning people as they meander down a path they've already been on year after year. They create "group think" (all heads nodding yes and no one asking tough questions) because no one is thinking differently. If the thinking is not different, you can't expect different outcomes from previous years.

Better, bold, new, and different results require new thinking and action:

1. Leadership does not delegate this role. An engaged leader is intimately involved in the strategic thinking and planning process (if not, how will they lead a new system?) This process is an essential part of their role.
2. Innovation in Leadership Knowledge. **The facilitator has systems and statistical knowledge** and facilitates the new learning and thinking necessary. The team learns a new way to innovate and transform their organization.
3. Openness to new learning **TOGETHER**. Together the team learns: how to question and challenge the status quo, how to reject the natural "we can't" excuses that stand in the way of innovation and transformation, and how to think with new knowledge and work **TOGETHER** through a bold, robust process of questioning what and why they aspire to a radical new level of success.

This focus is relevant for leadership teams in business, corporations, education, healthcare, nonprofits, and government/military.

**TRADITIONAL VS. INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC THINKING AND PLANNING**

Traditional planning is the linear thinking and language that fosters the creation of internal competition, fear, silos, and a toxic work environment full of blame, judgments, and criticism.

An alternative process is innovative strategic thinking and planning. This process is based on a theoretical foundation that includes systems thinking, understanding variation, developing knowledge, understanding the psychology of people, and the effective diffusion of communication.

TRADITIONAL PLANNING	INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC THINKING AND PLANNING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Vision</li> <li>■ Mission</li> <li>■ Objectives</li> <li>■ Goals</li> <li>■ Targets</li> <li>■ Tactics</li> <li>■ Numerical goals/specifications/metrics</li> <li>■ Budget by departments</li> <li>■ Alignment</li> <li>■ Quotas/incentives</li> <li>■ Compliance/regulations</li> <li>■ Deliverables</li> <li>■ Uses organizational chart, a hierarchical tool that does not include the customer</li> <li>■ Uses Six Sigma tools, a target driven tool that focuses on arbitrary numerical goals rather than understand what the system capability is.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Aim/Compelling Purpose</li> <li>■ Strategies based on a systems perspective</li> <li>■ Create quality, improvement and innovation as business strategies</li> <li>■ Values and behaviors develop the interdependent culture</li> <li>■ Customer needs defined and supported by data in context</li> <li>■ Experiential feedback</li> <li>■ Quality defined by the customer (markets)</li> <li>■ Measures of progress and success (looking at data over time)</li> <li>■ Uses Strategic Compass</li> <li>■ Uses System Diagram</li> <li>■ Uses Run/control/deployment flow charts</li> <li>■ Plan Do Study Act model of continual improvement</li> </ul>