

The Top 12 Points About The Power Of Strategy

Read and think about the following.

Introduction

Probably like you, I am a believer that the right strategy ensures a successful outcome, and that the wrong — or outdated — strategy wastes valuable resources, and needlessly delays the results. The trick is to select the perfect strategy — or have the ability to create it from scratch. In my view, the right strategies are what makes a person or company a success or failure today.

In the old days, hard work, commitment, effort, dedication, and “following the rules” were how you succeeded. It worked, but it was very, very costly in all areas: physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

But in the new millennium, it is clear that smart people are no longer willing to suffer for success — not even a little bit. The answer? Strategies. Creative strategies. Customized strategies. Clever strategies. Strategies are the keys to success, no matter what the goal.

But you have to know these strategies — a lot of them. And some that you have never heard of or never even considered. And you have to learn how to craft, adapt, and synthesize them to fit your situation or that of your company or clients.

Strategizing is a skill, and it is a skill that you can benefit from forever in your career, business, and in your personal life.

This Top 12 list contains 12 introductory and orienting points about strategy, and includes several examples of types of strategies. I hope that you enjoy it.

Thomas J. Leonard



Point No. 1

A strategy is “HOW” you get something accomplished, whether you are doing the work, someone else is doing the work, or the strategy itself doing the work.

People sometimes get strategies, plans, goals, outcomes, mission, purpose, vision, and action steps confused. Briefly, here is the difference (I have used phrasing from my company coachville.com, the largest web portal for the personal/corporate coaching industry):

Vision: Vision is **what is possible**. A vision is what you see that perhaps others cannot see as well. It is about an improvement, a betterment, sheer possibility, yet it is not pie-in-the-sky, either.

Example: At CoachVille, our vision is that every coach knows exactly what they are doing with clients, and are doing it very, very well.

Mission: A mission is what you are all about, and what you are **really doing**.

Example: At CoachVille, our mission is to help coaches become more effective with their clients and more successful in the marketplace.

Purpose: Your purpose is **why** you are doing what you are doing, why you have set a goal, why you are going for an outcome, what is motivating you.

Example: At CoachVille, our purpose is to evolve the process and practices of coaching.

Outcome: An outcome is what **occurs after you reach your objective or goal**. The outcome includes the results, but also the benefits of those results — both tangible and intangible.

Example: At CoachVille, our primary outcome is that CoachVille will be the host of the largest community of coaches worldwide and thus benefit from the No. 1 position in the industry.

Goal: A goal is the **measurable result** you are going for.

Example: At CoachVille, our primary goal is to develop and host an active e-community of 25,000 coaches by December 2002.

Plan: A plan is **what** you develop in order to identify, organize, and schedule your time, resources, and energy. A plan consists of a list of resources needed, actions steps to take, a timeline of events and progress milestones.

Example: At CoachVille, our basic plan is to build up subscribers to the coaching scoop, and to have the most interesting resources at any coach-oriented website. We've budgeted \$250,000 for the first 2 years and we are supported mostly by volunteers who help us create and manage the e-zine and website.

Strategy: A strategy is **how** something gets done, not just what you do. A strategy is your approach. It is your positioning. It is your smart way of reaching the goal with the least amount of wasted effort or cost. With a strategy, you are not always working directly on the goal itself, but rather on improving or positioning the environments, relationships, resources, flows, systems, or even yourself. So, strategies are very different from a plan. In fact, when you devise the right strategy, the plan naturally becomes obvious. But without the strategy, the plan is merely a set of linear action steps (read: lots of work and often stupid).

Example: At CoachVille, our primary success strategies include virtual community building, coach-generated research and development, and creating demand for coaching via personal and professional e-zines.

Point No. 2

The first reason to develop a strategy is to save yourself time, money, and effort.

In other words, by using a strategy, you are using your intelligence and creativity to be clever, instead of just focusing on sheer effort and action steps. Anyone can recommend action steps, but it's the effective coach, professional, or executive who always designs a strategy BEFORE embarking on the action steps, or quickly develops a better strategy when they see that the action steps are not working the way they should be.

Point No. 3

The second reason to develop a strategy is to expand the outcomes.

The right strategy ALWAYS expands the goals and the outcomes. ALWAYS. Think of Amazon.com. Their original goal was to be the largest seller of books, and their strategy to achieve that goal was to use the Internet as their storefront. But the strategy of using the Internet has proven so brilliant, it has expanded their goals, so now Amazon.com offers music, videos, gifts, software, and who knows what else! Their strategy became “even more important” than their original goal (more on this idea later).

Point No. 4

Every goal, then, deserves a clever strategy.

Goal setting, without an accompanying strategy, is fairly impotent and usually expensive. Sure, you can accomplish goals without having a strategy, but why not use the power of strategy to help you reach the goal more easily? Why not use your mind, wisdom, and creativity to make life occur more easily for you? Why slog through life?

Point No. 5

There are many viable strategies available for virtually every situation.

The following is a brief list of the types of things that people and companies want to focus on:

- ▶ Personal Development
- ▶ Professional Development
- ▶ Personal Financial Success
- ▶ Lifestyle Improvement
- ▶ Business Marketing
- ▶ Business Performance
- ▶ Problem-Solving
- ▶ Customer Relationship Improvement

Did you know there are at least a dozen distinct strategies to help a person reach goals in EACH of these areas?

Let's take the Personal Development area for a moment. To help a client (or yourself) develop personally, you can use any number of strategies.

For example, you can use: the Integrity Strategy, the Personal Foundation Strategy, the Attraction Strategy, the Personal Evolution Strategy, the Spiritual Strategy, the Healing Strategy, the Extreme Self Care Strategy, the Integration Strategy, the Evolution Strategy, the Beliefs Strategy, the Bodywork Strategy, the Acceptance/Detachment Strategy, the SuperReserve Strategy, the Overrespond Strategy, the Awareness Strategy, and the Self-Esteem Strategy.

Each of these strategies helps a person to develop himself/herself. Wouldn't it be nice to know something about each one of them? Wouldn't it be helpful to know enough to be able to play chef, and craft the perfect combination of ingredients from all of them, and whip up a customized strategy for a client, within minutes?

THAT's the power of strategy! But to become a masterful strategist, you need to know the strategies themselves and how to build custom ones to fit exact needs.

Point No. 6

Strategies are key to business success as well.

There is not a single business today that isn't using a strategy of some kind to grow or manage that business. But are they using the BEST strategy? Are they using the most CURRENT strategy? Are they using a CUSTOMIZED strategy?

Let's take one of the areas of focus listed above — Business Performance — and list a dozen strategies that might be used to help a company improve its performance.

You could use: the Creating a Gap Strategy, the Incentives Strategy, the Vision Strategy, the Competition Strategy, the Coaching Strategy, the Leverage Strategy, the Customers-As-R&D-Team Strategy, the Internet Marketing Strategy, the Automation Strategy, the Eliminate Delay Strategy, the Virtual Management Strategy, Intrapreneur Strategy, the Reinvention Strategy, and/or the Creativity-Skills Strategy. Oops...that's 14 strategies! See how easy this is?

You are already familiar with some of these, and others are probably new to you. But wouldn't it be helpful to be familiar with ALL of them? Would that make you wise? Wouldn't that make you highly effective with your clients, with your company and/or in your own personal life?

Point No. 7

You start the process of creating a strategy by asking yourself some questions.

- ▶ What is the smartest, cleverest, most creative and easiest way to make X happen, without having to do it like everyone else is trying to do it?
- ▶ What is a better way than no one is doing?
- ▶ What is an unconventional way? What's radical here?
- ▶ What if MY way even if it makes me look stupid?
- ▶ What is the dumbest thing we could do that might be the start of something big?
- ▶ What we can do to get 1,000,000 people to use our product or service without having to market it heavily?
- ▶ What would a slacker do in our situation, in order to reach the goal in the laziest way possible?
- ▶ What would God do (meaning, if one had all the power in the universe)?
- ▶ Who has already done what we are trying to do? What worked for them?
- ▶ What resources do we have plenty of (time, money, space, information, skills, experience, contacts, customers, etc.) that we just aren't using fully or leveraging well?

Point No. 8

Creativity is essential for strategizing.

One of the most fascinating aspects of strategy is that the process of developing strategies is a highly creative one. True, you can use off-the-shelf strategies. But it is also important to be able to craft and customize strategies. You do this by first learning the basic strategies for personal and business success (I have identified over 200 of them). Once you know these, when you ask yourself the questions above, you will have enough raw material to invent something new that fits perfectly for your situation or a client's. And — quickly and intuitively. It helps to have the raw materials (a list of already-known strategies) in your pantry.

Point No. 9

Strategies evolve you, in addition to helping you achieve your goals faster.

In any personal or business situation, there are three elements: the person, the goal, and the strategy. I call these *the Who*, *the What*, and *the How*. In an earlier point, I mentioned that the strategy affects and expands the goal, using Amazon.com as the example. But did you know that a strategy can also expand who YOU are? Think about it. I bet Jeff Bezos (CEO of Amazon.com) is a bigger/more expanded person since he began implementing this strategy to reach his initial goal. In some ways, the original goal expanded Jeff, meaning that he began to think bigger and got stretched as he launched Amazon.com. But as he developed his strategy of using the Internet, I say that this strategy expanded and evolved him as well.

In other words, what I am saying is that our goals and our strategies have as much to do with our personal evolution as do our direct efforts in that area. Or to put it another way, if you REALLY want to evolve yourself,

find a goal, create a clever strategy and watch the evolution occur. Strategies are a catalyst for personal evolution. It sure beats willpower, expensive efforts and arrogance.

Point No. 10

Strategies let you achieve in the middle of chaos.

There is a lot that has been said about “change” and “change management” during the past ten years. And, with the development of the Internet, change is changing. In fact, the rate of time is also changing, given an Internet Year is about three months, not twelve months. We are all re-evaluating what it is that we really want and how we’re going to achieve it. Like fast.

I think it is fair to say that we are moving from a rational world (predictable, logical) to an irrational world (unpredictable, illogical). If this progression is true, then it means that chaos had better become our friend — and fast — instead of us trying to control or limit the chaos (how 80s!). But how do we, as humans, “hold” chaos, given it brings up fear and stimulates us in ways we cannot predict?

The answer that I have found for myself is to become an expert on strategies. I find that when I focus on strategies, I can handle — and actually enjoy — chaos. **I do not need to know the outcome.** After all, as chaos increases, outcomes become less and less predictable. More about this in my next point.

Point No. 11

It is as important to be an expert in strategies as it is to be dedicated to results.

Earlier in this Top 12 list, you may remember that I said that the right strategy will expand the goal in very cool ways? I used Amazon.com as my example. Now, I have nothing against goal setting and goal achievement — that makes the world go ‘round. But I feel that it’s as important to learn the skills of strategy design, as it is to learn how to deliver results. Why? Because if you only deliver results, it means that you’re using older strategies, not inventing newer ones. It means that you’re good at running a Barnes and Noble Store, but ignorant that the majority of books will soon be purchased online. (Nothing against Barnes and Noble — they are great and they have bn.com.)

Put it another way. If I was your coach, I could help you reach your goals, using coaching and communication skills, and you could benefit from my experience of having helped a hundred other people reach that same type of goal. But I’d just be giving you “fish” instead of teaching you how to fish. So part of what I do with my clients is that I share strategies with them, not just action steps. And I teach my clients how to strategize, so that they can devise their own strategies, far after they’ve stopped coaching with me.

Teaching a client how to strategize is the ultimate in empowerment. You are giving them the tools to empower themselves. And that’s an “annuity of value” from which the client will benefit for a lifetime.

Point No. 12.

Everyone is a strategist. Every can be a better strategist.

It’s just a matter of how good you are or are becoming. After all, strategy is not a department. It is a life skill.

Additional Resources

I periodically offer a TeleClass on this subject. Please check for availability at <http://www.thomasleonard.com/teleclass> or subscribe to the Coaching Scoop e-zine at <http://www.coachingscoop.com>.



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