

CASCADE
DOWN
The

12 Sins

of Strategy

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Too
SAFE

VAGUE
PROCE

CASCADE
DOWN

FEW
ACTION

PPT
SNOOZE

LITTLE
INPUT

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The Realities

If you read any of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* books when you were growing up you would have read of the adventures of five young people who faced challenges, learned lessons and built strong friendships.

The recent release of a series of spoof books on the Famous Five sees some new titles tailored just for grown ups.

The books might well be poking fun at some of the realities of life with titles like:

- 5 Go Parenting
- 5 Give up the Booze
- 5 Go Gluten Free
- 5 on Brexit Island...

but it's the one titled '**5 go on a strategy away day**' that's calling out many of the clichés and sins of bad strategic planning.

After all, it's the offsite and team session that is aimed at creating a refreshed organisational strategy: and it's often the place where a new direction is set or the team presses 'reset' to chart a course for a new world.

The reality is that the strategy session is a must for a business if it wants to prosper in these dynamic, disrupted and competitive times.

But while a longer term plan of five and ten years might seem a little passé, a shorter more agile and responsive strategic plan addressing now, next year and the three years beyond are very much the rule of today.

As the *Harvard Business Review Blog Network* presented recently:



"Strategy formulation.. is an ongoing requirement of good management...

This is a process you must permanently embed in your organization."

Strategy for business is a must. And the strategy day is often a key part of creating that strategy.

Strategy's 3 Ps ...

POSITIONING - what we do and for whom.

It involves taking a stand.

PROFITABILITY - how we create a return for all.

It's about meeting a need.

PROGRESS - how we improve, change and grow.

It involves making a shift.



To woo or to new?

As that initial quote from HBR goes on to say, "Strategy formulation, then, is an ongoing requirement of good management. It is, to quote Michael Porter, 'a process of perceiving new positions that woo customers from established positions or draw new customers into the market.'"

So think about:

- What step change are you working towards?
- How are you building an innovative culture?
- How are you responding to the disruption in your industry?
- How are you building the team that is the senior leadership or executive team?
- How are you integrating into the business culture what customers want and expect?
- How are you gaining input from your stakeholders, staff, customers and supporters to inform the strategy?

The 12 Sins of Strategy

When it comes time to bring the team together to revisit the positioning, profitability and progress of the business, what will you do?

If you look at rebooking the same venue, using the same agenda as last year and find that the most challenging part of the strategic process is finding a common date when all the players can get in a room at once, your approach to strategy may be ticking off some of **The 12 Sins of Strategy**.

Beware the sins and take steps pronto to move away from the sins and move towards the good and better of strategy.

AFTER	HANG OVER	CASCADE DOWN	Few ACTIONS	Too VANILLA
DURING	ALL TALK	PPT SNOOZE	LITTLE INPUT	IDEA SLUMPS
BEFORE	SAME SAME	Too SAFE	VAGUE PROCESS	D.I.Y FACILITATION

The 12 SINS of STRATEGY

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Before the session

1. Same Same

Here's the sin: It's all the same as last year – same dates, people, venue, agenda, menu and program. This isn't to mention what gets discussed and decided -- if that's the same, that's a sure sin.

If your 'save as' button is getting a workout, you're a sinner! The world is VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. And our approach to strategy will need to change to adapt and respond to this environment.

We can't just review last year's efforts and update a few things here and there. That's tinkering, not transforming. It's tinkering at the edges and likely not addressing the bigger issues and more significant forces at work on your business.

If we're not responding and adapting to the dramatic changes in customer needs and behaviours, technology, disrupted industries on either side of us, increasing time pressures and fundamental global changes, we've got an ideal opportunity to make a fresh start this year at your very next strategy session.

The world of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) tells us that we as a human race are more interested in things remaining the same or staying the same (perhaps with a little exception). The number of us that go for difference and variety is really not that large – around 30% at most. At the most. And that's not always. Our preference is for sameness.

The drive to keep things the same is strong. It's easy, comfortable, risk-averse and won't upset things too much. But an ongoing period of same – over months, years, decades – has spelled the demise of many industries and businesses.

Don't be that industry or business. If you've been in business for a long time, you have an increased risk of being killed off.

"Longevity is decreasing .. corporate mortality rates are rising .. the good news is the newer firms are more nimble. The bad news for (older firms) is that their days are numbered, unless they continually innovate."

*From 'Strategy: The scary truth about corporate survival'
-- Harvard Business Review, December 2016*

2. Too Safe

This second sin could possibly read 'dangerously safe'. The cousin to doing the same as last time – or the last decade – is playing too small or too safe.

"Strategic leaders must not get consumed by the operational and tactical side of their work. They have a duty to find time to shape the future."

-- Stephanie S. Mead, Center for Management and Organisation Effectiveness

We are in an ongoing era of disruption and if we're too safe (or too same) we'll be trampled on by those who are more adequately responding to change.

Every business is impacted by the effects of market shifts and changes. And if you haven't 'felt' any of them yet, perhaps this will be the year.

That maxim of 'change or die' is never truer.

Have you gathered insights, information, background and the data needed to inform your strategic discussions and decisions? If you don't know what's going on, you may respond in a way that doesn't set you up for the industry changes and shifts underway.

Working with a pharmaceutical-style business recently, they discussed at their strategy day their need to adapt and change and to do so in ways they haven't previously. The way customers were buying products and services had changed, and the type of products and services had changed too. Plus there were some new players in the market. Their long-lived era of being 'the only' or 'the best' was under threat. So their strategy session and strategic response was not just about taking out more advertising or to better train the staff who are customer facing.

Both of these responses – training and advertising - are small tweaks and are more operational than strategic.

It's too small and too safe of a change.

If they decided these were their actions from their strategic session, they'd be back here next year in an even worse situation. In short, their thinking was too safe, too narrow and too operational and more in the 'tweak' or 'tinker' department than looking at what needed to be transformed.

As the morning mindset gave way to an afternoon of thinking bigger, they were on their way.

With greater insights on what was happening in the wider market, they were more able to think innovatively and set a course for some greater strategic actions.

In one of my earlier career roles as the Executive Director of Yachting in Victoria, Australia, I recall the appointment of an international coach to help boost the performance of the Australian international Olympic sailing team. The team had goals to be on the receiving end of a haul of gold medals in the next two Olympic games – that was four and eight years away from where they currently were.

If they kept tweaking or tinkering at their strategy, they were going to be playing too safe and the colour of their medals just wouldn't change.

Hence the international coach came onto the scene. And what a different approach this coach used. It rattled some people – it was all so new and different. It was not safe at all. (While his practices were safe in a safety sense, his mindset and the way he approached sailing coaching were new for the team).

But soon there was a real shift in the team's performance. And it played out over the years to result in more of those gold medals. And yes, while other factors also contributed to the team's success, there was no doubt that this shift in taking a bigger risk reaped a bigger reward.

Get set for your session with the insights, information, learning and data that you'll need so you're all equipped to take the right level of strategic action and take some greater levels of innovative thinking that will help you respond to what's going on in your wider world.

3. Vague Process

If you can tick off that 'yes' you're willing to look at things differently and be prepared to take some bigger steps, it's now about HOW are you going to create that strategic response.

What will you do in your strategy, offsite or team gathering that will help generate that shift? For many businesses and teams, they embark on the strategy session or the team offsite without a clear process in mind.

This sin is what I'd call 'vaguening the process'. That is, the process you're planning to use on the day to create and craft your strategic response is vague. It's ambiguous and not yet defined. You might know what you want to get at the end of the session, but you're not crystal clear on HOW you'll get that work done.

By the way, the process isn't the agenda.

The process is the way you're going to go about doing the strategic work, the strategic thinking in the lead up to, during and after your strategy session.

There are only so many Post-it notes you can write on to gather people's ideas. At some point you'll need to do something else that helps make sense of the information you're working with and draws that information to a conclusion and a decision.

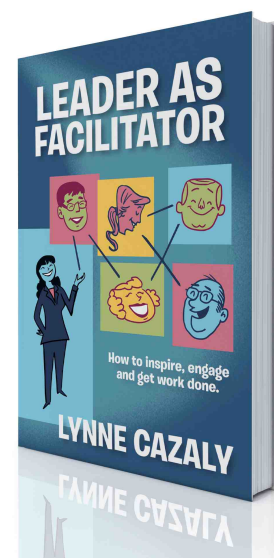
- What are you going to do?
- How are you going to do it?
- What do you think might need to happen when on the day?

Entering into a strategy session with no end result in sight is open and innovative sure; it may well mean you're open to what might happen. But you do need some type of process to guide the day. Wishing, hoping or expecting outcomes without putting a process into place that brings the agenda alive is not just vague, it's a waste. No, actually, it's a sin!

If you were heading off on the holiday of a lifetime you wouldn't just show up at the airport with your passport and credit card -- as fun as that may be. For the big projects and strategy work, you need some type of itinerary and how you're going to move from one place or space... to another.

In my book '*Leader as Facilitator*' I urge leaders to 'follow a process ... any process'.

Don't wing it or make it up as you go along. There are many tools, models and structures your strategy session can follow to make for a good interaction in a team and a great outcome in the strategy. It will help people move from scanning the environment, to giving their opinions, to coming up with ideas, to finally committing to action. Otherwise, you'll be lost in an infinity loop and struggle to get to some valuable conclusions that will result in actions back in the workplace.



4. D.I.Y Facilitation

A flow on from #3 Vaguing the Process is if you are trying to facilitate the strategy session yourself : doing it yourself or D.I.Y.

Thinking you can plan, observe, facilitate and participate all at once -- or even with a team of colleagues, trying to share the load -- is a hefty responsibility. How can you do it all? Facilitation is an area of expertise.

Each time someone steps out of their leadership role into the role of a facilitator or presenter at your strategy day, understand that it also shifts their attention and their connection to the event and the strategy. They often lose the thread of the work in the lead up to their part -- mainly due to their nerves, adrenalin and their distracted thinking about what they'll be doing soon up the front.

There can be a desire to 'involve the team' or 'share the load' or even 'give people greater responsibility' by having them lead sessions or facilitate at strategy days, but I believe there are other more cohesive ways to do this during the session, rather than them facilitating.

Some members of the team might take a stronger hand or give more of their input than you'd like and so having them leading a session might take things off on a tangent that's all about their area, expertise or preference. Others may (unknowingly) act in ways that stifle participants rather than encouraging contributions.

Make sure your team are immersed in the event and stay immersed. Taking them out and 'up' to the context level of 'what's going on here' is the role of the facilitator... not your team.

Often we think that we can save time or we don't have the budget for an external person to support us through the process of strategic thinking and decision-making.

We might think we can use the planning, culture or HR people in the business. We may well have people in the organisation with facilitation capability and believe that they can help us out on the day -- a little like finding someone who can help us carry a few boxes from the car into the office.

But there is more to facilitating strategy than that.

Another myth about facilitation is that you need to have someone who's a subject matter expert or familiar with your organisation or the industry. This is not true. It is a myth.

Facilitators are masters of the process you're using during the strategic process. They are experts at helping teams work well together. They are talented at helping remove barriers to progress and to uncovering genius. That's what you need on the day and throughout your strategic process.

If you need expert or industry input on the day -- or prior to the strategic process -- then engage a business consultant or subject matter expert or researcher to gather and give you the industry advice you desire.

As a facilitator, I want to work with a team of people who've got the smarts and technical knowledge they need (either in the room or close at hand and they know where to go to get it).

Facilitators bring incredible value to help get the team together and performing well so that you can all work together to identify, design, create and implement a strategy that will be owned by the organisation -- rather than imposed by a consulting firm.

Many organisations approach me and say, 'We've decided we need an external facilitator for our strategy session *this year*.'

I feel for them; I wonder what might have happened in previous years and how they may not have achieved what they truly desired or hoped would be possible. Perhaps previous strategic sessions haven't been collaborative enough or transformative enough or innovative enough, or maybe they realised they can't do it all. Perhaps some areas of the business have had a stronger hand or louder voice on the day and they'd now like to balance things out more.

If you're still thinking about DIY facilitation think about this: if you decide to have your facilitator from within the business or team:

- the biases that exist in your leadership team will influence what your strategy is; they already are
- you can't facilitate AND participate AND contribute effectively. You just can't.
- if you think the facilitator role is just a timekeeper or will just keep you on track, you don't know what you're missing and what other incredible value a facilitator will bring!

The DIY approach reminds me of an eccentric friend who decided he'd represent himself in court over a family legal matter. He didn't want to pay the legal fees. He thought there wasn't much to it and he could do it himself.

The end result saw him dabbling in an area of deep expertise that was beyond his scope of understanding -- and appreciation -- and the cost in the long run was way beyond financial.

Some DIY projects end up as a dangerous mess.

Your organisational strategy is too valuable to DIY everything; trying to DIY facilitation? It is indeed a sin.

During the session

5. All talk

"Leadership should be more participative than directive, more enabling than performing."

-- Mary D. Poole

This sin already occurs daily in many workplace meetings and workshops where teams of people sit around a table and ... talk.

It's somewhat of a workplace default: people sitting there talking. And talking. And talking some more.

Bringing a team or group together is an invitation of diversity. Sitting around talking for two days doesn't serve this opportunity for diversity. Talking seems a little one-dimensional. We all have differing preferences for how we take in information, process that information, make decisions, communicate, engage and think.

Howard Gardiner's theory of *Multiple Intelligences* documents how we have a number of different 'modalities' rather than a single general ability. He suggests that we have multiple ways of learning. So even if your preference is to sit and talk... it's not diverse enough, nor is it identifying and responding to what else might work for others across the business.

You need difference – in the room at the strategy day and across the strategic process.

Invite diversity and then make the most of that diversity with more than talk. In my blog post on the '*9 Elements of Collaboration*' and my whitepaper on '*The 7 Habits of Highly Collaborative People*' I address the many things you can do beyond talking to, or at, each other.

The most successful companies today foster environments where people collaborate effectively. A lone voice talking isn't collaborative.

In some workshops we can be forced to listen to long-winded or off-tangent sermons, or asked to present on what we've done over the past year to a room of less than interested individuals. Do you think some people are faking their 'listening face' at these types of sessions? It's challenging to listen for that long as well as make sense and retain the thread of the content without losing focus.

When I worked with a conservative audit business on their strategy, they got up out of their seats, plotted and planned using creative and innovative visual charts and maps around the room, shared inspiring stories, crafted tools to share the strategy after the day and had a successful day that encompassed many intelligences. Hooray for them! And people assume audit people are staid and stuffy – not these folks!

6. PowerPoint Snooze

For many leaders, the days before a strategic session see them spending countless hours preparing a PowerPoint pack or presentation of information.

Rather than the big investment of tweaking and tinkering with the layout on a document, have a conversation. Have dialogue with the team.

Time is better spent in implementation AFTER the session rather than preparation of presentations BEFORE the session and the presentation itself DURING the session.

We are already seeing the effects of too much screen time in families, workplaces and relationships the world over. There is a diminishing in our ability to interact socially.

Simon Sinek presented on this very topic in a short interview and presentation on working with millennials.

We are losing our social intelligence and reinforcing that at a strategy or team day by delivering more one-way presentations is a drag and a sin.

Attention spans are already short; no wonder some sessions feel like they are dragging on when people stand up to present dense packs of 132 slides (Yes, this happened at a team session).

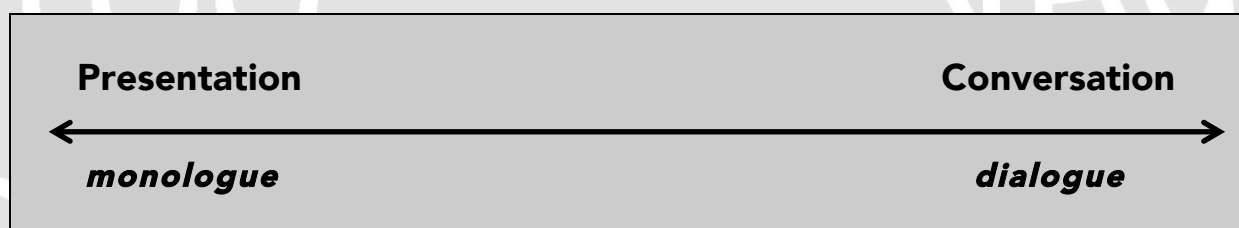
The team gets overloaded with information and it will be tough to get some inspiring, creative and innovative thinking happening after that!

I call it 'cognitive clutter'. It's when you expect an audience to absorb everything you've spent weeks working on, but in just a few minutes. We might expect them to then switch from drowning in information to being able to do their best innovative work. It's all too much!

In working with a leader in a health insurance company, I challenged them to 'pull the plug' on the PowerPoint presentation. After a few moments of hysteria, and some coaching on what to replace it with – dialogue, questions, interactive visuals on a flip charts or white boards – the leader was thrilled with the highest level of engagement in these staff sessions that they'd ever experienced. And they are very much still in business, and thriving.

Rather than using the PowerPoint deck as a crutch or reminder of what to say, make good use of the team of professionals you're bringing together for the day. Tap their knowledge, insights and know-how and work *with* them rather than preaching *to* them.

Where might you be on this scale:



7. Little Input

Almost always, great new ideas don't emerge from within a single person or function, but at the intersection of functions or people that have never met before.

*-- Clayton M. Christensen
Author of 'The Innovator's Dilemma'*

It's a sin indeed to keep things narrow or involving the 'usual suspects' at a strategy session. It might feel more comfortable but you won't get the best out of the event, the team or get the best possible strategic response.

The strategy could end up being insular, limited and reductive. Think instead about getting input from people with differing perspectives. People who interact with customers, work with suppliers, sell, negotiate, arrange, order, deliver, design, launch, strategise, problem solve, collect, coordinate and close. These people have insights galore to share.

The field of Design and User Experience is focused on creating and launching things that meet users needs. Customer and user insights, feedback and suggestions are pivotal, vital, in creating a successful product.

It's also why focus groups and testing sessions, prototyping and scenarios are used -- to get a range of people to comment on and experience things connected to your company and brand.

You could also think about how you will get insights from those who are not in the room on the day of your strategy session. Whether these are stakeholders, suppliers, customers, users, staff, shareholders, volunteers... whoever they are, aim to get some input from them so that views are expansive and represent the wider world.

At a specialist medical team strategy session two patients were invited to come and present their views, stories and experiences. It was incredible. What a game changer for so many of the team on the day who hadn't been so close to customers or seen and felt the challenges they'd experienced before, during and after their interactions with this group of medicos. Insightful in mega doses.

A disability agency did a similar thing; inviting clients and individuals along to the session to hear their stories, see and experience their challenges and use this to spur on greater thinking and more strategic responses to the bigger customer picture.

Other teams have used video booths to capture spontaneous and diverse thoughts from across the team. In this way, their views were provided in a less inhibited way than if they had to stand up in front of a scary senior leadership team!

The other half of inputs ... is outputs.

While there's more to cover on this later in this whitepaper on the topic of actions and outcomes ... I urge you to beware the 'tapper'. The tapper is the designated person sitting

CASCADE
FEW
DOWN
ACTION

in the corner of the room at a strategy session, tapping on a laptop and documenting the outcomes or key points of the session.

Err, it's a little dated and ineffective, your honour. It looks more like a crime scene or the trial with a court reporter capturing testimony! There are more collaborative and transparent ways to represent the progress being made, to capture what's happening *and* to document decisions.

At a financial business strategy day I facilitated, the CEO dropped in later in the day after leaving the majority of the day up to the team he'd empowered. His visit was not to 'check up' but to 'check in'. He was able to review the gallery wall of visual charts, flip charts, tables, action lists and initial plans the team had created and posted. He was able to *see* what had been done, not just hear a verbal report from someone in the room or read a wordy document next week by someone who'd typed up their perspective of what was going on.

PPT
LITTLE
SNOOZE
INPUT

Lovely stuff. No sinning there at all.

8. Idea Slumps

Any type of slump in a workshop is often feared, expected perhaps – think of the after lunch or afternoon slump when we're all a bit drowsy from eating too many sandwiches at lunch!

This is a period of quiet, lower energy and sometimes we can fear that it's not a good thing. But throughout the program there can be other slumps, speed humps or slow points.

A slump or silence can sometimes occur just when we want to start brainstorming or ideating or coming up with brilliant innovative ideas.

We need to avoid the, 'Yay, come on team, let's come up with new ideas for products!' or 'Hey there everyone, who's got a brilliant idea?'

We can't expect genius to automatically flow when we simply bring a group of people together in a room and tell them to be innovative. I believe you need to set up the environment for ideas to be born throughout the session.

Don't try and be all 'brainstorm-y'. You may well create an idea slump, as people aren't prepared to give the goods. You may run into periods of silence and quiet throughout the day as people are trying to process all the information and what they think about it.

There are natural rises and falls in an agenda and in a strategy session and often it happens just before we're about to make a breakthrough. Some facilitators refer to it as 'the groan zone'; it feels too hard, but if we carry on, we'll actually get there and break through.

Try not to push for innovation and ideas (or comment if it doesn't happen as you were hoping) as it may well create a slump or a quiet that kills the vibe. When nothing happens after the request for brilliant ideas, sometimes people can feel a little lost. 'Oh, see I told you I'm not creative', or 'I'm hopeless at this ideation and innovation thing.'

Let the day rise and fall in a natural rhythm and draw on the services of your facilitator who will help you run a range of activities and sessions that will reach the outcomes you're after.

In the meantime, when it comes to working out the actual ideas for your strategy, take a tip from founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos. He says:

**"There are two ways to extend a business.
Take inventory of what you're good at
and extend out from your skills.
Or determine what your customers need
and work backward, even if it requires learning new skills."**

After the session

9. Hangover

This sin is less about an alcohol hangover and more about a mood hangover!

The song, *'The thrill is gone'* made popular by Blues guitarist and legend BB King (and written by Roy Hawkins and Rick Darnell) hits on the message that once the thrill has gone, what happens next.

In this case, once the thrill of the offsite or strategy session is over, what happens next?

Yes, there can be a real coming-down or a flat spell after a significant strategic and transformative event. You'd have felt it after a holiday on your return to work – some of us feel it after the weekend!

With a strategy day of creation at a team offsite, you've been in a unique environment that has shifted and changed and been created by you all. There's been uncertainty initially which gave way to challenge, discussion, debate, disagreement, solution, ideas, euphoria, creativity ... and hopefully a collegiate feeling, a coming together of a team.

While it's great to get the team together, to get away from the office and clear the path of the usual workplace interruptions, there needs to be some time and space allocated to help you with 're-entry' back into the workplace.

- How are you going to land this thing?
- How are you going to assimilate what you experienced with the rest of the organisation?
- How are you going to reconnect?
- How will you integrate it all?
- What will you all do?

It's vital you work some of this out during your strategy session rather than leaving it all to 'when we get back in the office', otherwise you'll lose the spark... and the thrill will be gone. You'll feel dull, drained and distracted and other priorities will push their way in front of this one. It will feel like you had a great night and then you're suffering the next day trying to do anything productive.

Oh, and a word on the matter of real hangovers...

While many participants at an offsite think it's fun and games and an invitation to imbibe a little too much (yes I've facilitated planning and strategy sessions where some team members were under the influence or suffering from the night before.

While it may seem like a break from the office, it is an investment in the organisation and its people, customers, clients, stakeholders, shareholders. Some may think it's an opportunity to hit the booze and let loose – all on the company.

Then once the booze stops flowing, the leaders return to their workplace with a real hangover...from the event. Because of their drinking (or the effects the next day) they weren't tuned in during the event and they certainly weren't contributing their best. I've seen leaders who weren't so collaborative or cohesive with a hangover. Rather they may have been a little more combative, depressed, agitated or at other times, withdrawn, fearful or unusually quiet, managing their throbbing headache. What a waste of talent!

One of the best strategy off sites I experienced saw the team meet on the first evening after travelling to the venue, share a couple of bottles of good quality red wine and that was it. The rest of the time it was about focus and the work to be done. Many of us enjoy a wine or beer to relax or celebrate but often there's too much flowing and that can conflict with the type of event you're aiming for and what you might be trying to achieve by bringing everyone together.

By all means have a celebratory dinner and use that event to help the team bind, but think about it... are you happy for your staff or customers or shareholders or the media to see what you're getting up to? In this era of instant shares and vast social media and photos being snapped everywhere, take care. I was a delegate at a conference recently where a staff member of the venue took photos of a high profile board member grabbing half a dozen beers. Not a good look. Great PR that!

Be clear about the purpose of the event. If it's team building, then build the team; if it's a strategy session then work on the strategy. This is the future of the business, the livelihoods of employees and the value to customers we're talking about. While some businesses have strict, clear and well-understood policies regarding this, for some first-time attendees or new to leadership roles, it might be beneficial to make your offsite policy clear.

10. Cascade Down

A natural thing to do once the session is done and you've returned to the workplace is to think about **how you'll share the strategy to the wider organisation.**

By 'cascading' information, the idea is that you take what was discussed or decided at the strategy day and then package it up to send over the cliff, down down down to the murky depths below to the teams who will put the strategy into action.

But the fact there is a word for this – to cascade – to deliver information down to your team says structure, hierarchy and downward flowing information. Often it's about telling your next level, then they tell the next and they tell the next and before long you have the whispers game you played as a child except now it's being played out by grown-ups. Information is misinterpreted, not delivered at all or edited to take out the difficult-to-explain bits. While it might be convenient to cascade, for those who are on the receiving end of the cascade can feel like they've had a huge wave dumped on them and they're in a virtual washing machine being tumbled around.

A common reason why organisations get their senior leadership teams together and issue communication missives is to achieve alignment; getting the team unified and in-line, heading in the direction of the goals and targets of the strategy you've spent a few days crafting.

In the quest for alignment, when you're thinking about how you're going to send those messages out, there can be a tendency to over-think, or to over-write or over-design.

Your people want to know what happened at the strategy session. They may be eagerly awaiting the outcomes or an announcement to hear about what's going on, what's next and what their role is in future plans.

It can take some organisations way too long to formulate that communication and issue, release or announce it... and that is a sin indeed.

While you're finessing and crafting the words, design and layout of a message, an opportunity has been missed.

Phrases and idioms like, 'striking while the iron is hot', 'the early bird catches the worm' or 'first in best dressed' tell us that success comes when we 'get on with it'. So don't delay.

Speed up the time it takes to deliver your message regarding the strategy story and direction.

The CEO of a strategy day I facilitated took 90 seconds at the end of the day to use the video on his phone to create a short blast of information. He walked around the room with the phone's video on, recording the information plastered on the walls from the strategy session. He turned the phone around and talked to the video, sharing an inspiring, raw and human message to the organisation. He said things like 'here's what we did today', 'here's how we used your input', 'this is where we got to', 'here's how we want to move ahead with this strategy', 'what do you see as your role in us achieving this?' and 'look forward to speaking with you about it over the next few days and then putting it into practice over the coming months.'

He swiftly uploaded that short video to YouTube (private link) and published the link on the company's intranet site and to key leaders and, probably all staff, that day.

It wasn't recorded in a studio with a lapel microphone and perfect lighting. It wasn't scripted. It wasn't edited with introduction music and his name superimposed on the opening frames and it wasn't a slick production. It was a real leader, speaking to real people. And it was super inspiring. That video had thousands of views over the first day. And with the company having less than 1000 staff, it seemed they were looking at it time and again, pausing, making notes, and watching it again.

Nice stuff. No sin there, at all.

How about looking at how else information and communication flows in an organisation - up, across, diagonally. Move away from the 'voice from above' that bellows out strategic messages that cascade to the abyss below!

As Seth Godin in his book *'Tribes: We need you to lead us'* says, communication can be one of four kinds:

1. leader to tribe
2. tribe to leader
3. tribe member to tribe member
4. tribe member to outsider.

It's the 'leader to tribe' that is the preset or the default. Don't be a sinner. Extend your communication beyond the cascade down.

11. Few Actions

Too many events, conferences, workshops and offsites are focused on the event itself, and not the outcomes and strategic implementation that will follow. As a result of lots of talk, no actions are agreed on and so nothing or very little changes.

An article in CEO Magazine (September 2016) titled *'Why strategies fail and what to do about it'* placed execution/implementation/action after the session as one of the biggest reasons strategies fail. It reads:

**'it can be disheartening
when a plan that promises so much
delivers so little.'**

Not just disheartening; how about frustrating, annoying and waste of time, money and effort.

The impact on the leadership team may initially be unseen, but an organisation's leaders who go on a strategy day and then don't do anything with what they worked on, doesn't make for a good look. "If they can't follow through on this, what else won't they follow through on?" were the words from a senior team member after a strategy day's actions hit a roadblock and ... just stopped.

It's certainly not the type of perception that contemporary leaders are aiming to create in this day of authenticity, transparency and visibility.

The CEO Magazine article goes on further to mention the excuse and blame game that can crop up as leaders try to shirk responsibility and dodge accountability for bringing actions from the day to fruition back in the workplace.

This too is a no-go zone. We want to achieve great impact, outcomes and results from the strategic planning process.

It's vital that at the event, at the strategy day, there are commitments, actions and outcomes made and agreed to.

Some of the best sessions I've worked on have seen the team starting to map out the implementation – a framework of who needs to be involved or more detail and what this action is about. They're able to get a jump-start on the implementation and begin in earnest on the first day back to the office. Or better still, I love seeing leaders making calls in the afternoon tea break or right at the end of the day setting some things in place immediately as a result of the strategy day.

Most meetings, discussions, workshops are judged on what their outcomes are, on what they achieve and on what they produce.

So too with the strategy day.

CASCADE
FEW
DOWN
ACTION

This is about more than just a list of names and dates as an action list. Look at how you'll integrate the euphoria of the event with the actions agreed to into the operating rhythm of the business.

It's refreshing and inspiring to speak to senior leaders and CEOs who after their strategy day -- a few weeks later when we have a check-in call to see how things are going -- are able to report that change is underway and progress is being made. Decisions made on the day are being put in to practice. As with the classic leadership maxim: the right things are being done even if at times they aren't popular.

After the actual strategy day, there's a conclusion that's needed, like the tying of a bow on a gift, a closing the loop that says 'we had a strategy day to do x y and z... and here we go with it.'

That's no sin. That's super.

PPT
LITTLE
SNOOZE
INPUT

12. Too Vanilla

When the session and strategy day is done there is likely, hopefully, a communications or marketing task on the 'to do' list of actions.

At some point you'll want to, and need to share the strategy across the wider organisation. Sharing the message beyond the team who were there creating it is a must.

Further to the sin on 'cascade down', let's talk more about the actual communication of the strategy.

Many businesses opt for a 'strategy on a page' distillation. Increasingly these are appearing as highly engaging visual stories with map icons, visual images and strong colours to tell the story. For others, a typical PowerPoint deck or pack is created. Some organisations create a huge wall poster which can be printed and displayed across multiple sites and others have a separate intranet site or page and a range of communication tools to share the detail.

Too often after a fabulous strategy day I get to see the communication of the strategy and it looks like it's come from a completely different event -- and company. Rather than reflecting the energy, enthusiasm, collaboration and innovation that the day created, the communication can end up looking bland, clichéd and ... vanilla.

It's as if the creativity has been stripped out and the end result could apply to any company at all. There's nothing that differentiates the company or shows its human side or brings the strategy to life.

Many common responses to sharing the strategy are forced into multi-page documents full of boxes, charts, coloured arrows and dot points. Again it doesn't really bring the strategy to life for people.

With the rise in popularity of business storytelling, visual communication, sensemaking and other more artisan crafts, there is a need – a craving – by people in organisations to be more engaged by the strategy. Given engagement levels continue to fall globally, something needs to change. What we've been doing hasn't been working.

As Gabrielle Dolan in her book *'Ignite: Real leadership, real talk, real results'* says:

"employees are overloaded with information, so leaders need to communicate succinctly and with brevity to cut through this and have impact. Being real and communicating authentically can also help you get cut-through".

When you consider that a media star like Kim Kardashian has the following of the equivalent of several countries – 43 million people! - and the rising popularity of cat videos and internet memes, something needs to change when it comes to corporate communications.

Ice cream comes in 12, 48 or 101 flavours -- give people a range of options, a variety of ways of absorbing and engaging with your message.

Plus the strategic story and message will get 'legs'; it will be shareable, transferrable and as Seth Godin calls it, have the potential to be an 'idea virus'.

Spend less time stripping the flavor out of your communication and more time connecting directly with the people in your organisation and you'll transfer your strategic message with greater humanity and authenticity.

AFTER	HANG OVER	CASCADE DOWN	FEW ACTIONS	TOO VANILLA
DURING	ALL TALK	PPT SNOOZE	LITTLE INPUT	IDEA SLUMPS
BEFORE	SAME SAME	TOO SAFE	VAGUE PROCESS	D.I.Y FACILITATION

The 12 SINS of STRATEGY

www.lynnecazaly.com

What next...

Work with Lynne Cazaly as your facilitator or adviser. She has a program -- 'The Strategy Day' -- designed to help you work through the elements of crafting your strategy and avoiding the 12 sins.

It includes her cool tool the *Strategy Panorama* that gives you the processes on the day to work well as a team, identify and create your strategy and there's a blueprint for execution as well.

Lynne Cazaly will liaise with you to tailor the agenda, process and activities for your strategy session to suit the people who will be in the room, the position your organisation is in and the hopes you have for the future of the business.

She follows a five-step process of:

1. Briefing and background meeting with you
2. Design & sign off on session agenda and process
3. Preparation for the session
4. Facilitation at the session
5. Follow-up after the session

For more information about 1, 2 or 3 day events,
contact Lynne Cazaly
at www.lynnecazaly.com

or to discuss your thoughts about what you're hoping to do
contact Lynne on +61419560677 or at info@lynnecazaly.com



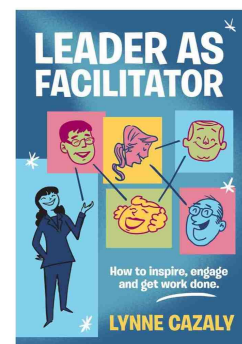
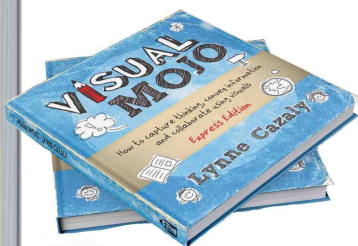
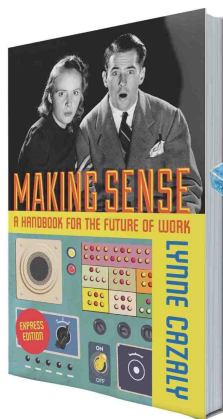
About the Author – Lynne Cazaly

Lynne Cazaly is a keynote speaker, author and facilitator. She is the author of five books:

- Agileish (*pub March 2017*)
- Leader as Facilitator
- Making Sense
- Create Change
- Visual Mojo

She works with executives, senior leaders and project teams on major change and transformation projects. She helps people distil their thinking, apply ideas and innovation and boost the engagement and collaboration effectiveness of teams.

Lynne is an experienced board director and chair and is a global keynote speaker and an executive facilitator. She is a partner with Thought Leaders and on the faculty of Thought Leaders Business School.



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