

Applied Strategic Thinking

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Workshop Objectives

- Explore the methods of strategic thinking
- Practice the seven major skills of how strategic thinkers process information
- Outline the strategic thinking process, both the major processes and their related sub-processes
- Practice the strategic thinking model within a small group.

Workshop Agenda

- What is strategic thinking?
- Seven major skill sets of strategic thinkers
- A model of strategic thinking
- Practice of strategic thinking process using Well's model
- Next steps

Ground rules

- **Everyone here has something to contribute.**
- **Assume that we all know a great deal about what we know**
- **Be curious—explore the process.**
- **Strategic thinking flourishes in group settings.**
- **Interactive process—don't hesitate to ask a question or bring up an insight. Don't be surprised if I ask you a question.**
- **If I say something you do not understand, stop me and ask for clarification!**

Assumptions



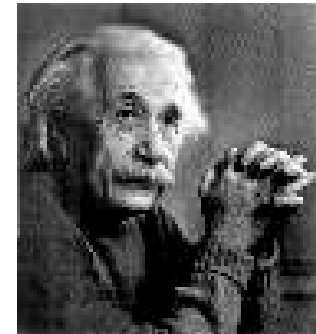
- **The people here are brilliant.**
- **Each individual is a Subject Matter Expert with his/her background and knowledge.**
- **We are very lucky to be here with each other.**
- **Each of us has a strategic issue or problem to work on.**

Strategic Thinking

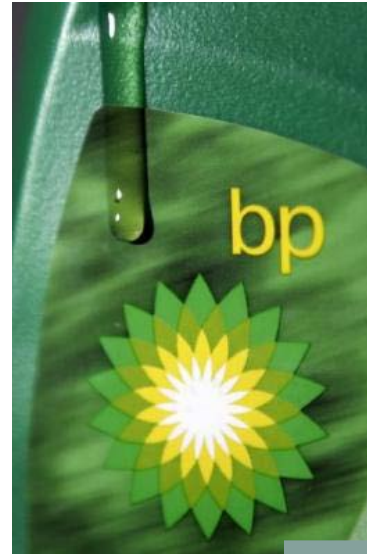
Why Strategic Thinking?

“The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them...”

Albert Einstein



What problems
have happened
recently
that require
different ways of
thinking?



What is Strategic Thinking?

“A series of questions created to help generate a new way of thinking about a problem or issue.”



Stuart Wells

Gifted Strategic Thinkers

Strategic thinkers have the ability to:

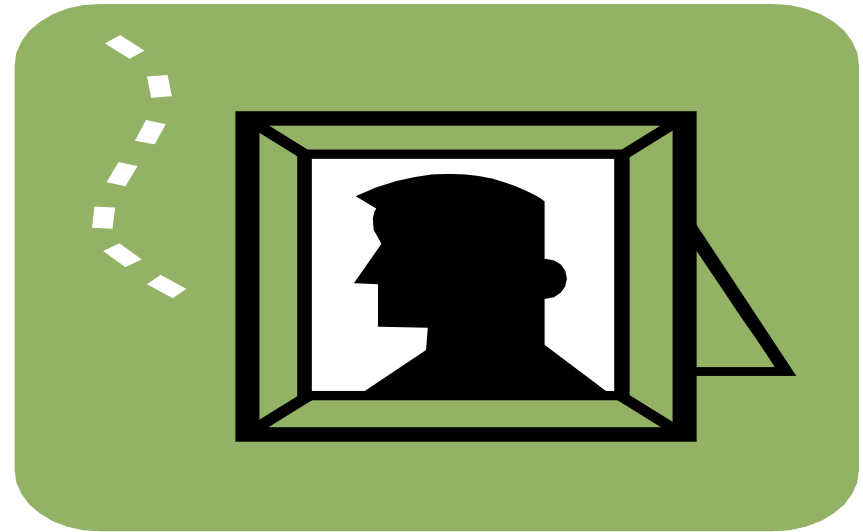


- ▣ Reframing
- ▣ Scanning the environment for trends
- ▣ Envisioning
- ▣ Abstract Thinking
- ▣ Inducting
- ▣ Think with multi-variables
- ▣ Valuating

Source: "What Gifted Strategic Thinkers Do" by Peter Linkow, Training & Development Journal, 1999

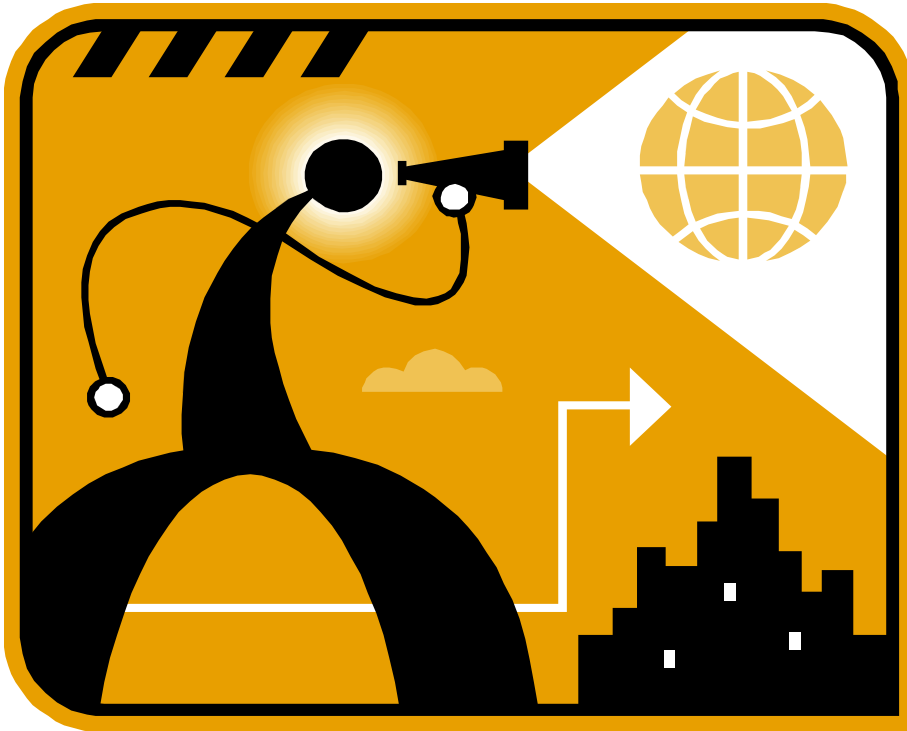
Reframing

- Challenging and restating the underlying beliefs and assumptions on which relations and actions are based.
- Extensive use of metaphor and paradox
- Example: “I am finding my keys” vs. “I am searching for my lost keys.”



HR Professionals are asked to do this when helping employees deal with a layoff.

Scanning



- An iterative process. Constant staccato search for information and the trends and patterns that are unfolding in
 - Technology
 - Government and regulatory agencies
 - Economics
 - Demographics
 - Cultural
 - Industry and market
- Taking a core sample of the population

HR Professionals do this when helping their employer assess their vulnerabilities to organized labor.

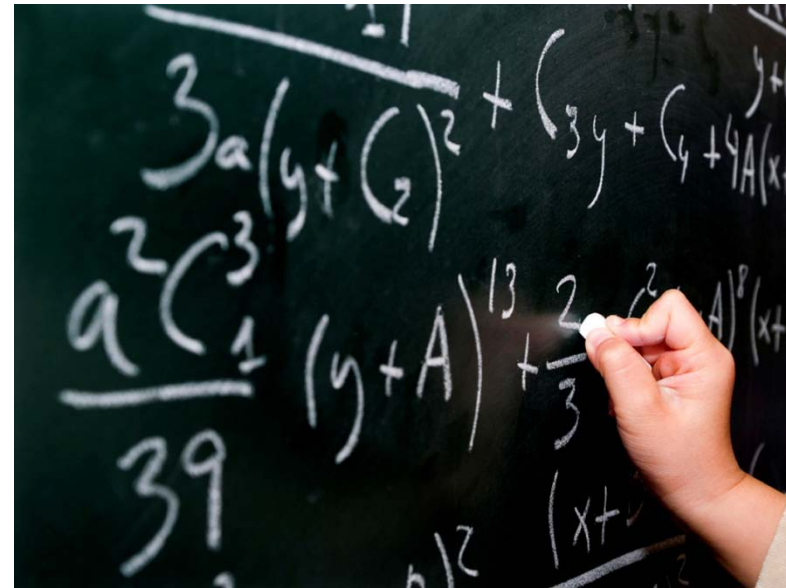
Abstracting

Grasping the essential underlying themes or similarities between disparate bits of information leading to taking action.

Distilling a flood of data into a useable pool of information.

Example: Using structured techniques to get to a core consensus or decision

- Pareto Analysis—80/20 rule
- Multi-voting—consensus tool
- Nominal Group Technique (NGT)
- Selection Matrices



Example of a Selection Matrix

Job Criteria	Weight	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Problem solving	2			
Technical expertise	3			
Team work	2			
Conflict management	1			
Customer service	2			
Yrs Experience	3			
Total Rating				

Example of a Selection Matrix

Job Criteria	Weight	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Problem solving	2	(2) 3 = 6	(2) 1 = 2	(2) 4 = 8
Technical expertise	3	(3) 1 = 3	(3) 3 = 9	(3) 3 = 9
Team work	2	(2) 3 = 6	(2) 1 = 2	(2) 5 = 10
Conflict management	1	(1) 1 = 1	(1) 4 = 4	(1) 3 = 3
Customer service	2	(2) 4 = 8	(2) 3 = 6	(2) 4 = 8
Yrs Experience	3	(3) 2 = 6	(3) 5 = 15	(3) 1 = 3
Total Rating		33	37	41

Envision



Seeing a future state as vivid visual images, starting with the future and planning backwards to the present.

Creating the tension between the desired future state and existing reality

HR professionals do this when they help with the development of a company vision statement.

Inducting

Forming beliefs, assumptions and generalizations quickly from concrete—often sparse—observations.

Observing patterns and formulating conclusions

Example:

- Skunkworks
- small scale pilot projects that can be expanded to larger-scale decisions and actions.



Multi-variant Thinking



- Systems thinking models
- Mathematical models

Balancing many dynamic variables and discerning the relationships among them.

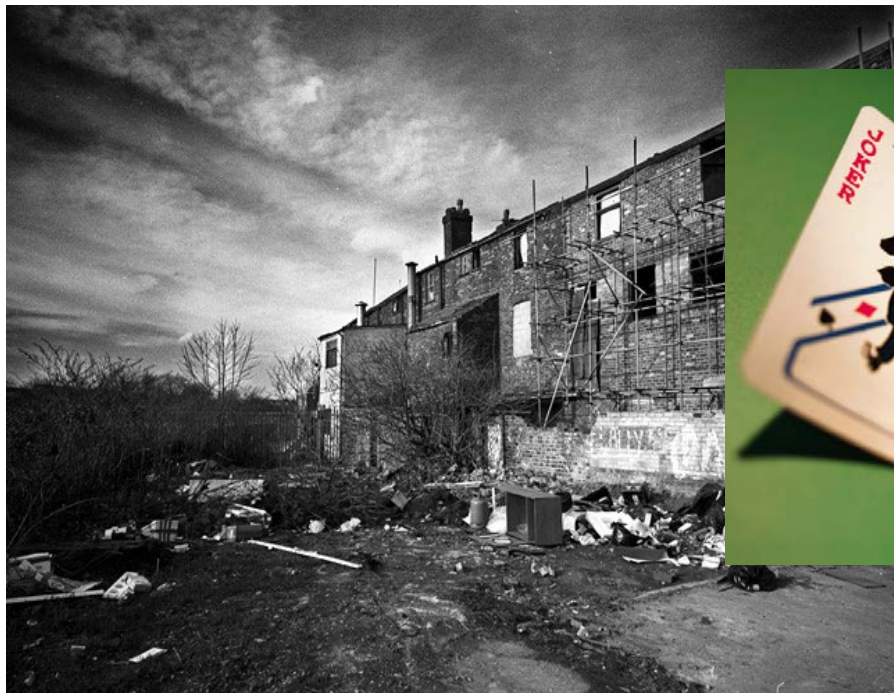
Predicting the outcome of particular actions or decisions

Example: Seeing the forest and also, the trees, the space between the trees, and the surrounding flora and fauna.

- Scenario building

Scenario Building: Compare and Contrast

Worst Case Scenario



Best Case Scenario



Reality will reside somewhere between the two

Valuative Thinking

Knowing and understanding the underlying values, beliefs and attitudes of others.

Working to incorporate a balance of interests.

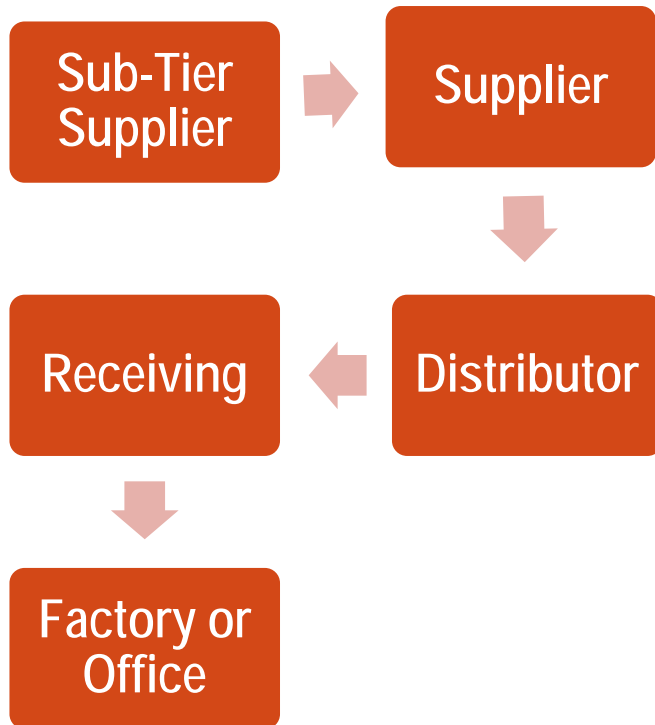
Using intuition to sense the needs of others.

Thinking of multiple stakeholders and their needs

- Example:
 - Diversity awareness or
 - Supply Chain Analysis



Supply Chain Analysis



Competitor Analysis

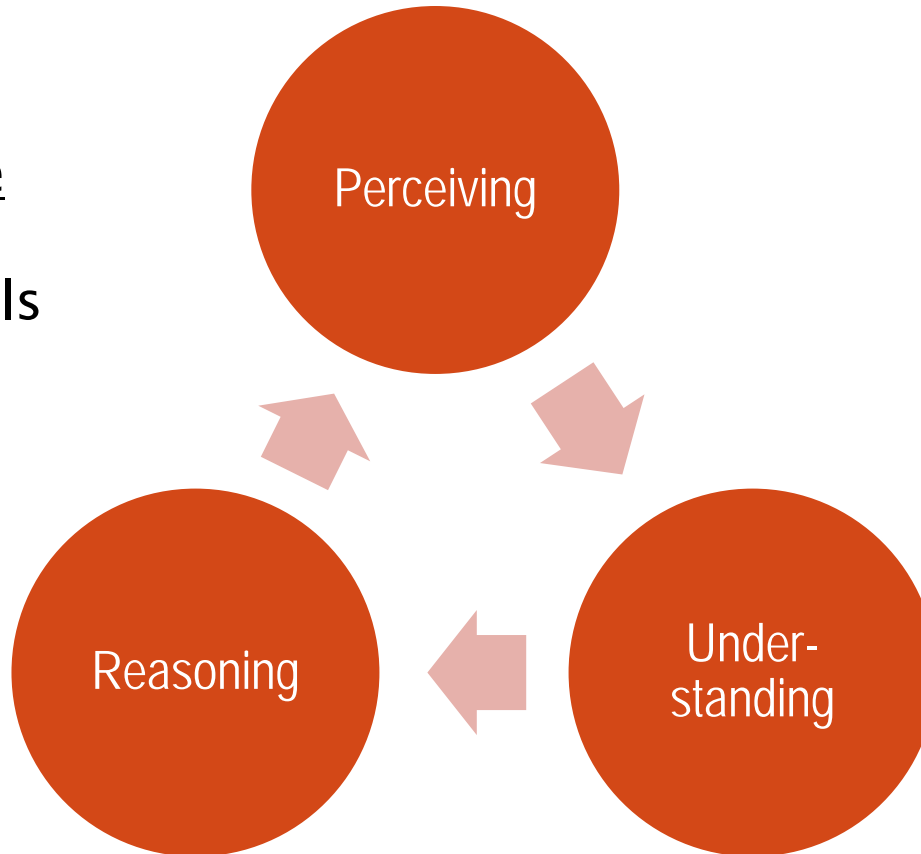


Stuart Wells'

Strategic Thinking Model

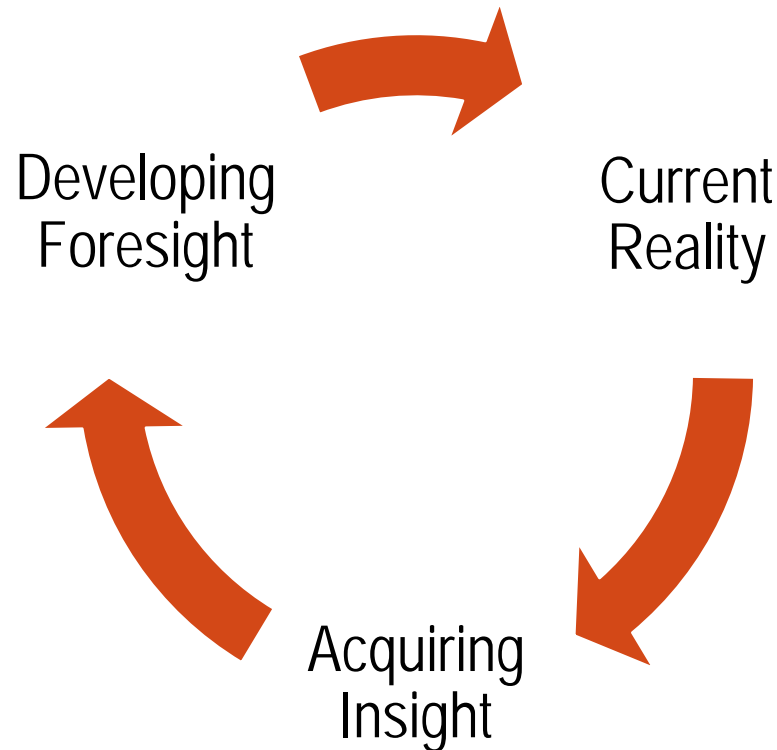
Strategic Thinking Cycle

Source:
Choosing the
Future
by Stuart Wells



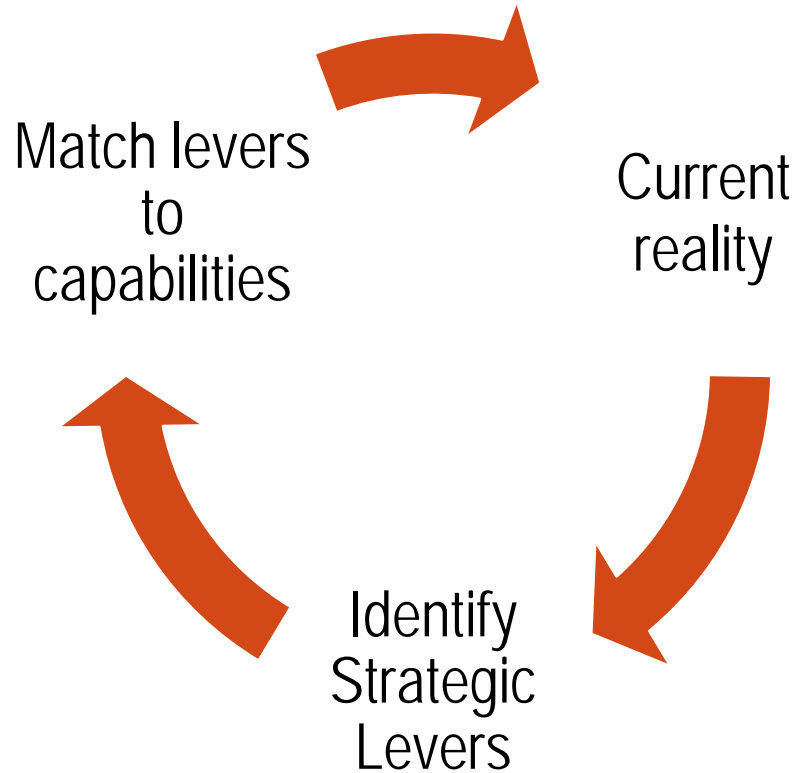
Handout: “Creating a
Strategy: Questions
for Critical Thinking”

Perceiving: What seems to be happening?



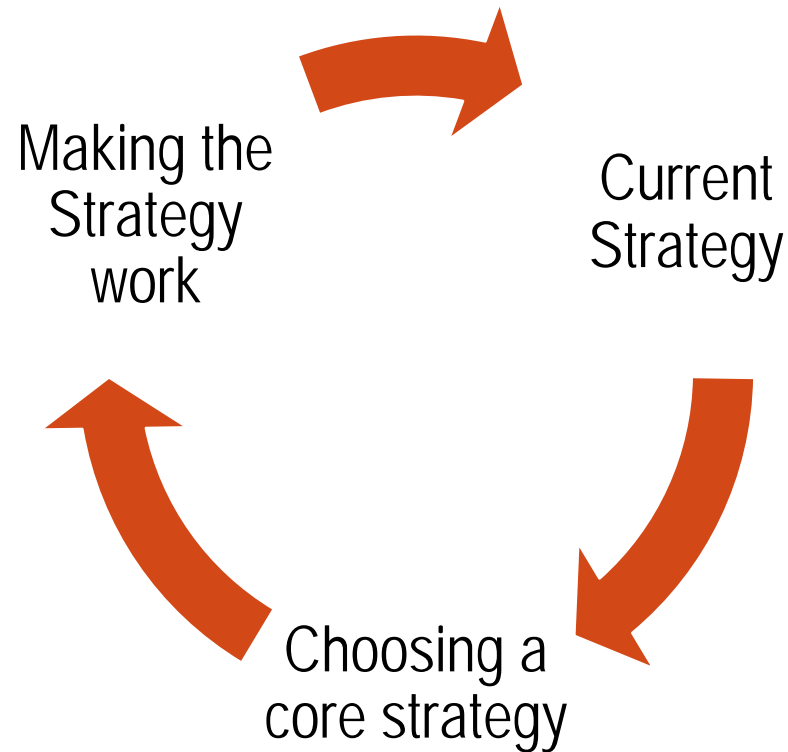
Source: Choosing the Future by
Stuart Wells

Understanding : What possibilities do we face?



Source: Choosing the Future by
Stuart Wells

Reasoning : What are we going to do about it?



Source: Choosing the Future by
Stuart Wells

**“The mind
never thinks
without a
picture.”**



Aristotle

Vision



Action

Strategic Thinking Exercise—Creating the “Picture”



- In a small group of 3, select one person to be the “Client”
 - One person is the Facilitator
 - One person is the Client’s Recorder
-
- The Facilitator guides the Client through the questions in the strategic thinking model.
 - The Recorder captures input from the Client on paper or chart paper.
 - Answer as many of the questions as you are able.

Thought into Action

- What are the notes telling you about your next step related to the central issue or question?
- Are there question marks telling you to gather more information? What additional information do you need to obtain? Where can you get that information?
- What are you going to do next to make it happen?
- If you perceive key obstacles, what are they?
- Identify the top 2 – 3 obstacles.
- Brainstorm 5 – 6 things you can you do to overcome the obstacles.

Action Steps



- What are the next steps of your strategic thinking process that will lead you to action planning?
- What are the immediate next steps you will need to take?

Key Learning

- As a result of your using the Strategic Thinking Model, what did you learn?



Evaluation

- Please complete the evaluation form.
- Provide any additional feedback that you think can make this session better.



Selected Bibliography

- Article: “What Gifted Strategic Thinkers Do”, by Peter Linkow, Training & Development Journal, 1999
- Choosing the Future, by Stuart Wells, 1998.
- “Creating A Strategy Questions for Critical Thinking”, Dark Horse Consulting and Coaching, Sacramento, CA 2010