Primer for Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking makes us more effective because we bring additional insight and solutions to issues. We don't stop at the first answer. We don't take a request at face value. We look around corners. To become a stronger Strategic thinker, we can practice three cognitive skills.

SCAN

» What breadth of data do you scan and consider?
» What connections do you make between disparate ideas?

FRAME

» What is your context for an issue– narrow or broad? Short-term or long-term?
» How do you intentionally narrow your thinking?

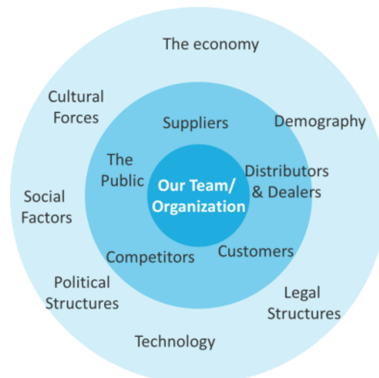
TEST

» Do you understand the assumptions you are making?
» Do you test your thinking over time?
» Can you "step outside" your thought process?

SCAN: Scanning is taking in disparate information, from a wide range of sources that may be relevant to your work.

Tips to try:

» Identify new sources of information
» Consider how a trend may impact your work (directly or indirectly)
» Be aware of your "triggers." We tend to pay attention to things we think are important.
» Listen without screening – don't disregard information (too quickly) because of its source or topic



How might these factors influence your work today and tomorrow?

FRAME: Framing is the leadership tool we use to define a situation (Is it urgent? What is the scope? What is important to pay attention to?) Misdirected frames will result in poor return on invested time.

Tips to Try:

» Be mindful about what is "in" and what is "out"
» Include diverse perspectives
» Narrow/expand your frame to generate alternatives
» Use creative thinking tools to generate new sets of ideas

» Bounds what matters in a situation (issue, outcome, time horizon)
» Shapes our response
» Engages others to view a situation through our lenses
» Narrow frames enable action; broad frames enable creativity...

TEST: Testing is the mental process of ensuring the validity of your frame and conclusions. It's important because we often form different conclusions based on our ladder of inference (right).

Tips to Try:

» Recognize and document assumptions about the past and hypotheses about the future
» Acknowledge bias
» Think about reversal (e.g., What if this is not true?)
» Overcome perceived investment ("sunk cost")

The ladder of inference was created by Chris Argyris. (Harvard Business School)