

## Introduction

We often say that strategy is the CEO's discipline and it may be obvious that CEO's are constantly thinking about the big picture business decisions that will help them better compete in their environments. Thus, if you are a CEO, you probably already see and understand the value of strategy tools in your professional life.

## Doing strategy when you are not the CEO

If you are not a CEO, however, you may need a bit more convincing. So, what do the strategy tools do for you if you are NOT a CEO? Do they still offer us anything useful?

Well, no matter who you are, you play a role in one or more organizations that are designed to create value for their stakeholders. These organizations could be for-profit companies, not-for profit organizations, families, and so forth. Regardless of the specific organization or your specific role, your overall purpose is to create value for the organization.

If you are a volunteer at a food kitchen serving the homeless, maybe you are creating value by literally helping to deliver food to the hungry. If you are a customer service representative in a call center for a major corporation, maybe you are creating value by minimizing the pain that customers experience when using your products. If you are a parent in your family, maybe you are creating value by caring for and developing your children. If you are a manager for a fast food restaurant, maybe you are creating value by helping the right employees get the right resources at the right times in order to deliver food quickly and inexpensively to customers. If there were no clear mapping between what you do in your specific role and the value the organization hopes to create, then there is no purpose for your role. Why would an organization have a role that creates no value?

The problem is that you have limited time, energy, mental resources, emotional resources, and so forth. In every situation you need to make decisions about how to invest your limited resources in order to create as much value as possible. Unfortunately, you will almost always have more opportunities to create value than you can take advantage of given your limited resources.

So, how do you focus your limited resources in ways that CREATE more and DESTROY less value?

Well, if you can effectively describe the strategy of your organization, then you can explain who the key customers (or stakeholders) of your organization are, and you can articulate why they continue to purchase products or services from your organization when they could choose any other organization in the competitive environment. If you can explain this, then you can also start to map your role and your work tasks to the overall logic for how and why your organization creates value. Doing so can help you develop the right "no" criteria in your role. If you cannot see the clear mapping between a task and the strategy of the organization, then maybe you are better off saying "no" to that task! When you really understand strategy, then you can tailor your work at any level of any organization to create the most possible value for your organization.

In addition, people who think strategically often move up more quickly in organizations. These are individuals who do great work within their own spheres, but who are also continuously adjusting what work they are doing in order to create more value for the organization. Co-workers, supervisors, managers and executives notice these people and want to hire them. These are people who create value, and, quite simply, we want them on our team!

## Conclusion

So, even if you are not a current CEO literally making the big picture decisions for a company, a good working knowledge of strategy can help you increase the value that YOU create for your organization.