

Flabby Strategic Thinking is Bad for Business

Much has been written about the correlation between armies fighting wars and businesses winning market share on the commercial battlefield. Looking at the language, the activities and the results of business processes, it's easy to see how the two share similarities.

And they are similar in two key aspects. Both armies and companies need great strategic plans executed well. Armies and businesses need inspirational leaders who can drive their troops to deliver the plan and win the battles, the war and the ensuing peace. But a quick look at two major world events of the last 10 years – The Iraq War and the Global Financial crisis currently afflicting us all – leads us to an inescapable conclusion.

Strategic thinking is pivotal to the success of any enterprise, military, commercial, or in public services. It simply cannot be flabby or sloppy. Yet in both these cases, and many others too numerous to mention, the thinking was clearly very flabby. Your own direct experience in client organisations will also confirm this.

- In Iraq, little thought had been given to what happens after Mr Hussein had gone. They are still thinking about that.
- In the financial markets, no-one had given any thought to what would happen if the supply of capital dried up. They are definitely thinking about that now.

Strategic thinking is the key to making and executing plans. And to understanding that there should be a Plan B, or even a Plan C, as well. But any seasoned military man will tell you the following: -

***Things go wrong. Events overtake the plan.
The strategic plan is always the first casualty in the war.***

In Business and in the Public Sector, it is no different, and the truly great leaders have a set of thinking skills and tools at their disposal which allow them to win, and win consistently.

- Creativity and Detail development tools to make plans.
- Flexibility and Resilience tools to respond positively and decisively to events as they unfold.
- Challenging and Troubleshooting tools to overcome resistance and obstacles.
- Collaborative and Conforming tools to energise teams to get things done.

We all have all of these tools at our disposal, all of the time, but we may not realise it. Flabby thinking is like flabby bodies. It all stems from lack of use. We can all fix our flabby bodies by working towards physical fitness. And in just the same way, the managers and leaders in your client companies can remove flabby thinking from their strategies by developing Cognitive Fitness. Cognitive fitness is the key to great plans, executed well, driving real business growth and success. We will develop this theme over the next few newsletters.

For now, the most critical thing is to make a start. So where is the start line? How do you find out how flabby or fit individuals' thinking is?

Naturally, you measure their Thinking styles and preferences. Our psychometric profiling tool *Thinking Styles*, widely used in all sections of both the private and public sectors, measures 26 different aspects of an individual's thinking preferences, allowing quick and easy identification of key strengths and weakness in their cognitive processes.

In groups, this also leads to fast and insightful comparison with team members, peer group members and more senior management. Armed with this critical information, you are rapidly on a path to provide coaching, training, personal development and leadership development interventions to help your clients cultivate and expand true excellence in Strategic Thinking.

This article is written by Ian King who is the Marketing Director of The Cognitive Fitness Consultancy and works alongside Fiona Beddoes-Jones, author of ConsultingTools' Thinking Styles.