



Impact at the Intersection

Looking to the Future

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Joel Barker's Strategic Exploration Tools

In "Scouting the Future," an article futurist Joel Barker wrote about the Implications Wheel®, he said that during his 30 years as a futurist he promoted the importance of visionary leadership because when leaders act without understanding the complexity within they invite "unintended consequences," two words that have become "the law of unintended consequences." This suggests that we should expect these unintended, implied "bad," consequences. This creates a fear of the future because it is full of negative unpredictable consequences. But there are also positive consequences, opportunities, in the future.

As a leader your role is to get people to follow you to the "place they would not go to by themselves" (Joel Barker, "Leadershift") That place is the future. Finding that place and leading your team to it is your most important responsibility. If you are unsure of what is ahead and afraid of the unintended consequences, you will lead slowly and that could put you at a competitive disadvantage.

Joel Barker's Strategy Matrix®

The Strategy Matrix® is a tool that allows individuals and organizations to examine the impact of trends, innovations, events, policy changes on strategic objectives and key characteristics. It is a convergent thinking tool that carefully analyzes the information an organization has about possible futures.

The concept behind the Strategic Exploration Tools that Joel Barker developed is a metaphor best represented by the era of American wagon trains. The wagon master's role was to lead the pioneers to a safe and fertile area in a given time. The journey started with a clear vision of the destination, an awareness of objectives based on initial resources and time, plus an awareness of certain key characteristics of the wagon train. The wagon master knew whether or not there were a large number of children, knew if there were strong back-ups to his role as wagon master, or one of the best cooks, etc. So, the wagon master could evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats as the wagons prepared to roll.

Then, before a good wagon master rolled away (and throughout the journey) the wagon master would send out scouts to see over the horizon. This provided him crucial information that allowed quicker decisions with higher confidence and allowed the wagons to move forward at a faster pace. What impact do you have on the rest of the wagon train knowing that the leader was scouting the future before making critical decisions that affected the well-being of the organization? Everyone's confidence was improved.

When the scouts returned to the wagon master they sat around the campfire and evaluated the impact of their information on the critical goals the wagon master wanted to achieve in the next days or weeks.

Four attributes for the wagon master and his scouts are necessary to ensure that the expedition is successful.

Speed: The scouts have to ride out, make observations, and return quickly. The wagon master and his scouts process the information quickly over the campfire in order to thoroughly evaluate the impact this information has on the expedition's personnel, resources and the ability to meet the goals of the wagon train

Qualitative Information: The information evaluated by the wagon master, his scouts and all members of the wagon train is thorough, comprehensive but it is still qualitative in nature. The information is based on observations, impressions, and estimates of the impact the factors have on accomplishing their goals. There is insufficient time to collect detailed information with absolute levels of certainty on what's always an unknown future.

The scouts rode out in many **different directions** to get a broad view of the horizon. Similarly, the wagon master with his scouts processes a wide range of trends (weather), innovations (i.e., a new rigging to protect babies), and events (a major storm) to consider their possible impact. Some will be assessed to have major positive impact on the expedition's strategic objectives, others will be discovered to have a negative impact, and some will have no impact on the goals and objectives

Ultimately this information is placed on the shoulders of the wagon master to make decisions. Just like the Implications Wheel the information generated by the Strategy Matrix is **decision enhancing** information that allows leaders to make better decisions about their future.

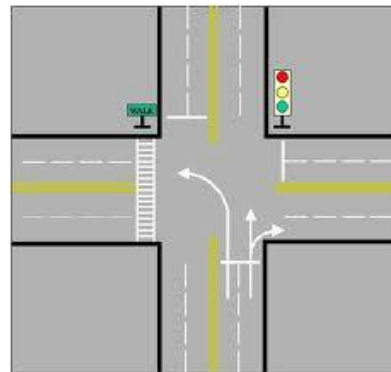
In the 21st Century

The Strategy Matrix puts these powerful scouting characteristics into place for 21st Century organization. In today's environment, there are more possible pathways to an organization's goals, more information from an overwhelming volume of data and information, a need for greater input from a diverse population of stakeholders.

The Strategy Matrix creates the ability to thoroughly evaluate the impact, short- and long-term, of trends, innovations, initiatives, events, and new strategic objectives on an organization's strategic objectives and key characteristics. It is equally valuable at an individual level, for example with career decisions. And it offers a S.W.O.T. analysis that becomes a 21st Century decision-enhancing tool.

The fundamental concept of the Strategy Matrix is the intersection of these factors and how they impact an organization's strategic objectives and key characteristics (defined as essential characteristics of an organization). It's a critical dialogue at the intersection:

- Where direction can be changed.
- Where collisions often occur.
- Where you can get stalled.
- Where a clear pathway is signaled.
- Where good connections can be made.



The question is simple: To what extent does this trend (or innovation, or initiative, or...) make it easier or harder to accomplish the Strategic Objectives. To what extent does it make it easier or harder to maintain this Key Characteristic (or eliminate a negative Key Characteristic)?

From this, leaders can make the important decisions. They can see the priorities to formulate actions. At the intersection, they can spot a clear road ahead, change direction if necessary, avoid collisions, or make good connections with other elements of the organization's objectives and characteristics.

*There are corners out there
You know they're waitin' somewhere
And you've got to be prepared to turn*

Harry Chapin

Manufacturing Example CAM-I											
Strategic Objectives						Key Characteristics					
- +	Strategic Objectives					Key Characteristics					Row Totals
	A - To begin exports to Europe by June, 2007	B - To create a Sales and Marketing Department that is profitable by January, 2007	C - To reduce the number of Peak Customers that is with the company by 2007	D - To meet the number of EPA Goals for Emissions by 2010	E - To achieve "Zero Emissions" in all plant locations by 2010	F - High Quality/High Price	G - Job Shop/High Technology	H - Rural Location	I - High % Sales with One Customer	J - High % Sales with One Key Characteristic Subtotal	
	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	-3	+1	
ST: 1 Year LT: 5 Years											
Significance Factor:											
1 - [Event] Environmental Cleanup Regs Enforced	+1 -3	0 0	+5 -5	+5 +5	+5 +5	+16 -10	0 0	0 -1	0 0	0 -1	+16 -10
2 - [Innovation] Decline in Use of Mechanical Components	-1 +1	+5 +5	+3 -1	0 0	0 0	+8 -1	+3 +1	+3 +3	-5 -5	-5 -5	+21 -25
3 - [Trend] High Expectations of Customers	+5 +5	+5 +5	+5 -5	0 0	+1 +3	+16 -13	+5 +5	+5 +5	-1 -1	+3 +3	+32 +29
4 - [Trend] Market Maturing in the United States	+5 +5	-1 -1	0 0	0 0	0 0	+5 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	0 0	-5 -5	+5 -11
5 - [Trend] Information Processing Systems Growing	+5 +5	+5 +5	+3 +5	0 0	0 0	+13 +15	+1 +5	+3 +3	0 0	+5 +5	+22 +28
Column Totals	+16 -1	+15 -3	+16 -1	+5 +5	+6 +8		+9 -1	+11 -1	+18 0	+8 -10	+ST -LT

S.W.O.T. Analysis - Total Quality Locomotives

Selected Rows Only

S.W.O.T. Analysis - Total Quality Locomotives											
Strategic Objectives						Key Characteristics					
- +	Strategic Objectives					Key Characteristics					Row Totals
	A - To begin exports to Europe by June, 2007	B - To create a Sales and Marketing Department that is profitable by January, 2007	C - To reduce the number of Peak Customers that is with the company by 2007	D - To meet the number of EPA Goals for Emissions by 2010	E - To achieve "Zero Emissions" in all plant locations by 2010	F - High Quality/High Price	G - Job Shop/High Technology	H - Rural Location	I - High % Sales with One Customer	J - High % Sales with One Key Characteristic Subtotal	
	+2	+2	+3	+1	+1	+3	+2	+1	+1	+2	
ST: 1 Year LT: 5 Years											
Significance Factor:											
1 - [Strength] Reputation in community	+1 +1	+1 +1	-1 -1	+1 +1	0 0	0 0	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	-1 -1	+8 -25
2 - [Strength] Product reputation	+1 +1	+1 +1	-1 -1	0 0	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+8 -25
3 - [Strength] Support from CEO	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	0 0	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+8 -25
7 - [Weakness] Budget limitations	-3 -3	-3 -3	+1 +1	0 0	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1
8 - [Weakness] Inexperienced HR staff	-3 -3	-1 -1	-1 -1	0 0	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1
9 - [Weakness] Current salary levels below community average	-3 -3	-3 -3	+1 +1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1
13 - [Opportunity] Increased number of training programs available	+1 +1	0 0	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1
14 - [Opportunity] Growth of online learning resources	+1 +1	0 0	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1
15 - [Opportunity] Company endorsement of online store	+1 +1	+1 +1	-1 -1	0 0	0 0	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1	+1 +1
19 - [Threat] Sexual harassment situation	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1
20 - [Threat] Cost of compliance with new regulations	0 0	-1 -1	-1 -1	0 0	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1
21 - [Threat] Well funded competitor in community	-3 -3	-3 -3	-1 -1	0 0	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1	-1 -1
Column Totals	+16 -1	+15 -3	+16 -1	+5 +5	+6 +8		+9 -1	+11 -1	+18 0	+8 -10	+ST -LT