

Strategy versus Tactics

What's the Difference?

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Topic of Discussion

- The Difference between Strategy and Tactics
- The important of having both
- Two fundamental human factors that naturally divide Strategy and Tactics
- How to keep them together

Origin of “Strategy”

- The word derives from the **Greek** word *stratēgos*, which derives from two words: *stratos* (army) and *ago* (ancient Greek for leading). *Stratēgos* referred to a 'military commander' during the age of Athenian Democracy - Around 500 BC
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategy>

Different Words for Strategy

- What
- Why
- Where
- Planning
- Blue Sky
- Out There
- Big Picture
- Direction

Origin of “Tactics”

- New Latin *tactica*, plural, from Greek *taktika*, from neuter plural of *taktikos* of order, of tactics, fit for arranging, from *tassein* to arrange, place in battle formation
- 1626
- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

Different Words for Tactics

- The “How” is something done
- “In the Trenches”
- The Devil is in the Detail
- Activities
- Tasks
- Meeting Actions

The Order

- First comes talking, then comes action

- Without Strategy, Tactics will fail
- Without Tactics, Strategy will fail

Both are needed for success in any
endeavour

Too Much Strategy

- Applying Strategy without Tactics is all talk but no action
- Nothing actually gets done!

Too Much Tactics

- Tactics without Strategy is “the blind leading the blind”
- Too busy cutting down the tree to stop and sharpen the saw
- Ready - Fire - Aim!

Human Factor on Strategy

- People are generally fearful of commitment (a trait learnt when younger – don't make mistakes!!)
- This leads to too much strategy, too much talking!
- Nothing gets done

Human Factor on Tactics

- People are also fearful of being accused of not being productive (another trait learned when young – you must be busy to be successful!!)
- This leads to lots of **tactics** – doing, but nothing planned
- The Wrong things get done

To Top It Off

- To a Tactician, Strategists appear non-committal, airy-fairy, light headed, fanciful
- To a Strategist, Tacticians appear hard headed, dogmatic, aggressive, single minded
- They don't tend to mix very well!!

3 Opposite Drivers

- Not Making a Commitment for Fear of Making Mistakes Increases Strategy and Decreases Tactics – **Nothing** gets done
- Fear of not looking busy Decreases Strategy and Increases Tactics – The **Wrong** things get done
- Strategists don't understand tacticians and tacticians don't understand strategists

- It is the balance that is important, and each project has it's own balance point

- Some projects require lots of strategy and not much tactics
- Some require very little strategy and lots of tactics
- Some require an equal mix
- Experience tells what is required

The Best Culture

- Ignore mistakes
- Ignore time keeping
- Focus on output
- Measure performance
- Recognise the important of the balance of Strategy and Tactics

Application to Kuwait Projects

- Projects in Kuwait are amongst the easiest in the world to do
- Why? Flat terrain; mild environment; easy materials; simple processes
- So what goes wrong?
- Is it Strategy or Tactics?

Discussion

- What can be done about improving project delivery in Kuwait?