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'STRATOGRAPHY': THE ART OF CONCEPTUALIZING AND COMMUNICATING STRATEGY

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Representations of strategy tend to either be so generalised as to have little real meaning for employees, or they go into such detail that people struggle to understand what is really required. The problem is that a strategy not understood by those who have to implement it is as bad as (or worse than) not having a strategy. In 1983, a classic *Business Horizons* article by Kark Weick pointed to the importance of using graphical approaches to representing strategy to overcome these problems, but since its publication little has been written on how managers might do this effectively. Our paper argues that individualized drawings of strategy, or what we term ‘stratography’, could enable more effective conceptualization and communication of the strategic complexity that organizations face and the paths that they are seeking to follow. We employ the latest thinking in cartography, educational philosophy, optics, graphic design and military practice in order to outline seven good practices of effective stratography.

Keywords: strategy, communication, complexity, drawing, graphics

DRAWING STRATEGY

A recent edition of *Fortune* magazine profiling Alan Mulally (*Fortune*, 2009) did something unusual. The journalist was so surprised and impressed by CEO Mulally's drawing of Ford's strategy, scribbled with his own hand in preparing for the interview, he asked if they could reproduce it in the magazine. It is a vivid illustration of Ford's challenge, Mulally's vision and the need to communicate this effectively to all stakeholders. As Mulally says in the article (*Fortune,* 2009, p.41), and writes on the drawing, "communicate, communicate, communicate… Everyone has to know the plan". In a world where some estimate that an average of 95% of a company's employees are unaware of or do not understand its strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2005), it is a vivid illustration of the power of a simple, personal graphic for communicating strategy.

This Fortune article reminded us of a classic *Business Horizon's* article by Karl Weick (1983) entitled *Misconceptions about Managerial Productivity*. In it, Weick outlines how stochastic practices like medicine or management or being a mechanic are different from many other fields of knowledge, in that effective practice is not about thinking before or separate from action, but acting and thinking in unison. "Medicinal diagnosticians", he outlines (1983, p. 48), "do not follow the sequence: observe symptom, make diagnosis, prescribe treatment. Instead they… observe symptom, prescribe treatment, make diagnosis. They can diagnose… only after they see how [the disease] responds to treatment, not before." Outlining the formula "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?", Weick (1983, p. 49) writes of how the action of developing drawings and maps creates meaning, animates debate, and facilitates shared diagnoses and action in organizations. They are prototype models that enable various treatment scenarios to be thought through or tested out. Weick (1983, p. 49) goes on to explain that: "The world of the manager is senseless until [someone] produces some action that can be inspected… you

can't make sense of a situation until you have something tangible to interpret". Given that an organization is of a scale far larger than a human body or a motorcycle, graphical representations are powerful animating objects that can be interpreted in this regard.

Mullally's drawing and Weick's paper illustrate a perennial business problem, and a solution that still remains largely untapped. How can executives communicate a complex message, the strategy of the firm, to a wide variety of stakeholders, so that the message is understood and remembered? What methods are there for communicating strategy effectively and what can executives do to improve the way they currently communicate? As the examples above suggest (and the practice of many managers who perhaps used to doodle 'back of an envelope ideas' a lot more frequently would reinforce), individualized graphics can be a powerful communication mechanism and aid to strategic thought. But in the thirty years since Weick's *Business Horizon's* paper how to do this effectively has received little explicit attention. Our article argues that critical attention to the drawing of strategy is long overdue. It explores how a graphical approach to strategy, or what we term 'stratography', might work, and how its principles can enable managers to enhance their conceptualization and communication of strategy.

COMMUNICATING COMPLEXITY

Science tells us that people can receive and understand complexity far more readily if it is presented graphically, rather than textually. People have better recall of pictures and printed words receive less 'processing attention' (Foos & Goolkasian, 2005). And it is now widely understood that the best way to learn, and retain what we learn, is to build understanding through combining three elements. The first element is the kinetic or 'hands-on' doing of tasks. The second is pictorial or graphical aids to help conceptualize. The third is associating these things with abstract representative *symbols*: text or language

and numbers (Anghileri, 2005). Without the first two elements, learning through language and numbers alone is not particularly effective. Take out any guide or manual, for anything from a television set to a bicycle, and think about how hard it would be to act upon if there were no pictures alongside the text. Research suggests that visual treatments in addition to text when providing instruction are helpful, particularly when prior knowledge is low (Chanlin, 1998; 1999).

Research also suggests that a major for managers have is how to effectively communicate strategy. A recent survey asked executives what were the areas of strategy requiring greater strength or emphasis. At the top of the list for 79 per cent of respondents, was the need to more effectively communicate their strategy internally (Hunter & O'Shannasy, 2007). A recent study has shown how PowerPoint slides can help to advance the kind of things that Weick posited as important: the cartographic rendering of boundaries and distinctions, the collaboration that comes from discussing an image projected before ones eyes (Kaplan, 2010). However, PowerPoint slides are often bounded by the decisions made by the programmers that designed the generic package and difficult for the individuals to whom they are being projected to re-interpret and manipulate. We might borrow Mathew Crawford's (2009) argument from *Shop Class for the Soul* to suggest that, more often than not, PowerPoints are indicative of a culture that can no longer lift the lid and tinker with or adapt the fundamental workings of an object.

In keeping, company strategies are generally captured in, and communicated by, documents and generic PowerPoints packed with text and numbers, or with graphics that are hard to follow or relate to. While people do often learn about strategy by enacting it on a day to day basis (the first element of understanding), business strategy is hardly ever communicated through effective pictures or graphics (the second element). It should not be a surprise, therefore, that many people in most organizations are not sure what to do to

enact the company's strategy, or that they have default a view of what to do that may be quite different from other people in the organization. Without good graphics they lack a good foundation for learning, remembering and acting.

Curiously, useful graphical aids to help communicate complexity are commonplace in other stochastic fields of endeavor. For instance, sports commentators often draw on interactive screens to demonstrate to their TV audiences how football strategies work out. Coaches, managers and players make extensive use of graphical tools for immediate communication of how they see the play unfolding and to demonstrate what moves may be the most effective. Drawing on white boards, flip charts, freeze frames from TV footage, play books, game cards are all useful vehicles for conveying positions and dynamics on a contested space over time. In mechanical, medical or military practice the graphic is also critical. It is important to train people in as many 'concrete' situations as possible to simulate 'live' scenarios (first element), and it is also important to express strategy through verbal and written commands (third element), going forward. But these two strategic strands are effectively joined by pictorial representation of the situation at hand and diagraming and map-reading are crucial parts of a professional's training.

However, good individualized images are seldom used in the presentation of a business strategy to stakeholders. We lack an appreciation of that 'second element' of understanding critical for communicating, learning and understanding. Consequently, many strategies may be failing not because they are poorly planned or implemented without enthusiasm, but because they are poorly and uni-dimensionally expressed.

At this point, a knowledgeable reader might well be wondering 'but what about Strategy Maps, one of the most popular new concepts in strategic management developed over the past decade?' Kaplan and Norton's ideas advanced in books such as *The Balanced Scorecard* (1996) and *Strategy Maps* (2004), reflect a desire for good graphics in strategy

in a very effective way, and they prescribe a graphical approach which can be a useful foundation (see the Tesco example later in our paper). However, perform an image search on Google for 'strategic maps' and the vast majority of images that appear are intricate PowerPoint slides that are more language and numbers than pictorial and stick rigidly to the prescribed generic balanced scorecard (BSC) template. While it is estimated that over 70% of Fortune 100 companies use the BSC (Beiman & Johnson, 2007), and almost all now offer some explanation of their strategy or vision on their websites, it is telling that not one of these companies uses a BSC or Strategy Map as part of this explanation process. We need to develop additional non-textual, non-generic ways of communicating strategy effectively to enable truly multi-modal strategy communication.

Moreover, the time is right. We believe that many of the views being addressed in Britain at present with regard to a Revised UK Corporate Governance Code, get to the nub of a world-wide problem that more pictorial approaches than BSC and Strategy Maps could help fix. The Chairman's preface to revised Code hopes that it: "might be a turning point in attacking the fungus of 'boiler-plate' which is so often the preferred and easy option in sensitive areas, but which is dead communication" (*Financial Reporting Council*, 2009, p. 13). Reporting on subsequent discussions, the article, 'Investors Want You to Tell a Better Story' in the *Financial Times* (Stern, 2010) opined that the task for leaders in the light of the new code was to recognize that current modes of communicating strategy with stakeholders "drowning in technical measurements – total shareholder returns, earnings per share, economic value added… fail to answer the much more important and basic questions: why do you exist? What are you trying to do?... The task [now] is to communicate the character of your company. Stop hiding behind massaged figures and intricate PowerPoint slides. Tell us a story about your business that people can believe in."

Furthermore, whereas the educational revolution sparked off by Howard Gardner's

(1983) *Frames of Mind* (which argued for multiple forms of intelligence and corresponding learning styles, of which spatial-pictorial was one) encouraged people to claim that they either were, or were not, 'visual learners', recent research suggests that such distinctions are not black and white (Pashler et al., 2008). Added to this, the Internet through which we now gain so much of our information is multi-modal, effortlessly combining the textual, visual and kinetic in very unique ways – which wasn't the case when *Frames of Mind* or *The Balanced Scorecard* were written (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Hull & Nelson, 2005). Consequently, we must recognize that we are all now, to some degree at least, increasingly visual learners. We should explore how we might effectively visualize, or pictorialize, strategies further.

EXPLORING WHAT GOOD STRATOGRAPHY MIGHT LOOK LIKE

While there have been good approaches developed for drawing organizations, they tend to either focus just on an organization's structure, and use set, systemic rules for depiction (Mintzberg & Van der Heyden, 1999; Cummings & Angwin, 2004). Or they promote drawing activities but offer little detail on what should be done or aimed for, such as the 'strategy canvas' suggested by Kim and Marbourgne (2005), or proponents of 'design thinking' in business and its principles of think-make-do prototyping (Esslinger, 2009; Martin, 2009). We believe that a further approach should be introduced which recognizes explicitly the importance of graphical representation of strategy and its ability to represent connections between and across levels of analysis. 'Stratography' can be defined as pictorial abstractions that outline the unique terrains and/or some relationships related to this terrain: competition, internal relationships, or market conditions in which organizations are embedded. Maps are perhaps the most commonly recognized media for outlining such relationships. Consequently, we should start our exploration of stratography

by seeking to understand what makes a compelling map or graphical depiction of relationships in a terrain. Having surveyed what cartography, graphics, aesthetics, cognition and optics have concluded in this regard, we summarize seven good stratographic practices. The first four may be associated with mechanical movements: stopping the eye, spreading the eye across a terrain, enabling the eye to seek out connections, and facilitating the eye to zoom and out, between micro and the macro levels, to draw key linkages. The last three may be related to more cognitive and sensual principles: mimesis, synaesthesis and mnemonics.

1. Attracting and Focusing the Eye

Because an eye is busy, good stratography must gain the attention of the viewer quickly. It must have 'eye appeal'. It must be quickly perceived to be interesting or useful and able to be quickly comprehended. Put another way, it must have a use or interest value greater than the perceived effort it will take to extract that interest or use. Hence, key elements for stopping the eye and encouraging it to focus on a graphic are:

- novelty – this can go a long way toward getting a second glance, but too much can make a graphic appear irrelevant;
- aesthetics - clear lines and strong colors, but not too many of either;
- purpose - a clear view of what the map is seeking to do, and not trying to do too much;
- utility - conveying a sense that the viewer could quickly take something interesting from it.

The examples of good stratography that we provide at the end of the article illustrate this principle of attraction and focus well.

2. Spreading the Eye: Left to right, Top to bottom, Clockwise

Although it is not true of all cultures, the Western eye generally becomes acculturated to scanning a page hierarchically from the top left corner across and down the page, or clockwise from left to right, down and back around. It follows that good stratography in business contexts where this is, or is becoming, the prevailing culture (it is increasingly more common for Chinese characters to be recorded and read across rather than down the page), will work with rather than against this grain. Enabling the eye to move in this comfortable manner, to quickly get an understanding of the presentation of the terrain and the key relationships, is generally effective (see figure 1).

[Figure 1 about here]

Denis Wood's *The Power of Maps* (1992), illustrates the value of this with reference to a well-known illustration by Tibor Gergely in the children's book *The Little Red Caboose*. The second half of the book, the beginning of which is marked by this picture, brings a mountain, and its defining characteristics, into the foreground of the story. What immediately grabs the viewer is the train about to make it to the top, with all eyes in the picture also leading to it. The eye then rolls down the mountain and into the context – where the train has come from. Of course, this context is important too: but best absorbed after you have understood that this story is now about the train's relationship to and ascent of the mountain.

3. Encouraging the Eye to Search

Having arrested the viewer and then spread their eye across its surface, a very good

graphical representation may begin to do two more things simultaneously. It will draw in the eye, keeping it engaged in the picture; and it will begin to loosen the eye up, to make it suspend preconceived beliefs and ways of proceeding and to seek new patterns. While this sounds unusual, look at the examples in figure 2 and decide which one causes your eye to be drawn into the figure and search around, and which one seems to repel it?

[Figure 2 about here]

The adaptation of a painting by Bridget Riley, shown in figure 2 (top), draws you in. Then, almost immediately, you feel your eye wandering as it looks for patterns, lighting up different parts of the brain as you go. Written languages and graphs and charts that follow a regular, pre-determined pattern (e.g., right, down one, left, right, down one, left…) and cover most of the available surface, do not have the same effect.

Unfortunately, most attempts to communicate strategy have an effect more similar to the image shown below the Riley picture. When cigarette manufacturers were first required to print health warnings on their packets, they were very clever about using the latest thinking to design statements that both conformed to the fledgling regulations and that cynics might say were not particularly readable. However, as governments and other regulating bodies have become savvier about this practice, tobacco companies have had to print bigger, bolder and less wordy warnings. Now many countries require a warning far less removed from concrete experience of the illnesses caused by smoking, and far more likely to have an impact on the viewer: pictures of those diseases or degradations.

So, how does image above draw in the eye while the warning below seems to be pushing it out? It has to do with space and what we might call an irregularity which is not too irregular. Good graphical representations like these include a lot of white or neutral or

negative space, generally irregularly proportioned but in ways that patterns can easily be sought and found. This helps bring the viewer in and encourages the viewer to start to look for relationships because it is part of the way our brain works to always be seeking patterns and connections. In the same way that knowledge management or creativity gurus tell us that ‘slack’ is required to encourage new and productive reservoirs of tacit knowledge and patterns of thinking, graphics need to contain ‘slack’ too: in the form of enough space to enable the reader to find themselves and other connections. Riley's picture exhibits these characteristics. The image below it, with its heavy and close borders and its cramped and regular font (all caps, and little differentiation between the space between words and letters within words), makes it a struggle to read. You can almost feel it trying to push your eye away.

4. Facilitating the Eye’s Zooming In and Out

The ability to see both the micro and the macro, the big picture and the detail, the complex and the simple, is a particularly important aspect of effective strategic action. Good stratography should aid this. Because incorporating too much detail can turn people off or paralyse them, good stratography should focus on just the few dimensions necessary to aid decision making in a particular arena. Certainly, while three dimensions may enable us to better represent reality, we find it much easier to work with a two-dimensional map or graphic. And, within two dimensions, a useful general rule is to aim for no more than seven colours, no more than seven directions or seven value categories and not to introduce too many different shapes. By simplifying complexity in this way, we contribute to the achievement of the first three eye-movements described above, and we facilitate a fourth: the ability to see both the micro and macro, to see a particular detail that may related specifically to a particular part of the system while seeing the system as a whole. To move

in and out as it were, on a vertical plane – like a zoom-lens.

An exemplar of this characteristic is Harry Beck's London Underground map, first published in 1933. While it is far less geographically accurate than the map it replaced – the actual location of objects has been manipulated to aid visibility, so whilst Morden and Wimbledon appear close together on the map you would not want to walk between them in practice – it is a far more effective decision making aid if one's purpose is to travel by train and if one has a basic geographical knowledge of London.

The simplifications incorporated into Beck's diagram enabled travelers to quickly plan, discuss and take action, picking out particular lines while easily seeing key relationships between lines and the Underground as a whole. Measures of the Beck map's value include the way in which it has slipped into the very fabric of London life, an icon that effects behavior and language; and, the way that it has been copied all over the world (from New York to Moscow to China), and adapted for the London Underground itself as its network has expanded. Thanks to the white space within the map people have been able to 'get into it' and develop it for different purposes. As Beck explained, the map should be "a living and changing thing, with schematic 'manipulation' and spare part osteopathy going on all the time" (Garland, 1994, p. 60).

As Edward Tufte explains, people respond to this macro/micro effect, they love to be able to see the big picture *and* personalize the data (see Tufte, 1990 & 2001 for more on this effect). Similarly, Weick (1983, p. 49-50) explained how having the ability to see both the actual complexity and interconnectedness of things in a simple big picture could increase confidence and reduce stress. Indeed, any device that enables this (for example, Mercator's World Map for 16th century explorers, or Google Maps for today's travellers) is thus extremely endearing and pragmatic.

Unfortunately, in our experience, most strategic plans are not so endearing. They

are either so generalised as to have little real meaning or resonance to employees on the ground, or they go into such detail and are so complex and thickly worded that people can't readily zoom-in to see how it relates to them and zoom-out to where they are in relation to the big picture.

While what we have discussed thus far might be related to the mechanical movements of an eye, there are other important aspects of good stratography that relate to human cognition, behavior and the interrelation of the senses.

5. Mimesis: Leading the Eye in Human Directions

Not only do graphic depictions of space and relationships have an advantage over text in engaging the eye, enabling it to roam and move in and out, maps also have the advantage of appealing to 'mimesis': in other words they can mirror the different directions people might take in real life. Stratography can demonstrate how the talk can be 'walked'.

Strategic planning documents, presented as text, can only go left to right and top to bottom, they can't mimic any other direction. (This unilateral movement is also the case with classic strategy frameworks like the micro-economic theory of the firm (input-process-output) and the value chain.) The mimetic dimension helps learning and retention by connecting cognition to physiology.

The famous map of Napoleon's fateful Russian campaign by Charles Joseph Minard (shown in figure 3), may be the best known, if not the best, example of using simple mimesis (in combination with other factors that we have already described) to deliver a complex story in a simple and compelling way. The narrowing beige line shows the gradual decline of his force from 422,000 when crossing the Russian border to 100,000 when it gets to Moscow. The black line traces the demise in retreat set against the declining temperatures of the Russian winter (bottom thin line). Only 10,000 men will

cross back into Poland. Napoleon is spent. Words alone could not capture this left to right and then right to left movement in a way that enables one to so readily see antecedents and relationships between actions and leave such an indelible mark on the memory. Numbers are less effective communicators in this respect too as, in Weick's words (1983, p. 51), "people who examine [only] the numbers are unable to reconstruct [in reality or in their minds] the actual events that produce those numbers".

[Figure 3 about here]

With graphical representations, three pathways to market can be drawn as three arrows, going upmarket can be shown as going above where we might draw the market now, and by doing so the drawing will be more closely linked with our experience of the world. Indeed, mimesis means that simple pictures can transcend language. If a man points left anywhere in the world he is universally understood to mean left.

6. Synaesthesis: Uniting Different Modes of Communication, Senses and Behaviours

One of the communication advantages of a drawing or map is that it can be multi-modal – it generally contains pictures and text, whereas text is just text. Multimodality generally enhances the ability to communicate meaning (Hull & Nelson, 2005). Good multimodal graphical representations of space also have a 'synaesthesic' effect. That is, they develop their relationships with the reader from the initial 'eye contact' onwards to draw in and engage other senses which then start working together to give the map greater meaning. A good map makes you want to touch the image; trace what you see with your finger; talk to the person next to you about it and hear what they have to say – whether they see what you see. If you've ever been in London, you may recall just how tactile the Tube map is: it

invites you to trace your route with your finger, to share your perspective on it with your travelling companions, to annotate it with additions, reminders and doodles particular to individual aims and goals. And as with any map, once you have added to it physically you (and your co-customizers) have a greater mental connection with it.

Consequently, a good graphical representation does more than just depict. It can also aid communication, network and integrate senses within a person or between people. A story outlined by Weick (1983, p. 48-49) illustrates these social functions:

> The young lieutenant of a Hungarian detachment in the Alps sent a reconnaissance unit into the icy wilderness. It began to snow immediately, and unexpectedly continued to snow for two days. The unit did not return. The lieutenant feared that he had dispatched them to death. However, on the third day the unit came back. Where had they been? How had they made their way? "Yes," they said: "We considered ourselves lost and waited for the end. We did not have any maps, compasses or other equipment with which to ascertain their position or a probable route out. But then one of us found an old tattered map in a seldom used pocket. That calmed us down. The map did not seem to quite fit the terrain but eventually we discovered our bearings. We followed the map down the mountain and after a few wrong turns eventually found our way." The lieutenant borrowed the map and had a good look at it. "This isn't a map of the Alps", he said. "It's a map of the Pyrenees."

The story illustrates how pictorial maps are not only useful because they represent reality, but also because they draw people in, encourage people to communicate, and provide both a template and the confidence to inspire decision making and action. Thus, graphical representations (which can never be perfect matches with reality) may not get people to their destination in a straight-forward manner, but they can get people moving, and when people are animated and begin to integrate, new vistas emerge, new communication arises and new possibilities come into view. These enable the next decisions to be calibrated with better information and a clearer orientation to emerge.

Because of their eye-appeal, mimetic potential, their openness and ability to draw people in, and their capacity to simultaneously enable macro and micro thinking, good pictorials are great devices for bringing people together. One can tell when one has hit

upon an interesting graphical representation in a discussion: it becomes a focal point, a skeleton, or a repository for ideas. Indeed, scientific research not only tells us of the value of pictures over the printed word, but of the spoken word over the printed word in communication. Subsequently, stratography that people want to speak to, draw on, debate, add to, or adapt, covers, or unites, all the bases.

7. Mnemonics: Entering the Mind's Eye

Finally, a good stratogaphy should be mnemonic. It should be easy to recall and it should help you remember things. Think back over this chapter. What do you recall – a particular paragraph or a graphic? Could you sketch out the storybook picture of the train or the map of Napoleon's march without looking? Can you recall the information about Napoleon's campaign contained in the paragraph previous to the picture (assuming you don't know this already)? It is likely that the graphic has entered your minds eye in a way that text does not.

Being able to 'stick' in the mind is especially important in strategy. Because it is being enacted in real time all the time, there are very few opportunities for people to refer back to the plan or policy details before acting. So, it helps if people can recall a broad picture of what they are contributing to and how.

This mnemonic quality is partly a sum of the six parts of stratography that we have already discussed. If a picture has arrested the eye, easily spread the eye across it, draws the eye in and leads it in certain ways, aided the viewer to zoom into specific situations while seeing the big picture, brought other senses into play and helped focus the viewer/s mind/s, then it will surely be remembered. But one important additional rule here is the rule of seven, first discovered by scientists trying to ascertain why it was so difficult to develop a computer that could beat a chess Grandmaster.

In looking at how Grandmasters conceptualized a chess board, its pieces and the myriad compositions thereof, they found an interesting quirk in the way the human mind works. Scientists found that rather than thinking in terms of individual squares and pieces, Grandmasters divided the playing field into seven main combinations depending on the state of the game. While the seven zones might change depending on the state of play (e.g., rookless defence, Bishop led attack), it was never more than seven. It turns out that this is true in everyday life as well. Large local authorities encounter problems when they move from seven to eight digit phone numbers as the memory difficulty that people face when making such a move is exponential. One way around this is to encourage remembering a number in pairs (e.g., 34 55 61 20), thus requiring the memorization of just four chunks of information.

Indeed, none of the most popular management frameworks of the past four decades (the BCG matrix, five forces of industry, diversification matrix, Porter diamond, balanced scorecard, 7Ss, 7 habits…) has had more than seven components. Consequently, if you are trying to develop a strategic graphic or map that can be easily recalled it should not have more than seven main elements.

GOOD STRATOGRAPHY IN ACTION

The preceding paragraphs have outlined seven practices of good stratography. Good stratography should attract the viewer's eye to focus on key aspects, spread across relevant terrain, search for connections, and zoom in and out to make linkages between macro to micro levels. Cognitively and sensorially, good stratography should be designed to mime human movements and directions, pull together or unite other senses and energies, and to be easily remembered or recalled. Using these seven elements together provides a useful lens for evaluating, and consequently better understanding, the potential effectiveness of

particular examples of graphical representation as a tool for communicating strategy. We illustrate this with three examples that utilize some of the stratographic principles that we have outlined above.

Air New Zealand

When Rob Fyfe became CEO of Air New Zealand in 2005 he wanted a wider range of employees and other stakeholders to feel connected to the company's emerging strategy and understand how it related to their everyday jobs. A multi-disciplinary team of 15 employees were empowered to simplify and make memorable the Company's new strategy. They chose to do so by drawing and writing it out in a series of 'doodles' that could be taken on tour as part of a 'Roadshow' to explain and involve people more effectively in the organization's strategy. Examples are reproduced in figures 4 and 5. The novel use of common office objects attracts and focuses the eye while making the drawing appear much less daunting than a normal strategic planning document: as if you were sitting at a desk or coffee table with a colleague as they are explaining it. Also, of particular interest is the way in which the picture follows the outline suggested in figure 2, drawing, spreading and leading the eye to excellent effect.

The Air New Zealand employees that we spoke to were universally positive about the effect of the Roadshow drawings. In the words of one senior operations manager (who was a sales manager at the time): "it was one of the most compelling pieces of work to come out of the exec office and nothing like what I had seen at the airline before, or indeed expected. For a 'foot soldier' in Sales like myself it provided a very clear and unified vision of what needed to be achieved and why. To survive we were going to have to be different and do things differently – and the strategy drawings 'walked the talk'".

[Figures 4 & 5 about here]

Tescos

Figure 6 shows a second good example of stratography in action: British-based multi-national supermarket giant Tesco's Strategy Steering Wheel. The unique form attracts the eye. The strong red segment focuses the viewer on the top left corner of the image with the primary focus on the customer. The eye is then steered clockwise around the circle from left to right, the top to bottom around back to relate all of the other segments back to the customer perspective. The eye is also drawn to the cool blue in the centre showing how everything leads to Tesco's mission and motto: 'every little helps'. The eye is then able to walk in and out of the circle from macro to micro and back.

To aid this, the Wheel is combined with other multi-modal graphical and textual tools such as individual store updates with traffic lights that show green, amber or red on each of the 20 slices within the five arcs, and individualized 'shopping lists' that describe in simple terms current areas of focus in terms of the wheel's elements so that employees can incorporate them into their daily practices. Together, these visual aids help bridge the macro-micro divide that is so often a problem in strategy communication: how can we relate the big picture to the everyday smaller activities that employees undertake? As former CEO Sir Terry Leahy (a prime mover behind the Wheel) has said: "Tesco doesn't want one leader. We want thousands of leaders who take initiative to execute [our] strategy" (*Harvard Business Review Online*, 2008).

The Steering Wheel grew out of a classic Kaplan and Norton Balanced Scorecard approach that began to be developed in the 1990s. This heritage can be seen in four of the arcs representing customers, finance, operations and people. However, this initiative to capture Tesco's strategy in a simple and effective graphical manner for staff and other

stakeholders was taken to another level when Tesco's developed its own geometry to represent it and a fifth distinctive arc about their community. This changed the approach from being a generic management framework to a living and guiding example of stratography that oriented and animated the organization in a manner that was unique and true to itself. The shape, colors and simplicity (five basic arcs each with two to six contributing spokes) add up to a memorable and meaningful image that can be re-interpreted and adapted over time. This is important for driving the huge Multi-national's strategy and keeping initiatives coordinated. The Steering Wheel gave real and authentic meaning to what Leahy and others were, by the end of the 1990s, terming The Tesco Way.

[Figure 6 about here]

Procter & Gamble

Our final example of stratography in action is taken from Procter & Gamble's 2009 annual report and website. It takes an extremely large and complex company's growth strategy and distils it into a simple and memorable image that leads the eye from the top left corner, enables the viewer to search to and from the field of play to how to win on that field, would allow different readers to dive down to explore different levels of detail underneath each of the statements, and mirrors the classic left to right movement of the generic value chain, but adds value by enabling the viewer to think through the reciprocity of actions from right to left as well. The P&G strategy graphic manages to embody many of the stratographical elements we have outlined about in a memorable and arresting manner.

While the P&G graphic may be seen to have some deficiencies in terms of the seven principles of stratography we have outlined above (e.g., it does not appear that arresting; it is a little crowded with text; it doesn't facilitating seeing the links between the

macro and micro; and it is, dare we say it, a bit 'PowerPointy'), it is important to note that it is unusual. Despite some of the now obvious advantages of communicating strategy by incorporating individualized graphics along with text, very few firms currently do this. One recent survey found that P&G was the only Fortune 100 Company that included graphics to explain its strategy on its Internet site (Cummings & Fabryko, 2011).

[Figure 7 about here]

P&G, Tesco and Air New Zealand have performed well above average in recent years. A key contributing element to their success may be their ability to represent and communicate to key stakeholders their complex strategies and goals. However, while the stratographic examples we have reproduced here are polished in appearance, we believe it is the principles that underpin them rather than the polish that are key: and these principles can be employed and played around with in relation to your organization at any time and place. All that is required to begin is a pencil, scrap of paper and an inquiring set of minds.

BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Over the past decade we have searched for good examples of stratography, and they are few and far between. One can understand, therefore, why the *Fortune* journalists mentioned at the head of our article might have been so surprised and enamored by a CEO drawing strategy: it is certainly not the norm nowadays. Correspondingly, the idea that drawing might be taught on an MBA sounds novel. But it might not have turned out this way.

It is largely forgotten that the first business school established in a university was very nearly launched at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) by

College President Robert E. Lee (Lee, 1905; Marsh, 1926). On January 8, 1869, Lee presented a report to Washington College's Board of Trustees outlining a plan for a Business School as part of a range of initiatives he and his team were sponsoring in relation to the College's commitment to 'practical education' . A committee chaired by Lee had been considering this for some time, and Lee tabled the proposed curriculum. Many subjects would not appear out of place at a business school today, but not the last one: Mathematics, book-keeping and penmanship, correspondence and the correct use of the English language, geography, technology, law, economy, history and biography, modern languages, geometry and drawing.

Lee's plan was approved. But Lee became seriously ill just a few weeks later, and without Lee as its champion the business school did not come to pass. Modern business schools trace their lineage back to institutions established nearer the turn of the 20th century, and the reports that led to the standardization of a business curriculum around one agreed model in the 1950s, where the experts involved were of quite a different type from Lee's practical band (Gordon & Howell, 1959; Pierson, 1959).

But we would argue that the General (and Karl Weick and Alan Mulally) was onto something. The ability to think 'geometrically' and to draw ideas and strategic initiatives should be a part of every good manager's arsenal. This article has attempted to combine their and many others' ideas in such a way to encourage many more managers to communicate strategy not just by saying, writing and tabling it: but also by drawing it.

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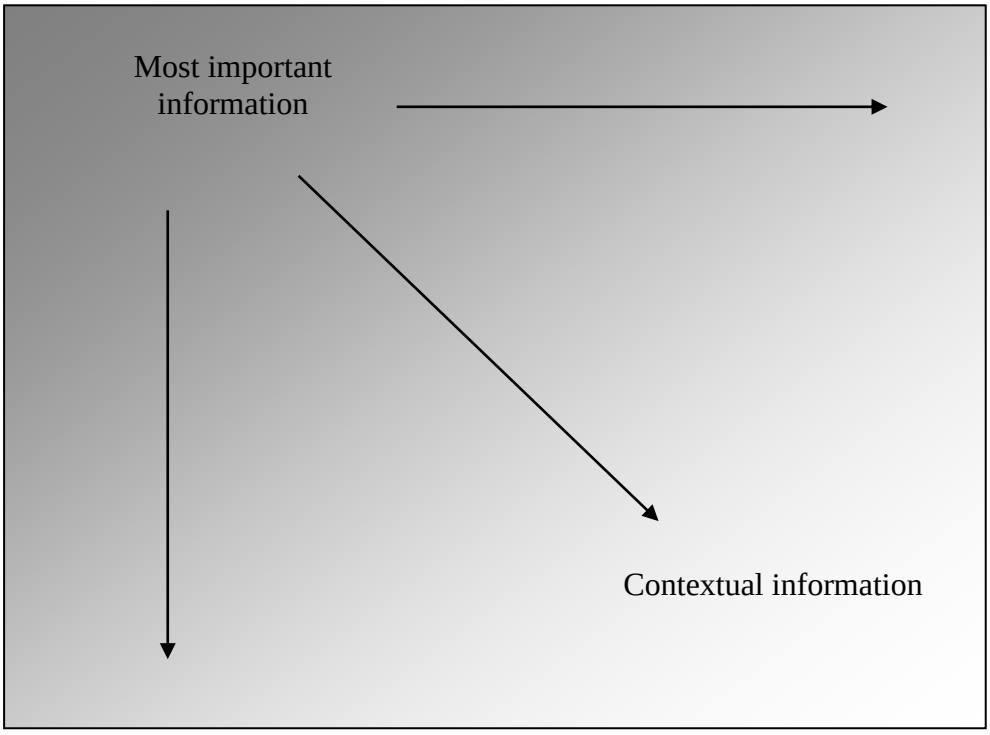
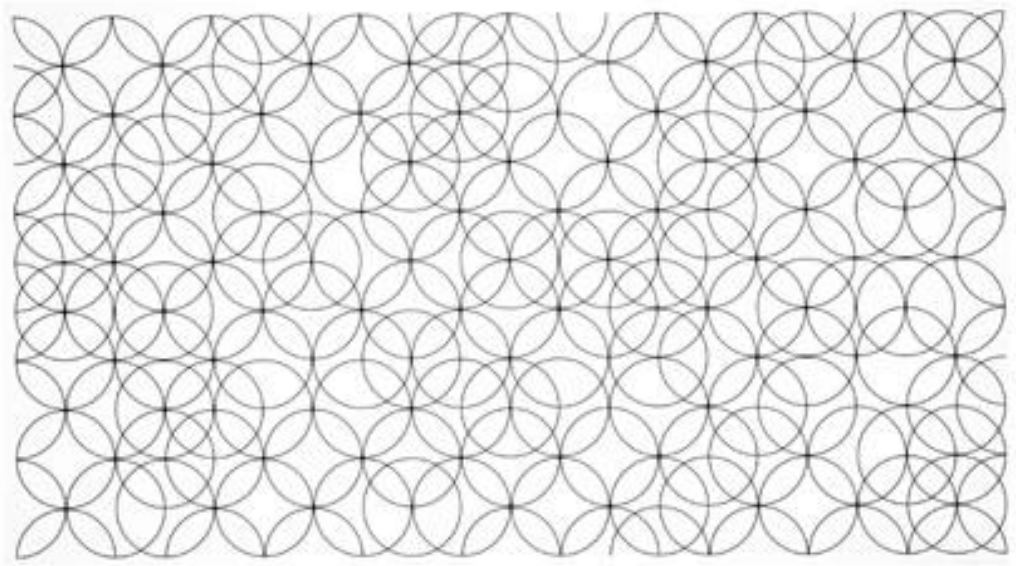


Figure 1
Spreading the eye



SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: SMOKING CAUSES LUNG CANCER, HEART DISEASE, EMPHYSEMA, AND MAY COMPLICATE PREGNANCY

Figure 2
Drawing the eye in or thwarting the eye

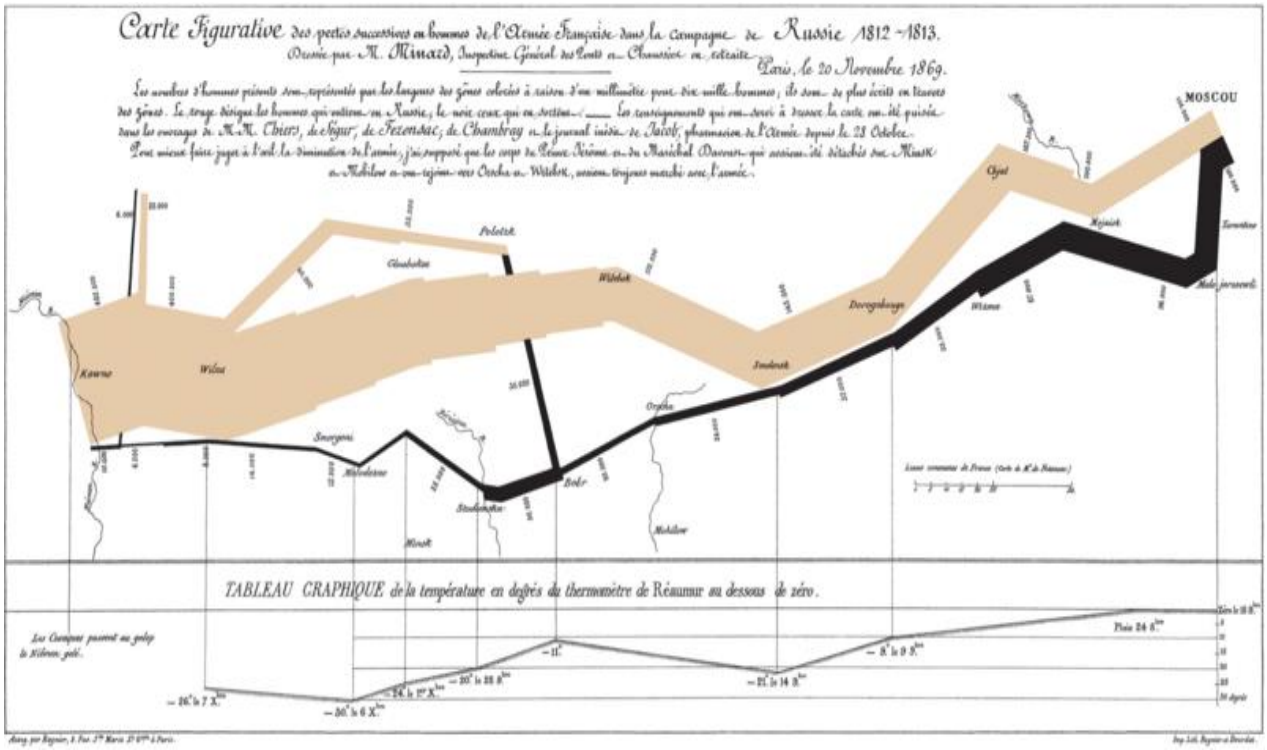


Figure 3
Napoleon's March to Moscow by C.J. Minard

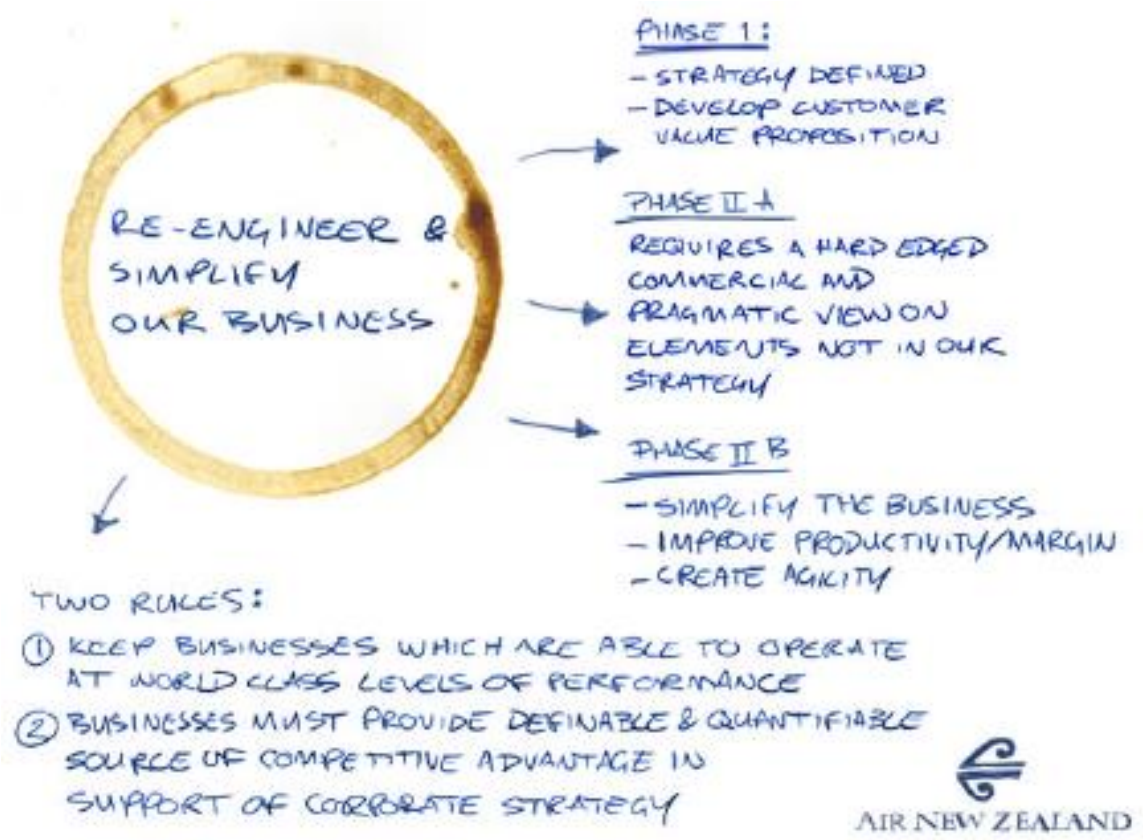


Figure 4
Air New Zealand

Figure 5
Air New Zealand

Figure 6
Tescos

Figure 7
Procter & Gamble