

in this issue

Strategic Planning

Give Them the Full Story

Strategic Action

What's Your Story?

Industry Snapshot

Hewlett Packard's
New Strategy Story

Reading List

*The World is Flat – A Brief History
of the Twenty-first Century*
By Thomas Friedman

Announcements

About Trek

trekking

a newsletter on practical strategic thinking and action
issue #17: what's so special about your mission?

editor's message

We all remember a parent telling us to do something and justifying it with, "because I said so." It's a cop-out phrase. It gives the child no credit for being able to think independently or understand the situation. We have seen too many companies with "mission" or "vision" statements that are similar to the "because I said so" line of thinking. Statements like "We strive to be the premier company in the (you fill in the blank) market" have the same effect on your team as the parent cop out—they ask them to accept something at face value with little explanation or justification. They don't inspire action. They don't respect the intelligence of your staff.

This month, we advocate the strategy story as an alternative to mindless mission statements. In Strategic Thinking, we talk about why a story is a better form of communication, and in Strategic Action, we give you some suggestions on writing your own story. In our Industry Snapshot, we give you an example of a good strategy story, and our Reading List this month reviews *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman.

strategic thinking

Give Them the Full Story

Companies write mission statements to provide an overriding vision of where they want to go and what they want to achieve. A good mission statement is supposed to guide the thousands of decisions that get made by the people in your company as they execute your strategy.

A simple mission statement is enough to get some people (especially senior management) fired up and ready to charge into the breach. But for the rest of your people, this one big statement may not be enough. They are probably asking themselves, "Why is being number one important?" "Do we deserve to be number one?" "How do we do that?" or "What's in it for us?" They need to hear more of the story, one that they can repeat and re-tell over time.

That's why we think it is important to take your mission statement to the next level and make it a statement of direction, or what we call a "strategy story." Why do we use the word story? Stories don't just tell you what to do; they help you understand on a deeper level why you should do something. A good strategy story can help create the passion for achievement that your team will need to get the job done.

(continued on next page)

trekconsulting
fresh information. smarter decisions. great results.



A great source on corporate story telling, The Story Factor, was reviewed in a recent issue of Trekking (<http://www.trekconsulting.com/Publications/Newsletter/Issue11/Issue11.html>).

Telling a strategy story is actually helpful in most any situation where you want to unite a group around a goal, a project, or a product launch. Next time, take a few minutes to do more than just tell your team what to do; inform their minds and feed their hearts. Tell them a good strategy story.

-Mary Adams (adams@trekconsulting.com)

strategic action

What's Your Story?

If you are trying to describe your company's strategy through a story, it should be short enough so that it can be stated in the time it takes to deliver an elevator pitch: 30 seconds. That means 6-8 sentences.

The story must have impact and be compelling. That means you should use colorful words, create drama, and generate enthusiasm. What does a corporate strategy story look like?

- It is short
- It shows where you came from
- It tells about your external challenges
- It personalizes your company
- It states your strengths
- It identifies your challenges and your performance gaps
- It shows the path to success

Can you tell a compelling short story about where you want to take your own team?

- Michael Oleksak (oleksak@trekconsulting.com)

industry snapshot

Hewlett Packard's New Strategy Story

HP is a company that could use a good strategy story. Following its merger with Compaq, it now provides a huge array of products, ranging from printer toner to high-end servers. But today, 85% of its profits come from its printer business. New CEO Mark Hurd recently stepped in, following the departure of Carly Fiorina, and he is taking a very different approach than his predecessor. This is our version of his current story based on the initial reporting of Hurd's strategy:

Hewlett Packard has a long, proud history as a technology leader. Today there are those who would say that our rich portfolio of products is unwieldy and unmanageable. They are wrong. We have the legacy of the HP culture from Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard—the accountability that made us one of tech's most consistent performers. We can use that culture and give each product group control and responsibility to deliver the performance our shareholders expect. Our job today is to execute.

(adapted from Business Week, September 12, 2005)

reading list

The World is Flat – A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century

By Thomas Friedman

Friedman, a New York Times columnist and best-selling author (*Lexus and the Olive Tree*), admits he was distracted in post 9/11 days while writing and studying issues of religious fundamentalism. When he finished, he came to realize that the world had, in his words, become more flat. Advantages previously held by the United States and Western Europe were disappearing due to the availability of fiber optic cable and the Internet, especially in India, as well as the cheaper but increasingly skilled labor in China.

One of his sections is entitled, "The Ten Forces that Flattened the World" and includes the fall of Communism in 1989, the emergence of the Internet, the role of software, outsourcing, and off-shoring. He reports that the convergence of these events has changed our lives and the competitive business landscape forever.

Friedman's eye-opening analysis warns individuals and companies to be alert and open to change. He recommends continuous training and education to keep with up in an ever-faster and ever-flatter world. A must read for the modern businessperson. You can read more about this book by visiting Thomas Friedman's web site (<http://www.thomasfriedman.com/worldisflat.htm>).



announcements

In August, Trek kicked off the first of five seminars on Strategic Thinking that will be presented to Teradyne executives. These seminars are part of a series of professional development courses organized by Northeastern University's Corporate Education Program. In today's knowledge economy, strategy cannot just come from the top of an organization. People at all levels need to understand how their work fits into the context of the larger organization and how to think strategically about their own individual challenges. Our sessions at Teradyne were highly interactive and very productive. Please let us know if you know of another company (maybe your own?) where this type of session would be helpful.

Do you ever get involved in mergers or acquisitions? If you do, then you know that as hard as it is to get a deal done, it is even harder to deliver the promised benefits of the deal after it closes. If you want to increase your understanding of post-merger integration, please join us and the Institute of Management Consultants on Thursday, September 15 from 5:00 - 9:00 PM at the Sheraton Lexington. Our guest speaker will be Anthony Buono who is an active consultant, author and professor at Bentley College. The title of his talk is Handling Mergers and Acquisitions: How Consultants Help Clients Avoid Paradoxes, Pitfalls & Traps. For more information, visit <http://www.imcne.org/events/2005/sep1505.html>

In next month's issue, we discuss Hard data vs. Soft data.

about trek consulting

Since 1999, Trek Consulting has helped CEO's of early stage and middle market companies to face challenges of growth, change and succession. Our hallmarks are fresh information, disciplined analysis and practicality. We help you create specific action plans with metrics tied to revenues, costs or corporate value. Then we follow up to help you keep on track and/or adjust your plans as circumstances change.

Our clients report improved market focus, increased revenues, better margins and lowered costs. To learn more about Trek Consulting and how we can help you improve your company's results, visit us on the web at www.trekconsulting.com or call us at 781-729-1008.