TRIBAL STRATEGY
Anthony Willoughby discusses his use of tribal techniques to influence strategies at huge companies

BIG DATA
We look at how big data is affecting company strategies around the world

DAVID vs GOLIATH
Timothy McCausland talks about small company strategies to challenge the big boys
Letter From The Editor

Welcome to this issue of Chief Strategy Officer.

We are seeing the numbers of people looking at the magazine increase with each edition due to everybody sharing it and people finding the content interesting and engaging. I have had several emails in the past few weeks from happy readers, so thank you to everyone who is helping to spread the magazine.

In this issue we are looking at several issues currently affecting those working within strategy as well as some of the most innovative approaches to strategy.

Anthony Willoughby discusses one of the most inventive and original approaches to strategy that we have ever seen, including input from African tribes and their local knowledge.

We hear about influencing the perception of a strategy both internally and externally with Michaela Jeffery-Morrison.

Krista Treide talks to Yulia Ivanova about her experiences creating brand strategies for some of the largest companies in the world over the last 25 years.

Growth Strategy CEO Wayne Simmons discusses strategy automation, a new and exciting area that many companies are now exploring.

Big data strategies are making a big impact on many companies around the world, we look at how missing out on this could cost companies dearly in the future.

As always if you like the magazine share it and if you are interested in writing or advertising in the magazine please get in touch with me at ghill@theiegroupl.com.

George Hill
Chief Editor
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Got Something to give?

We are always looking for new contributors or cutting edge ideas.

Contact George Hill for more details
ghill@theiegroup.com
If you go to a stockbroker and ask for execution only support, they will provide all the information and execute the trade of your behaviour. They will not use their market knowledge, their market know how or their own judgement. They will simply de-
liver as per your order and no more. For example, if you have placed an order to buy stock at a particular price level then they will simply purchase the stock for you at that price level and no more. Their performance will be measured on whether they have been able to execute this order as accurately as possible. This means if your need to own the stock has changed this has no relevance to the stockbroker. Unless you cancel the order they will continue to carry out the order.

If on the other hand you ask them to use their judgement, market knowledge and market knowledge this is no longer an execution only order and different rates apply. Their charges to you as a client will increase and they will see this as an up sell from the execution only service offering they have in place.

The point here is that the more someone uses their judgement, their market know how and their knowledge base the further up the value chain they go.

How does this relate to Strategy Implementation and Strategy Execution?

When we look at these terms from a decision making perspective, i.e. if we look at the 4 different decision making levels in an organization (using a standard Management Consulting framework) then the C-Level decisions require a different framework to the other levels e.g. the Ansoff matrix ns McKinsey 7S framework. In other words, these frameworks ensure that a set of variables are taken into account to support decision making at that level.

At the strategy execution level. The BSC (Balance Score Card) ISO’s and Six
Sigma are frameworks that ensure the relevant variables are focused to ensure that performance matches expectation and delivers what is expected in the manner intended. However, as in the example of the stock broker this is an execution only framework, where the Operational Managers are expected to focus solely on these variables and their performance is measured in line with how well they execute them. Please remember the word execute originates from Middle English (1350 - 1400) executen derived from Latin executes participle of ex (s) equi meaning to follow up, carry out (punishment), etc.

When viewed from the standard decision making level within an organization; C-Level management is commonly classed as level 4, operational management as level 2, the staff as level 1. This leaves level 3. So who are the managers at Level 3? They are business unit or senior Managers. Now if we say C- Level managers are responsible for formulating and operational managers are responsible for executing. Where does this leave the level 3 managers? If they formulate strategy they are crowding the C- Level and if they focus on the execution they are micro-managing. So what framework supports them in adding value to the organization? In the same way as project management; the programme level decision making is different to the portfolio level and project level - therefore the frameworks required at this level is also different.

In the military as a sector, there is a framework called the C4I framework – which is accepted to be a strategy implementation framework, meaning to carry out/fulfil/perform. The Generals (Senior Managers) will be given a mandate and will be expected to carry out the C-Level decisions. They will, however, be expected to use their strategic thought capacity, knowledge base and know-how. This then, as a level of decision making, will have to be distinct to Strategy Execution be-
cause as we have already accepted they will be expected to use their judgement as part of their daily activities. This has an impact on how accurately the relevant risks and complexities are identified and dynamically managed, project level risks are different to programme level risks which in turn are different to portfolio level risks. What happens when a risk changes categories i.e. a low risk becoming a high risk? What frameworks are used to ensure they are being managed by the appropriate level of management within the organization? Here the managers will need to use their judgement, market know-how and knowledge base. Therefore, by definition, they cannot be execution level managers or C-Level managers.

The terms implementation and execution are different. The impact on an organization of ensuring they are treated as distinct is huge. By treating implementation and execution as different decision-making levels within a company, it helps it to effectively realise the overall vision for the organization. In other words, by treating Strategy Implementation and Strategy Execution as distinct we can more effectively ensure the organization delivers the vision and direction of the C-Level Managers without blurring strategically drawn lines.
One of the aspects of implementing a strategy that many companies struggle with, is the perception of the strategy both internally and externally.

Perception is always a key aspect of any initiative and as such it becomes vital to the overall success of a new programme. A strategy may be improving the
profitability of a company but if the strategy is viewed as a negative, the changes will never be as positive as they could otherwise be.

For instance a strategy that increases the profitability of a department, but requires significant amounts of additional work will never be perceived as popular if the rewards of the approach are not adequately communicated.

Equally, a new strategy should be effectively communicated to those outside of the company in order to make sure that changes are fully recognized for the positives that they create.

These are not two separate tasks however. They are intrinsically connected and both have significant bearings on the other.

A classic example of this is Apple.

When Steve Jobs was breaking new ground on the way that society perceived new technologies, the strategy was clear. Innovations in order to create new products that would genuinely revolutionise the way that people interacted with their electronic products. When Steve Jobs passed away and Tim Cook took over as CEO of Apple, there was a feeling that pervaded that Apple had now changed its tactics and this was no longer the case.

Take the release of the 5S and the 5C for a prime example of how the media and society in general has perceived these two new pieces of technology. Most media outlets have let out a collective sigh at their release, claiming that Tim Cook has lost innovation and is now trying to maximise profits and not attempting to break the new ground attempted by Steve Jobs. Looking at the way the products were reported we can see why this is a prevailing reaction in the public eye. Slightly improved technical specifications and the addition of multiple colours and a plastic casing in the case of the 5C. These just make the brand gimmicky according to many, trying to hit the entry level market to increase sales.

What many people have neglected to mention is that this is the first time that any phone
ever has had a 64 bit processor.

The significance of this is massive, yet has been largely ignored and added into the reports as another technical specification rather than celebrating this for the genuine originality that it is. This kind of processing power opens the opportunities to run increasingly memory intensive programmes and push the use of the mobile device as a powerful processing unit into reality.

This step taken by Cook and the team at Apple however has not struck the correct chords, not because it is a bad idea but that the event in which it was launched had the wrong focus. It should not have been on the phones themselves, but on the unique aspects that they are bringing to the table.

Therefore, the reality of the Apple strategy is not that it has changed, they have not stopped breaking new ground, but they have changed the ways in which they are approaching the subjects that make their products truly unique.

The 5S is not a slightly faster iPhone 5 with a fingerprint scanner, it is instead a new way of looking at how phones can be used, again.

This is the same with many companies. The strategies employed often focus messages on the elements which will change day to day rather than the ultimate end goal. Rather than simply saying what people will have the change or the slight change to their role now, look at how they will be benefiting from it in the long term.

Also when you are attempting to communicate your strategy externally are you truly showing the benefits of what this strategy will bring or are you showing simply the small term changes that will be made to create the strategy?
An Interview with Krista Treide, Partner & Chief Brand Officer, Made For Good

Yulia Ivanova
Brand Strategy Leader

There are a few people in business who have done it all. They have created the startup, they have steered the big guns and they have shared their skills through universities. Krista Treide has done all of this and more.

Having worked internally at both Reebok and Nike before forming her own agencies and eventual-
starting ‘Made for Good’. This is a unique brand, encompassing key CSR ideals in the overall company strategy whilst also acting as a consortium for like minded companies. It is a truly unique company born out of Krista’s library of experience.

I was lucky enough to chat with Krista about everything brand strategy.

**Made For Good seems like a fascinating brand, what gave you the idea to help found it?**

I’m tremendously grateful for the amazing experiences I’ve gleaned in my 23-years of building some of the world’s most successful brands. Seven years ago, I had a series of life-shattering events that transformed me forever and in that period I realized that while exhilarating, what my professional endeavors lacked was meaning.

It was then I took my core competencies in building and leading global brands, fused them with philanthropy and crafted my first social good business [Modus] which created brands for underserved demographics and incorporated a recurring and meaningful give back. People looked at me like I was crazy when I explained this concept back then – and in just under a decade of amazing proliferation of philanthro-capitalism, consumers today are expecting brands to integrate social and meaningful giving into their model.

‘Made for Good [and my other social good business endeavors] actually germinated from the “event” and not an idea, per say.

**Having worked in the business for 23 years, how have you seen the concept of ‘brand’ change in that time?**

The last two decades have delivered such an unimaginable combination of innovation and economic reshaping that brands have been forced to change significantly.

Brands are no longer seated on a podium, dictating to a faceless audience. They are now faced with some of the most educated, discerning and focused consumers who in many cases drive business concepts and demand real, two-way relationships. As a result, brands have to work harder than ever before to showcase authenticity and those who have none are finding it hard to survive. Brands have had to sharpen their storytelling and while the best will always innovate at all costs, they are now innovating disruptively. Brands are now thinking more about their legacy vs. what next year might look like. It’s become a dog-eat-dog brand world and consumers are fueling brands
to be honest and transparent. It will only become more challenging for brands in years to come.

What do you think somebody needs to succeed in brand management?

I’m fortunate enough to have had a great visionary as a mentor and advocate at the onset of my career. His guidance made little sense to me at the time as I was myopically focused on a role and arena of brandbuilding. He strongly guided me to experience a wide range of roles [sales, marketing, operations, finance, brand management, strategic planning]. His rationale was that with hands-on experience within a variety of matrices, one would have a much greater comprehension and appreciation of the entire brand machine and how it must operate similar to a food chain. His advice couldn’t have been more perfect.

Since successful brand management begins with the foundation of the brand and permeates across all responsibilities, it is imperative for brand leaders to have broad reaching experiences. Additionally, I’m a firm believer that anyone leading a brand must have time living and leading brands in other countries. Building a successful global brand happens when the brand is both iconic globally and relevant locally. If balanced properly, the brand equity becomes impenetrable and gives the brand amazing staying power.

Do you think a Chief Brand Officer has moved from being the voice of the company to being a conductor of many voices within the company?

Without question. A Chief Brand Officer serves as the evangelist of and for the brand. When that person is clear and successful internally and across all other categories of the business, brand soul has great strength and authenticity beyond the brand itself and with key stakeholders outside of the brand [retail partners, consumers, supply chain partners, and much, much more]. As a result of the previous question about “brand change”, the Chief Brand Officer role has become increasingly important for any successful global brand looking to ensure it is authentic and has great staying power.
What Do You Think Makes A ‘Good’ Brand?

- Authenticity
- Disruptive Innovation
- Category Creator
- Transparency
- Reliability
- Emotional connections with consumers
- Relevant social good, integrated into the brand
- The ability to build [and value] an unwavering legacy
- Great storytelling
- Deliver products consumers didn’t know they needed but then cannot live without
- Relevant social good, integrated into the brand
Strategy Automation: Bringing Strategy into the 21st Century

Wayne Simmons
CEO
The Growth Strategy Co.

Recent research from Innovation Enterprise Ltd. and The Growth Strategy Co. has found that over 90 percent of senior strategy executives categorize growth as their most urgent issue. While it is consistently the proverbial “keep you up at night issue”, achieving sustainable business growth, particularly medium to long-term strategic growth, remains a challenge for many companies.
Solving this challenge is the key value creation opportunity for companies and strategists - capital markets consistently reward the companies that can confidently articulate strong future growth stories. Indeed, as much as 70 percent of the enterprise value of a company is based on market expectations of its future growth prospects over the medium to long-term time horizons. In essence, companies create value by taking action today to generate future growth and cash flows at rates of return that exceed their cost of capital.

The significance of medium to long-term growth gets even more compelling. Growth-focused companies outperform the market during good times, and instead of retreating, tend to extend their market positions through the most challenging times. With enterprise value as the prize, the case for medium to long-term business growth - and the mission of strategy executives and practitioners - becomes clear and intertwined.

A case for change.

Until the global economic crisis of 2008, it was probably "OK" for strategy-related disciplines to focus on annual strategic planning and getting the mission and vision statements just right. For the preceding 30 years, global gross domestic product (GDP) was ascendant, new markets and customers were emerging and there was a general sense that "a rising tide lifts all boats". In this environment, companies focused on creating value largely through operational excellence and competing against known competitors for market share in known markets, with known products and known demand.

For strategists in this environment where "the known" was the norm, using the previous 5-year strategic plan as the basis for the next 5-year strategic plan wasn't out of the ordinary. However, after this inflection point, it became apparent that the "known world"
was replaced with an “unknown world” were structural change, uncertainty and complexity define the new business environment.

Introducing Strategy Automation.

For practitioners and executives in strategic management, competitive intelligence, strategic planning, strategic intelligence and related fields (we call them modern growth strategists), this new business environment requires a major transformation in the basic function and focus of strategy-related disciplines. This new capability is called Strategy Automation.

Strategy automation is a new category of enterprise software that is designed for strategy and related disciplines to facilitate the consistent business processes, information flows, analysis and collaboration needed to drive strategic (medium to long-term) growth outcomes.

What are the benefits of strategy automation?

Until now, the approaches and tools needed for strategists to consistently address strategic growth have been virtually non-existent. To address that issue, strategy automation provides several key benefits that significantly improve the modern growth strategist’s overall value, relevance and impact in key ways:

• Get strategy into the revenue “game”. The primary focus of strategy automation software is to equip companies with dedicated capabilities to address the medium to long-term growth that drives enterprise value creation.

• Provides an information advantage. Strategy automation allows a shift from a manual, ad hoc and paper-based approach to an automated approach that uses the power of information to organize, analyze, visualize and take action on the underlying factors that drive growth.

• Improved effectiveness. Strategy automation provides a platform for more consistent strategy formulation, problem solving, and decision-making leading to more credible and effective identification, profile building, targeting and mapping of future growth opportunities.

• Repeatability, consistency and sustainability. As a unified platform for strategy, innovation and business growth strategy automation provides a foundation that makes business growth more repeatable, consistent and sustainable.

• Strategic Clarity. Strategy automation takes the mystery
out of strategy and the value that it provides. Through growth-focused metrics, indices and visualizations modern growth strategists now have a clear and consistent way to articulate, “where the growth will come from”.

Conclusion: Bringing Strategy into the 21st Century.

The complexity and intensity of modern business will continue to increase. In this environment, yesterday’s market leaders can quickly become tomorrow’s laggards. As companies look beyond short-term revenue and current performance, they often realize that their traditional playbooks alone may simply not be enough. Accordingly, modern growth strategists can no longer meet the growth imperative using disconnected, ad hoc paper-based processes that are rooted in 1970s industrial theory.

When this realization occurs, a central question becomes: What’s the alternative?

All the challenges mentioned are driving demand for a new generation of strategy and strategy automation software. These combined capabilities elevate the discipline of strategy away from the 1970s era of “competitive advantage” to a modern, 21st Century variant that is automated, repeatable and focused on sustainable business growth.

Equipped with new strategy automation capabilities, for the first time, strategists can use advanced technology to consistently take the preemptive actions needed to improve the future growth prospects of their companies. For these modern growth strategists, strategy automation becomes an engine to reassert a more prominent “seat at the table”, increase their relevance to their companies, and receive well-deserved recognition as enterprise value creators.

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Big data has been described by several people in several different ways, it could be anything from collecting lots of data to using the data to track movements and habits to make the most of business situations.
The definitions are varied, but one thing for certain is that with thousands of companies now using big data systems, it will change the way that companies work. The conversation around big data is changing from an 'it could' to 'it is' and those who aren’t keeping up will soon find that they cannot even understand the conversation let alone take part in it.

So how will this change strategy?

Think about the ways that companies used to work, a CEO would say 'I think we should aim our marketing at this market because they all like doing this'. This would then be fed down the company and the strategy would be implemented and there would be a new focus on that particular area. The way that this was measured was through sales, donations or interactions. This would be the primary way that a particular strategy would have been deemed a success or failure.

In comes the internet and changes everything. Now you can see how many people came to your website or were interested in a particular product, you could get them to sign up and send out information about products that they have shown an interest in. This changed the dynamic, but was still reliant on several factors and did not necessarily have the intuitive and predictive elements that could maximise the information needed for a truly intuitive strategy.

Big data aims to overcome this limitation through the collection of data and its analysis aims to create insight into how customers think, how they perceive products and ultimately how they respond to the company. Essentially big data aligned with flexibility in strategies allows companies to be fully dynamic whilst using customer reaction as a wind vane to gauge perceptions.

This can be done through sev-
eral elements from sentiment analysis of a brand on social media through to the actions of customers whilst on a website or the ways in which they are using the smartphone app. Big data can allow a company to have constant feedback, creating a focus group that is giving feedback instantaneously and always. This kind of power allows experimentation with quick results and therefore an exciting and new way to gain feedback and base strategy on almost real-time results.

Another benefit that big data brings to a strategy is that with data being recorded, a backlog of historical data based on a company's customer base can be created. From this historical data it is possible to use predictive analytics to predict the outcomes of certain strategies, based on the data from what has been done before.

It may be several years until a company has enough data to be able to use this technology accurately, but will herald a new way to approach strategies.

Big data is here now and companies are utilising it today to great effect, are you part of the conversation?
As the Chief Strategy Officer for a small community bank operating in the suburbs of New York City, I am constantly reminded through advertising, event sponsorship and direct competition that my “rivals” include some of the largest financial institutions on earth. Eight out of the top ten banks in America operate within our bank’s footprint. The deposit base of the smallest bank on this list is 500 times that
of our bank. That’s the competitive reality which must be considered in devising strategy for our small company. Yet, Orange County Trust is a very profitable bank, returning a respectable annual dividend to stockholders and maintaining capital levels that exceed, by multiples, the legally required minimums.

Those top ten banks control about 90% of all US bank assets. The sheer scale of this concentration can be mind-numbing for smaller competitors. The other 10% is held by about 7,000 banking institutions of various sizes, with the vast majority clustered in a category generally described as “small.” In a system unique to the United States, community banks are the Mom & Pops of American finance and, for the most part, serve as the bank-of-choice for a majority of America’s small businesses.

So, in markets where community banks operate side-by-side with the money center banks, what are the strategies that can sustain superior performance results? Moreover, can these strategies be modified by other types of small businesses to compete against “giants?”

Too Big to Fail as Strategic Partner

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the word pragmatic as a way of “dealing with the problems that exist in a specific situation in a reasonable and logical way instead of depending on ideas and theories.” Thus, pragmatism leads to the strategy of working with big competitors in circumstances that results in an overall benefit to the customer. Since our bank might not be able to offer a commercial customer a loan of the size required for the customer’s factory expansion, for example, partnering with a larger bank to meet the needs of the customer provides a solution that is a win for all parties. It also helps develop our bank’s reputation as an active player in the market, all while sharing the risk with the larger partner. But, since all is fair in love, war and business, the threat of client poaching must be considered. In my experience, if the larger partner bank wants to do Deal No. 2, they will be respectful of the various relationships and, in most markets, word usually gets around that someone “chicken-hawked” a customer out of a participation deal. Not cool, but it can happen. Try to get non-compete language in any partner arrangement with large competitors, but don’t expect a warm response to the request. Typically, a large bank, or any national firm, will assert the standard line that...
“if we do this for you, we have to do it for everyone.” In dealing with large, money center banks, I have been reminded more than once that the reason and logic of pragmatism works both ways.

A correlative opportunity in relationships with large banks can include an off-load of business that is simply not profitable “enough” for the larger partner, although it might be square within the profitability target of our bank. While the larger bank might keep certain elements of the relationship, there can be occasions where our bank fills in the gaps, here and there. It might not be a line of business that can be accurately forecasted, but maintaining a working relationship with the larger bank has its own strategic benefits for our bank, sometimes beyond any particular customer enhancement. Our bank, like any business, has capital needs. When it becomes necessary, having a good relationship with a larger bank, though a competitor, puts us in a good position to obtain favorable terms for our own “house” financing.

Finally, though not claiming to be exhaustive of the benefits in partnering with a competitor, large banks have well-trained employees and, occasionally, an individual may find some allure in working for a smaller outfit. This can be a delicate dance, of course, but many larger banks prefer to maintain a happy stable of alumni rather than an angry rabble of defectors.

The Small Experience

Over the years “customer service” has generally been averred as the principal differentiator between small and big companies. That is, small companies were thought to have a superior nimbleness that permits broader and longer hand holding with customers. Hand holding is still important, but only to the extent it can be justified by measurable effectiveness. Smaller firms tend to have limited resources and owners usually wear multiple hats, which can limit the amount of actual time spent with any one customer.

Customer service, moreover, has become a component of a broader customer contact strategy designed to create an enhanced “experience” for the customer. Old time marketers might bemoan the MBA-speak of such things as an “enhanced customer experience” since keeping the customer happy has been a tenet of commerce since the lumberjack sold logs to Noah, but when a business provides a positive, impactful customer experience, the end result is usually a “sticky,” profitable
customer.

What is a positive customer experience? As noted, part of it is simply being attentive to customer needs – good customer service - but customers may not always be knowledgeable of a company’s capabilities which, unless addressed, could result in lost opportunities or worse; a customer departs to a competitor that deploys all its resources to snare the customer. Good customer service is an expected commodity in all markets, big and small. Small companies can no longer realistically differentiate themselves by "offering" a high level of customer service. Delivering a positive customer experience has more to do with learning something new, being exposed to some practical application for one’s business or personal life and, generally, experiencing the unexpected.

While small businesses might not be able to deliver superior customer service in today’s market, they are, nonetheless, better positioned to deliver the positive customer experience. Small businesses are not apt to have a “playbook” carved in stone like bigger businesses. Each customer can truly be treated as unique. Then, by decoding a customer’s commercial genome, a small business can discover the possibilities for delivering the unexpected. This should not be viewed as a haphazard process and no business can expect to be successful with a hit-or-miss approach. For small businesses that compete directly with giants, the single most important strategy for success is an enthusiastic, unwavering, committed embrace of information technology.

It wasn’t long ago that our bank self-identified as a “fast follower” with respect to information technology. That is, basic capital allocation priorities limited the amount of resources we could throw at IT such that we would “follow” the lead of bigger, resource-laden banks, assuming with follow-on investigations that the
IT in question was fully vetted before being deployed. IT “drafting,” if you will. For some time, the gap between leader and follower was, for the most part, imperceptible to the customer, but, as IT channels have increased (social media, mobile capability, cloud commuting) and IT costs have, on a relative basis, decreased, the idea of being a technology fast follower can hardly be justified as a prudent strategy.

For small businesses, a sensible, but comprehensive assessment of available IT is a worthwhile investment – and strategy - that will likely unveil surprises. For our bank, a recent IT assessment revealed some underutilization of technology we already owned (which is common) as well as available new applications and processes that might have been prohibitively expensive a few short years ago. The customer base of our bank is, like us, primarily made up of small businesses. Many of these businesses, again like us, compete against much larger competitors. The small businesses in this category that have taken advantage of the advancements and cost reductions in IT have been the businesses that effectively compete (and thrive) as against their much larger competitors.

Assessment is vital, of course, but what becomes even more critical to sustaining competitiveness for small businesses is the proper deployment of the adopted technology throughout the organization. It doesn’t help if the boss is the only one who knows “how it works.” Central to this concept is continuous training, update monitoring and testing of the IT you own. Underutilization is usually the result of a temporary pause, intended or not, in the use of any particular piece of information technology. It creeps in when people are promoted, transferred, fired, go on vacation or hide in their jobs.

There are examples of small businesses successfully competing against larger rivals in all corners of American business – alcohol production (craft beer, wine and spirits), energy (“Small Wind”), agriculture (“Farm to Fork”) and financial services (community banks), just to name a few. In each category, the calculus for success is built around a unique, impactful customer experience. Then, through the leveraging of relatively inexpensive technology with wide applicability, small businesses are successfully competing with the giants in measures heretofore unseen.
Thinking Nomadic

Anthony Willoughby
Founder
Mammoth Hunters

The time might be right for executives to stop looking for new and novel ideas and to start exploring the methodology of successful decision making, leadership development and capital protection upon which all civilizations have developed. As technology
and information services become even more readily available and accessible today, the next great business innovation may very well come from the fundamentals of wealth management and leadership development that have been with us for thousands of years.

Over the past decades, I have been working on a visualizing process called territory mapping, obtained from 15,000 year old nomadic principles and wisdom that draw on responsibility, authority, contribution and an absolute clarity of your territory.

This process encourages future-thinking organizations to tackle the most complex business situations like nomads trekking the globe: to understand, value and transcend all cultural, hierarchal and language barriers is to achieve a new clarity in today’s changing and challenging commercial landscapes.

Laying the Groundwork

One way to lay the groundwork for territory mapping is to go out of the boardroom and break out of the comfort zone literally and figuratively, and embark on immersive, off-the-path experiences – some people call them adventures.

The scene for a leadership workshop might be a 100-year old Chinese building constructed around a large internal shady courtyard. Or the backdrop of the Great Wall of China itself. Ian Thubron, TBWA Greater China Group President, describes takeaways from his experience: “Up on the Wall – there can be no more powerful metaphor for the barriers we face than the Great Wall of China... We came away bonded as a group of leaders, with some war stories, some legends, some common language, and more importantly a clear plan per office, of some of the things they need to do to help us be more TBWA; how to build the culture, how to energise staff, how to collaborate, how to make ourselves more attractive to clients and prospects. A huge array of ideas.”

Global Business Nomads

The Omnicom Group Inc. applies territory mapping techniques in developing the workforce and attracting “the
brightest and most creative talent.” Creating a common corporate language is also a focus of Express Automation in Kenya as they use nomadic principles to get people to take more responsibility for the destiny of the company. A well-known vacuum cleaner producer used the concept of territory in strategizing the entry of their new air treatment fans to new market categories in North America, China, and Australia. The board of Aviva Group in Turkey and the executives of Cigna Global Health also have embarked on semi-nomadic journeys to gain insight into new methods of growing their business and developing talent.

Situating talent development in locations that disconnect employees from the modern way of life (no Internet access, dormitory accommodation, hot water and electricity optional) allows for intensive
engagement within the core group. Participants discover that it lets them focus on investing in the will power and morale of the team. If a company builds trust in employees, it leads to individual fulfillment which creates group motivation. At the same time, the motivation of the group inspires individuals to lead in ways that generate more profitable, competitive and happier firms.

Immersion in Indonesia

Not all organizations choose such remote locations to inspire employees because they disconnect people from their business realities. One forward looking Japanese electronics firm is using immersion as a strategy to connect key players into the realities of what they see as a burgeoning emerging market. This electronics giant aims to develop the mindset and skills of its staff to tie in project opportunities with infrastructure development in Indonesia.

The company sent seven executives from Japan, to join two Indonesian researchers as part of their mindset and skills training. The mapping and discussion sessions took place in various settings: Borobudur, a 9th century Mahayana Buddhist Temple in Central Java; a climb to Mount Merapi, dubbed one of the most active and dangerous volcanoes on Earth; then back to the seminar rooms for intensive brainstorming.

Herders, Warriors, Leaders

The stunning locations are just a backdrop – such settings work because of the interaction with and learning from the culture and wisdom of the people inhabiting these landscapes.

"Nomadic lifestyle takes us into others' territory. How we approach this is by sharing what we can do, and being respectful by taking care not to damage territory."

For many years I have been taking foreign executives to spend time with the Maasai people of East Africa to explore leadership and values. A famed tribe of herders and warriors, the Maasai stays true to a traditional semi-nomadic way of life that has allowed the tribe to farm deserts and scrublands for generations, and survive the most devastating droughts and natural disasters – a relevant model for a world facing the challenges of climate change, energy consumption and resource availability.
For a week, executives walk, talk and sit around camp fires with Maasai elders, warriors, women and children. These discussions provide the executives with fascinating insights into the nomadic way of life and how it has enabled the Maasai to thrive, adapt and prosper in changing and hostile environments. By examining Maasai core competencies, participants can design their framework for building a successful organization, which is anchored on clarifying and aligning responsibility, authority and accountability of their key stakeholders.

Milia (Emmanuel) Mankura, a Maasai elder and colleague who co-facilitates programmes with me, highlights the core values of stability and knowing who you are — important traits for sustainability and adaptability. According to Mankura, “Nomadic lifestyle takes us into others’ territory. How we approach this is by sharing what we can do, and being respectful by taking care not to damage territory.”

The practice of nomadic cattle herding and ways of thinking that Mankura demonstrates can be applied to modern business systems of decision making, people development, resource management and organizational structure. Using nomad principles as a framework, we sit down with the chief and the head of HR and work with the executive team to help employees understand, own and take responsibility for delivery of the corporate mission.

The experience highlights a key Maasai principle: ensuring everything a person learns is useful and has a relevant application is to instill pride and confidence in their own identity and ensure their contribution to the community.

Mapping is a useful technique for people to explore both
their inner territories (who they are as business leaders) and their business terrain (their organizations, their markets, the economic landscape). Having a clear sense of how everything fits together grows the needed inspiration, passion and courage as we claim our space and share the world with others.

Anthony Willoughby is an explorer, entrepreneur and team builder. He is a Founding Partner of Mammoth Hunters.

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