

Are you thinking strategically or operationally?

Are you making time to take a step back and think more strategically?

As your organization adapts to new and yet-to-be-defined realities, the to-do list can be long and peppered with unusual or evolving tasks. Do you know what you, your team and your organization need to let go, embrace, learn, do, etc., to get back to thriving?

If you're fortunate enough to be working right now, odds are you're being pulled in many directions, but strategic thinking is not just a senior leadership responsibility. Whatever role you play, you bring a unique perspective and set of skills and experiences that are needed to help shape a successful future.

The current level of uncertainty and ambiguity can make strategic thinking seem even more daunting than usual. There's also a sense of comfort and satisfaction in being able to put a checkmark next to items on the to-do list; there's a sense of control and progress.

It's important, however, to supplement your necessary operational, reactive and task-driven efforts by carving out space to consider the medium- and long-term view. This will ensure that you and your team are working on the right tasks and priorities, and that you are proactively preparing yourselves for the future.

How do you go about this?

1. Begin by completing this brief strategic thinking self-assessment to identify your strengths and opportunities;
2. Identify one or two actions you can take immediately to increase the amount of time and headspace you dedicate to thinking strategically;
3. Talk to others (your manager, colleagues) about it. Help foster more strategic conversations.

Self-Assessment: Am I Thinking Strategically or Operationally?

Assess questions 1-10 below and rate each one as either an “S” or “D”.

S = This is an area of strength for me right now. D = This is an area in which I need development.

		Actions I Can Take
	1. I spend time generating new ideas either alone or with my team.	
	2. I can explain the cause and effect linkages between every decision, no matter how small, with the broader goals of my department or organization.	
	3. I continually make an effort to broaden my knowledge and experience so I can identify connections and patterns.	
	4. I explicitly identify both the opportunities and risk(s) associated with a decision.	
	5. I deliberately make a trade-off, saying no to one alternative over another.	
	6. Once acting on a decision, I adapt my approach when new information comes in.	
	7. I commit time to networking and nurturing my relationships with strategic people (e.g. customers, suppliers, competitors).	
	8. I can clearly articulate what impact my decision will have on different stakeholders.	
	9. I anticipate how a situation may change in the medium or long term.	
	10. I block time off in my schedule to proactively reflect on situations rather than spending my days reacting to situations.	
	11. I am curious about the future and think about how technological, demographic and political trends may impact my industry.	
	12. I manage my tasks and priorities skillfully and make time to reflect and stay up-to-date on developments in my industry.	