



Seven Steps to a Winning Strategy

BY RICHARD MARTIN

Strategy is about deciding what to offer, to whom, how, and why. I've create a simple yet effective model I call the "Seven Ms of Winning Strategy": Mission, Market, Mark, Mass, Manoeuvre, Morale, and Marketing.

MISSION CLARITY

Your mission is how you generate value. It is at the intersection of competencies, passion and values, and market needs. Competencies are what you know, what you can do, and what you think and believe. Passion and values are why you do what you do. As for market needs, this doesn't just require identifying goals and wants, but also educating customers about their needs and your value. In the end, you must formulate a clear and succinct mission statement that incorporates these three factors, and communicate it widely to your team and your clientele.

MARKET KNOWLEDGE

Market knowledge requires careful assessment of the competitive battlespace so you can leverage and generate sustainable winning advantages and value. Markets = Value + Customers + Territories. Value includes tangible products, intangible services, and enduring relationships that help your customers achieve their goals and satisfy their wants. Customers are the businesses, organizations, governments, individuals, whatever, that need you and your value, and they can vary by territory. How can you help them identify and achieve their goals in the most effective and cost-effective manner possible? Who else is out there trying to do the same thing, and how can their activities undermine your strategy? How can you steal a march on them?

MARK TARGETS

Mark your targets for motivation and measurement. Unfortunately, people often succumb to the "Horizon Problem." No matter how hard you try, you will NEVER reach the horizon. Your

goals should be developed and expressed as specific, measurable targets. The most important and highest goal is your vision, which describes the concrete end state you are aiming for within a set timeframe. All your other goals cascade from that in a hierarchical manner, with each subordinate one contributing to its parent. These can be assigned to specific individuals along with resources and the authority to achieve them in a timely and efficient manner.

MASS FORCES

There are never enough resources and energy to go around. Scarcity is the watchword, and you must always focus your main effort on those manoeuvres and resources that have the greatest chances of succeeding. You must identify and leverage your center of gravity to maximum effect. This is the source of your strength and balance, what makes you uniquely capable and powerful in the market or any other undertaking. In a competitive market, you must also differentiate your products, services, and relationships and position yourself against competitive actions and reactions. Mass enables you to set relevant priorities and align them fully to your vision and objectives.

MANOEUVRE SCHEME

You need a scheme of manoeuvre and a plan to carry it out. I've written extensively about manoeuvring in prior articles in this column. In a nutshell, manoeuvre is about creating winning conditions for your plans by generating and leveraging your competitive advantages. A complete manoeuvre scheme identifies a main effort, secondary and tertiary thrusts,

supporting activities, time phasing, assignment of responsibilities and resources, and target alignment.

NURTURE MORALE

Morale is the will to victory, the willingness to make sacrifices for the great good and to persevere in the face of obstacles, setbacks, resistance, and counter-moves by competitors and non-business stakeholders. Morale is critical to success and winning because you must believe in your mission and vision. What about your team? Who is in your corner, supporting you in building and maintaining your resources and capabilities? Who is helping you strengthen your resistance, resilience, and robustness?

MARKETING/MESSAGE

The "Number One All-Time Major Marketing Mistake Nearly Everyone Makes": Focusing on you and your business's needs instead of your customers and their needs! Marketing means we have to learn to walk a mile in another person's shoes. To do this, we must observe, listen, analyze, and assess. We must focus on a core message, get it out there, and repeat, repeat, repeat!

See how far you can get in creating a compelling Mission and analyzing your Market(s). Mark your targets by creating a vision-objectives hierarchy and determine your centre of gravity so you know how to best Mass your forces. Create an effective scheme of Manoeuvre with detailed execution plans. Nurture Morale, yours and your team's. And finally, focus on Market needs, wants and habits, as well as the message you must convey to be victorious.

Richard Martin is the president and founder of Alcera Consulting, where he applies his military training as a Canadian Army officer to a range of business applications. He is the author of the book, *Brilliant Manoeuvres: How to Use Military Wisdom to Win Business Battles*. For more information on Richard and his services visit: www.Alcera.ca