

DR. LOIS FRANKEL

Get and keep the job you want.

One of the areas in which we are frequently called upon to coach clients is strategic thinking. Upward mobility is often contingent upon the ability to combine tactical and strategic capabilities. The problem is, most people are “wired” toward being a big picture, or strategic, thinker or toward being a more concrete, practical, and detail-oriented thinker. One of our coaches recently asked two of his CCI colleagues, Dr. Joe Thigpen and Dr. Bruce Heller, for assistance with helping a client to develop greater expertise in the area of strategic thinking. What ensued was an interesting e-mail dialogue that I thought would make perfect coaching tips for anyone interested in gaining greater competence in this arena or helping others to develop it.

1. Stimulating ideas encourage strategic thinking. There are "gurus" who see the world from a higher level than the rest of us. Start by reading the book, *How to Think Like Leonardo DaVinci: 7 Steps to Genius Every Day* by Michael Gelb. It teaches the different ways to approach problems that enable us see them with fresh and unique perspectives. Another good book is *The Visionary's Handbook: Nine Paradoxes That Will Shape the Future of Your Business* by [Watts Wacker](#) and [Jim Taylor](#).
2. Strategic thinking requires a lot of homework in a wide variety of fields. You need to be aware of what is going on in the world and in business. The higher the level of strategic thinking, the higher the level of sophistication in data. It starts with reading and talking widely with diverse experts in business and goes to exposure to ideas well beyond business. This does not occur over a year or two but over a lifetime of inquisitiveness. However, the time to start is *now*. At the very least, regularly read Harvard Business Review, Fortune, BusinessWeek or another business magazine.
3. “Block time” for high level thinking. At the least, an executive should block two hours each week for thinking beyond the immediate challenges of the day. During this time, ask yourself these questions, “What are we not doing now that if we did do would make the biggest difference in our future?” “What talents, resources, technology, etc. will we need for the future that we need to get ready for sooner rather than later?” “Who do I need to talk to that will enable me to sense a clearer picture of what could be a huge opportunity or danger for us?” “How would I approach this problem (challenge) if I could see it from a ten year perspective?”
4. People need to win with their strengths. Not everyone is well-suited for a job that requires strategic thinking, but if a person has strengths that enable him or her to *lead* strategic thinkers and use common sense in evaluating decisions with input from others, that person can be successful in high levels within an organization.

We hope you find these tips helpful and wish you a very happy, healthy, and success-filled New Year.

Until next month, stay well.

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