

The four elements for strategy success today

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The UCT Graduate School of Business is launching a new course this October to cut through the bamboozling nature of old strategic thinking and practice. It will develop new strategic thinking that is more imaginative and effective for the real world of today.

According to Jon Foster-Pedley, Director of the Strategy Starterkit short course, many businesses need strategic thinking reboot.

“The dominant systems and practices that made a firm successful in one era can in fact threaten and drag down the business as the business environment shifts. Most existing approaches to strategy - to make long, elaborate strategic plans - are today simply unworkable,” he said.

He added that businesses need active strategists, who learn quickly - these new strategists practice and learn the skills of using a number of different forms of intelligence, and don't rest on “that's the way we have always done it” reasoning.

The Strategy Starterkit course, offered by the UCT GSB's Executive Education unit, cuts through the cumbersome strategic processes of old and presents strategy tools simply by avoiding fads and jargon.

“The course is based on sound practice, research and experience of practicing and teaching strategy, but we have made the strategy tools easy to absorb and put into action. It is for any leader, manager or any professional at any level in any organisation who wants to create impactful strategies that add value,” said Foster-Pedley.

The new course will give South Africans cutting edge strategy skills that will enable them to make sense of complex data, become more imaginative, use flair and creativity, work with problems, communicate better and become quicker on their feet.

Foster-Pedley said there are four key areas for any manager and professional to look at when rebooting their strategic approach.

- Strategy should be viewed as wellness, not band-aids. What is required today is a systems thinking approach - this enables businesses to see the big picture of a strategy and how value is created throughout the business. This allows one to see the fundamental drivers of value, and thus the development of more effective and adaptable strategies.
- Boldness is needed. One is really only going to get ahead through action and trying things out. There is scope, even in a tough climate, to try new, good ideas and improve them rapidly, balancing the skills of planning, thinking and experimentation.
- Look at how to develop well-informed and stake-holder aware strategies, whether in business or the public sector. This requires leaders to have the ability to see more viewpoints, alternatives, solutions and opportunities for success, and then make more informed decisions on what action will create value. Strategy is not about the “one” person in the business in an ivory tower. Today strategy is fast-forward and involves people at all levels.
- Simplify. Avoid complex jargon - if it can't be explained simply, chances are it won't be understood by others very easily.

Foster-Pedley is a faculty member of the UCT GSB and teaches at business schools internationally where he is a visiting

professor in innovation, creativity and strategy. He will be joined on the course's faculty by several experienced and passionate educators, practitioners and academics. All of them have extensive real-life strategy, business and corporate experience, both as line managers and strategy designers and facilitators.

The Strategy Starterkit runs from 12 - 15 October 2009 at the UCT GSB. Contact Junita Abrahams on 021 406 1323 or SMS "Strategy" and your email address to 31497. SMSs charged at standard rates.

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