

# Shifts in strategy for 2016 and beyond (Part 1)

 By [Mike dos Santos](#)

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It is truly an age-old industry dispute: the value of strategy and planning versus the value of implementation and creativity. In spite of the various arguments put forth by both camps in the past, contemporary opinion within the industry is pointing to the fact that both of these areas have a critical role to play in the fields of marketing and communication.

Strategy, planning, implementation and creativity are all heavily reliant on each other. For without a sound strategy, there is no foundation upon which to execute relevant and resonant creative work. And without inspiring and timeous creative execution, there is no visible or audible manifestation of the strategy beyond the boardroom and into the minds and hearts of consumers.

In recent years, this debate has gained further traction, with more and more corporates, marketers and creative agencies re-assessing (and realising) the importance of strategy as a key driver of both brand and business value. While this is certainly a step in the right direction for an industry in which silo mentalities and conflicting agendas have sadly been all too prevalent in years gone by, it also comes with an awareness that the field of “strategic planning” (as we have traditionally understood it) is undergoing – and will continue to undergo – constant redefinition as both a business tool and a process.



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As such, it is crucial that we bear in mind the changing role of strategy in today's world – one in which the time-honoured theories, methods, techniques and rules of yesteryear are rapidly becoming outmoded. A recent report by Stanford Social Innovation Review sums this up succinctly, drawing on the words of Dwight E. Eisenhower, who was once quoted as saying: *“Plans are useless, but planning is everything.”*

In order to ensure relevance in a rapidly changing world, we thus need to afford greater consideration to the shifting role of strategy and the ways in which we build brand and communication strategies going forward. Against this backdrop, in Part One of this article I look at the first of six of the key shifts that are shaping the field of strategic planning in 2016 and beyond.

## Strategic shift: The rise of the micro-strategy

In today's dynamic and increasingly volatile marketplace, there is a growing imperative for strategic planning to be more agile, more responsive and more adaptive. This notion forms the crux of the so-called “micro-strategy”, which postulates a

much shorter-term view of the strategic way forward – whilst simultaneously remaining flexible enough to be modified as and when often unpredictable changes within a brand's macro-, meso- and/or micro-environments occur.

Bearing in mind the fact that we can no longer treat the past as a reliable predictor of the future, the exponential advancements we are witnessing in technology and the ever-increasing narrowing of time gaps between major market shifts, it is evident that the era of the rigidly defined strategic plan is coming to an end. As such, going forward, strategies (and strategists) will need to become ever more adaptable and geared towards the present and immediate future. Constant reorientation will be key in this regard!

As organisations continue to grow more decentralised in nature, planning will no longer happen in isolation. To this end, we will need to ensure that strategy, creative and customers remain aligned (and engaged) throughout.

That wraps up Part One of 'Shifts in strategy for 2016 and beyond'. In Part Two we'll look at small data as the missing link, paying attention to the outliers, overcoming the digital backlash and more.

## ABOUT MIKE DOS SANTOS

Michael graduated with B.A. Honours in Marketing Communication (cum laude) and started his career as a marketing and research assistant before moving into Strategic Planning at Grey Johannesburg. With a keen attention to detail and experience across the marketing communication spectrum, Michael continues to be inspired by the dynamic world of brands and branding. Mike now works as a Strategic Director at Shift Joe Public.

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