

HOW TO DEVELOP THE MIND OF A STRATEGIST

Strategy is a mindset, a way of thinking about decision making, work issues, even a wide variety of life-related issues. Michel Robert in his 1993 book, *Strategy Pure and Simple: How Winning CEOs Outthink Their Competition*¹, defines strategic thinking as, ". . . a fresh approach to the subject of strategy. It identifies the key factors that dictate the direction of an organization and is a process that the organization's management uses to set direction and articulate their vision."

In his newest volume, *Strategy Pure and Simple II: How Winning Companies Dominate Their Competitor*², Mr. Robert makes the key point that, ". . . the companies that will prosper and outpace their competitors during the next two decades will be those that will be able to outthink their competitors strategically . . . the winning CEO in the future will be the one who can craft a singular strategy that gives the company a distinctive advantage." Becoming a strategist means committing to a mental approach that outthinks the competition, or the opposition, or the media and produces a distinctive or unique approach, series of steps, solution options, or direction choices.

It's easy to list these outcomes but much tougher to consistently achieve them. Keep in mind that we're talking about a management process, not the creative process. Creativity and strategy are different. I'll address the differences in a future column. Today let's help you learn how to develop the mind of a strategist. Let's begin by helping you assess your strategic tendencies.

A LITTLE SELF-ANALYSIS

How strategic are you? What's your strategic mindset? Here's an exercise you can do privately to determine just how strategic you really are. Assess yourself against these strategic attributes:

¹ Robert Michel, *Strategy Pure and Simple: How Winning CEOs Outthink Their Competition*, McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, 1993, ISBN 0-07-053131-5, LOC 92-23176.

² Robert Michel, *Strategy Pure and Simple: How Winning CEOs Dominate Their Competitors*, McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, 1997, ISBN 0-07-053133-1, LOC 97-39581

1. **Inconsistency:** The strategist is intentionally inconsistent; in fact with a true strategist, inconsistency is a virtue.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) advises, coaches, and counsels the men and women who run very large corporations and organizations. He is an expert in managing and counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications issues. The fastest growing portion of his practice involves civil and criminal litigation. He is one of the few who can and truly does coach CEOs.

He is a prolific author (several books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), coach, and counselor. He is quoted in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and industry trade journals. He is a columnist, advisor, or editor for almost every major public relations periodical. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies that Reduce the Media's Power*, remains a classic work in the field of direct communication. He is an internationally recognized speaker on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs, and reputation preservation and restoration. Visiting his Web site, www.e911.com, is like attending the University of Crisis Management.

An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR), Mr. Lukaszewski is a member of the PRSA's College of Fellows (Fellow PRSA) and Board of Ethics & Professional Standards. He served as a crisis communications advisor to the International Disaster Advisory Committee, Agency for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance from 1989 to 1992, and is a civilian advisor to several other federal agencies. He lectures annually at the U.S. Marine Corp's East Coast Commander's Media Training Symposium and was the second recipient of its Drew Middleton Award. He is the recipient of both Ball State University's 2004 National Public Relations Achievement Award and the 2004 Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to PRSA, and is among the winners of the 2005 *PR News* Lifetime Achievement Award. His name appeared in *Corporate Legal Times* as one of "28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose," and in *PR Week* as one of 22 "crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis."