Formicio Insights
On moving organisations beyond their default future

Welcome to our latest bulletin and best wishes for 2017.

As many of you will know my good friend and colleague Peter Boggis and I spent a good portion of 2016 writing our book. It's called **Beyond Default** *and we're delighted to say that it's now finished and goes to the publishers next week.*

The premise of the book is that all organisations, whether they are commercial or non-profit, are on a trajectory to their default future; which is the place they will end up if they take no action other than that currently planned. If the default future is an acceptable future state then no further action is needed – just enjoy the journey. If, however, the default future is deemed unacceptable then decisions need to be made and actions taken to change the trajectory to one that leads to an improved future.

In many respects, there's nothing new in this thinking as it's always been the role and accountability of leaders to steer their organisations to a better future. What's different is accepting that organisations are on a given trajectory for a reason, and only by understanding and addressing the factors that are determining the current trajectory will leaders stand any chance of successfully changing their organisation's trajectory.

This default future thinking has led us to believe that the purpose of strategy is simply to change an organisation's trajectory – from that which

The Case for Greater Collective Leadership

Leadership is important as without it organisations would have no direction and people would have no one to follow. But is all leadership the same, or are different leadership models required in different circumstances? The authors of this article think so, and argue that collective leadership – as opposed to individual leadership – is critical if an organisation is serious about changing its trajectory and going beyond its default future. Furthermore, they offer seven operating principles for establishing greater collective leadership.
Read the full article here.

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What Can Leaders of Change Learn from World-Class Performers?

It's often quoted that some 70% of major change initiatives fail to deliver their intended objectives. If this is true, and the risk of failure so high, what can be done to increase the chances of success? In this article the authors suggest that much can be learned from world-class performers – particularly from ballet where the dancers continually work at the very threshold of failure. But first they examine the evidence for the poor rate of change success.
Read the full article here.

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The Purpose of Strategy: To Change an Organisation's Trajectory

If the purpose of strategy is to change an organisation's trajectory, from one that is taking it to its default future to one that is not only better but achievable, how are the strategic choices best made and how can the chosen strategy best be implemented? In this article, the authors present a framework for developing strategy that comprises three strategic trajectories: reality, intent and opportunity. They argue that only by understanding the trajectory of strategic opportunity and the trajectory of strategic reality can informed choices be made on the trajectory of strategic intent.
Read the full article here.

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Experiential Learning Journeys: A Source of Shared Insights and Collective Leadership

This article explores how deploying the principles of experiential learning through one or more 'Learning Journeys' is an effective way of developing collective leadership from the shared insights and experiences gained. Learning journeys can also help executives gain the collective capabilities needed to assess the effectiveness of current strategy, explore different strategies and successfully operationalise their chosen strategy.
Read the full article here.

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is taking it to its default future to one that will take it to an improved future.

In the book we talk about three trajectories: **Reality** (the trajectory you're currently on), **Opportunity** (the spectrum of trajectories that are open to you) and **Intent** (the one you've chosen and why). We also cover how to make strategic intent meaningful to others; how to turn strategic intent into operational reality; and how it all starts with collective leadership.

This is not a typical book on strategy that tells you what your strategy should be, nor do we aim to present a multi-step methodology for developing strategy. Our objective is to share some of the insights that we have learned over the years that explain why developing and operationalising strategy remains such a challenge.

Beyond Default will be published in late spring 2017 by LID Publishing. We'll keep you posted.

In the meantime we hope you'll find some of our recent articles of interest and value.

As always, we welcome your feedback.

Best regards
David Trafford

About Formicio

We work with people who want to change their organisation's trajectory, to one that takes it beyond its default future.

Specifically we can help you **assess** your current strategy and the default future it will

The Impact of Organisational Capabilities on Project Success

This article explores the argument that one of the principal reasons why delivering projects aimed at implementing strategy remains a challenge is that insufficient attention is given to the embedded organisational capabilities that define an organisation's trajectory. When a project aimed at strategy implementation comes up against organisational capabilities that are not aligned with its target trajectory, it will inevitably fail, either because they were not considered at all or their impact was underestimated. These organisational capabilities are often described as the organisation's 'antibodies' to change. Some organisational capabilities are easily recognisable, while others only become apparent when they are experienced. Successfully changing an organisation's trajectory therefore involves introducing new organisational capabilities, strengthening others and 'retiring' some.
Read the full article here.

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'Being Digital' as an Organisational Capability

All organisations are digital to some degree. The question is how digital do they need to become if they are to compete in an increasingly digital world? From the early days of computing – or, as it was then called, data processing – all organisations, whether they are commercial enterprises or government agencies, have become increasingly digitally-enabled. This article argues that if organisations are serious about becoming 'more digital', they need to give focus and attention to developing 'being digital' as an organisational capability. The authors describe the seven conditions that need to be in place to develop and sustain this capability.
Read the full article here.

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Operationalising Strategy – Turning Strategic Intent into Operational Reality

There is often more to operationalising strategy than making structural changes, redesigning processes and training staff. For strategies to be truly successful, leaders need to create the conditions that enable the organisation to pull itself into an improved future – a future that not only reflects the strategic intent, but also becomes operational reality.
Read the full article here.

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Making Your Strategic Signature Explicit

The act of strategy development is essentially about deciding where an organisation aims to operate along a small set of strategic axes, where each strategic axis represents a source of value. Making these positions explicit as a strategic signature is an effective way of helping an organisation understand what it needs to do to change its trajectory to its target future.
Read the full article here.

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deliver, *develop* new strategies that reflect strategic opportunity, and create the conditions to successfully *operationalise* your chosen strategy.

Our approach is to help you find a strategy that works for your organisation, while keeping you true to your strategic intent.

More details can be found on our website.

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Parting thought

"Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure."

Confucius,
Chinese teacher,
politician, and philosopher
c551-479BC
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How Operating Principles Can Make Strategy Meaningful

The purpose of any strategy is to change an organisation's trajectory, away from its current default future to one that is judged to be better. Unfortunately most strategies are too complicated, too detailed or too vague to be meaningful to the people who are expected to implement them. They lack a meaningful set of clearly articulated principles that define how the organisation needs to operate in the future.
Read the full article here.

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Using Organisational Capabilities to Pull the Present into the Future

One of the most powerful forces determining an organisation's default future is its existing organisational capabilities – the very capabilities that have contributed to past and current success. But are these capabilities the ones needed for future success? If the target improved future is different to the default future, then it is highly likely that different organisational capabilities will be needed. It is not to say that all existing capabilities will need to change, only those preventing the organisation altering its trajectory away from its default future. The aim is to have the organisational capabilities in place that will 'pull' the organisation to its targeted improved future.
Read the full article here.

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