

## Strategic Leadership and Decision Making



Session 10

### TEAM TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES

A technique is a procedure to complete a task

Technology, the study of or a collection of techniques

Skill, the ability to perform a task

Scientific technique, any systematic method to obtain information of a scientific nature

a way of carrying out a particular task, especially the execution or performance of an artistic work or a scientific procedure.

skill or ability in a particular field. Examples

"he has excellent technique"

noun

1.

the manner and ability with which an artist, writer, dancer, athlete, or the like employs the [technical](#) skills of a particular art or field of endeavor.

2.

the body of specialized procedures and methods used in any specific field, especially in an area of applied science.

3.

method of performance; way of accomplishing.

4.

[technical](#) skill; ability to apply procedures or methods so as to effect a desired result.

5.

Informal. method of projecting personal charm, appeal, etc.:

He has the greatest technique with customers.

noun

tactics (def 1).

a system or a detail of tactics.

a plan, procedure, or expedient for promoting a desired end or result.

of or pertaining to arrangement or order; tactical.

an action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific end.

synonyms: strategy, scheme, stratagem, plan, maneuver; More

method, expedient, gambit, move, approach, tack;

device, trick, ploy, dodge, ruse, machination, contrivance;

"a tax-saving tactic"

the art of disposing armed forces in order of battle and of organizing operations, especially during contact with an enemy.

Means by which a strategy is carried out; planned and ad hoc activities meant to deal with the demands of the moment, and to move from one milestone to other in pursuit of the overall goal(s). In an organization, strategy is decided by the board of directors, and tactics by the department heads for implementation by the junior officers and employees.

Strategic leaders need teams to solve problems and to develop policy alternatives to meet the challenges of working in "permanent white water." This is particularly true when dealing with policy issues and problems related to resource allocation decisions. A high-performing team will use, as one of several tools, a consensus process in estimating the situation and developing policy recommendations at the strategic level of government, business, or in other national or international organizations. The consensus team model uses a systems approach in dealing with strategic problems.

## **INPUTS**

Inputs to the consensus decision making process include the leader, the team members, and other resources used to forge a decision. Clearly, the quality of the decision making process and the decision itself are affected by the quality of the inputs. This is especially true with regard to the team leader's contributions.

The leader of a strategic team has two critical responsibilities. First, the leader is accountable for the effective functioning of the team. Key to maintaining effective functioning is the team's ability to step back periodically and critically examine what is happening. Second, the leader is responsible for developing and maintaining a stable structure as the team engages in its work. This responsibility hinges on the team's meta-decision. A meta-decision is a front-end decision about how the team is going to reach consensus and make a decision.

Consensus acts as an energy force in developing unity of action and effort. Consensus involves both process and outcomes. It is not dictatorial, idealistic, conforming, bland, or sterile. Developing effective consensus has much to do with widespread participation, acceptance, and support for decision implementation.

## **PROCESS**

The process is divided into Three Pillars:

- **High Conceptual Level.** Employ multiple frames of reference to develop high conceptual power. This means developing a "team mindset." Team members must think strategically to find the highest quality solution to a complex national problem, and to minimize risk of failure. Remember to stay out of the weeds.
- **Prudent Consensus Approach.** A high-performing team recognizes that effective team consensus does not emerge at the extreme ends of decision options. It usually falls between unanimous agreement and profound conflict. Successful strategic teams develop strong team identity, control internal politics, foster competitive debate, and forge consensus for action.
- **Vigilant Decision Management.** Effective strategic teams monitor their activities and make necessary adjustments to improve performance. The team is a self-correcting entity that develops capability to assess performance and take corrective action. The critical element here is that team members collectively take responsibility for both identifying and implementing changes to achieve success.

**OUTPUT.** High-performing teams employ consensus decision making. Common purpose and goals, shared leadership roles, personal and mutual accountability,

and collective work products are the values gained from this consensus approach.

**FEEDBACK.** Strategic leaders have an opportunity to expand power through the feedback process in the model. The most dynamic aspect of the consensus team approach may be in employing feedback effectively to both team members and the team leader. Meaningful feedback is essential to making this process work.

**A FINAL WORD.** How you make decisions at the strategic level is just as important as the decision itself. The best decision in the world is nothing without a powerful consensus for action, and useless unless it has produced a decision that is good for the organization. Decision makers must come armed with critical thinking skills that will allow them to efficiently and effectively function at the strategic level.

## **TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES**

In addition to the CTDM Model, there are a number of other tactics and techniques that can enhance the decision making processes of strategic leaders. Tactics and techniques are instruments to use to achieve some desired end. We measure a piece of lumber before cutting it to a precise length and angle to fit it in a structure. We choose a particular iron to approach the green given certain wind conditions. We know what we want and we choose our tools from experience, or the practices of others.

Techniques are methods a person uses to complete the technical requirements associated with a particular role. Techniques represent knowledge of specialized methods and the skill to apply them. Tactics are more like plans and procedures that would be used to achieve some objective. For example, a leader might use as a tactic the CTDM, and use evaluation of the work as a technique.

Some techniques and tactics break down into simple lists of things that leaders have used successfully. Retired General Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, developed a collection of 'rules' which he kept very much in evidence on his desk:

1. It isn't as bad as you think. It will look better in the morning.
2. Get mad, and then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.

4. It can be done!
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don't let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can't make someone else's choices.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision. Be demanding.
12. Don't take counsel of your fears or naysayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

The following six sections develop the processes of team tactics and techniques.

## **SECTION 1: Leader Planning and Preparation**

The team leader is responsible for laying the groundwork for team activities. A joint/interagency team leader has several issues to consider before his or her team gets down to business.

### **1. Clarify the team's identity and charter.**

Establish a close working relationship with the Executive Sponsor-the strategic decision maker empowering the team. The Executive Sponsor will guide team efforts and maintain liaison with the other strategic decision makers. This reduces the amount of mixed guidance to the team and clarifies the reporting relationship between the team and strategic decision makers. Clarify and gain agreement on the following issues (Clark and Wheelwright 1992):

- The name of the team.
- The name of the Executive Sponsor.
- The Executive Sponsor's objectives, intent, and guidance.
- The team's purpose and assigned tasks.
- A description of the desired product-what is a quality product?
- Set boundaries on the magnitude of the desired outcome.
- The users and the uses of the team's work.

- Team composition.
- Advisors & experts available to the team.
- The team's scope of authority.
- The Executive Sponsor's milestones.
- The Executive Sponsor's reporting requirements.

## **2. Understand the complexity of the problem.**

Do not go into your first meeting cold. Track the history of the problem and related policy decisions. Develop your intuition about how the policy has taken shape, how the problem evolved to its present state, and how organizations have responded. Understand the stakeholders, their interests and their competitors. Get an accurate view of how stakeholders will react in team activities. Clarify the Executive Sponsor's current political agenda. What perceived need inspired the decision to form a team? What are the risks and consequences of team failure? In the end, what really matters to the strategic decision makers?

## **3. Write out the team's mission.**

Define the team's mission-when, who, what, to do what and where.

## **4. Determine the conceptual framework.**

Most problems lend themselves to a conceptual framework for resolution. In many cases, the systems approach is very useful. Once identified, a conceptual framework serves as a basis for designing the team's process plan. For example, the Framework for Grand Strategy suggests that the team should first assess the international environment, and then assess the current U.S. domestic situation. Overall, the conceptual framework guides the work of the team.

## **5. Envision goals (Zsombok, et al. 1992)**

- Identify the team's specified and implied tasks. State team goals in specific, concrete language:
- Consider how the team's purpose fits into the larger picture.
- State the tasks and products that you must deliver.
- Think about outcomes that would count as team failure.
- Provide a basis for deciding priorities.

## **6. Determine needed functional expertise to fill gaps.**

The conceptual framework may also indicate information needs. These gaps may require the team to rely on outside experts or use of a "fact-finding" subgroup. Consider how the team will fill its information needs.

### **7. Keep pace with the environment (Eisenhardt, 1990).**

You may have to deliver a product quickly. Keeping pace may require "fast decision making." Before you design your team's process plan, you may need to employ tactics to accelerate the team's decision making processes:

- Initiate procedures to track real time information on the environment and current operations. Hone your understanding of what is going on and what works. Do not completely rely on long-term, general performance trends.
- Anticipate that while the team is doing its work, it will need to build several alternatives, using the team's intuitive understanding of the situation and diversity of experience. Even include options that may not have widespread support. Shape alternatives as more information is available. Rely on the power of comparisons in reflective debate to sharpen preferences and team member efforts.
- Seek outside advice. Rely on an experienced counselor to act as a sounding board for ideas or to provide insight into a variety of issues. Be selective in choosing an advisor—a team is best served by a trusted counselor who is respected by his or her colleagues.
- When it's time to decide, include everyone. Use a two-step procedure called "consensus with qualification" to push for consensus. Debate the issue and attempt to forge consensus. However, if consensus does not emerge the leader makes the choice. All may not agree with the decision, but everyone has a voice in the process.
- Integrate policy and tactics. In deliberations of strategic options, discuss required tactical moves in a "quick and dirty" fashion. Refine options as necessary. Do not complete elaborate, detailed tactical planning during deliberations.

### **8. Design a process plan (Zsombok, et al. 1992).**

Describe how your team will approach its work—the sequence of steps and delegation of responsibilities. Consider the conceptual framework you identified to solve the problem in laying out the major steps in the team's process plan. Make sure your plan reflects the sequential step-by-step nature of tasks.

Establish checkpoints in the process plan to review team progress. Plan on periodically checking to see if the team is still on course. Be prepared to recycle on certain issues. Use checkpoints to adjust the team's process.

Write out a team process plan and allocate time available. Frequently, the structure of most "unstructured" strategic decisions involves three basic phases:

- Identification: assess the situation and identify problems.
- Development: search for alternatives and build decision options.
- Selection: evaluate & choose an option, and authorize actions.

### **9. Manage time (Zsombok, et al, 1992).**

Do not go further in your process planning without properly allocating time available to each portion of the team's process plan. Outline a time schedule. Include periodic "alarm bells" to alert the team to approaching deadlines. Protect the last part of a work period to review the team's product and to complete final revision. This requires constant monitoring of a team's schedule. To avoid a last minute crash, build cushions into time schedules.

### **10. Structure the team.**

Consider tasks that need to be done and tailor the team to get the work done. Use designated subgroups as necessary, such as a fact finding subgroup. Be careful that you properly integrate the work of a subgroup into the team's process plan. Make sure that you do not employ subgroups in parallel when their products are sequential in nature.

### **11. Determine assignment of member roles and functions.**

Define team member roles and functions. There are a few key functions that must be assigned initially. These include time keeper, recorder, spokesman, and chart maker/report writer. Relate team member roles and functions to one another. This understanding of interrelated roles and functions enables team members to integrate their work, anticipate what should occur and, when the unexpected happens, react accordingly.

### **12. Plan to control internal politics (Eisenhardt, and Bourgeois, 1988).**

Control internal politics by empowering team members. When the leader empowers members, most see little need or have any desire to engage in politics.

### **13. Plan for reflective debate.**

- Establish important ground rules to promote productive policy debate (Yates, 1987):
- Include all affected team members in the debate.

- Adhere to norms for proper conduct and protocol.
- Employ neutral language and ordinary, nontechnical terminology.
- Discourage the use of "we-they" discourse.
- Avoid old grievances about historical injustices.
- Provide full access to information.
- Keep communication channels open.
- Focus on interests and mutual problems instead of "positions."
- Avoid "winner take all" decisions.

Encourage team members to speak their minds. Recognize that if debate is left unstructured, there is a high cost to team unity. Unstructured debate can get emotional. Lingering rivalries are possible. Do not allow extreme and strident voices to dominate discourse and obstruct the team's process.

Employ proven methods that improve the quality of strategic decisions: include Dialectic Inquiry and Devil's Advocate. The Dialectic Inquiry method is useful in paring down and producing a high quality assessment of the situation. The Devil's Advocate method is useful in producing a high quality course of action.

#### **14. Plan for forging team consensus.**

Consider how you plan to build consensus on situation assessment and your team's proposed recommendation. The basic idea is that everyone must have their say. If push comes to shove, consider using the two-step procedure called "consensus with qualification" to push for consensus.

#### **15. Lay out the agenda for the first meeting.**

- The goals of your first team meeting should focus on three themes:
- Strengthening team identity.
- Understanding the rationale for forming the team.
- Starting work on situation assessment.

There is always a temptation to plunge into the problem. Your team will do better in the long run if you spend equal time on all three aspects, especially at the first meeting.

#### **16. Arrange details of first meeting.**

Let team members know the following details of the team meeting so they can prepare:

- Organizational sponsor.
- Name of the team meeting.

- Date, time, duration, and location.
- Purpose & desired product.
- Attendees.
- Preparation tasks (if required).
- Resource requirements.

## **SECTION 2: A General Team Process Plan**

A team process plan describes how a team will sequence steps and delegate responsibilities. The team also should gain consensus on a procedure that resolves conflict quickly.

<b>SESSION</b>	<b>TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION</b>
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<b>1a Initial Meeting</b>	Team goals, ground rules,  member roles, etc.  Conceptual framework  and process plan.
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If you need a conceptual framework, use the tried and true "systems approach" to gain insight into what is happening. A systems approach enables the team to identify key components and how they interrelate. Identify cause-and-effect patterns. Then the team can better understand how possible decisions are likely to turn out.

<b>1b Problem Awareness</b>	Historical view, key trends, major issues.
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Start with a historical frame of reference. Track the evolution of the problem and related policy decisions. Discuss how the policy has taken shape, how the problem evolved to its present state, and how organizations have responded.

<b>2 Stakeholders</b>	Stakeholder views.
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Understand the interests of the stakeholders and their competitors; obtain an accurate view of how they have reacted to policy decisions. Consider the stakeholders' frames of reference and perspectives. Search for a shared vision of the future--identify the stakeholders' "common ground."

- Identify external forces and critical trends.



## **Alternatives**                      alternatives.

Request team members review and assess the alternative approaches individually according to their agency/functional perspective. Suggest a simple rating scheme such as:

- Workable and preferred
- Workable but less preferred
- Difficult but preferred
- Not executable (state rationale)

Be careful not to exclude some good alternatives. The screening process enables team members to gain insight into other member perspectives and how each function would have to change to implement a decision. This step is crucial in gaining a broad perspective on how the U.S. Government works and the need for joint/interagency cooperation.

## **7 Develop Decision Options**      Formulate choices for decision

Develop a few decision options in concrete terms. Assign someone (who has a good understanding of the team's mission) to build a few strawmen. Use concrete strawman proposals to discuss, compare, modify, and to choose from. In developing options, consider various stakeholder perspectives.

## **8 Assess Decision Options**                      Compare and debate the choices

Here are some important questions to answer in assessing decision options:

- What is the objective we hope to achieve with the decision?
- Have we considered all means available?
- Can or will this option achieve the objective?
- What are the costs-according to each frame?
- Are the desired gains and risks of failure clarified?
- What are the value tradeoffs incumbent with the decision?
- Will the public support the decision?
- Will the situation be altered later?
- What are other possible outcomes-short & long term?
- What will it take in "political capital" to implement?

When assessing decision options, use a devil's advocate or "war gaming" model to search for gaps in a proposal. In war gaming, team members "play out" a decision option against probable threats or simulated opponents, with all risks properly included. During a debate or a war game, gaps become obvious. Also, a devil's advocate or war game can uncover misunderstandings in the way various members perceive a decision option. Once a misunderstanding is identified, clarify the point (Zsombok, et al, 1992).

Ultimately, the team leader is responsible for resolving value conflicts that a team cannot resolve by internal debate. This responsibility is a unique task of a leader. The leader, as a sole person sitting in judgment, can better subordinate one value to another, mindful of the team's mission and its goals (George, 1980).

## **9 Develop a Recommendation and Required Actions**

Integrate policy decisions and tactics. In developing your recommendation, identify required tactical moves. If substantial political resistance exists, mold your recommendation by using an incremental approach to make a major policy change, thereby reducing the stakes in the near term. Craft a step-by-step approach in implementing your recommendation.

### **SECTION 3: A Standard Meeting Agenda**

#### **Start on time:**

- Bring your team to order.
- Introduce yourself.
- State the purpose of the meeting.

#### **Get to know each other:**

- Conduct team member self-introductions.
- Review individual background and skills.
- Present personal expertise / interest on the issue.
  
- Establish member equity.

#### **Set the stage:**

- Restate the team's mission.
- Restate the executive sponsor's guidance.
- Foster a sense of shared mission.

### **Clarify team goals:**

- Explain how the team's mission fits into the big picture.
- State major tasks to be accomplished and products.
- Provide a basis for determining team priorities.
- Make sure everyone understands the team goals.

### **Work out decision making issues.**

- Establish a climate of consensus-style leadership.
- Discuss the need for consensus.
- Present the case for requiring everyone's input.
- Describe the role of reflective debate.

### **Confirm the meeting agenda:**

- Review the meeting agenda.
- Suggest meeting timelines.
- Review the product desired.
- Get consensus on the meeting agenda.

**Assign member roles and functions.** Functional Experts, Sub-Group Leaders, etc.

**Assign admin tasks:** Spokesperson, Recorder, Timekeeper, etc.

### **Outline the team's conceptual framework and process plan:**

- How should the team think about the issue?
- Framework for Grand Strategy?
- The Systems Approach?

### **Process:**

- What is your plan to attack the problem?
- Tackle an easy issue first, then the hard ones.
- Get the history on the situation.
- Identify stakeholder interests.
- Assess the situation using member views or reframing.
- Brainstorm solutions.
- Build a consensus strawman, then argue, or start with the status quo and then tweak.
- Use the Delphi Technique.
- Assess the risks and alternative outcomes.
- Use consensus with qualifications.

**Get Started:** Go to the first step on your agenda.

**Make Assignments:** Issue task to team members. Require inputs within three to five days so things don't go cold.

**Evaluate Team Processes:**

- Allow ten minutes at the end for team self-evaluations.
- How did this meeting go? What didn't members like?
- Are we addressing the right issues?
- Are we spinning our wheels?
- What do we need to correct?
- Will this team succeed? Why or why not?

**SECTION 4: Ground Rules for Team Members**

**1. Promptness:** Team meetings are sacred. We start on time. Come prepared to participate and contribute to the team.

**2. Team Goals:** Understand the team's goals. When not clear, seek clarification at the outset, rather than waste time pursuing vague objectives. Do not begin working without good direction.

**3. Member Roles:** Understand your role and function on the team. Identify other team member roles and functions. Understand the interrelated nature of roles and functions. Integrate your work with that of others.

**4. Member Contributions:** Contribute to team success by participating actively in execution of assigned roles. Watch for disengaged members and try to bring them back into the team. Do not continue without attempting to improve the situation.

**5. Teamwork:** Work as a team. Step outside your role to help teammates. Understand it is not enough for you just to help others--learn what caused the problem. There are several reasons for the need to help--an uneven distribution of workload, or an unwise employment of a member's expertise.

**6. Debate the Issues:** Everybody engages in reflective debate.

**7. Personal Conduct:** Adhere to norms for proper conduct in debate:

- Use neutral language and ordinary, nontechnical terminology.
- Discourage the use of "we-they" discourse.
- Avoid old grievances about historical injustices.

- Provide the team full access to information.
- Keep communication channels open.
- Focus on rationale rather than "positions."

**8. Open Discussions:** Speak your mind. But, do it in a way that does not jeopardize team unity. Avoid becoming emotional, and reverting to lingering rivalries.

**9. Self -correct:** Call "time out" to correct processes.

**10. Team Evaluations:** Take time to look at team processes. Be prepared to present your evaluation at the end of each session.

## **SECTION 5: Tactics for Dealing With Differences Among Team Members (Yates 1987)**

**1. Establish a sense of shared mission.** An obvious, but critical task that provides a sense of self, fosters cooperation, controls fragmentation, and establishes member equity and contains defensiveness.

**2. Create incentives to act.** Deadlines, assigned responsibilities, and a structured process encourage all members to act and assume responsibility for team success. Time is money-produce something tangible and get it on the street.

**3. Track evolution of problems and policy decisions.** Tough problems trace a twisting course as they unfold. This influences the team's intuition about how policy has taken shape, how the problem evolved to its present state, and how organizations have responded.

**4. Understand the stakeholders.** Understand both personality traits and bureaucratic interests of the stakeholders. Team leaders of joint/interagency team's need to get an accurate view of how various stakeholders will react to team activities.

**5. Deal with extremes and the middle.** There is a tendency for extreme, strident voices to dominate debate. Team leaders need to control strident voices and give the silent middle a secure opportunity to present their temperate views. Moderate views often reduce conflict.

**6. Search for common ground and a shared vision of the future.** Most teams have a set of common needs, or "common ground," that should be identified and expanded. The search relies on open discussion, discovery of common needs, and agreement on objectives.

**7. Address winning issues first. Begin debate on issues that can be easily resolved.** This forms a habit of successful conflict resolution within the team. It reemphasizes that team success means working together in forging consensus.

**8. Take decisive action by using an incremental approach.** When intense conflict and resistance exist, a practical approach is to employ a step-by-step strategy in solving the problem. Bold decisions, implemented incrementally, gain headway while reducing tension.

**9. Build a few "strawman" proposals in concrete terms.** To improve reflective debate and focus discussions on tangible issues, assign someone to build a few proposals. Teams work exceptionally well when they have strawman proposals to discuss, compare, and modify.

**10. Attend to the needs of the implementers.** Nothing gets done unless the supervisor makes it so. Pay attention to the problems your decisions pose for those who must implement higher-level directives.

## **SECTION 6: Tactics to Accelerate the Decision Making Process-Fast Teams**

**1. Track real time information.** Fast teams track real time information on the environment and current operations to develop an intuitive and deep grasp of the strategic situation. Fast teams focus on today's critical concerns and current organizational operations to learn what's going on and what works.

**2. Build multiple, simultaneous alternatives.** During the decision process, fast teams immediately begin to build alternatives, using the team's understanding of the situation and diversity of experience. They include options that may not have widespread support, and rely on comparisons in debate to sharpen their preferences.

**3. Rely on the advice of an experienced counselor.** Fast teams seek outside advice of an experienced, usually older, counselor to act as a sounding board for ideas or to provide insight into a wide variety of issues. They are selective in choosing an advisor who is respected by his or her colleagues.

**4. Try for consensus, but don't delay deciding.** When it's time to decide, fast teams use a two-step procedure called "consensus with qualification." They debate the issue and attempt to forge a consensus. If a consensus does not emerge after everyone has had their say, the leader makes a choice, guided by input from the team. All may not agree with the decision, but everyone has a voice in the process.

**5 Integrate policy decisions and tactics.** Fast teams integrate their decisions with other policy decisions. In deliberations of strategic options, they briefly discuss required tactical moves in a "quick and dirty" fashion. Then, they refine options as necessary. Fast teams are able to better implement decisions because they prevent many of the headaches resulting from disconnected tactics