

HOW FLUID IS YOUR STRATEGY?

By Marilyn Thiet

For years I did not think the words fluid and strategy belonged in the same sentence. A strategy was something to be set and kept for at least three to five years sometimes longer. While the tactics and actions may change the strategy was firm. Businesses were many times faulted for changing their strategy too often leaving confusion in the wake. Fast forward to today and leaders who set a strategy that is too firm may be setting a course for disaster.

I was privileged last week to attend a strategy workshop led by an old friend and former colleague Mo Kasti, now the CEO and President of the Center for Transformation and Innovation. As Mo gathered with healthcare leaders he displayed a photo of a rapidly moving stream of water flowing over, around, and through a pile of rocks and discussed the concept of creating a Terrain Based Strategy™. Keeping the mission, vision, and values intact, the strategy changes based on the terrain it encounters. For the group gathered last week, there is probably no rockier terrain out there today than healthcare. As I listened I couldn't help but think of so many other industries and corporations who could have benefitted from a bit more fluidity in their business strategies.

Blockbuster recently announced the closing of the remainder of their US based stores. How closely was their leadership watching the changing technology terrain and adjusting their strategy? Their mission statement talks about providing the most convenient method of distributing video entertainment. Yet their strategy did not match their mission once the terrain changed to video streaming and downloads.

As leaders it is our job to keep our eyes on the ever changing terrain we are encountering and react quickly enough to adjust our strategy and tactics accordingly. It is also our job to communicate those changes so clearly that our teams can make the necessary adjustments without missing a beat. How fluid is your strategy? How well will your business continue to rapidly flow when it encounters the rock piles?

"Strategy is like water, it adapts to the terrain."

~ Sun Tzu