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HOW TO DEVELOP THE MIND OF A STRATEGIST[©]

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ABSTRACT

Strategy is one of the more mysterious areas of public relations practice. For many, being a strategist or a strategic advisor is considered to be at the top of our professional practice activity. Still, merely using the adjective “strategic” or the noun “strategy” does not get us to the table where management objectives are debated and decisions made. The strategist has to develop a management-oriented mindset, behaviors, and attitudes that attract management attention. The strategist also needs to learn why some strategies fail.

When discussing strategy and being a strategist, several questions generally arise:

- How do I get to the table?
- How do I stay at the table?
- How can I get better control of the boss?
- How can I have true influence over the boss?
- What do I do once I get to the table?
- What can I do to keep from getting shot down by the lawyers and management consultants?
- What are some of the questions I should be prepared to answer?
- What exactly is strategy?

There’s a great U.S. cartoon series called “Wizard of Id.” One of the classic cartoons pictures the king handing his court jester – his public relations person – a news release. The jester takes one look at the news release and says to the king, “This is just not news, your Highness.” The king replies, “Stamp it secret.” Now, that’s strategy.

The most effective goals and the strategies to achieve them are simple, positive, focused, time sensitive, understandable, and achievable. How do your mission, vision, values, and business strategy measure up? Lots of people think they have something strategic to offer and deserve to be at management's table without really knowing what strategy is.

When it comes to being a strategist – a successful, counter intuitive, energetically positive thinker – your focus must remain on the success of the team, its leadership, and promptly achieving useful, important, positive goals.

What is strategy? It is defined by Lukaszewski as mental energy, verbally injected into the organization's thinking that helps management and the organization achieve their objectives.

Strategy is a tough challenge for tough-minded thinkers and relentlessly action-oriented doers. If you can genuinely put yourself in the boss' shoes and look at things from an operational perspective, talk in the vocabulary of management, think and recommend using strategic management process approaches, then apply what you know how to do to that which management really needs done and what is truly important, you will have developed the mind of a strategist. You'll be sought out. Count on it.



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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 the author of the four-volume *Executive Action® Crisis Communication Management System* and has published 26 unabridged monographs on critical communication subjects since 1994. His newest book, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?*, was published by Jossey-Bass in 2008.

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."