**Guidelines for Strategic & Tactical Thinking**

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Strategic thinking is concerned with the longer term, such as our overall positioning in the customer account. Tactical thinking is concerned with the next twelve months, such as ensuring the successful delivery of the project (or projects) during the coming year. Operational thinking is concerned with putting together and executing the detailed project workplan (tasks and resources) at the day-to-day level.

On all projects, and especially on large, complex ones, think through the project at the strategic and tactical level, before rushing into planning at the operational level. To illustrate the differences, it is conceivable that we could deliver to the customer specification on time and on budget but damage the business relationship in the process. In this example, the tactical objectives would have been achieved at the expense of a strategic objective to develop future business.

**Who before Why before What**

Start by understanding the people you're dealing with in terms of their personal and organizational objectives and external influences.

Once you feel comfortable that you understand who the players are, think through:

• why the initiative is being undertaken,

• what benefits the organization is looking to achieve,

• what must be accomplished to achieve these benefits,

• how success and failure will be measured.

Understand the "why," before you start to look at the details of "what" must be accomplished and "how" you're going to do that.

**So What**

Throughout the planning process, continually ask yourself "so what?" What do your findings really mean?

Think about the implications of what you have found.

Focus on what problems you are trying to solve. "A problem well stated is a problem half-solved."

Think beyond the specific application and technology. How can we really help the customer meet their needs? Don't accept anything as a given unless you've asked why.

**Benefits of Strategic and Tactical Thinking**

The benefits of strategic and tactical thinking can be thought of in terms of effective approach and efficient execution:

• the worst approach, poorly executed, produces slow failure,

• the worst approach, well executed, produces quick failure,

• the best approach, poorly executed, produces survival,

• the best approach, well executed, produces success.