



Hope Is a Strategy (Well, Sort Of)

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Ok, I can hear you groaning. We've all heard the phrase "Hope is not a strategy" — and it isn't, especially when based on illusion, delusion, fiction or false assumptions.

But hope is a critical part of achieving a strategy when based on what is possible; perhaps not highly probable, but possible. Hope is the belief that something is possible and probable, and the recognition that the degree of each is not necessarily equal.

When hope is based on real-world experience, knowledge and tangible and intangible data, it results in trust, which is necessary to implementing any strategy. Without faith in the people, processes and technologies involved, how can we achieve anything? Hope recognizes the reality that failure happens, success is not assured, the laws of physics don't change and prudence is needed to discern when to persevere — and when to pivot. Hope doesn't demarcate a linear path, but it does guide us through twists and turns. Hope views the glass as half full, not half empty. Hope supports realistic optimism, a necessary component of success.

This sounds so trite and mundane. Hope is a strategy. Yeah, right. But it is. After a few decades of helping organizations create highly actionable, measurable, living strategic plans that adapt to the changing world instead of leaving our companies stuck in concrete, I've seen hope achieve marvelous success for customers, employees, communities, stakeholders and shareholders.

So, what would happen if you tried to make hope part of your strategy? Remember: 1) base it in fact, not fiction; 2) learn and apply from failures along the way, 3) focus on what's working instead of what's broken, and 4) use optimism as your greatest act of rebellion against the naysayers and status quo. Hope really can be a strategy.

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