



*Achieving radical and sustainable improvement in top line performance*

## ***Strategy vs. Tactics***



**...Know the difference!**

August, 2011

Quick Links:

[About KappaEast](#)

[Why KappaEast](#)

[What Keeps You Awake](#)

[Services](#)

[Resources](#)

[Clients](#)

[Contact KappaEast](#)



### **Definitions:**

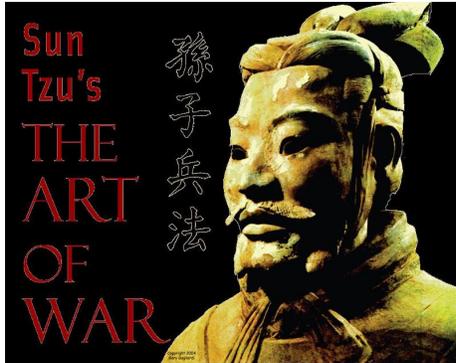
**Strategy** is a plan of action designed to achieve a particular mission or goal. Think of strategy as a vector or force, represented by a line with an arrowhead showing direction, like the street sign above. The length of the arrow or its magnitude represents the resources or energy pushing the vector in the right direction, to achieve a mission or goal.

If strategy is the answer to why, then tactics is the answer to how. Strategy is typically a longer time frame, tactics a shorter time frame. Strategy is distinct from tactics. The direction in which the arrow should be moved at all and in which direction is a matter of strategy (thinking and planning). How the vector or arrow is moved in the right direction and how fast is a matter of tactics or doing.

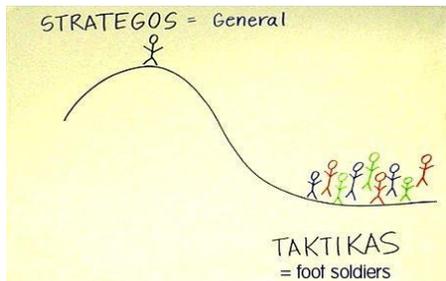
### **The Challenge:**

The perils of confusing strategy with tactics are best described in the following two-dimensional matrix.

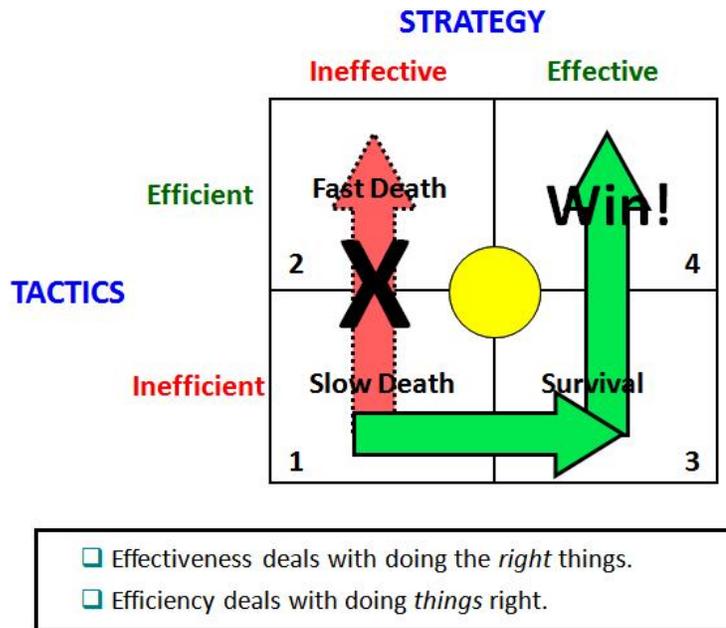
"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."  
 ...Anonymous



"All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved."  
 ... Sun Tzu



"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."  
 ... Sun Tzu



**How It Works:**

**Quadrant 1:** Companies that are ineffective in strategy and inefficient in tactics, typically experience a slow and painful demise. Wrong strategy and wrong tactics usually manifest themselves in very low morale and dysfunctional teams (in-fighting and polarized camps) throughout the organization, with little or no progress towards achieving business goals and objectives.

**Quadrant 2:** When organizations realize they are in trouble, the knee jerk reaction is to create a sense of urgency which typically results in the edict that "We all need to work harder." Unfortunately, if the strategy is still fundamentally wrong, it is equivalent to running faster in the wrong direction. For example, when sales organizations are behind in their top line forecast, the tendency is to make more sales calls, write more proposals, conduct more demos, etc. However, if we are still calling on the wrong people, selling the wrong solution, instead of a lingering death, the wrong strategy efficiently implemented is surely the way to a quick death.

**Quadrant 3:** This quadrant acknowledges that the company is on the right track, headed in the right direction, and is able to answer the "Six Questions of Strategy." However, tactical execution, still remains an issue. Holding individuals accountable for follow-up execution on the key strategic decisions, is the only way to move from the Quadrant 3 to 4.

**Quadrant 4:** This is the best possible situation, an effective strategy, combined with efficient operations. This combination maximizes results for the organization. However, keep in mind that once both dimensions are in sync, the organization must constantly monitor changes in the market, especially competition, as they are not a constant. Which means, today's strategies and tactics may be insufficient for the future and require frequent (typically quarterly review) review and updating.

**What's Next:**

**Did you know that the word "strategy" is a word of military origin? The word strategy derives from the Greek "strategos" which means "the leader or commander of an army or general." If you want to learn more about the origins of strategy, arguably the three most significant texts on the subjects are *The Art of War*, written in the 6th century by Sun Tzu, *On War*, by Carl von Clausewitz (19th century) and *Strategy* by B.H. Liddell Hart. And for a quick 2 hour read on your next plane flight we suggest *The Defence of Duffer's Drift* by E.D. Swinton.**

**If you would like to explore the current state of your strategic plan, we would welcome a call. If you have additional best practices we would welcome hearing those as well. You can reach us at [kappainfo@kappaeast.com](mailto:kappainfo@kappaeast.com).**

**Unless otherwise attributed, all material for KappaEast eBulletin is copyrighted by KappaEast 2011. All rights reserved. You may reprint any or all of this material if you include the following "2011 KappaEast Management Consultants, LLC used with permission [www.kappaeast.com](http://www.kappaeast.com)." Please send us a courtesy note.**