

Vlerick Leadership Day

25 November 2010

**EXPOSING SOME MYTHS
ABOUT STRATEGY AND
LEADERSHIP**

Marcus Alexander

Visiting Professor, Vlerick Management School

Adjunct Professor of Strategic and International

Management, London Business School

Associate Fellow, Oxford University Saïd Business School

Some of my students have been quite successful...



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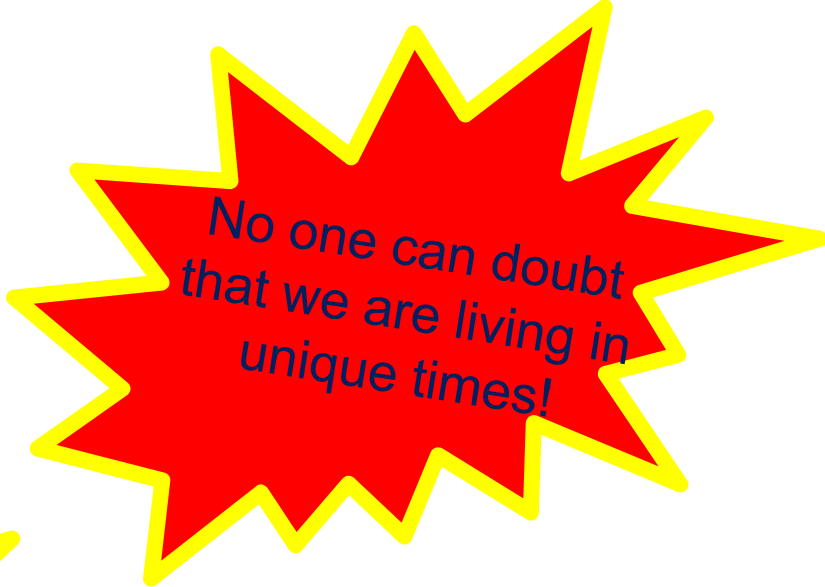
Management, London Business School

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Myths - lets start with 'the crisis'...



Things have never been like this before!



No one can doubt that we are living in unique times!



The rate of change is greater than ever!

....REALLY?

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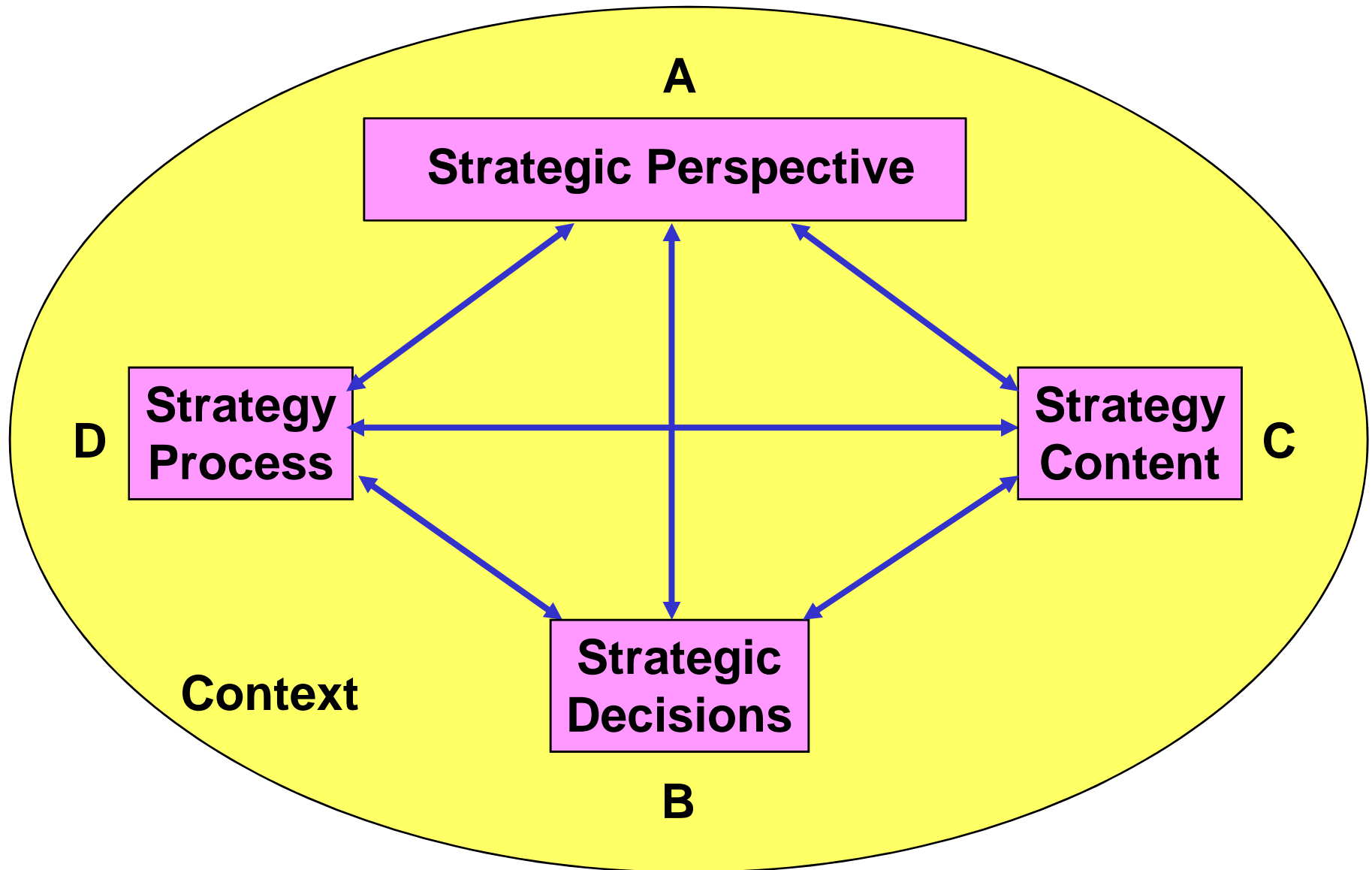
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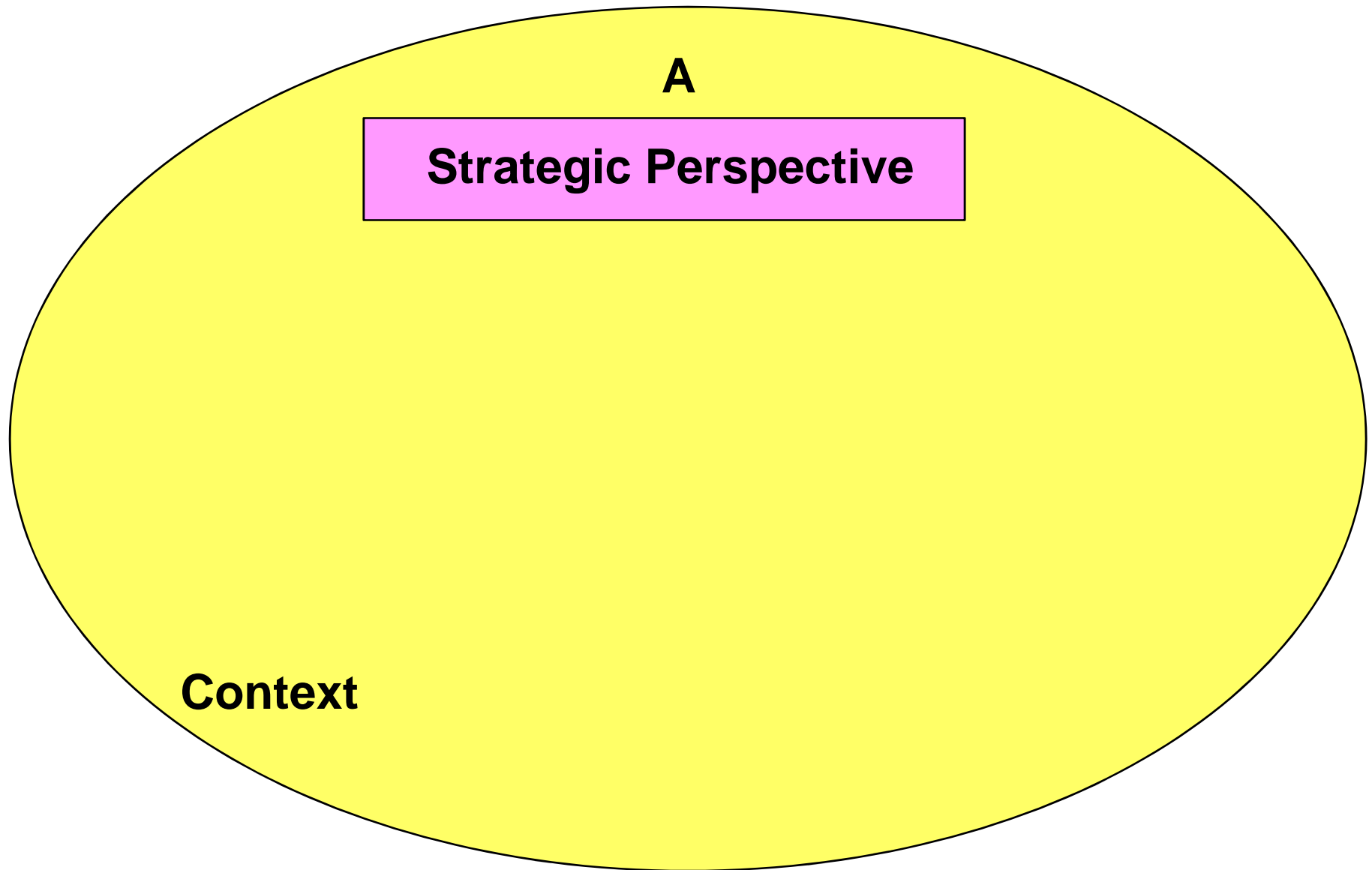
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Some 'dimensions' of strategy



Some 'dimensions' of strategy



A. Strategy as a 'perspective'

Στρατηγός - The 'Art of the **General**',
standing back from the front-line fight

“Doing the right things vs Doing things right”

Relative to goals: the 'how' and the 'why'

Deeply questioning Cause & Effect

Dynamics, inter-relationships and systems

Recognises: “We are not alone”

Strategic Perspective and leadership

Some common myths:

“In terms of perspective, real strategic leaders always take a strategic perspective, rising above normal mortals, and dwarfing their colleagues and followers, who are left behind in awe at their leader’s unique overview”

A. Strategic Perspective: Challenges

Questions to reflect on and discuss briefly:

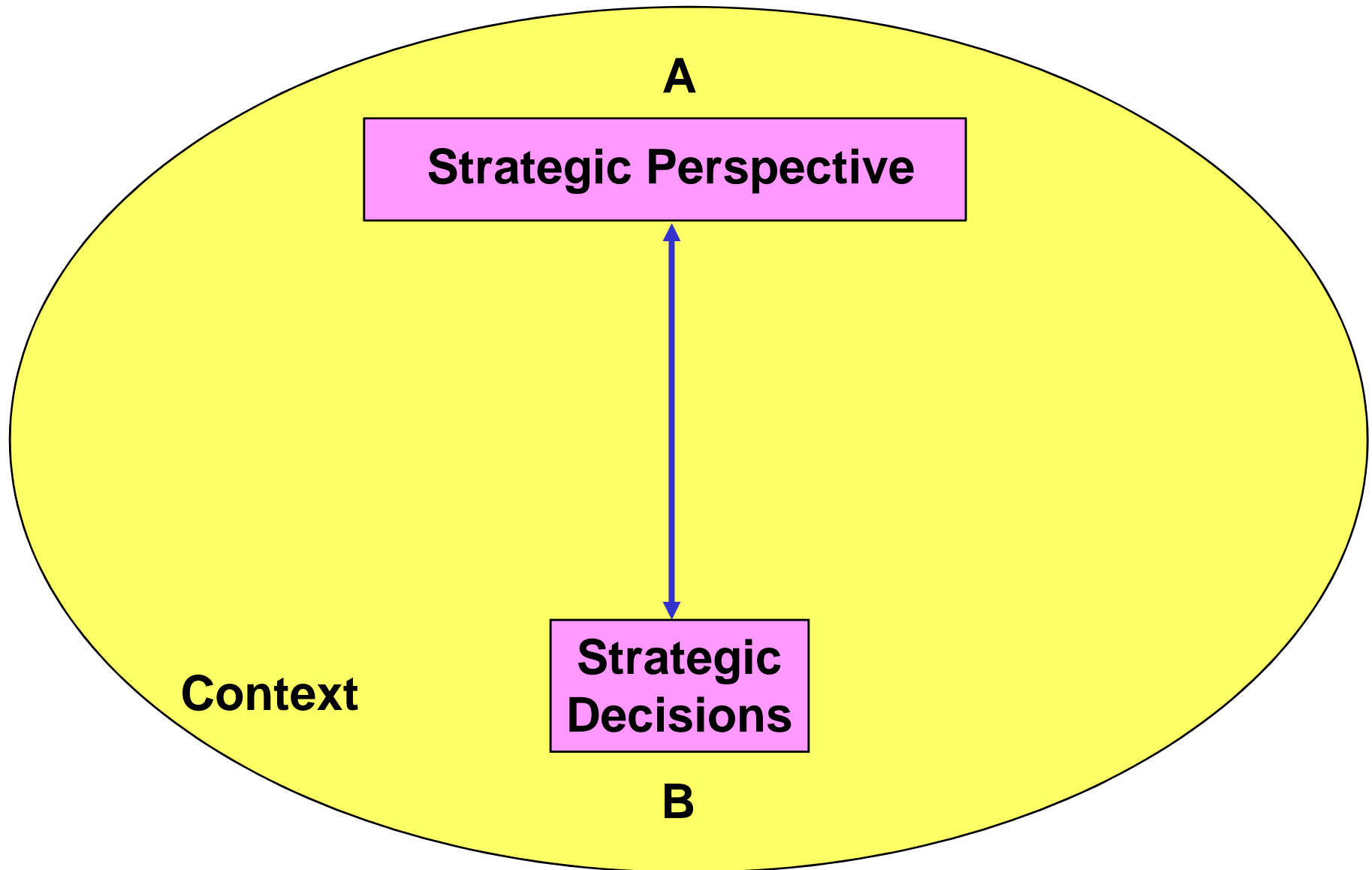
When/why/how often do YOU take a 'strategic perspective'?

- Is there anything you would like to change about this?

How do you help others take a strategic perspective when it is appropriate?

- Could you be even more helpful?

Some 'dimensions' of strategy



B. Strategic Decisions



Strategic Decisions and leadership

Some common myths:

“In terms of decisions, real strategic leaders make all the really important decisions, but they leave lower-level decisions to their followers”

B. Strategic Decisions: Challenges

Questions to reflect on and discuss briefly:

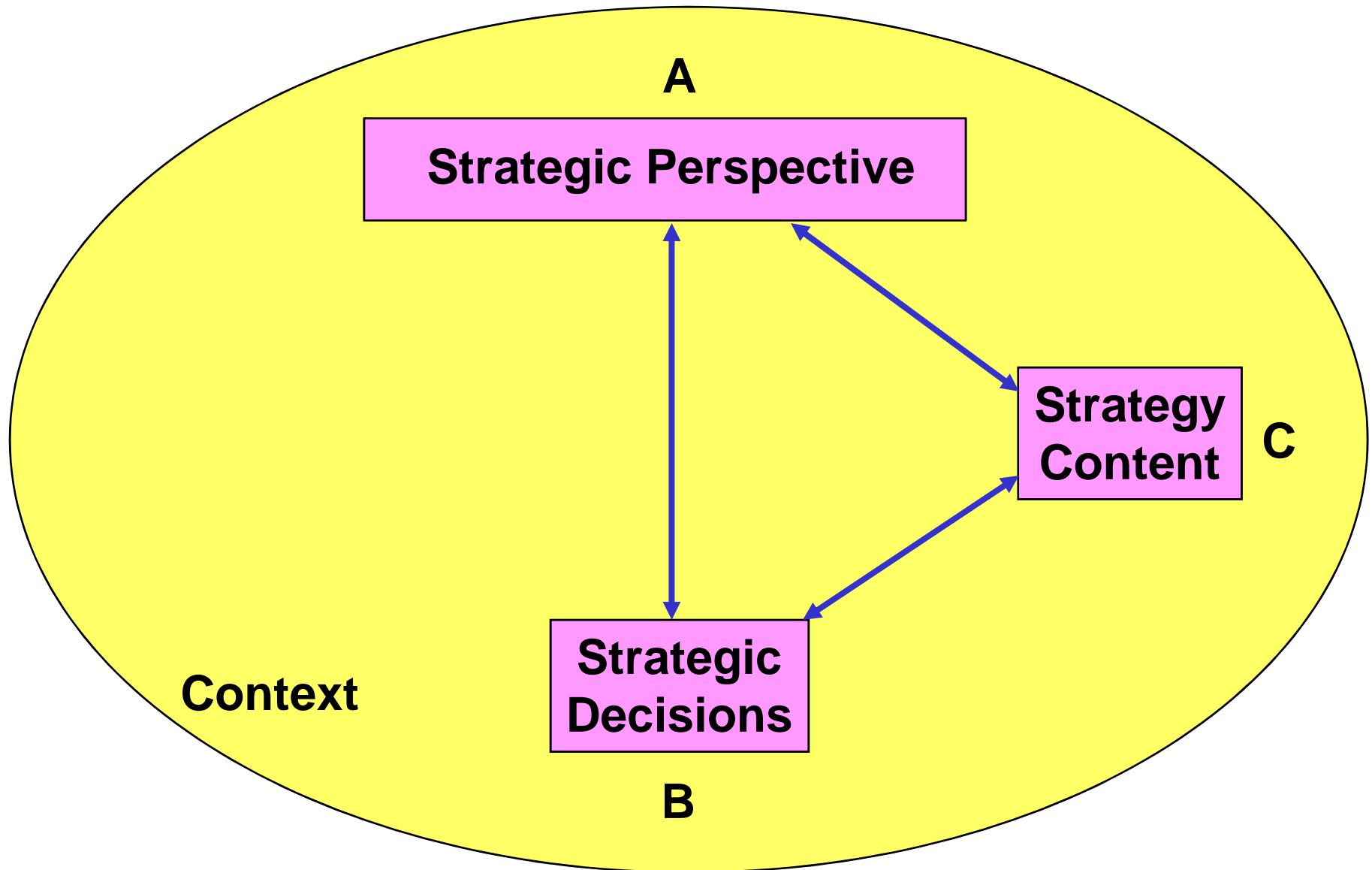
How do YOU improve the quality of 'Big Strategic Decisions' in your organization?

- What else could you do?

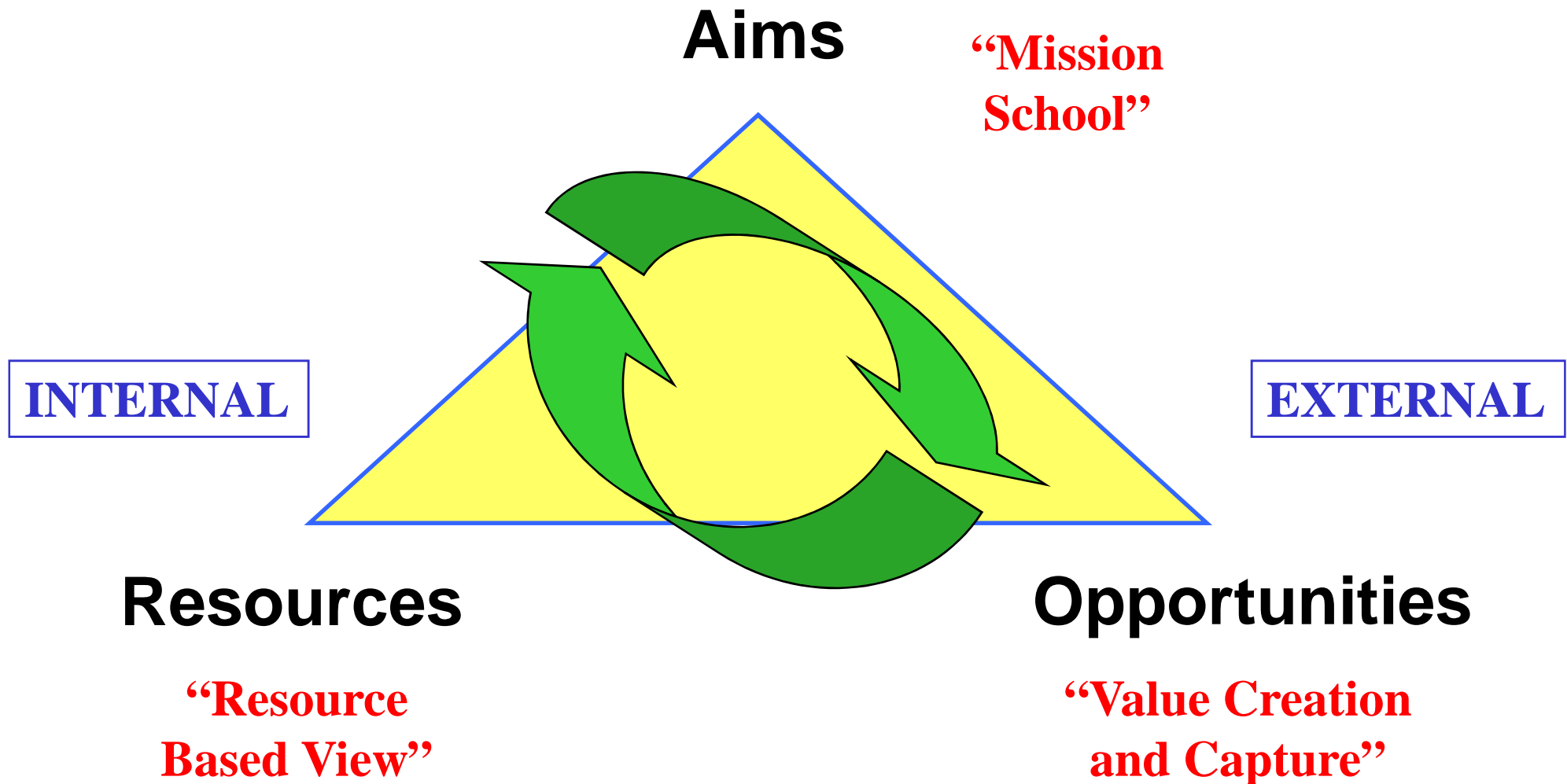
What are some of the 'Little Strategic Decisions' that are still important in YOUR organization?

- What do YOU do to improve them?

Some 'dimensions' of strategy



C. Strategy Content



Strategy Content and leadership

Some common myths:

“In terms of content, real strategic leaders concentrate on creating a vision that guides their followers to work out the details later; they are not constrained by the external opportunities or internal resources, and don't care too much about them”

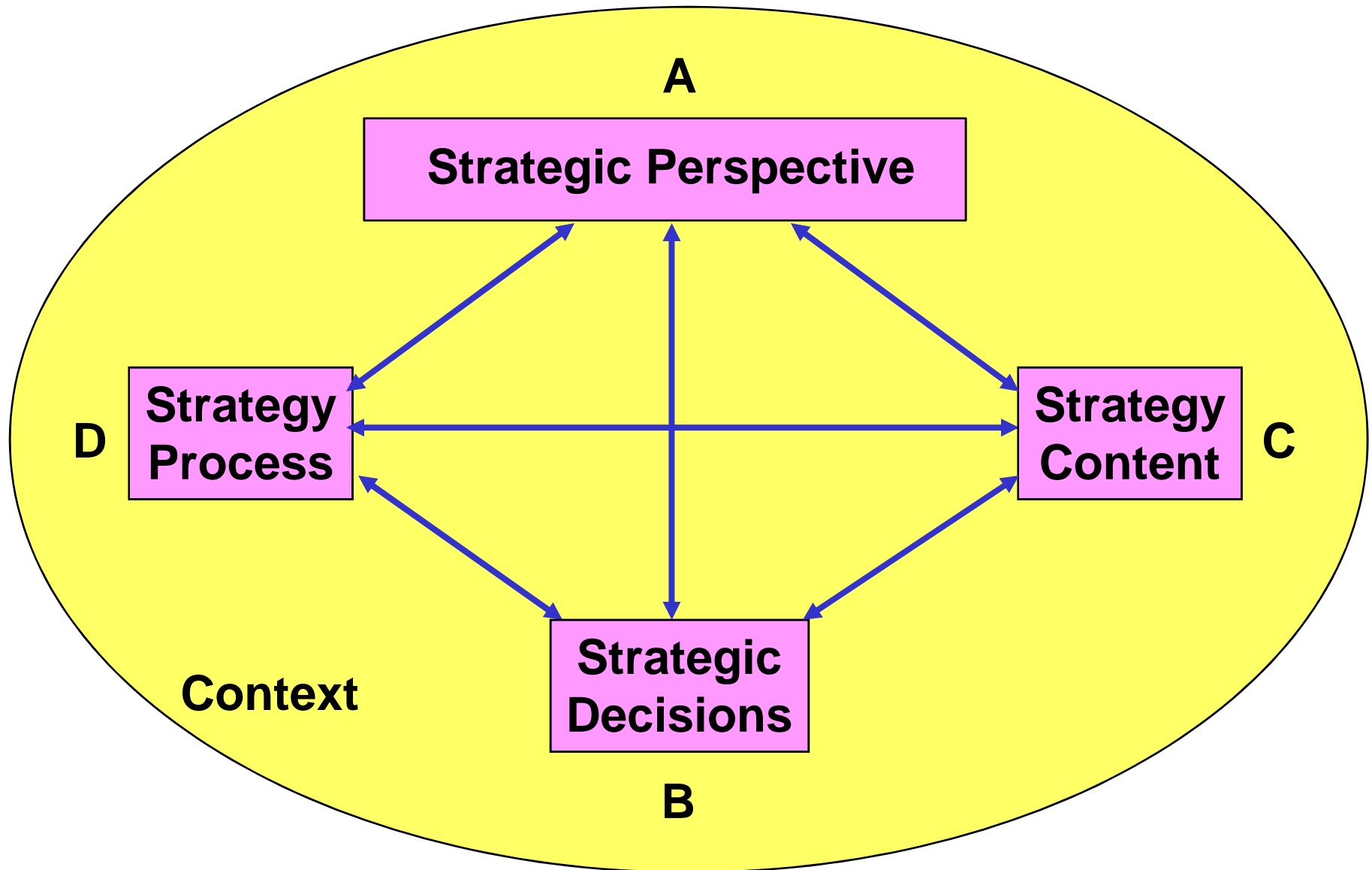
C. Strategy Content: Challenges

Questions to reflect on and discuss briefly:

What are YOUR own biases between the 3 corners and why?

How do YOU help others in teams and as individuals to link all 3 corners together?

Some 'dimensions' of strategy



D. Strategy Process

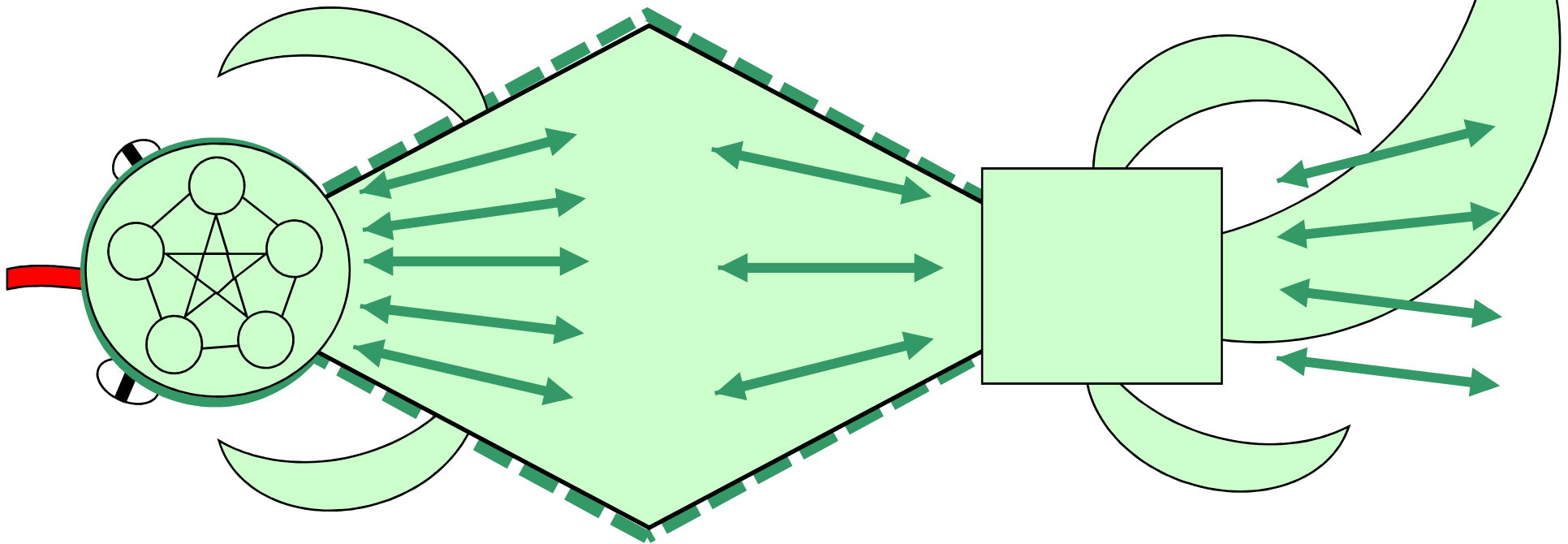
Where are we now ?

Where could we go ?

Where do we want to go ?

What will help us get there ?

What do we do today?



Strategy Process and leadership

Some common myths:

“In terms of process, real strategic leaders are deeply insightful about the current situation, come up with innovative new ideas and are able to spot the ‘winners’ among many options. They then sell their conclusions to others, and even make people think they came up with some of the ideas themselves”

D. Strategy Process: Challenges

Questions to reflect on and discuss briefly:

What makes the 'Strategy Process' most/least effective in YOUR organization?

What roles do YOU play in the Strategy Process of your organization?

- Are these the 'right' roles, and could you play them better?

**Common
sense...**

**THE BLINDINGLY OBVIOUS IS
INDEED OFTEN 'BLINDINGLY'**

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Don't let
mythical strategic leadership
crowd out
what you already know
makes sense for
strategic leaders....!