The Strategist

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“Competition existed long before strategy.
It began with life itself.”

-- Bruce Henderson, founder of the Boston Consulting Group

Sabi Sabi Game Reserve, South Africa, August 2017 (photo by Adam Brandenburger)
“The differences between you and your competitors are the basis of your advantage.”

-- Bruce Henderson, founder of the Boston Consulting Group

Sabi Sabi Game Reserve, South Africa, August 2017 (photo by Adam Brandenburger)
“Creativity is seeing what everyone else has seen, and thinking what no one else has thought”
contrat

combination

constraint

context
Course Architecture

Topics of sessions:

Class 1: The Strategist as Creative Radical
Class 2: Strategy from Contrast
Class 3: Strategy from Combination
Class 4: Strategy from Constraint
Class 5: Strategy from Context
Class 6: The Strategist is Me

Format of each session:

Introduction to topic
Discussion of readings
Real-time applications

Project work:

Weekly write-up on a creator of your choice
Final manifesto titled “The Strategist is Me”
contrast

combination

constraint

classic
From shop-then-ship to ship-then-shop

Think different.

... literally
LIFE PAINT™  VOLVO

The best way to survive a crash is not to crash.

Challenge: Every year in the UK more than 19,000 cyclists are killed or injured. Accidents in the dark are more likely to be fatal.

Solution: Life Paint. An innovative reflective spray turning ordinary items into high-visibility safety gear in the glow of headlights. Aimed at the cycling community and distributed through women's most influential bike shops.

Results: - UK project seen in every country in the world. - 5 million YouTube and Facebook views. 600,000 sold. - 100,000 units generated 2 years. - Production increased tenfold to meet global demand.

Sometimes the best advertising doesn't look, walk or talk like advertising.

https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/campaign-big-awards-2015-gold-automotive-integrated/1369188;
my thanks to Ida Li for this example
Unbundling

https://www.ignant.com/2013/08/19/spaghetti-bench/ (Pablo Reinoso)
How to begin:

Precisely identify the assumptions that underlie conventional thinking in your industry

Think about what might be gained by proving one or more of them false

Deliberately disturb an aspect of your normal work pattern to break up ingrained assumptions

What to watch out for:

Because the assumptions underlying your business model are embedded in all of your processes — and because stable businesses need predictability — it won’t be easy to change course

Organizations are very good at resisting change
“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That’s because they were able to connect experiences they’ve had and synthesize new things.”

-- Steve Jobs
The Enterprise

Customers

Complementors

Suppliers

Competitors

Co-opetition, by Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff, Doubleday 1996
“Daimler announced today that it intends to enter into a joint venture with BMW to create a mobility powerhouse. With this move, two arch-rivals leverage competition and cooperation --- at the same time.”
IoT Blockchain

From Complexity Labs https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fw8Q1Zd-mQ
How to begin:

Form groups with diverse expertise and experience; brainstorm new combinations of products and services.

Looks for ways to coordinate with providers of complementary products (who may even be competitors).

What to watch out for:

Businesses often manage for and measure profits at the individual product or activity level.

But combinations require system-level thinking and measurements.
“Creativity loves constraints”
-- Marissa Mayer at Google
### OLD SWOT

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shanzhai in Shenzhen
nomad Copenhagen — image courtesy of Jane Lee at https://blog.naver.com/photojane/220213459133
How to begin:

List the ‘incompetencies’ (rather than competencies) of your organization — and test whether they can in fact be turned into strengths.

Consider deliberately imposing some constraints to encourage people to find new ways of thinking and acting.

What to watch out for:

Successful businesses face fewer obvious constraints; people may feel no need to explore how new ones might create new opportunities.
How to begin:

Explain your business to an outsider in another industry. Fresh eyes from a different context can help uncover new answers and opportunities.

Engage with lead users, extreme users, and innovation hotspots

What to watch out for:

Businesses need to focus on internal processes to deliver on their current value propositions — but the pressure to focus internally can get in the way of learning from the different contexts in which other players operate.
The Six Forces Diagram is from Andrew Grove, *Only the Paranoid Survive: How to Exploit the Crisis Points That Challenge Every Company*, Doubleday, 1996