

# The Strategist:

## Summary

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**contrast**

**combination**

**constraint**

**context**



What this course was — strategy inspiration

What this course was not — strategy evaluation

## Strategy from Contrast: Prompts

1. Precisely identify the assumptions that underlie conventional wisdom in your company or industry, and try changing them
2. Periodically disturb your work pattern to break up ingrained assumptions
3. Think big (categorically and existentially)
4. Be an explorer as well as an expert and include explorers in teams
5. Don't be a surface original
6. See differently in order to think differently, by de-familiarizing the familiar around you

## Strategy from Combination: Prompts

1. Use diverse groups to brainstorm new combinations of products and services
2. Look for ways to coordinate with providers of complementary products and services (who may even be competitors)
3. Possible combinations are astronomical in number
4. There are pros and cons to cooperating in the face of competition
5. Raise your “idea income” by choice of people you surround yourself with
6. Combine models not just products as a strategy

## Strategy from Constraint: Prompts

1. List one's “incompetencies” and test whether they can in fact be turned into strengths
2. Consider self-imposed constraints as a way to find new ways of thinking and acting
3. Constraints can be spatial, financial, technical, people
4. Constraints can be rule-/brand-/challenger-/competition-based
5. Constraints can be of foundation/resource/time/method
6. Reverse/breakaway/stealth positioning or re-positioning are constraint-based strategies

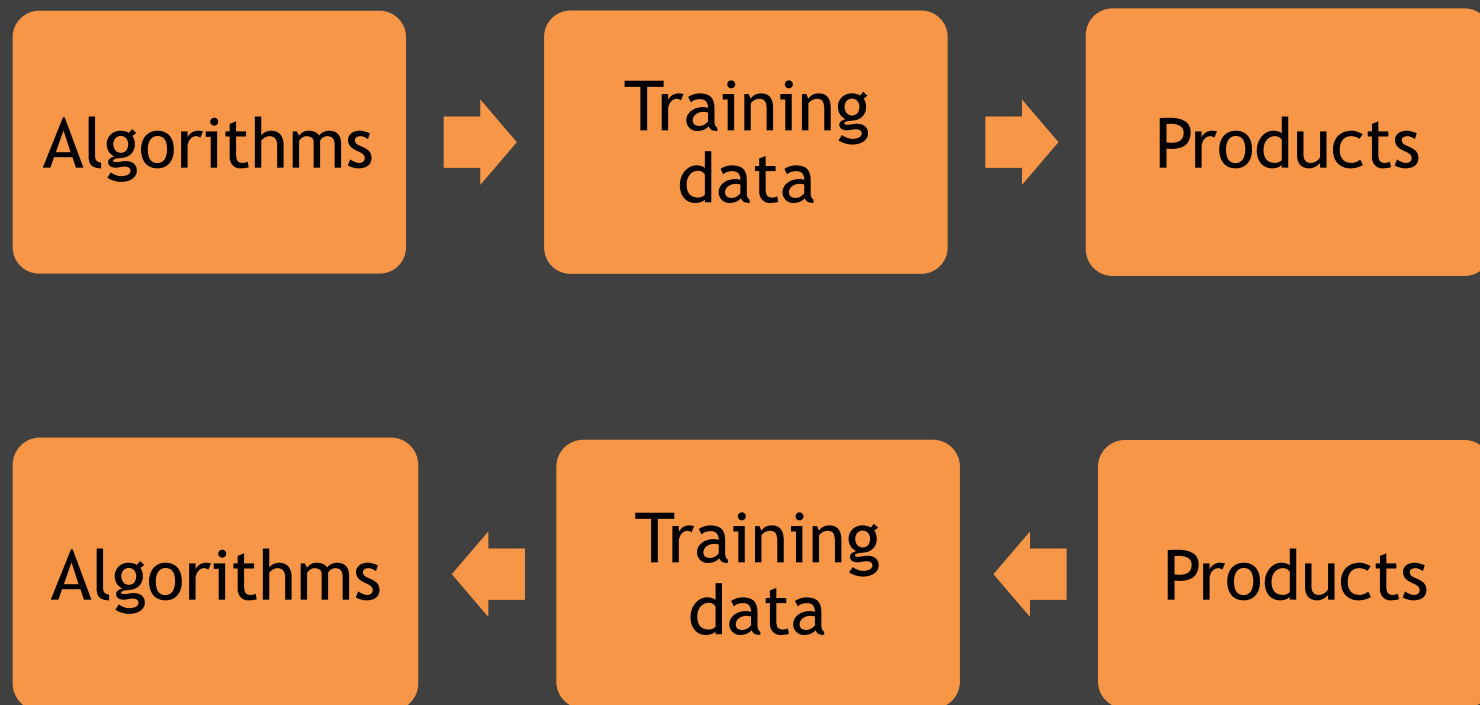
## Strategy from Context: Prompts

1. Explain your business to an outsider in another industry — fresh eyes from a different context can help uncover new answers and opportunities
2. Engage with lead users, extreme users, and innovation hotspots
3. Use analogy in addition to deduction and trial-and-error
4. Beware surface similarity, anchoring, and confirmation bias in constructing analogies
5. Ways of thinking, doing, and making are all potential sources of analogy
6. Avoid the trap of believing that everything that must be learned can be found in one's specialized field

Use the 4 C's to organize as well as inspire



## Contrast: From products to algorithms



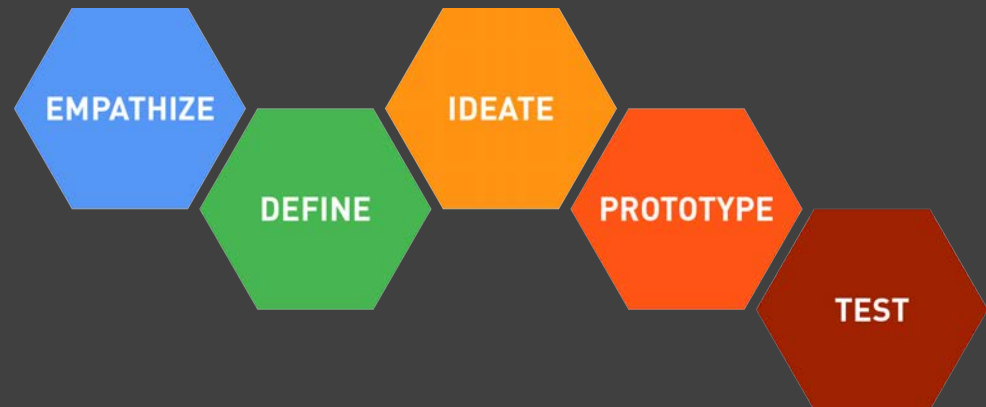
# Combination: A Turing test for empathy



Sophia

+

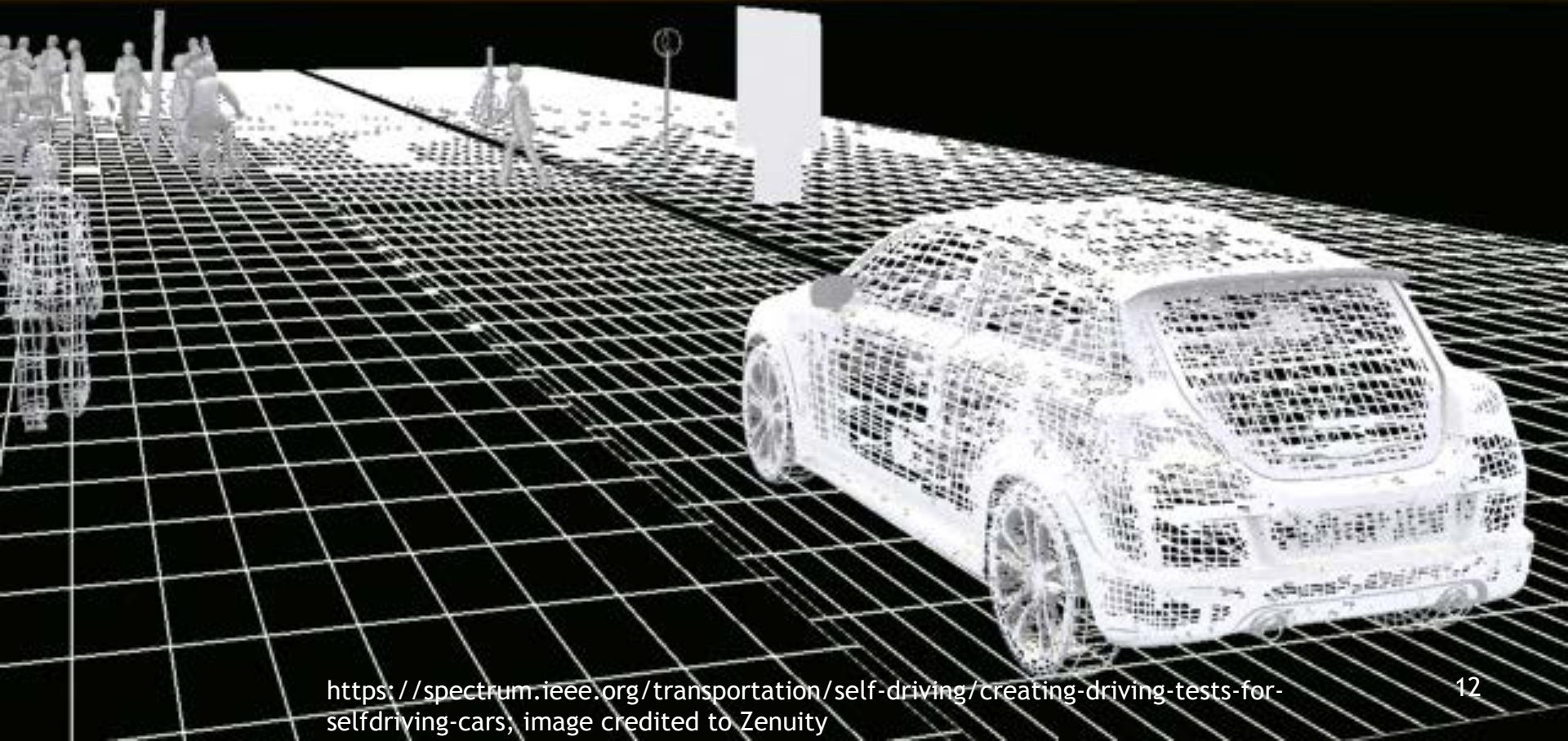
Design  
Thinking



## Constraint: SpaceX manufacturing



## Context: Driving tests for self-driving cars



## More Examples ...

### Contrast

From high-speed electric vehicles to low-speed electric vehicles (a disruptive innovation?)

From online to pop-up experience (Bluetopia) when web-hosting company Bluehost comes to Soho

Turn the Periodic Table upside down?\*

### Combination

Restaurants and photogenic decor, for Instagram

Walmart, Unilever, Nestlé, ... and IBM, for blockchain in food supply chains

Social media and e-commerce, for the future of shopping

\* Martyn Poliakoff et al., "Turning the Periodic Table Upside Down," *Nature Chemistry*, 11, 2019, 391-393



## More Examples cont'd ...

### Constraint

Roboadvisors are small but can ask their clients to share information across their financial portfolios (unlike Fidelity ...)

“Often our greatest weaknesses are the other side of our strengths” (Melinda Gates)\*

### Context

A device making drinking water by mimicking how hairs on certain cacti and lizards pull humidity from the air\*\*

“Focus on anomalies, accidents, and analogies, rather than averages, in order to spark imagination”\*\*\*

\* Adam Grant, “How Your Strengths Can Make You Weaker,” *New York Times*, 04/26/19, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/26/smarter-living/how-your-strengths-can-make-you-weaker.html>; \*\* My thanks to Julia Hu for this example, see <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/canadian-innovation-pulls-drinking-water-out-thin-air>; \*\*\* Ryoji Kimura et al., “The New Logic of Competition,” Boston Consulting Group, 03/22/19, at <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2019/new-logic-of-competition.aspx>

“Good ideas are always crazy until they’re not”

— Larry Page\*