THE STRATEGY BENEATH THE STRATEGY

Our strategy is realistic.
Is realistic the same as right?

Strategies are built with care, from what the business knows and does well.
That is a large part of the answer. It is not all of it.

SWIPE →

WHERE A STRATEGY STARTS

A strategy usually starts from what the business already has in hand.

What is running, what is planned, and what waits on a list for its turn.

That is what makes it realistic.

WHY IT MATTERS

It is tangible, specific and written down. A strategy built on it can be explained, resourced and delivered.

WHAT A STRATEGY IS FOR

A list tells us what to do. A strategy sets objectives that move the business towards its goals.

The list answers: what do we do next?

The strategy asks: where do we stand, and how far are we from our goals?

WHAT IT NAMES

A strategy focuses on the next goal and stretches towards the long-term one. It names the objectives that take us there. The options to deliver them come next.

WHY THE LIST GETS THE TIME

In the room, what is written down is easy to discuss. It has owners, numbers and dates.

The future has none of these yet.
So the conversation returns to the list.

NOBODY CHOOSES THIS

Each leader brings what their area can evidence. Questions about direction often require what nobody can prove yet.

WHAT IS MOVING OUTSIDE

Some of what decides our direction sits outside the business.

Where the market, technology and regulation are heading. What our competitors are preparing.

Little of it is certain. Much of it decides whether our direction is right.

WHERE IT SITS

Much of it is already known inside the business, in pieces. Commercial sees the market. Engineering sees the technology. The CEO hears where competitors are going. In the room, it arrives in pieces, if at all.

WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

Some of what decides our direction is already inside the business.

A weakness we have carried for years. What our assets and people can really endure. An opportunity someone senses.

We know it. It is just not written anywhere.

WHY IT STAYS UNSAID

Leaders spend their days on today's problems. The long-term thought comes on the drive home or late at night. And there is hardly the time, or a place, to capture it and build on it.

WHAT IT COSTS

Built mostly from the list, a strategy becomes the plan with a longer horizon.

It delivers.

And the business arrives where it was already heading.

WHAT GOES MISSING

The opportunities that needed a different direction are not taken. Nothing shows it, because the plans are on track.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

In a good strategy conversation, the list is still there. It is just not what sets the direction.

What we have in hand informs the direction. It does not decide it.

WHAT CHANGES

The direction is challenged before anything is committed. The first answer is not always the right one, and there is room to look for a better option.

WHAT IT MAKES POSSIBLE

An objective is a choice. When we know why we made it, we know what it rules in and what it rules out.

That reasoning becomes the criteria for the decisions we take through the year.

So the people delivering it can decide without waiting for us.

WHEN THINGS CHANGE

When the market or the business moves, there is a reason to come back to, not only a plan to defend.

THE HARDER PART

What we know makes the strategy realistic.

Making it right needs what we have not yet put together.

That is the harder part of the work. It is also where the direction is decided.

WHY IT IS HARD

We know this. What we rarely have is the time, or the distance from the day-to-day, to reflect on it and put it into words.

THE TAKEAWAY

Realistic is not the same as right.

And a strategic conversation is not a planning meeting.

As this season's strategy workshops begin, it is worth noticing where the time goes. To where we are going and what we want to achieve? Or to delivering work we are not yet sure takes us there?

IF THIS RESONATED

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