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Our strategy was agreed. Were the alternatives ever on the table?

Most leadership teams can explain what their strategy commits them to. **Far fewer can explain why it was chosen over the alternatives, because the alternatives did not make it into the room**.

We arrive at the strategy workshop knowing the business better than anyone in the building. We have run our part of it for years, and we bring what we know: our plans, our numbers, the work in hand, and whatever has been waiting on the list since the last cycle.

Around the table there is genuine trust in each other's expertise, and that trust has a side effect. The question "why this and not that?", asked about real options, is seldom heard. At best someone asks "why do we need to do this?", the answer comes back professional and sometimes quite technical, and the room moves on. **The options are rarely set out next to each other, so there is nothing to weigh. What we work from are our lists, and they are lists we already know well**.

The time itself is short for what is at stake. The session is built for reviewing rather than thinking: sometimes for deciding, and sometimes simply for reviewing and proceeding to the next step.

Rarer still is the question about the whole. Taken together, do our objectives read as a coherent strategy, one that gives us confidence we are moving towards something? **Or as a stretched plan, stretched in time rather than in challenge**?

And sometimes **we know what is missing**. All year it comes up, in the leadership team and in our own teams: the weakness that keeps creating frustration and slowing us down. **Several reviews later, it is still not in the strategy. And we know it.**

Asking why A and not B is not a challenge to anyone's expertise. It is the conversation a strategy should be built on, and the one we leave the least time for.