

Look at the legs on that strategy

 By [Garren Coetzee](#)

29 Jan 2015

The term "strategy" in day-to-day advertising, is thrown around as loosely as "booty" is in modern day hip-hop. And even though both are constantly being referred to, no one can truly pinpoint what a good one looks like.

To add to this inappropriate and barely justified simile, as with "booty", it's not so much about having one, but rather, the quality of the one you have.

Howell J Malham Jr, in his book "*I have a strategy (No you don't)*", does a great job of explaining what a good strategy requires. He explains that a strategy should have:

1. A purpose
2. A plan
3. A sequence of actions or tactics
4. A distinct, measurable goal

When applying the four elements, Malham suggested it becomes evident of how comprehensive your strategy needs to be, and rightly so. It should be the reference point, which will provide guidelines as to what's in and what's out, when it comes to your brand and your brand extensions.

Apart from a focused approach and the obvious benefits, which will result from a tight strategy, your strategy should further serve as the catalyst for your creative. It needs to be the genesis of all your tactics, and be your point of call as you develop any ideas, and execute such ideas. Your strategy needs to have legs.

The playing field for creativity

Here is a sport analogy to help explain what I'm trying to get at: your strategy needs to become the playing field for your creative executions. Where the game is being regulated by the framework set out in your strategy, it will at all times need to adhere to the parameters which were agreed upon. And just as the rules and regulations of any sport help ignite moments of sporting brilliance, so too should your strategy have the ability to leave your creatives inspired.

It is common knowledge that creativity is fuelled by restrictions and limitations, so it's up to your strategy to set the environment which will allow the beauty of this game to unfold, and unfold in a way which is directed at achieving your strategic objectives. Creative director, Normen Berry wrote "Vague strategies inhibit. Precise strategies liberate."

A good strategy needs to have legs!

In my experience, I've found that because of the 'Always On' nature of digital and the extent and frequency with which a strategy needs to be applied, the legs on a strategy really get tested when it's applied in the digital space. Its legs, for example, will be seen in daily basic brand extensions such as in its ability to guide how your community managers engage in their responses, and whether it's able to shape social content, which is being generated daily.

Your strategy needs to be reflected in all your brand extensions and tactics, not only in the big, flashy ones. It will therefore be in your strategy's ability to be applied throughout your value chain, that its quality will become evident. Sun Tzu, a Chinese military general, strategist, philosopher and author of *Art of War*, explained it like this: "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

Insist on a strategy that is tight; one which contains a clear purpose, and a plan which will ensure that that purpose will be fulfilled. Ensure that both the purpose and plan are clearly established as they will serve as the catalysts behind all of your executions, providing the framework for your creative, and ensuring a focused approach is maintained. Therefore do not orphan your strategy after you've presented it to client - revert back to it and allow it to run.

"All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved", Sun Tzu.

ABOUT GARREN COETZEE

Garren Coetzee is the head strategist at digital marketing agency, Flume www.flume.co.za. Flume's focus is to bring business to their client's business by creating brand awareness, building brand reputation and making sure that the funnel and mechanism is optimised for results. Marketing digitally means that Flume specialises in the online environment.
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