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A biweekly collection of articles, comments and opinion pieces from popular media and the blogosphere, thematically reflecting the spirit of George C. Marshall's enduring legacy of leadership and strategic vision.

Why leaders stopped caring about strategy ...

By Carmen Nobel, *Forbes*

"What are the first three words that come to mind when you hear the word 'strategy'?"

That's the free-association exercise Cynthia A. Montgomery gives to mid-career business leaders in her Executive Education classes at Harvard Business School. Seasoned executives, they respond with "plan," "vision," "direction," "focus," "advantage." But they rarely say "leader," "CEO," or "leadership."

To Professor Montgomery, this is indicative of a disturbing trend.

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Corporate vision: are your sights too low?

By Michael Graber and Jocelyn Atkinson

CEOs are responsible for setting the strategic vision and driving long-term growth. However, many are compensated based on quarterly and annual goals, which can make keeping the long view in sharp focus challenging. Incremental moves to cut costs, improve efficiency and extend product lines may yield positive metrics. But is this short-term focus on financial results ultimately harming shareholder value by limiting long-term potential?

As CEO, it is difficult to get authentic feedback from employees who are by nature keenly focused on protecting their job. Here are some questions to self-assess:

1. Will the vision I have foster strategies that generate significant growth?
2. Can every person in the company clearly link his/her job to the vision?



3. Have I hired the talent I need to drive value?

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Four ways to be a leader who matters

By Les McKeown in *Inc.*

Leaders who build lasting legacies don't do so overnight. For long term impact, a leader must be reflective and thoughtful. The greatest need we face in business today is leadership that makes real, positive change in the long term. Achieving this requires leaders who are prepared to do more than simply rush to the next opportunity and extract the maximum short-term gain. Leaders who think, act and value the long-term. Leaders who change lives, and who leave a legacy.

Four steps... in becoming a leader who makes a difference:

1. Find a place of solitude.
2. Discover your contemplation trigger.
3. Get beyond instant gratification.
4. Model more than you share.

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Secret strategies from great military leaders

By Eric Barker in *Business Insider*

Successful strategy is about surprise. Running straight at a problem when it's well established is suicide. Throughout military history frontal assaults against prepared defenses have usually failed, a fact written in military history for all generals to see... great generals strike where they are least expected against opposition that is weak and disorganized.

History says you need an element of surprise. Almost all successful attacks have hit enemies from the rear, from the flank, or anywhere it is not expected.

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Becoming more strategic: three tips for any executive

By Michael Birshan and Jayanti Kar, McKinsey

We are entering an age of the strategist. A powerful means of coping with today's more volatile environment is increasing the time a company's top team spends on strategy. Involving more senior leaders in strategic dialogue makes it

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easier to stay ahead of emerging opportunities, respond quickly to unexpected threats, and make timely decisions.

This is a significant change. At a good number of companies, corporate strategy has long represented the bland aggregation of strategies that individual business unit heads put forward. At others, it's been the domain of a small coterie or the exclusive territory of a CEO.

We offer three tips that any executive can act on to become more strategic.

1. Understand what strategy really means in your industry. By the time executives have reached the upper echelons of a company, almost all of them have been exposed to a set of core strategy frameworks. Part of the power of these frameworks is that they can be applied to any industry.
2. Become expert at identifying potential disrupters. Expanding the group of executives engaged in strategic dialogue should boost the odds of identifying company or industry-disrupting changes that are just over the horizon, the sorts of changes that make or break companies.
3. Develop communications that can break through. A more adaptive strategy-development process places a premium on effective communications from all the executives participating.

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