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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.*

## Six habits of true strategic thinkers

By Paul J. H. Schoemaker in *Inc.*

1. Anticipate.
2. Think critically. Conventional wisdom opens you to fewer raised eyebrows and second guessing. But if you swallow every management fad, herdlike belief, and safe opinion at face value, your company loses all competitive advantage. Critical thinkers question everything. To master this skill you must force yourself to: a) reframe problems to get to the bottom of things, in terms of root causes; b) challenge current beliefs and mindsets, including your own and c) uncover hypocrisy, manipulation, and bias in organizational decisions.
3. Interpret. Ambiguity is unsettling. Faced with it, the temptation is to reach for a fast (and potentially wrongheaded) solution. A good strategic leader holds steady, synthesizing information from many sources before developing a viewpoint. To get good at this, you have to: a) seek patterns in multiple sources of data; b) encourage others to do the same and c) question prevailing assumptions and test multiple hypotheses simultaneously.

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## How leaders envision and inspire

By Faisal Hoque from his *Fast Company* article, "Three Ways Successful Leaders Buffer and Bounce Back from Adversity"

A strong leader must be able to inspire everyone in the enterprise with a clear vision regardless of market conditions. Achieving this requires:

1. Creation of a platform for success and growth. This serves as an engine to solve problems and anticipate future obstacles in order to overcome them.
2. Genuine inspiration from the top down. This results from the effective communication of a leader's vision. Making people "do their job" and people wanting to "get the job done" are two very different scenarios that will lead to two very different outcomes.
3. Communication of vision from an execution standpoint: Great ideas may rally the crowd,



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but if a leader is unable to articulate how those ideas will convert into action, a team can quickly lose confidence and fail to meet long-term goals. Follow-through and attainment of objectives must be priorities to keep everyone motivated.

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## IBM CEO shares her leadership philosophy

By Max Nisen for *Business Insider*

A CEO's most important job is looking out for the long term and reinventing their company as the world changes. IBM CEO Virginia Rometty thinks the most important part of accomplishing that won't be a strategy or plan but what she calls "strategic belief."

Clients would often say to me, "What's your strategy?" And I would say, "Ask me what I believe first, that's a way more enduring answer." And in the world you and I live in now where everything's changing so quickly, you can't predict everything, and—and this is probably the most important "and"—and most of us have workforces that are very bright, very intelligent, that want to be engaged in a broad way. This idea of a strategic belief is saying that you can agree....on some really big arcs of change, I would call them.

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## The reality of the new leader

By David Rock, Executive Director, NeuroLeadership Institute

Speaking on the subject of the "Reality of the New Leader," Edward Reilly, president of the American Management Association, noted over the spectrum of the 160 courses they offer to corporate America, they have identified a clear trend—a permanent change from "prescriptive management" to "managing by intent." This shift is seen even in the US military; in fact, military leadership is embracing this shift and showing how effective it can be to delegate a great deal of strategy to operational managers who are the closest to the challenges on the ground.

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## Why culture is more important than strategy

By Rene Carayol at Management-Issues.com

It can be tempting for businesses to over-emphasize the focus on strategy whilst inadvertently underplaying the power of culture. I would argue that culture is in fact more important than strategy. Culture is all about the psychology, actions and beliefs of a group of people.

I believe there are two definitions of the kind of culture that creates momentum for any business. The first one is that "culture is what happens when the CEO leaves the room." The second definition is "the way we get things done around here." It is all about the attitude of those working for your company. The most important thing about culture is that it's the only sustainable point of difference for any organization. Anyone can copy your strategy, but nobody can copy your culture. So why would you leave it untended?

The best businesses are the ones that have a culture that has grown to be bigger and stronger than any one individual. If your culture is strong then it gains power through inspiring your people to conform to it. It becomes the thing that links everyone together, no matter what

department they're in. If your people become engaged with the company, the strategy is more likely to be "owned" by all and focused upon.

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