Strategic Thinking Quiz

Review Michael Gerber’s hats. (Be sure to read the getAbstract book summary of his book, The E-Myth available on the Course Work webpage.) Ask yourself, “Which hat is easiest for me to wear? Which one have I left on the rack, and what are the possible risks in doing so?”

Take this quiz to find out your natural tendency. Consider having someone read each question out loud to you and circle the letter that you relate to the most.

1. Which of the following sayings best describes your mindset?
   a. If you want it done right, do it yourself.
   b. We don’t plan to fail, we fail to plan.
   c. The biggest risk is not taking any risk.

2. Which are you MOST likely to tackle when surprised with extra time?
   a. Update the filing systems or catch up on month-end activities
   b. Check in with each team member to find out their project status
   c. Check your calendar for upcoming industry events

3. When you face a new and challenging project, your first reaction is to:
   a. Get started on an outline, plan, or prototype
   b. Determine your objectives, and how you will measure success
   c. Explore multiple scenarios, risk factors and possible outcomes

4. Which of the following BEST describes you? “I’m the one who...”
   a. Stays focused and makes things happen
   b. Coordinates the team and keeps them working smoothly
   c. Enjoys being innovative and creative

5. When a crisis/difficult problem shows up, what do you do first?
   a. Write down all the information about the problem
   b. Informally survey colleagues and others in your network to find out if they’ve faced a similar situation
   c. Ask provocative questions, like “what if we take no action at all?” or “Are we sure this is a problem we need to solve?”

6. Which one are you MOST skilled in?
   a. Completing tasks on time
   b. Maintaining standard operating procedures
   c. Thinking critically and for the long term

SCORING: Count the number of A’s, B’s and C’s. Then read the descriptions below to interpret your results.

   # of A’s _______   # of B’s _______   # of C’s _______
Strategic Thinking Quiz (continued)

Answer Key

If your answers were primarily A’s, your tendency is to wear the “technician” hat. You may find some of the activities in this month’s issue to be difficult for you, especially setting aside time for strategic thinking, which you may consider to be a luxury—especially when there’s “real work” to be done. Technicians are not comfortable with delegating their work, believing it’s more trouble and time than it’s worth.

The risks in spending all of your time at the technician level include: lack of growth toward senior management or even burnout, as you become the only person in the office who is ready and able to put in the extra time to finish the job. There’s also a higher likelihood that you’ll be surprised when your skills or knowledge become obsolete—with your nose to the grindstone technicians aren’t able to see what is coming on the horizon for your company...or their industry. The Strategic Thinking activities in this Course Work will help you practice thinking more strategically.

If your answers were primarily B’s, your tendency is to wear the “manager” hat. This can be a very fulfilling role—after all, you’re the “glue” that holds a team together, and they truly appreciate your guidance. Your comfort at this level might be creating some complacency. If you’re a middle manager, you face additional risk because you’ve probably taken on some of your own supervisor’s management tasks and made it easier for them (not you) to spend more time thinking strategically.

While your projects are always completed on time and you meet or exceed performance expectations, your lack of strategic thinking means you aren’t questioning the status quo or taking risks, which means your work is so predictable that people use words like ”solid” to describe you. Is this what you aspire to achieve? Is this it?

If your answers were primarily C’s, your tendency is to wear the “entrepreneurial” or strategic hat. You’re innovative, a risk taker, and you have a clear vision of where you want you and/or your company to be in the next 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years. While strategic thinking has tremendous benefits, your ability to identify possible risks can be seen as negativity by some, and some of your colleagues might become frustrated when you start asking a long list of questions after they’ve presented a “bullet proof” plan.

Strategic thinkers are wise to let others know they prefer to be in the initial meetings for a new project, and position themselves as a problem solving resource (especially when a situation seems impossible). The tactical activities in this month’s issue will help you become more comfortable speaking the language of the Manager and the Technician, to ensure that you communicate your vision and your big goals are realized.

Did you know that—according to a Harvard Business Review article—when a group of executives was asked to select the leadership behaviors most critical to their organizations’ future success, they chose strategic 97% of the time? Begin practicing a few of the habits in this month’s Course Work to become more comfortable at the strategic level.