Strategy ⟶ finder

BACKGROUND THEORIES,
RESEARCH AND CONCEPTS

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Contents

Strategyfinder – the development background: theories and concepts

This document sets out the basic concepts, theories and evidence for the design of *Strategyfinder*. It presents the reasoning behind the software platform and associated methods. *Strategyfinder* uniquely provides a new way of team working that can more effectively support strategy making, team problem solving, and systemic risk assessment and mitigation.

The document is divided into several sections – each addressing an important aspect of team working. Each section uses a mix of quotes from well-known researchers along with associated key arguments. The section then summarises the key features of *Strategyfinder* that support the arguments presented.

There are a **series on *Strategyfinder* manuals** available with the purchase of the software (see Appendix 1). These manuals describe the different uses of *Strategyfinder,* where the uses are informed by the theories and concepts presented in this document.

The key bodies of **theory**, and associated **literature,** that inform the *Strategyfinder* method are listed in appendix 2. A **brief history of the development** of the *Strategyfinder* methods is presented in appendix 3.

A: Team strategy/problem solving meetings…

"The significant problems we face...cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them."[1]

"Meetings are a great trap… However, they are indispensable when you don't want to do anything."[2]

If members of a team are competent and are intent on making a good decision, then they will likely have different, but informed, views about the decision situation. It is these different views that can make a decision more robust and encourage creativity.

"Where all think alike, no-one thinks very much."[3]

Human beings are discomforted by disagreements and conflict. They will, therefore, incline towards conflict avoidance.

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[1] Albert Einstein
[2] K.K Galbraith
[3] Attributed to Benjamin Franklin

"Most organisations prefer consensus and harmony over dissent and conflict. The procedures in place often seem expressly designed to minimise the frequency of exposure to actual disagreement and, when such agreements happen, to explain them away."[4]

"Groups can go in all sorts of directions, depending in part on factors that should be irrelevant. Who speaks first, who speaks last, who speaks with confidence, who is wearing black, who is seated next to whom, who smiles or frowns or gestures at the right moment - all these factors, and many more, affect outcomes."[5]

Often meetings are dominated by 1 or 2 team members, giving others with potentially valuable input little opportunity to speak. All groups have a range of personalities with some that are naturally extravert and have lots to say and others who are less comfortable with having a voice. Gathering the expertise from all members of a group is usually very important.

A meeting is often subject to conformity pressures that suppress alternative views, where there appears to be very little listening to one another. Often participants don't want to rock the boat[6].

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand: they listen with the intent to reply"[7].

In many meetings, participants are not very good at listening because they have a keen interest in having their say and so considerable mental effort is expended on finding a gap in the conversation that permits an expression of views. Consequently, many important views are missed. Furthermore, sometimes the point of view being expressed is so contrary that a physiological response is triggered preventing listening and often resulting in responses that once expressed are hard to move away from.

> *These are process management issues and **Strategyfinder** has been designed to help reduce and/or alleviate them. Strategyfinder, through the combination of anonymity and simultaneous entry, reduces the chance of these negative group behaviours occurring and encourages the quieter members of a group to have a voice.*
>
> *Strategyfinder, by allowing the views to be captured and publicly displayed, allows participants to move from the physiological response to a more cognitive one, avoiding knee-jerk responses, and allowing for more thoughtful consideration of all of the views taken as a whole.*

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[4] P32 Kahneman et al 2021
[5] P94 Kahneman et al 2021
[6] . Groupthink is a well-researched (social psychology - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groupthink) behaviour where the desire for agreement and being part of the 'group' (sometimes seen as an elite group) inhibits good rational decision-making. Abilene is where members collectively decide on a course of action that is counter to the preferences of many or all of the individuals in the group (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abilene_paradox)
[7] Stephen Covey The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (1989) according to https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Stephen_Covey

The act of **co-creating agreements/outcomes** means they are imbued with both emotional as well as cognitive commitment. By being able to effectively listen and be heard participants gain a sense of ownership for the results[8].

Strategyfinder provides anonymity when needed and, because everyone can speak at the same time, a co-creation process is possible. Through the causal mapping process all views can be more easily listened to, judged on their merit (rather than by their proponent) and seen in the context of other views. The team stands a much greater chance of arriving at a set of outcomes that they believe are the best. Whilst individuals may not achieve all that they want, they understand why a particular direction is being taken – they can agree to not fully agree and move on.

B. Causal thinking is the basis for action – causal mapping is the basis for drawing together the thinking of many people in an action-oriented way.

"…our sense of understanding the world depends on our extraordinary ability to construct narratives that explain the events we observe. The search for causes is almost always successful because causes can be drawn from an unlimited reservoir of facts and beliefs about the world." "This continuous causal interpretation of reality is how we "understand" the world." "causal thinking helps us make sense of a world that is far less predictable than we think"[9]

Personal Psychology: "We conceive a person's processes as operating through a network of pathways… the network is flexible and frequently modified, but is structured… the channels are established as means to ends… his [her] structured network of pathways leads towards the future so that he may anticipate it" "a person places an interpretation upon what is construed. He [she] erects a structure, within a framework of which the substance takes shape or assumes meaning"[10]

"…in most everyday conversations, a claim to understand something is a claim to understand what causes that thing"[7]

Causal maps are a network – a system.

Networks are a structure which has **characteristics helpful for decision making**. There is a structure to strategy[11], to solution finding. The structure depends on an understanding of the means-ends

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[8] What is called *procedural justice* or procedural fairness (popularised by Kim WC, Mauborgne RA (1995) A Procedural Justice Model of Strategic Decision Making. Organization Science 6:44-61). This vastly assists in getting commitment to, and implementation of, the agreements.

[9] Kahneman D, Sibony O, Sunstein CR (2021) Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment. William Collins, London. pp156-158 and p152

[10] Kelly GA (1963) A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs. Norton, New York p49-50

[11] Eden C, Ackermann F (2001) A Mapping Framework for Strategy Making. In: Huff A, Jenkins M (eds.) Mapping Strategy, Wiley, London, pp173-195

assumptions – no action is taken without a presumption about what its' consequences are expected to be.

> *The causal mapping technique embedded in **Strategyfinder** encourages reflection and enhanced holistic understanding as each statement is explored in terms of its action-oriented meaning – gained through considering both the explanations and consequences.*

Causal maps allow us to manage complexity, rather than reduce it. Most complex problems comprise many elements and yet holding all of these in mind at the same time is a challenge. As such, groups often decide to work on 'chunks' independent of the overall structure. And yet we know context matters and that actions taken to resolve one part of a situation can have deleterious effects on other parts.

"Every problem interacts with other problems and is therefore part of a set of interrelated problems, a system of problems…. I choose to call such a system a mess"[12]

"The problems of real world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well formed structures. Indeed they tend not to present themselves as problems at all but as messy indeterminate situations"[13]

Causal mapping helps with managing messy problems as it allows groups to explore the full picture – the system - teasing out nuance and providing the opportunity for analysis of the system to provide key insights.

> ***Strategyfinder** provides assistance in exploring the system by allowing 'chunks' to be focused on (using specific views of sub-systems, similar to the 'tabs' present in spreadsheet software) thus managing the cognitive load.*

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[12] Ackoff, R.L. (1974) Redesigning the Future: a systems approach to societal problems. Wiley, New York. p21
[13] Schon, D. (1987) Educating the Reflective Practitioner, Jossey-Bass, p4

C: Negotiating agreements…

When there are **different, but informed, views about the decision situation** then reaching agreements depends upon using a method that helps **social _and_ psychological negotiation.**

> **"When we appear receptive to listening to and respecting others' opposing positions, they find arguments to be more persuasive, our research shows. In addition, receptive language is contagious: It makes those with whom we disagree more receptive in return. People also like others more and are more interested in partnering with them when they seem receptive."[14]**

> **"[the] network is flexible and frequently modified"[15]**

**Strategyfinder** is a visual model of system thinking by the team.

It is in transition as the team change their mind moving towards high levels of consensus. The combination of the use of causal mapping and anonymity encourages groups to play with the different perceptions and potentially arrive at creative outcomes - creativity is stimulated.

Partly due to the challenges of cognitive overload, groups can often jump to evaluation too early – missing the key steps of Intelligence (the capturing of information) and Design (the structuring of the information)[16]. Options for action are assets and so opening up the conversation and exploring different points of view provides valuable stimulus for using effectively these assets. This ## allows for creativity and reflects Fisher and Ury's work on negotiation[17] – as the resultant outcome is not an individual 'tabs' creation but rather an emerging consequence of many intelligent brains adapting and refining the ideas. As such it is both more robust as well as generating increased ownership.

> **"If you keep doing what you're doing, you'll keep getting what you're getting"[18]**

**Strategyfinder** allows for views to be captured, edited, extended, and explored – a model or object in continual transition[1] until agreements are reached. Furthermore, **Strategyfinder**, through providing anonymity and direct entry, enables co-creation and through the mapping process allows for all views to be listened to, judged on their merit (rather than by their proponent) and the group to arrive at a set of outcomes that the group believe are the best. Whilst individuals may not achieve all that they want, they understand why a particular direction is being taken – because of this form of 'procedural justice'[1], they can agree to disagree and move on.

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[14] Gino, F. (2020) Disagreement Doesn't Have to Be Divisive, Harvard Business Review, November.
[15] Kelly GA (1963) A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs. Norton, New York p49
[16] Advocated by the Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon.
[17] Fisher R, Ury W (1982) Getting to Yes. Hutchinson, London.
[18] John M Capozzi 1997.

D: Group Processes (see also section A)

"Where all think alike, no one thinks very much."[19]

Groups suffer from conformity pressures – for example, 'groupthink' or the 'Abilene Paradox'. In both cases, participants don't want to rock the boat. Groupthink is a well-researched behaviour[20] where the desire for agreement and being part of the 'group' (sometimes seen as an elite group) inhibits good rational decision-making. The Abilene Paradox is where members collectively decide on a course of action ('going to Abilene') that is counter to the preferences of many or all of the individuals in the group[21].

> ***Strategyfinder***, *through the combination of anonymity and simultaneous entry, reduces the chance of either of these negative group behaviours occurring and additionally allows the quieter members of a group to have their say.*
>
> *A powerful feature of **Strategyfinder** is the option to use a 'blind gather' of views. Blind gather means that participants enter their views blind to the contributions of other participants, and anonymously. This significantly reduces the likelihood of 'group-think' and widens creativity.*
>
> *The views are organised – clustered - by the facilitator as they are entered by participants and then, when blind gather is complete, shown to the group. The views can then be elaborated by the group in 'open gather' mode, where all participants see all contributions as they are made. Participants are able to edit their own contributions, but not those of others.*

E: Facilitation

Facilitation, by a professional and experienced facilitator or a team leader, is seen to be a key part of effective group work and research has shown that in many instances, groups don't outperform their most knowledgeable members unless interaction is ameliorated through the intervention of a facilitator and with the assistance of software[22].

Expert facilitators can help in the design of the meeting (who is to attend, what foci to consider, which features to use) as well as in the management of the meeting (for example, managing process issues, keeping to time, navigating the software). Facilitators therefore can help with the management of group processes (Section D above).

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[19] Walter Lippmann, quoted in Responsible Statecraft

[20] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groupthink . Key source: Janis IL (1972) Victims of Group Think. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA.

[21] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abilene_paradox. Source: Harvey J (1988) The Abilene Paradox: the management of agreement. Organizational Dynamics Summer:17-34.

[22] Ackermann F (2020) Group Support Systems: Past, Present, and Future. In: Kilgour DM, Eden C (eds.) Handbook of Group Decision and Negotiation, Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland, pp627-654.

> "Facilitation is a dynamic process that involves managing relationships between people, tasks, and technology, as well as structuring tasks and contributing to the effective accomplishment of the meeting's outcomes"[23]

One definition of facilitation notes that their role is "to see and understand the group life, and to intervene, when appropriate, to help the group stay in the present and maintain a task orientation"[24]. This definition touches on both the management of content (contributions related to the task) and process (group life).

In some cases, facilitators are independent of the group, and/or the organisation, in others they are the group leader, the manager, the person initiating the meeting. Whilst many of the activities are the same, there are a few that are specific to each[25]. For managers facilitating their teams switching between managing process, managing content, and expressing their own views is, as always, challenging.

Strategyfinder, through the range of process manuals designed for the facilitator/leader plus a clear graphical interface with features easy to find, has been designed with the facilitation process in mind. In addition, being able to enter ideas/views anonymously Strategyfinder allows facilitator-managers to be able to ensure participants feel more comfortable in contributing. With permission of the group, the facilitator is able to easily see who contributed what, even though views are anonymous to participants.

A list of the Strategyfinder manuals is provided in Appendix 1.

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[23] Bostrom, R. P., Anson, R., & Clawson, V. K. (1993). Group facilitation and group support systems. *Group support systems: New perspectives, 8*, 147

[24] Phillips L, Phillips MC (1993) Facilitated Work Groups: Theory and Practice. Journal of the Operational Research Society 44:533-549.

[25] Ackermann F, Eden C (2011) Making Strategy: Mapping Out Strategic Success. Sage, London. Chapter 11 on facilitation pp273-274.

Appendix 1

There are a series of manuals, some of which provide guidance in different facilitated workshops and can be obtained via mail@strategyfinder.com or visit www.Strategyfinder.com

'USING STRATEGYFINDER' MANUALS

 'STRATEGYFINDER WORKSHOP' MANUALS

Appendix 2: Key bodies of theory used in the design of Strategyfinder

The <u>key</u> bodies of theory, and literature that informs the Strategyfinder software and methods are listed below:

<u>Psychology</u>: A Theory of Personal Constructs by George A. Kelly[26].

<u>Negotiation</u>: Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In, Revised Edition by Fisher R, Ury WL, Patton B; and originally: Getting to Yes by Fisher an Ury[27].

<u>Strategy mapping</u>: Eden C, Ackermann F (2001) A Mapping Framework for Strategy Making. In: Huff A, Jenkins M. (eds.) Mapping Strategy, Wiley, London, pp173-195

<u>Strategy making</u>: Eden C, Ackermann F (1998) Making Strategy: The Journey of Strategic Management. Sage, London. Ackermann F, Eden C (2011) Making Strategy: Mapping Out Strategic Success. Sage, London.

<u>Causal mapping</u>: Bryson JM, Ackermann F, Eden C., Finn C (2004) Visible Thinking: Unlocking Causal Mapping for Practical Business Results. Wiley, Chichester

<u>Decision-making/problem solving</u>: Kahneman, Daniel; Slovic, Paul; Tversky, Amos (1982). Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. Cambridge University Press; Nutt Paul C (2002) Why Decisions Fail: avoiding the blunders and traps that lead to debacles. Berrett-Koehler Inc, San Francisco.

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[26] Kelly GA (1963) A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs. Norton, New York.
[27] Fisher R, Ury W (1982) Getting to Yes. Hutchinson, London. Fisher R, Ury WL, Patton B (2011) Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In, Revised Edition. Peguin, New York

Appendix 3: A Brief History of the Development of *Strategyfinder* Methods in the Context of Organisational Problem Solving

The prompt for the development of the methods now used in relation to Strategyfinder resulted from time spent working in industry and subsequently as a management consultant. Exploiting the role of simple visually interactive models that map a conversation – for example, simple decision trees built in real-time with the decision making team – was the beginning of a focus on naturalistic and interactive modelling directly with a management team.

These experiences led to an exploration of cognitive psychology to help understand the process of thinking about problem situations. The role of Personal Construct Theory (PCT) and the use of Repertory Grids and Implication Grids as an expression of this theory[28] and a way of understanding the nature of a problem and choosing between alternatives[29] seemed a helpful and a practical expression of PCT.

This led to the development of 'cognitive mapping' as a more effective expression of Personal Construct Theory in its application to organisational settings[30]. The formation of the Managerial and Organisational Cognition Interest Group in the Academy of Management provided a useful context for this development.

The development of the *COPE* software in the 1980's (at the University of Bath and using an IBM Portable PC with a 386 chip) enabled the display and crude analysis of cognitive maps, and the subsequent development of *Decision Explorer* in the 1990's (at the University of Strathclyde, for Windows PC) extended this work.

Both software programmes were able to visually represent causality and dichotomous constructs (a key element of PCT). These software packages extended the ideas behind the Implication Grid, and made it more practical in an organisational setting; by freeing up the elicitation of constructs through a formal process and instead using the currency of organisational life: verbal arguments about how a person makes sense of the nature of a problem situation.

Prior to the use of the software packages came the associated development, in the 1970's, of 'oval mapping' as a way of engaging a team in building a group view of a problem 'on the wall' as a causal map and using it to reach agreements about solutions[31].

The development in the Operational Research community of 'problem structuring methods' in the 1980's facilitated the development of Strategic Options Development and Analysis (SODA) as a method for problem structuring and problem resolution[32].

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[28] Fransella F, Bannister D (1977) A Manual for Repertory Grid Technique. Academic Press, London. Adams-Webber JR (1979) Personal Construct Theory: concepts and applications. Wiley, Chichester.

[29] Eden C, Jones S (1984) Using Repertory Grids for Problem Construction. Journal of the Operational Research Society 35:779-790.

[30] Eden C (1988) Cognitive Mapping: a review. European Journal of Operational Research 36:1-13.

[31] Bryson JM, Ackermann F, Eden C, Finn C (1995) Using the 'Oval Mapping Process' to identify strategic issues and formulate effective strategies. In: Bryson JM (eds.) Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organisations, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, pp257-275

[32] Eden C (1989) Strategic Options Development and Analysis - SODA. In: Rosenhead J (eds.) Rational Analysis in a Problematic World, Wiley, London, pp21-42

The SODA (Strategic Options Development and Analysis) method became well-established, and it developed into a prescribed method taught in many University courses and used by Operational Research groups in business and the public sector.

Strategic planning managers (at, for example, ICL and BT in the UK) noted the potential for the use of a variation of SODA as a method for strategy development, where a senior management team could be actively involved (rather than depending on a planning team or external consultants)[33].

This active involvement with senior management teams led to a 'structure of strategy' that reflected causal mapping and its hierarchical nature (goals supported by strategies, in turn supported by portfolios of actions) but set within a process view of strategy making[34].

The significance of negotiation – both psychological and social (negotiated social order (NSO) and socially negotiated order (SNO)[35]) – became more prominent. The Making Strategy process developed further as it was influenced by the Harvard School of negotiation[36]. Although often supported by the *Decision Explorer* software it was also supported by the simple 'oval mapping' technique[37]. The role of the model as a 'boundary object' and 'transitional object'[38] to facilitate negotiation was being realised.

Alongside these core method/tool developments was the extension of methods to encompass the strategic management of stakeholders, agreeing organisational purpose, and understanding and exploiting competitive advantage[39].

Decision Explorer was not ideally suited to working with management teams from a process perspective and so the *Group Explorer* software was developed (at the University of Strathclyde using Windows Server). This was a group support system (GSS) that enabled team members to communicate directly with the strategy/causal map development via their own laptops, and to see and explore the map projected onto a screen. The group support system utilised *Decision Explorer* facilities such as the categorising of statements (nodes on the causal map) and a range of analysis

[33] Eden C, Ackermann F (1992) Strategy Development and Implementation - the role of a Group Decision Support System. In: Kinney S, Bostrom RP, Watson R (eds.) Computer Augmented Teamwork: A Guided Tour, Van Nostrand and Reinhold, New York, pp325-342. Eden C, Galer G (1990) A client's perspective. Long Range Planning 23:42-43. Eden C (1993) Strategy Development and Implementation - Cognitive Mapping for Group Support. In: Hendry J, Johnson G, Newton J (eds.) Strategic Thinking: Leadership and the Management of Change, Wiley, London

[34] Eden C, Ackermann F (1998) Making Strategy: The Journey of Strategic Management. Sage, London. Eden C, Ackermann F (2001) A Mapping Framework for Strategy Making. In: Huff A, Jenkins M (eds.) Mapping Strategy, Wiley, London, pp173-195.

[35] See Chapter 3 of Eden C, Ackermann F (1998) Making Strategy: The Journey of Strategic Management. Sage, London. And Eden C, Bennett PG, Clark P, Stringer J (1993) Problem Formulation and Negotiation in Multi-Organisational Contexts. Journal of the Operational Research Society 44:625-628.

[36] Fisher R, Ury W (1982) Getting to Yes. Hutchinson, London

[37] Bryson JM, Ackermann F, Eden C (2014) Visual Strategy. Wiley, San Francisco.

[38] Eden C (2021) Behavioural Considerations in Group Support. In: Kilgour DM, Eden C (eds.) Handbook of Group Decision and Negotiation, Springer Nature, Switzerland, pp777-792

[39] Ackermann F, Eden C (2011) Making Strategy: Mapping Out Strategic Success. Sage, London.

tools. In addition, the problem structuring method began to be used for systemic risk management[40] and unravelling the failure of major projects[41].

Decision Explorer and *Group Explorer* became out-dated and, in particular, did not allow for teamwork where members were located in different places. *Group Explorer* required Windows Server (which required specialist set up and was therefore expensive) rather than being browser based. The need for distributed engagement was made clear as in a number of engagements the strategic problem solving and strategy making work had involved senior management teams where each member was located in a different country –and so initial maps had to be built on a one-to-one basis and then merged resulting in a less effective process.

Thus, *Strategyfinder* has been developed to reflect the long-term theoretical and practical development of the strategy making and strategic problem-solving method[42].

Strategyfinder has taken 3 years to develop but has been used very successfully for all the above situations, with a recent focus on addressing 'grand challenges'[43]. Strategyfinder, crucially, is browser based, provides very easy entry and location of statements (nodes) and causal links and their editing, allows for the strategy maps to be in continual transition as the thinking of the team shifts, and has a very wide range of analysis tools: all of the key features of *Group Explorer* plus many more.

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[40] Ackermann F, Eden C, Williams T, Howick S (2007) Systemic Risk Assessment: a case study. Journal of the Operational Research Society 58:39-51. Eden C, Gonzalez JJ (2022) Systemic Risk and Disaster Risk Reduction. In: Radianti J, Gjøsæter T, Murayama Y (eds.) *I*nformation Technology in Disaster Risk Reduction ITDRR , Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland

[41] Williams TM, Ackermann F, Eden C (1997) Project Risk: systemicity, cause mapping and a scenario approach. In: Kahkonen K, Artto KA (eds.) Managing Risks in Projects, E&FN Spon, London, pp343-352

[42] Eden C, Ackermann F (2018) Theory into practice, practice to theory: Action Research in method development. European Journal of Operational Research 271:1145-1155.

[43] Ackermann, F. (2024), Managing Grand Challenges: Extending the scope of problem structuring methods and behavioural operational research, European Journal of Operational Research, forthcoming

CATALOGUE
STRATEGYFINDER MANUALS AND GUIDES

MANAGING THE SOFTWARE PLATFORM

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Strategyfinder tool and method is the only known way of acknowledging risk as a system of interconnected risks. The method has been particularly successful in major project risk management and pandemic risk management, as well as many other messy risk situations.

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> Shows, as a step-by-step guide, all stages of the process for constructing the model of the risk system, conducting appropriate analyses of the system, and developing effective risk mitigation strategies and action programmes.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

These set of manuals show different aspects strategy making. Each method can be used independently of others, however together they work a portfolio of highly important parts of strategic thinking and strategic management.

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ISBN 978-3-903556-10-2

> Strategic management needs to be practical and capable of implementation. Thus, it must address the key issues the organisation faces in creating strategic success. This method has been used extensively by top management teams in many countries and many industries in public/not-for-profit organisations as well private/for-profit companies. It is based on a series of 4 half day workshops with the members of the management team connected to Strategyfinder from the own chosen location.

Strategyfinder – METHOD - TEAM STRATEGY FINDING DETAIL

ISBN 978-3-903556-09-6

> Shows, as a step-by-step guide, all stages of the process for strategy development and the creation of agreed strategies and action programmes.

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ISBN 978-3-903556-12-6

> Competitive advantage is known to follow from exploiting distinctiveness, and distinctiveness comes from understanding and exploring the network of distinctive competences and distinctive assets. This method shows how to discover and explore distinctiveness and so develop effective strategies to exploit and develop competitive advantage. The method has been used not only in the commercial sector but also the public sector (including police forces, health service, etc).

Strategyfinder – METHOD - STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

ISBN 978-3-903556-08-9

> A crucial part of any effective strategy or problem solution is understanding the responses of key stakeholders and developing strategies the manage them. Stakeholders are often a social and influence networks with various levels of power and interest in managing their own responses to your strategies and solutions. This method uniquely helps develop effective stakeholder management.

There also brief manuals available for using Strategyfinder to help manage strategy delivery and monitor progress, and also some effective ways of presenting an agreed Strategyfinder strategy. In addition, organisations often favour starting strategy making with a SWOT analysis – Strategyfinder is very effective at moving a SWOT analysis to strategy development. These guides/documents are available on request.

TEAM SOLUTION FINDING – MANAGING MESSY AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Strategyfinder – METHOD - TEAM SOLUTION FINDING

ISBN 978-3-903556-13-3

> Many, if not most, organisational problems are a system of interacting issues that have soft as well as mathematical relationships. This method enables the 'owners' of the problem, as well as possible experts able to help suggest solutions, to get together to understand the systemic nature of the problem and so develop an effective and practical solution. Significantly the participants need not be in the same location and are able to bring together a team perspective and to co-create a jointly owned systems view. With this method and Strategyfinder there deliberations can be fast and highly productive (see the example real case: 'Strategyfinder – a real case example of team solution finding in 45min).

> The Strategyfinder 10min video shows how a manager was able to get the views of his team, without the need for a meeting, prior to attending an important meeting (see YouTube "Strategyfinder Briefing Workshop@).

When analysts address problems by constructing mathematical models or simulation models it is crucial they understand the nature of the problem as seen by those who will have the responsibility to implement any solution. This method enables analysts to undertake fast problem construction with the client group. (24pp)

The manual assumes familiarity with Strategyfinder – the getting started manuals.

OTHER TRIED AND TESTED USES FOR STRATEGYFINDER

Strategyfinder – REVERSE ENGINEERING TEXT INTO A STRATEGY MAP
ISBN 978-3-903556-23-2

Reverse engineering a published mission statement/strategy statement can provide a good to revisiting strategy development. It can also 'test' a mission/vision statement for thoroughness and logic. This method helps gain clarity in understanding a report/documents(s). The manual illustrates the process using a published mission statement and provides a set of 'rules' for reverse engineering.

Strategyfinder – ESTIMATION USING AN ADAPTED DELPHI TECHNIQUE
ISBN 978-3-903556-14-0

A range of experts in the estimating topic produce independent estimates of the likely cost of a new and probably complex project (using the rating facility in Strategyfinder), they then explain the key factors that impacted their estimate (using the 'blind gather' facility in Strategyfinder), everyone now re-estimates in the light of knowing these factors, and the process is repeated until the range of the estimates gets smaller and the average and median moves to what can then be regarded as the best estimate. An important outcome is a range of possible risk factors and factors crucial when undertaking the traditional estimating.

Strategyfinder – METHOD - BRAINSTORMING ISBN 978-3-903556-04-1

Brainstorming can easily be done using 'sticky-labels' on a wall, however using Strategyfinder can offer benefits of i) anonymity and so opening up possible ideas that would not surface otherwise, ii) show causal, or other, connections between ideas, and so iii) analyse the structure the inter-related ideas, iv) use categories to help see different characteristics of ideas, v) undertake anonymous evaluations of the ideas against a variety of criteria. This manual describes a simple process for doing brainstorming.

Focus Groups

The Team Solution Finding and Team Strategy Finding methods each provide a basis for fast and highly effective focus group work. With Strategyfinder, participants in the focus group can be located anywhere with an internet connection. The early stages of these methods offer little more than other 'whiteboard' software. However, Strategyfinder allows for causally connecting statements from participants, and most importantly both during and after a focus group workshop the material can be analysed in a variety of ways.

In addition, the methods allow for the focus group to go beyond expressing view and the linkages. The group can be facilitated to providing their own agreed solutions.

FACILITATOR GUIDES

Strategyfinder – GUIDE - MULTI-ORGANISATION COLLABORATION GUIDE
ISBN 978-3-903556-16-4

> Based on extensive experience, the guide introduces a range of issues to pay attention to if using Strategyfinder for Multi-Organisation Collaboration when faced with messy problems, or the need to construct a joint strategy, when an input from a collaborative multi-organisation group is required.

> The Strategyfinder Team Solution Finding and Team Strategy Finding methods are particularly effective for addressing 'Grand Challenges' and 'Future Shocks'. These require commitment from many organisations agreeing to work together. Many features of Strategyfinder methods help: high group productivity, anonymity when appropriate, able to explore degree of consensus on potential agreements, and participants can join from their own organisational location.

> Eden, C., Paulsen, S., Gonzalez, J. 2024. Breaking the Cycle in Norway. In Resilience in Action. IBM Institute for Business Value (accessible from IBM web site) provides a brief summary of multi-organisational collaboration in Norway. And, Ackermann, F. 2024. Managing grand challenges: Extending the scope of problem structuring methods and behavioural operational research European Journal of Operational Research 319, (2), 373-383 discusses some of the issues.

Strategyfinder - GUIDE - IDENTIFY AN OPTIMUM GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS
ISBN 978-3-903556-05-8

> Getting together an optimum group of participants is important for all strategy, risk, solution finding workshops. Ensuring both an adequate range of expertise is represented and crucial power-brokers (implementers) are present is crucial. This guide uses Strategyfinder to help with the identification of the best group of participants and helps with getting the group size to a reasonable level.

Strategyfinder – GUIDE - FACILITATION NOTES
ISBN 978-3-903556-22-5

> This guide provides a set of notes about the role of a facilitator/leader/manager when using Strategyfinder. A workshop checklist is provided. The guide also includes suggested further reading.

THE STRATEGYFINDER WEBSITE

https://www.Strategyfinder.com
The web site provides a variety of video support.