Ep 31 - Escaping the Short-Term Trap

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Develop momentum.

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You need to get people to buy into the idea that big results need years.

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They need time.

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Long time frame, big results, they go together.

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The Japanese reduction in BMI shows,

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for example,

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and so do many,

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many others,

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that if you try to commit to big goals on short time frames,

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it doesn't work.

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It's the Jump Leap Long-Term Strategy Podcast, episode 31.

(00:00:34):

You have a hunger for game-changing results.

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You may be a CEO,

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a board member,

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a manager,

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a consultant,

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or a strategic planner,

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and you aspire to produce big results with your company or perhaps your clients.

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You know some methods which do work.

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But you still find yourself and others drifting back into short-term thinking,

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especially in these tumultuous days.

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But below or behind the latest crisis or tariff, you know better.

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Without daily activities which take you towards a true north,

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kind of a preferred long term destination.

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You run a huge risk, a huge but slow moving risk.

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You could end up at the end of it all being sucked in like so many other

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organizations into a 24 hour news cycle or the latest drama that happens to be

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happening so often.

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Or the most recent news about the economy or the stock market.

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Do you build the muscles necessary to withstand even daily shocks and surprises?

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Tune into this episode to join me in tackling this wicked problem.

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In this episode,

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I'll be sharing the approach we're taking to design the Long-Term Strategy

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Conference 2025 taking place in June so that it helps you,

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someone who wants game-changing strategy.

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I'm Francis Wade, and welcome to the Jump Leap Long-Term Strategy Podcast, and welcome back.

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If this is your first time joining us,

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you may be wondering,

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how exactly is this conversation going to proceed?

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Because it's a little bit different than most of the podcasts I've witnessed or listened to.

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The first is that we're going to spend a good amount of time diagnosing the problem

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that I mentioned,

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diagnosing the issue.

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We're going to be tearing it apart in different ways.

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And the point of our doing that is not just to delay some kind of final answer,

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but this is a wicked problem.

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The diagnosis of it is what we think is the most valuable takeaway that you'd have,

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where you'll be able to examine,

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in this case,

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my underlying thinking,

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my assumptions,

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my experience,

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the frameworks I'll be using,

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and you'll be able to walk away with an experience of how I've used them and how

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I've been analyzing the problem.

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In other words,

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I'm going to show you how we make the sausage and not just tell you what the

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sausage is at the end.

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So you'll know kind of where that comes from and where my conclusions come from.

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Some of them are very counterintuitive and some of them are,

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they run against the counter,

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you know,

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the cultural common wisdom,

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kind of the common thinking.

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And I'm basically trying to follow Einstein.

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Einstein said that if I have an hour to solve a problem,

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I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem.

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and five minutes thinking about solutions.

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In other words,

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the quality of the problems has to do with the quality of the diagnosis or the

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thinking.

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So if you have any feedback for me,

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just send it over to or visit longtermstrategy.info or find me on LinkedIn.

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Look for this episode if you want and then drop a note and I'd be really happy to hear from you.

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So let's jump in with a story.

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Stories about Thomas.

(00:04:01):

He is the longtime CEO of a mid-sized manufacturing company.

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Let's pretend that he's in the US.

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As such, his company is subject to new tariffs coming at him from all directions.

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They have their suppliers who are in Vietnam.

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A bunch of them have new tariffs.

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And they have customers who are in China who are going to be subject to new tariffs as well.

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And as a result, his C-suite is understandably in shock.

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He looks around the meetings and people come in and what they talk about is perhaps

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that takes up half the meeting,

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way too much time.

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And he finds the conversation and the point of focus devolving into short-term

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strategic sort of emergency mode.

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And he's not happy with it.

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He sees disturbed by it.

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It's the opposite of the way he thinks things should be.

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And in the past,

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He always had for himself a clear mental picture of where the company should be in

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the next 10 or even 20 years time.

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Matter of fact, he's made notes to himself, all kinds of details.

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He's been a CEO for a long time,

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so he's made lots of notes and he's changed them over the years with respect to

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where he wants the company to go.

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He's always infused with a picture of where things should be headed.

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But he really hasn't shared any of those details.

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No one else has the map that he has.

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They have some vague idea, a little bit that he's shared with them now and again.

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The fact is, they haven't really seemed all that interested and they haven't asked him.

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So he's been kind of like, well, you know, let me keep them focused kind of on short term stuff.

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And let me think about the long term on my own.

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Now,

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He's having a rethink because he believes that his team needs a complete

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reorientation and it needs to be pretty dramatic because nothing else is going to

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disrupt the thinking and the rut that he sees them falling into.

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All of a sudden, there's this new daily habit.

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of focusing on kind of what happened this morning or in the last 24 hours.

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And he knows that he has,

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you know,

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he has some Asian competitors and they're all very long term oriented and they have

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detailed plans and their staff knows about these plans,

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which makes him think,

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you know,

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how do they,

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how do they do this?

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How do they get to the point where their staff is not just aware, but they're actually engaged.

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So he's thinking to himself, okay, I've had a true north.

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Should I announce it?

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Or should I ask for input to correct it or make it more current?

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It's a dilemma.

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What should he do?

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So perhaps you're like me and you can actually relate to this particular challenge

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that Tomas is going through.

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That, you know, you're someone who is, you know, you know, you're way around the head of a

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head of a company,

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you know,

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you've been around the C-suite either as a member of the C-suite or you're someone

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who has,

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you know,

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a leader in the company,

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you're maybe a board member.

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And as you look around, you want these kinds of game changing results more than ever.

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Matter of fact,

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you know,

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knowing that the entire world is in a swirl makes you think that there may be even

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an opportunity.

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to do something that would really be disruptive,

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that would set your organization apart from either the competitors,

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or if perhaps it's a part of government,

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that would get it to the point where it becomes indispensable to government,

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as opposed to superfluous,

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which happens from time to time,

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and they shut down government departments because they become irrelevant or

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outdated.

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So yeah, I don't want to achieve maybe a profit,

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kind of result or a shareholder stock result, based result.

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You may have a bit on your mind or you want to be able to point to results that

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you're producing that maybe you're,

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if you're in government or if you're an NGO,

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that your beneficiaries are actually experiencing that the results are moving in

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the right direction.

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However, you don't really have a roadmap to accomplish this, that,

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is strong enough, robust, has enough detail to deal with the contingencies like tariffs.

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Truth is, many companies kind of assume that things would continue the way they are.

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I think of Canadian companies, for example, that basically assume that the U.S.

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would always be there.

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And now they're finding out that that's just not true,

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that the America that they always knew and respected and liked and relied on and

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counted on and maybe took for granted is gone and maybe gone forever.

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And all of a sudden,

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the long-term prospect,

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the long-term comfort and stability that they had unintentionally been relying on

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has now disappeared.

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So that's perhaps the most egregious,

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the most exaggerated example of companies in the world right now within a country

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that are having to do a forced rethink.

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And as you hunger,

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let's say,

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for these game-changing results,

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you want to make a fine start,

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a good start,

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and you fear stepping out on the wrong foot that maybe you'll make a mistake.

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And one way to make a mistake in the way you start is by having the wrong context

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for long-term strategy.

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If you have the wrong context, you could turn people off.

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You let managers think that, oh boy, here we go again.

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Or you could have your board think that you've lost a screw.

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Or board members may think that this is a bad idea.

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We need to be focused on survival.

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And this true north business needs to be put off indefinitely.

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So you are concerned that if those results,

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if that kind of start to the whole process,

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if you do start the process,

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is a bad one,

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then it won't end well.

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So I think that you're kind of confused because all the information out there is big.

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about the need for a true north,

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the need for a long-term strategy to accomplish it,

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and the method.

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And if you don't sort out your own internal kind of confusion,

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you may not be trusted by your stakeholders.

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You know,

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they may think they hear you,

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but they're not sure if they actually believe you or that they're willing to follow

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you.

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So there should be sort of a formula.

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that a company could follow and a way to think about the skills that are needed to

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react when there are there will always be tariffs I suspect we're moving into a

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world in which daily drama is a regular part of business life and if that's the

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case

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then you need something strong.

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It's like strong medicine, right?

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If you need something that's robust,

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because as you observe other companies sort of getting sucked down into the vortex,

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do you just surrender and just go with them?

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Where you're all scrambling, scrambling and hoping to survive this week and today.

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And as you articulate the problem that I'm describing to other people,

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You want to do it in a way that's not just panicky.

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That doesn't sound like you're just trying to scare people into thinking that they

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need to be thinking of long-term game-changing kinds of outcomes and strategies.

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You want to sound like you know what you're talking about with some degree of confidence.

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You also want the right framing,

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to frame the problem in the right way so that when you describe it to others,

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you'll see some heads nodding.

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They won't be looking like you with blank looks.

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That it'll actually resonate to something that they've been thinking or experiencing themselves.

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Because everybody,

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you know,

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you got,

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this is the last few weeks and I'm recording this at the end of April.

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Every business person in the entire world

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is facing a level of disruption that are unprecedented.

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There is no one left out.

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And the momentum to just get sucked into the vortex is tremendous,

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especially if your organization leaders are used to looking around the industry for

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guidance.

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If they're not used to defining their own true north,

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Instead,

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they kind of take an average of what's happening,

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what their competitors are doing,

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or if you're in government,

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taking an average of what other agencies and departments are doing and kind of

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doing that.

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That you're not used to thinking, doing this kind of thinking on your own.

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You're used to following the average and that's gotten you to where it's gotten you.

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It's kind of worked to some degree.

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And if a game changing result happens,

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You kind of shrug your shoulders, maybe perhaps some, and said, oh, they got lucky.

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Well, in this podcast, in this discussion, I want to introduce you to the idea that maybe...

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It's not luck.

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Something else.

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And what's that something else?

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Well, let's talk about that.

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Because if you don't sort of pay attention to where game-changing results come

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from,

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they'll always seem to be a function of these things that you can't control.

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Because you can't control luck.

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If you're not in the right country, you can't control that.

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If you're not

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already a $5 billion company,

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US dollar company,

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then you're not big enough to be able to set your own course.

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You've just got to sort of follow what everyone else is doing.

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And any discussion around game-changing results for your company would just seem

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like something magical that you could never have within your grasp,

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that it's not within your means to accomplish it.

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Now,

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I've talked to consultants,

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strategy consultants who tell me that they have clients who call them and they want

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game-changing results for their clients and their clients say,

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I just want a five-year strategy.

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And they don't know,

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aren't able to engage their clients effectively to say,

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that's a problem if that's all you want.

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And let me tell you why.

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They don't have a conversation,

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know how to have a conversation with clients that persuade them that a five-year

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context isn't sufficient for game-changing results,

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that something more is needed.

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Now, typically, you know, companies will

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hear about this game-changing business and figure,

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oh,

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well,

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all I need to do,

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CEOs have traditionally done this,

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is let me just ask for twice the results in half the time.

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So if you're a CEO, you may think that that's what you do every day.

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Everybody who comes to you gets the same treatment.

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How about you double the results and give it to me in half the time?

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And it's not necessarily based on any analysis.

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It's just instinct or it's a habit.

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It's a routine because you know that people are coming to you with,

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you know,

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padding built in and you hope and believe maybe that if you keep doing that in the

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future,

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that it'll continue to work.

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I want you to consider that that's not working the way it used to.

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And well, why?

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Part of the reason is that your stakeholders are smarter than they've ever been before.

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They're more savvy.

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In years past, maybe you were the only one with an MBA.

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Maybe you were the only one with 20 years experience in the industry.

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Maybe you're the only one who understood the technology.

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It was more of a level landscape.

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Now you've got 20 year olds using AI to dig up facts that you don't even know where

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they come from.

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Find information, find resources and get themselves trained in ways of thinking that you thought

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took 20 years to develop so you can't quite use the you can't at all use the same

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approach that you used before that kind of forcing people double the results in

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half the time doesn't work you also you know being hopeful

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And being like the rah-rah kind of CEO,

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if you're a rah-rah CEO,

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I don't mean to insult you if you are,

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but if you're a rah-rah CEO and you're always upbeat and you're always the most

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positive and you're always there energizing folks and telling them,

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yeah,

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we can do it guys.

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You're always cheering from the sidelines.

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If you're trying to follow that approach in this environment,

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I imagine that is pretty tiring because a disruption once a month

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Maybe you can rah-rah your way out of that and rally the troops.

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Be the most energetic, the most positive, the most upbeat, the most, you know, energetic.

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The one who's the most visionary and who's,

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you know,

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gregarious and you're engaging and you walk around.

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When the disruptions are coming once a month,

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that's probably,

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you know,

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maybe you could get by with that.

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In today's world, you may find that you can't do that on a daily basis.

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that that method is no longer working.

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Some would also argue that you need outsiders.

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You need to bring in a fancy consulting firm and they'll tell us what to do.

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I'm going to suggest that whereas consultants like me can be really useful,

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really helpful,

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that it's not our business to tell you what to do,

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what the answer is.

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At best, we can offer expert guidance as you find your solutions.

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But the days in which we would disappear for a week,

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having analyzed all your data and then emailed over a presentation or had a meeting

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in which we launched our final results or final recommendations,

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and you would hear them for the first time and you would get your head nodding and

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we get you to agree.

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Those situations in which we did all the thinking,

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or as they say,

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the old consultant joke is that consultants,

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all they do is ask you for the time and ask you to share your watch with them and

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they tell you what time it is.

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That way of relying on outside answers

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doesn't work either because the volume of changing of changes that have happened

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recently and that will are likely to continue to change mean that you can't think

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or imagine that consultants who come in and spend three months,

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paid a million dollars and study your situation are going to be able to ride three

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months of change

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And even understand what these changes mean better than your own people can.

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Imagine in the last three months.

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So we've had three months of total turmoil in the world.

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So by the time you hear this,

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you know,

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things may have settled down,

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but I imagine that they have not.

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That's the way things are going.

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Imagine bringing in consultants in January and watching as the world changed.

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and as you had to deal with all kinds of outside influences.

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So imagine these consultants changing their scope every week,

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every half week,

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every day,

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as they try to keep up with the changes,

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as they try to comprehend the impact of

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what is happening in the world on your company,

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the area in which,

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the niche in which you and your colleagues have the most expertise.

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And they could try to be as expert as you are,

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I suggest that you probably think they can't.

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Things are changing too fast for them to learn your business.

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Unless you're a solo entrepreneur,

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solo freelancer,

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you're in a zone in which there's a heck of a lot of complexity.

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And even when your team is gathered together, your best minds are in the same room.

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You realize that all the complexity requires everyone in the room that you aren't

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the one who knows everything.

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Maybe if you've been around for a long time,

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maybe you can remember 20 years ago where you had done every job and you were an

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expert in everything.

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and you knew more than anyone else.

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Now you have a piece of the puzzle and you need an entire team to tackle any kind

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of complex issues,

(00:21:54):

right?

(00:21:54):

Because there's a heck of a lot of independency that didn't exist before thanks to technology.

(00:21:58):

Those solutions are working.

(00:22:00):

Your stakeholders are smarter than ever before.

(00:22:06):

They're outsiders.

(00:22:08):

That approach doesn't work.

(00:22:09):

Using force doesn't work.

(00:22:12):

Being rah-rah doesn't work.

(00:22:14):

And

(00:22:16):

I suggest that the challenge that you have has to do with a frame.

(00:22:23):

And that frame comes from, I'm going to say experts in the strategy world like myself.

(00:22:33):

We're guilty.

(00:22:34):

Because what we don't do is we don't make it clear that there is a connection

(00:22:39):

between long-term framing and big results.

(00:22:46):

So we try to emphasize, oh, yeah, you want to produce game-changing results.

(00:22:51):

And by the way, you need long-term thinking.

(00:22:53):

And you say, what?

(00:22:54):

And you say, oh, nothing.

(00:22:56):

But what we know is that there is a deep connection between long-term thinking and big results.

(00:23:04):

And these two go hand in hand.

(00:23:07):

So there's an example of this I wanted to share with you.

(00:23:11):

So the Japanese have...

(00:23:13):

obesity rate of 4.6%.

(00:23:17):

I believe the right number is now.

(00:23:20):

This is a body mass index.

(00:23:23):

Whereas, here in Jamaica, it's 24.2.

(00:23:25):

In the U.S., it's 38.7.

(00:23:32):

Yes, I'm quoting these numbers from memory because I just wrote an article on using them.

(00:23:38):

And how did they get there?

(00:23:39):

How did they get to be the world leader in body mass index?

(00:23:45):

In the second edition, everybody else is struggling at the high end.

(00:23:49):

Well, started in 1964, where they started to pay the salaries of nutritionists.

(00:23:57):

Fast forward to various points throughout the years that have ensued,

(00:24:03):

and they've gotten to the point where,

(00:24:06):

as far as I understand it,

(00:24:07):

they have a nutritionist.

(00:24:09):

Someone trained in teaching as well as nutrition, licensed and located in each school.

(00:24:18):

And what they're doing is they're training students

(00:24:22):

They are designing the food that they eat.

(00:24:26):

They're involved in the kitchen.

(00:24:27):

So you can imagine, right?

(00:24:30):

This is no small intervention.

(00:24:33):

And it didn't happen just the other day.

(00:24:37):

So if a company,

(00:24:38):

a country rather,

(00:24:40):

is interested in reducing its body mass index and all the benefits that come from

(00:24:44):

doing so,

(00:24:45):

you know,

(00:24:45):

like

(00:24:46):

the health benefits to the entire country,

(00:24:49):

the individual benefits to society,

(00:24:52):

rather to the human beings,

(00:24:54):

the low cost of healthcare.

(00:24:57):

They've increased their longevity.

(00:24:59):

There's a reduced incidence of lifestyle diseases as a result.

(00:25:07):

There are these amazing results that everyone in every country wants,

(00:25:12):

especially if you've had someone pass away as a result of

(00:25:15):

essentially having a high body mass index.

(00:25:17):

Everyone wants these results.

(00:25:19):

However,

(00:25:19):

given the time frame it took for them to produce it,

(00:25:22):

what do you think a two-year plan or a four-year plan looks like when put down on

(00:25:28):

paper?

(00:25:28):

I think the Japanese would maybe shake their heads and say, you don't get it.

(00:25:33):

They may tell you their story.

(00:25:36):

And,

(00:25:36):

you know,

(00:25:36):

if you're a CEO or if you're someone in government at a high level,

(00:25:40):

you may say,

(00:25:40):

yeah,

(00:25:41):

but I want twice the results in half the time.

(00:25:45):

You may complain and argue that you want it now.

(00:25:49):

You may say it loud and you may be all excited about it and revved up.

(00:25:54):

And back to what I said before,

(00:25:57):

experts are not confronting the link between long-term frames,

(00:26:05):

timeframes,

(00:26:06):

and big results,

(00:26:07):

and that the two are inextricably linked.

(00:26:10):

They don't tell their clients the truth.

(00:26:12):

They know it.

(00:26:13):

I know this because I talk to them, talk to some many of them.

(00:26:18):

And I notice that it's kind of something that if you say to a client,

(00:26:24):

you run the risk of the client saying,

(00:26:26):

I'm not interested.

(00:26:27):

Thank you very much.

(00:26:27):

I'll call somebody else who's going to give me my five year plan that I really want.

(00:26:30):

So we've not done a good job in my industry.

(00:26:35):

We're not having the courage to stand up.

(00:26:37):

So the problem persists because we're not telling the truth.

(00:26:39):

So what I want for you is,

(00:26:41):

you know,

(00:26:42):

the opposite of your clients and your companies not achieving all they can.

(00:26:48):

I want them to be strong so that they can be ripe.

(00:26:53):

They can be ready for a disruption.

(00:26:55):

They can be prepared for it, preemptively designed for it.

(00:27:00):

or preemptively developing muscles so that they can deal with it.

(00:27:06):

So the way I'm gonna do that is to describe a process that we went through to

(00:27:10):

design 25 obstacles to game-changing preemptive long-term strategy so that it could

(00:27:20):

occur for you as a matter of design.

(00:27:25):

and a matter of skill,

(00:27:26):

not a matter of,

(00:27:28):

like I said,

(00:27:28):

luck or force or hope or using outsiders to do your thinking for you.

(00:27:36):

And while,

(00:27:38):

you know,

(00:27:38):

people in the past have said,

(00:27:39):

well,

(00:27:39):

we're not going to commit to anything game changing and preemptive and long term

(00:27:44):

because,

(00:27:44):

you know,

(00:27:44):

we could fail.

(00:27:45):

I'm going to suggest that accepting that failure

(00:27:50):

is a part of the journey.

(00:27:53):

And that's some of what we're gonna be dealing with at the conference.

(00:27:59):

So after last year's conference,

(00:28:02):

I had a sort of a,

(00:28:04):

there was a message that we were sending in one of the webinars that I did.

(00:28:09):

Then I had an insight, but the conference,

(00:28:13):

Webinar that I did had to do with Big Hairy Audacious Goals.

(00:28:16):

The Jim Collins, part of the Jim Collins book built to last.

(00:28:20):

I almost couldn't remember it.

(00:28:23):

So that book is great.

(00:28:25):

That book talks about Big Hairy Audacious Goals and the difference that they make.

(00:28:30):

And it showed,

(00:28:31):

it has an imperial evidence between Big Hairy Audacious Goals and company

(00:28:35):

performance.

(00:28:36):

And if you read the chapter, you may see that there's a few things that it doesn't talk about.

(00:28:42):

One is that it doesn't even mention any idea of how to accomplish,

(00:28:46):

how to set these big,

(00:28:47):

hairy auditions.

(00:28:48):

It makes it sound as if it's just kind of magic.

(00:28:51):

You set them and you're good.

(00:28:53):

So there's no process involved or described.

(00:28:56):

And in the original book, there was no time frame involved.

(00:28:59):

Just said, big.

(00:29:00):

A couple of years after,

(00:29:03):

the authors,

(00:29:05):

Collins and Porras,

(00:29:06):

produced a Harvard Business Review article that said,

(00:29:10):

for the first time in public,

(00:29:13):

that they need to have 10 to 30 year timeframes.

(00:29:17):

Now, I don't know for sure if what I'm going to tell you is the truth.

(00:29:19):

And I've tried to reach out to the authors to ask them,

(00:29:22):

tell me something,

(00:29:22):

guys,

(00:29:23):

is this what happened?

(00:29:24):

But here's what I suspect happened.

(00:29:26):

By not naming or not describing or detailing the timeframe required, they left it up to

(00:29:36):

Dorito.

(00:29:37):

Dorito,

(00:29:38):

if I'm a CEO and I have a tenure of three,

(00:29:41):

four,

(00:29:41):

five years,

(00:29:43):

I'm going to want to ram a BHAG into a three,

(00:29:45):

four,

(00:29:46):

five year time frame.

(00:29:47):

So I read the book, I get inspired and I say, all we need is a hell of a BHAG.

(00:29:52):

And that BHAG needs to happen next three years.

(00:29:56):

next four years,

(00:29:57):

by the time my stock options invest,

(00:30:00):

by the time I retire,

(00:30:01):

by the time I leave,

(00:30:02):

or by the time my average tenure,

(00:30:04):

which I think is down to four years.

(00:30:05):

So didn't mention any of this.

(00:30:10):

And in last year's conference, I offered the method that my company has used since 2021.

(00:30:16):

We've done about 60 long-term strategy interventions in companies.

(00:30:25):

And these interventions, we developed a method called the endpoint method.

(00:30:29):

We offered it in last year's conference materials and said, okay, this is a possible answer.

(00:30:36):

And it's very different from the chat GPT answer, I'll tell you.

(00:30:42):

But what we found is that our participants needed more than just the right answer.

(00:30:50):

And we found this with our clients as well, that they needed more than just

(00:30:55):

a way to do this that works.

(00:30:58):

The solution we would use,

(00:31:00):

especially with clients,

(00:31:02):

is not necessarily to explain everything,

(00:31:06):

not to explain the pitfalls.

(00:31:09):

Instead, we didn't need to do that.

(00:31:11):

We would just demonstrate what works.

(00:31:13):

And the momentum of the process that we use would be you move from one

(00:31:18):

accomplishment to the next,

(00:31:19):

to the next,

(00:31:19):

to the next.

(00:31:20):

And you keep moving all the way through to

(00:31:24):

something you could implement and find that way credible.

(00:31:30):

And for potential clients who came to us and said, you know, we don't get it.

(00:31:36):

You know what,

(00:31:36):

why do we need to think more than three years,

(00:31:39):

four years,

(00:31:39):

five years into the future?

(00:31:41):

We would say,

(00:31:41):

you know,

(00:31:42):

if we can't have a conversation in which we can essentially persuade you that

(00:31:48):

Big, big, big results need years in order to accomplishment and a long-term perspective.

(00:31:53):

We couldn't convince you of that.

(00:31:54):

We would just say, well, you know, we don't think that it's a good fit.

(00:31:57):

And maybe there's other companies.

(00:32:00):

And so we would turn them away.

(00:32:03):

That strategy is what we've used in live conversations with prospective clients and clients.

(00:32:10):

And it's kind of worked.

(00:32:11):

Well, it doesn't work for a conference attendee.

(00:32:13):

However, yes, you're listening to this.

(00:32:16):

You may never be.

(00:32:17):

Chances are you won't be a framework consulting client at any point in the future.

(00:32:23):

Chances are you're listening from another country, another part of the world.

(00:32:29):

You won't necessarily never meet in person.

(00:32:33):

Chances are.

(00:32:34):

However, you need to do more than just develop momentum.

(00:32:40):

you need to get people to buy into the idea that big results need years.

(00:32:49):

They need time.

(00:32:50):

Long time frame, big results, they go together.

(00:32:55):

The Japanese reduction in BMI shows,

(00:33:00):

for example,

(00:33:01):

and so do many,

(00:33:02):

many others,

(00:33:03):

that if you try to commit to big goals on short time frames,

(00:33:09):

It doesn't work.

(00:33:10):

You run the risk of being seen as a charlatan.

(00:33:13):

Because in the world today, there are lots of people saying they'll do things instantly.

(00:33:19):

Lots of people making day one promises.

(00:33:23):

And those of us who are listening and noticing that these day one promises,

(00:33:29):

they weren't credible to begin with.

(00:33:31):

And then they didn't happen.

(00:33:34):

And then people who make them are pretending as if they didn't say anything to that effect.

(00:33:39):

Or what did I read just yesterday?

(00:33:41):

Oh, it was said in jest.

(00:33:47):

So you run the risk if you're a leader who is,

(00:33:50):

you know,

(00:33:51):

making all these promises and trying to do twice the stuff in half the time.

(00:33:56):

And at some point you'll be held to account and then all you'll be able to say is,

(00:34:01):

That was said in jest, but that doesn't work.

(00:34:04):

Instead,

(00:34:04):

what you need is a way to persuade others that the way they're framing the problem

(00:34:12):

of big results is incorrect,

(00:34:16):

that it's flawed,

(00:34:18):

that the way the conventional wisdom has developed is that

(00:34:24):

I don't mean to blame Collins and Porras and, you know, their book and BHAGs.

(00:34:31):

It's just the way we humans have developed the idea that big goals can somehow be,

(00:34:39):

somehow stand on their own.

(00:34:41):

And if you don't give them a year or a real time frame, then you don't need to.

(00:34:46):

And if you look at the, you know, if you do a search, and I invite you to go check this out,

(00:34:51):

Go look at the chat GPT version of long-term strategic planning.

(00:34:55):

It takes people down this path that I'm describing that does not work.

(00:35:00):

It's full of misconceptions.

(00:35:04):

I'll get all excited at this point,

(00:35:07):

even adamant,

(00:35:09):

and sound like,

(00:35:10):

I'm going to say something I probably shouldn't say to all audiences,

(00:35:16):

but sound like a fanatic about this.

(00:35:19):

And it's the very opposite of what needs to be.

(00:35:22):

I don't know where ChatGTBT is pulling this from,

(00:35:25):

but from our experience of 20-something years,

(00:35:30):

the 60 retreats that we've been in on,

(00:35:32):

and all of them 15 to 30-year kinds of strategic plans and divisions that go

(00:35:38):

together,

(00:35:39):

ChatGTBT is wrong,

(00:35:42):

false,

(00:35:43):

incorrect,

(00:35:44):

approach doesn't work.

(00:35:47):

Now, I won't go into why all that is.

(00:35:48):

You can check into my prior podcast,

(00:35:52):

listen to them,

(00:35:53):

and you'll find the answers to this particular dilemma.

(00:35:57):

Point is that these popular misconceptions are rampant.

(00:36:03):

So, after the conference, I said, okay,

(00:36:08):

Knowing the right thing isn't enough or knowing a way that works,

(00:36:12):

the endpoint method isn't enough.

(00:36:13):

What people need is also some inoculation against the things that aren't working.

(00:36:18):

So we said,

(00:36:19):

okay,

(00:36:19):

what if we help our conference attendees to develop some muscle so that they could

(00:36:24):

find these obstacles,

(00:36:26):

explain what they are to other people and reframe the accomplishment of

(00:36:31):

game-changing strategy so that it is about long-term thinking.

(00:36:38):

What if we gave them language or what we're calling obstacle knowledge?

(00:36:42):

What if we could give you obstacle knowledge so that as soon as you see one of

(00:36:46):

these obstacles,

(00:36:48):

you would know how to respond?

(00:36:50):

So here's what we did.

(00:36:52):

We backed up and we said, you know, there's 25 obstacles.

(00:36:56):

So we boiled it down to 25 and we have 25 obstacles.

(00:37:01):

And we're now at this point looking for speakers to speak to these very specific obstacles.

(00:37:08):

Now, we may not cover all of them in the course of the conference.

(00:37:14):

It's many obstacles.

(00:37:18):

And finding experts in each of these obstacles is no small feat.

(00:37:23):

But we believe that if you can make progress in knowing these obstacles,

(00:37:26):

get some language around them and be able to notice them and what to say when they

(00:37:30):

show up so that you can cast a frame that

(00:37:35):

brings long-term thinking and game-changing results and puts them together in a way.

(00:37:40):

It's not threatening to people,

(00:37:41):

doesn't make them wrong,

(00:37:42):

doesn't prove that their misconceptions are ruining their thinking,

(00:37:48):

but do it in a way that is appropriate,

(00:37:52):

fact-based,

(00:37:53):

rigorous,

(00:37:57):

confident even.

(00:37:58):

I know confidence doesn't come at the very beginning,

(00:38:01):

but it comes after persistent use,

(00:38:04):

that maybe by the end of it,

(00:38:05):

you could be a different kind of strategist.

(00:38:09):

And that perhaps is our mission is to give those folks who are interested and have

(00:38:16):

a hunger,

(00:38:18):

thirst for game-changing strategic plans with this kind of obstacle knowledge so

(00:38:23):

that they could become a different kind of strategist.

(00:38:26):

So that they could be fluent in getting past

(00:38:31):

the obstacles that are being thrown up in every company right now.

(00:38:34):

Whenever someone says, but what's our true north here?

(00:38:37):

Do we really want to get sucked into the vortex?

(00:38:40):

And people look at them and say, well, what do you think we should do instead of that?

(00:38:44):

And they don't really know what to say because they're sort of stuck for words.

(00:38:49):

They don't have a way to put together a persuasive case.

(00:38:53):

They don't know the examples.

(00:38:55):

They don't know the 25 obstacles.

(00:38:56):

They can't frame the problem in a way that

(00:39:02):

It gives fresh perspective to people that they work with.

(00:39:07):

So a different kind of strategist is kind of what we're heading for in terms of

(00:39:14):

your walking away from the conference.

(00:39:18):

So there's 25 obstacles, 25 topics.

(00:39:23):

The obstacles have been turned into lessons, distinctions, topics.

(00:39:27):

You will not find these on chat GPT because they do not follow conventional wisdom.

(00:39:32):

Can't do a search for it.

(00:39:36):

Chat GPT has it all wrong, but to give you an example of just one of them.

(00:39:40):

So let's look at Tomas and the case study that I mentioned before.

(00:39:45):

So Tomas has a strategy already in mind and

(00:39:52):

He's asking a powerful question,

(00:39:54):

which is,

(00:39:55):

do I just take the strategy that I have in mind,

(00:39:57):

document it in a nice way,

(00:39:58):

and then persuade how many hundred people in my company to follow it?

(00:40:03):

So here's a distinction that maybe he could find to be of value.

(00:40:07):

You probably know of zero-based budgeting.

(00:40:10):

So what's zero-based budgeting?

(00:40:12):

Well, that's the idea that the old way of budgeting, the traditional way of budgeting,

(00:40:20):

involved taking last year's budget and essentially adding 5%,

(00:40:25):

10%,

(00:40:38):

12%,

(00:40:25):

whatever percent,

(00:40:31):

you know,

(00:40:32):

was based on you needed last year or whether it went over or under.

(00:40:38):

It's like people spend up their budgets because they don't want to go under because

(00:40:41):

then they'll get less and they get this year.

(00:40:44):

But essentially the traditional way of budgeting involved using the prior year as a,

(00:40:50):

more than a baseline,

(00:40:52):

more like an anchor to say that,

(00:40:55):

oh,

(00:40:56):

we're essentially going to do more of the same.

(00:40:58):

I got a call from a prospective client the other day and they said,

(00:41:02):

well,

(00:41:02):

you know,

(00:41:03):

we're going to refresh our five-year strategy,

(00:41:05):

but we don't think there's much that needs to be changed.

(00:41:11):

If you take that seriously, that you…

(00:41:16):

Have a bridge I want to sell you?

(00:41:17):

I don't know.

(00:41:19):

So much has changed in the world in the last three months.

(00:41:22):

Forget five years.

(00:41:23):

Last three months.

(00:41:25):

That if you're seriously saying that our strategy needs just a big continuation of

(00:41:30):

what it used to be.

(00:41:32):

Because the strategic thinking that we did is still right and correct and doesn't

(00:41:37):

require any,

(00:41:38):

you know,

(00:41:38):

it just requires maybe a 10% more,

(00:41:39):

10% less,

(00:41:41):

7.5% here or there,

(00:41:43):

a little bit of nudging,

(00:41:43):

a little bit of changing a few words,

(00:41:46):

little statements,

(00:41:47):

you know,

(00:41:47):

vision is still the same.

(00:41:48):

I was told, I suggest to you that there is something called a zero-based strategy that Tomas,

(00:41:57):

needs to consider.

(00:41:58):

And what zero-based strategy is, is starting from a blank sheet of paper.

(00:42:05):

Now,

(00:42:06):

that does not mean in the way we do it,

(00:42:10):

developing amnesia and pretending as if you have no history.

(00:42:15):

In our case,

(00:42:16):

and during the conference you will hear this,

(00:42:18):

there is a way to transition from a full knowledge

(00:42:22):

insights,

(00:42:24):

a deep understanding,

(00:42:25):

a diagnosis,

(00:42:27):

actually,

(00:42:28):

kind of like the Einstein quote that I mentioned before,

(00:42:31):

a deep diagnosis of your prior results that earns you the right to say,

(00:42:38):

okay,

(00:42:39):

so from a zero-based strategy,

(00:42:41):

how do we proceed?

(00:42:42):

I suggest, and you will hear this at the conference, that the two go together.

(00:42:46):

The two can go together.

(00:42:49):

No, I've also, you know, chat GPT, some of these same things.

(00:42:52):

Chat GPT said,

(00:42:54):

well,

(00:42:54):

you don't want to do a zero-based strategy because then you'll disregard everything

(00:42:58):

that you accomplished or didn't accomplish in the past.

(00:43:03):

And you don't want to do that.

(00:43:05):

As if the two are exclusive.

(00:43:08):

So there's an art that I would recommend to Tomas that he develop,

(00:43:13):

which is how do I acknowledge that?

(00:43:15):

all of our results?

(00:43:17):

How do I gain insights into our prior results?

(00:43:20):

How do I share the old or the current true north that I developed?

(00:43:28):

So that we can then take a zero-based strategy going forward,

(00:43:37):

follow a process to develop a zero-based strategy going forward.

(00:43:42):

How do we acknowledge everything and still use a zero-based strategy?

(00:43:49):

So you'll hear this at the conference.

(00:43:51):

It's the concept alone is a massive reframing around how most companies do strategy.

(00:43:59):

And the arguments that people have against it,

(00:44:02):

they're very similar to the ones that are,

(00:44:04):

you know,

(00:44:04):

the arguments against zero-based budgeting is,

(00:44:07):

oh,

(00:44:07):

that takes too much time,

(00:44:09):

costs too much,

(00:44:10):

we got to bring in experts.

(00:44:13):

And these things just aren't, they're not true.

(00:44:17):

Again, if you go into my prior podcasts, I give examples of where this is just not true.

(00:44:22):

It's the framing.

(00:44:23):

People suppose that it must be a problem because otherwise everybody would be doing it, right?

(00:44:27):

No.

(00:44:28):

If you frame it the right way, these complaints are not very hard to deal with.

(00:44:35):

But if you do a search for zero-based strategy, there's not many people talking about that.

(00:44:41):

It's not easy.

(00:44:42):

It's not a regular way, a normal way, an everyday way of thinking about strategy.

(00:44:48):

And when a company calls and says they want a five-year strategy,

(00:44:52):

usually what they're meaning is that we don't want to do no zero base,

(00:44:56):

nothing.

(00:44:57):

We just want to continue what we've always done.

(00:45:00):

A world of

(00:45:03):

tumultuous tariffs and disruption may cause you,

(00:45:09):

your company,

(00:45:10):

your clients,

(00:45:13):

companies that you care about to rethink that premise.

(00:45:18):

Maybe it's up for question.

(00:45:20):

If it is, then understanding this obstacle, the difference between zero-based

(00:45:27):

strategy and other kinds of business as usual strategy is a powerful one to share

(00:45:33):

with people,

(00:45:35):

especially finance people,

(00:45:37):

especially CEOs who tend to be very finance oriented board members.

(00:45:42):

You know, they, they can perhaps as you share it with them effectively and give examples,

(00:45:49):

see the analogy that you're trying to draw and see the power that it takes or it

(00:45:56):

allows for to create a zero base strategy.

(00:46:02):

Arguably,

(00:46:02):

this is exactly what Apple did in 2010,

(00:46:05):

whereas they had been a product company beforehand,

(00:46:12):

they made a switch and said,

(00:46:14):

we need to be an ecosystem company.

(00:46:16):

And when they made that switch to become an ecosystem company and define their

(00:46:21):

future as an ecosystem,

(00:46:23):

what became possible was the,

(00:46:28):

I think it's called the Apple Hub came first,

(00:46:31):

but ultimately it became the iCloud solution,

(00:46:34):

which was implemented some 14 years ago.

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That's 14 years after 2010.

(00:46:39):

Took them a better part of two decades.

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That if you can draw,

(00:46:45):

if you can draw analogies and stories that demonstrate that zero-based strategy

(00:46:54):

allows for game-changing thinking.

(00:46:58):

But you need to allow and create time,

(00:47:02):

long-term frames,

(00:47:04):

long-time frames,

(00:47:06):

to allow for them to happen together.

(00:47:08):

And that there is no violating this.

(00:47:11):

As I'm telling you, you're probably thinking, okay, Francis, I get it, it's obvious.

(00:47:16):

It's not how strategy is practiced in most companies I've been in touch with.

(00:47:23):

Also,

(00:47:24):

in response to this podcast,

(00:47:28):

as I mentioned before,

(00:47:28):

drop me a comment,

(00:47:30):

find me on LinkedIn,

(00:47:31):

go to longtermstrategy.info or go to the conference website and you'll see where

(00:47:37):

I'm sharing this episode and go ahead and drop a comment or a question

(00:47:44):

And I'll be happy to respond.

(00:47:48):

Coming to the end of this episode,

(00:47:49):

not quite the end,

(00:47:50):

because in the next couple of moments,

(00:47:52):

I want to tell you about the next episode of the podcast.

(00:47:56):

So keep listening.

(00:48:02):

You've got to be really focused when you take people away.

(00:48:06):

What is your primary goal?

(00:48:08):

Because maybe it's enough to open up, really help people to see new possibilities.

(00:48:15):

And that's it.

(00:48:16):

And then schedule a separate time where we're going to prioritize those ideas.

(00:48:21):

and then shape them so we are really clear on what is the potential value

(00:48:27):

proposition from each of these ideas so that we can make more informed decisions

(00:48:34):

and choices.

Show Notes

The link to the 25 Obstacles is here -
https://strategyconf.fwconsulting.com/conference-topics-2025/ and here
https://strategyconf.fwconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2025/09/25ObstaclesTranscriptsCombined.pdf