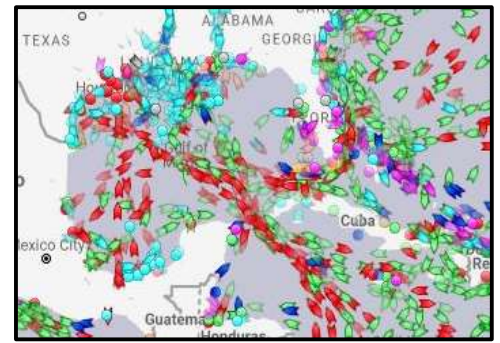


However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results

—Winston Churchill—



A while back, the spouse and I headed to Galveston for a last-minute getaway. Normally we stay on the Gulf coast with its seawall and beaches, but for a change of scenery, we decided to try the other side of the island.

We booked an older hotel on Galveston Bay and scored a second story room overlooking the water. Not only were we within walking distance of the historic downtown, great seafood restaurants, and all the souvenir T-shirts one could ever desire, we had a delightful serendipity shortly after we arrived. As we were bustling around our room getting settled, something caught our eye—a huge yellow ship passing right in front of our window.

We hurried outside to the edge of the pier and stood there in awe of the two tugboats skillfully maneuvering this massive ship through the narrow passage. And so began our weekend hobby—one of us with the binoculars scanning the water; the other with a phone looking up information on each of the many ships traveling through the Galveston channel. (Yes, there is an app for that!) It is mind boggling who and what is heading to Texas ports!

Now, being a very astute person, I was confident that not one of those ship captains had simply crossed their fingers and left their home port, *hoping* to make it to Galveston. And then, being a very curious person as well, I pondered what was required before a ship could set sail. Wikipedia had the answer:

Before any trip, a captain is legally responsible for passage planning which consists of four stages: appraisal, planning, execution, and monitoring.

Appraisal: A detailed mental model of how the voyage will proceed, and all information relevant to the voyage.

Planning: Laying out the voyage. Charting, projecting courses, preparing for the unexpected, entering the information into chart plotters, communicating the passage plan to the navigation team.

Execution: Using the plan as a “living document,” but anticipating and being ready to make any necessary changes in response to special circumstances.

Monitoring: Ships don’t run on autopilot. Once the voyage has begun, progress and position must be monitored on a continual basis, with corrections made to assure its finishing on course.

To sum it up, this kind of endeavor requires careful planning, expert navigation, and a skilled crew. Nothing is ever left to chance.

If you think that sounds just like what it takes to have a successful business venture, well done! My point indeed! Skip just one of those stages, and you are headed for rough waters. We see it all the time: entrepreneurs with great ideas, but who haven’t thought far enough ahead. CEOs and management who are too stressed, too busy, too resistant, or too hesitant to make necessary changes and course corrections. Positions that are filled with the wrong people. Untrained employees. Spotty communication.

When is the last time you honestly asked yourself if your strategy was producing the results you want?

If you intended on getting your act together last year, and here it is January again ... If you aren’t sure why your strategy isn’t working or why things are always slipping through the cracks ... If you would like to see your organization running in synchrony rather than relying on the top to do it all ... If you need an outsider with fresh eyes to examine your operations top to bottom ... MasterThink is here to help!

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