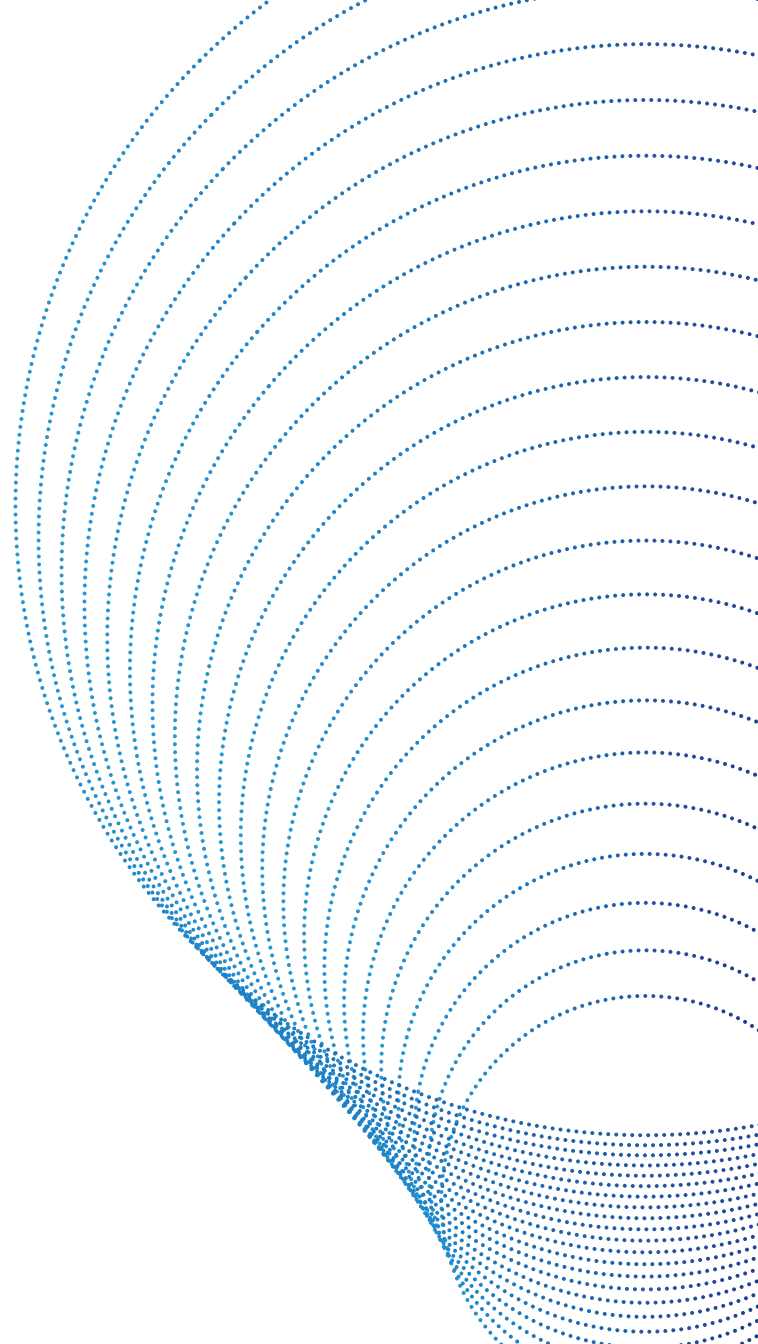


The Strategic Leadership Playbook

Volume 1: Best of LinkedIn
2022-2023

From the mind of Jeroen Kraaijenbrink
Illustrated by Julia van Montfoort



The Strategic Leadership Playbook

Jeroen Kraaijenbrink

Illustrated by
Julia van Montfoort



Effectual Strategy Press

PREVIEW

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Volume 1:
Best of LinkedIn
2022 - 2023

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Effectual Strategy Press

www.jeroenkraaijenbrink.com

Hardcover ISBN: 978-90-83320-35-9

Paperback ISBN: 978-90-83320-36-6

Ebook ISBN: 978-90-83320-34-2

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To Start With

Over the last year, many people have asked me if there was a book containing the visuals and posts that I share on LinkedIn. After having to say no a couple of times, the idea emerged to actually create such book. After all, if you are asking for it, who am I to say no? I decided to listen. So, here it is, the very first Best of LinkedIn Strategic Leadership Playbook!

For this book, I selected the 64 most popular tools that I shared over the past year. Each selected post received between 200,000 and 3 million impressions. By selecting those posts that performed best, I wanted to make sure that each and every one of them is highly valuable and deserves a place in this book. Why 64? Because that's the number of posts reaching the 200k limit—plus it allows for a nice 8x8 format that is the backbone of this book.

Here and there, I've made some slight modifications to the original visuals and posts, mainly to make them more consistent in terms of design, correct some errors, and remove the promotional content sometimes included. In all cases, though, I've kept the core message around each tool untouched. After all, it has been the specific combination of visual and text that has made them valuable for you and that triggered you to like, share or comment on it. I didn't want to ruin that.

I wanted the book to be more than just a collection of posts and add additional value. Therefore, the first thing I've done is to carefully curate and categorize them in eight distinct categories:

- **Complexity Tools**, for creating a better understanding of the challenging context most organizations operate in today in this highly connected and dynamic world.
- **Purpose Tools**, for setting direction and creating organizations that know why they do what they do and to help them make a meaningful positive impact.

- **Strategy Tools**, for turning purpose into a more granular and concrete direction so that people in the organization know what to do, how and when.
- **Process Tools**, for improving the way strategy and implementation are done and developing a short-cycle, participative approach to strategy that delivers results.
- **Organization Tools**, for clarifying the complexity of organizational change, so that it is clear what organizational changes are needed to realize a particular strategy.
- **Change Tools**, for actually turning ideas, plans and visions into reality by helping people change their mindsets and behaviors in the right direction.
- **Leadership Tools**, for helping key people drive the change so that they understand their role and style, and know what it takes to be an effective leader.
- **Consulting Tools**, for the internal and external people guiding the strategy and implementation process, helping them improve the way they do this.

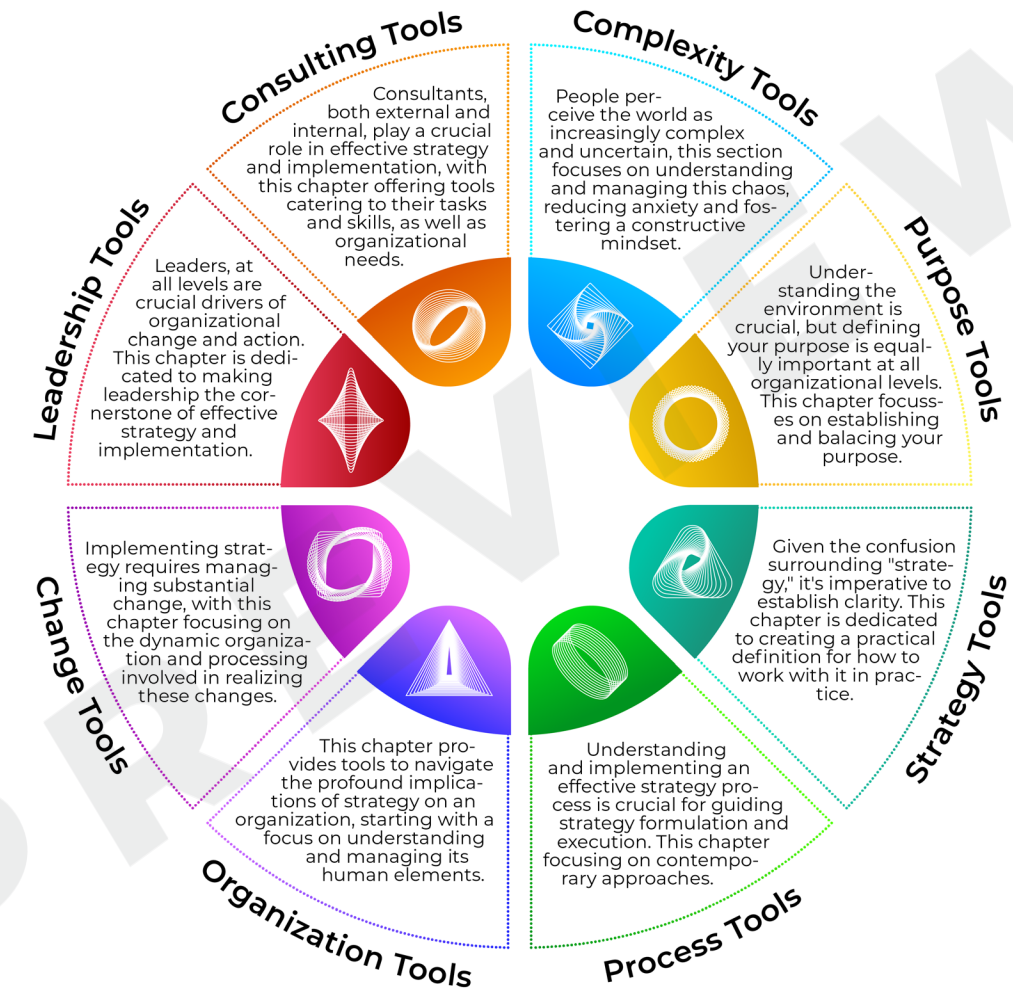
As you can see, there's a clear logic and underlying story reflected in these eight categories that shows how they form one integrative whole. It also shows what the specific tools are for and when to use them. The same applies within each category, where I've added brief explanations on how the eight tools in a category add up and relate to one another.

A second main addition that I've made to create more value, is adding a five-step instruction to every single tool. This means that, next to 64 tools and 64 descriptions, you also have 64 brand new step-by-step instructions for applying the tools in a productive way.

This selection of tools and these value-added additions have turned the book into what it is: The Strategic Leadership Playbook.

Happy strategizing!

Jeroen





Complexity Tools

A significant share of the people that I've met over the last years observe that the world around them has become more difficult to understand and manage than it used to be. They use a variety of terms to express this feeling, including complexity, uncertainty, ambiguity, anxiety, disruption, crisis, or transformation, or acronyms such as *VUCA* and *BANI*.

If we take this feeling to the extreme and assume that nothing can be truly understood and managed anymore, we end up with chaos. And if there's chaos, there's not much we can do, other than hope and wait for the best.

Since hope alone is never a good strategy, we don't want to accept that everything is just chaos. The good thing is that it isn't. To create clarity on this, this first section contains a set of eight tools that help you make sense and understand what is going on in the world around you. Once you apply them, you will see that what seems chaotic and unmanageable at first place, can actually be dealt with quite systematically. This, so I hope and believe, helps reduce the anxiety many of us feel and develop a more constructive, "let's fix this" mindset.

We start with two tools that unravel the dimensions underneath the idea of chaos: *VUCA* and *BANI*. Both open up the black box of what's going on in the world around us and thereby create clarity about the different factors at play. The first tool, *What VUCA Really Means*, offers an objective decomposition of the uncontrollability of the world around us in four components: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

The second tool, *What BANI Really Means*, does something similar, but from a more subjective point of view. It deconstructs the uncontrollable world into four perceptions—brittle, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible—thereby breaking four illusions we may have had about this very world.

The next three tools take a deeper dive into the meaning of risk and uncertainty. *The Bullwhip Effect Explained* provides an understanding of how incremental chain effects add up and can lead to disruptive effects. The *Hype Vs. Trend* tool explains the difference between hypes and trends. As argued there, both are important, but in very different ways, making it important to understand their differences. Tool 5, *Three Types of Risk*, provides further clarity into the notion of risk, by identifying three high-level

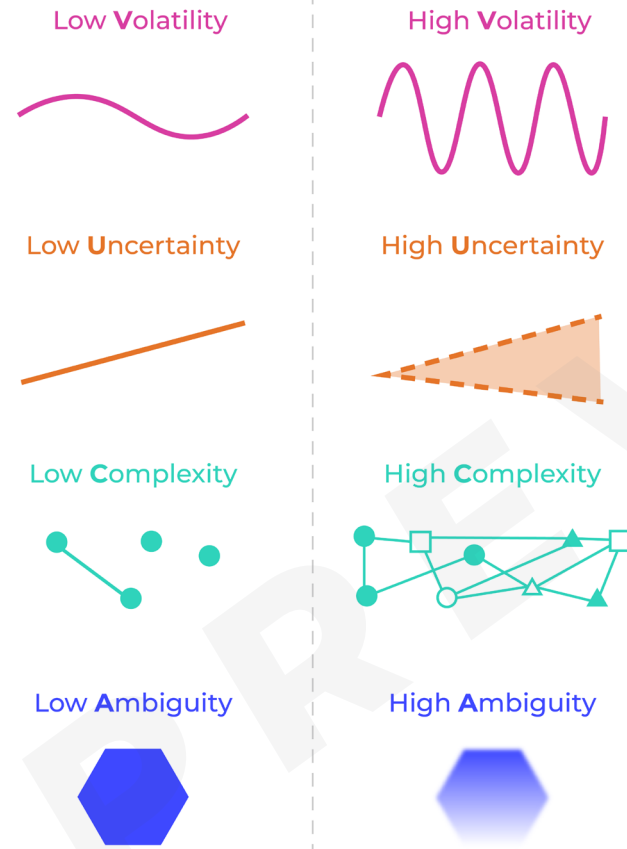
categories, each of which asks for a different response.

With the next two tools in this section, we make the shift from understanding the world around us to managing it. *The Strategy in the Face of Complexity* contribution introduces and explains the Stacey Matrix. This matrix identifies four categories of situation—simple, complicated, complex, and chaos—with pointers telling us how to respond in each of them.

Tool 7, *The Four Strategic Horizons*, distinguishes four different timelines for your strategy. As is argued there, it is important as organization to pay attention to all four horizons in order to be prepared for both the short-term and the long-term. With its inclusion of a time perspective, it helps create further clarity in understanding when and how uncertainty plays a big role (in the long-term) and when things are more predictable and manageable (in the short-term).

Finally, *From Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0* reveals the general shift we're witnessing toward more purposeful, resilient and human-centric organizations. As such, this last tool in this section, is a nice segway into the next section on Purpose.

What VUCA Really Means



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How to Use this Tool:

1. Define the situation that you want to analyze. For example, is it a certain region, industry or technology? It's never simply "the world" or "the environment."
2. Think about the timeline that is relevant. Is it just today, a year ahead, 3 years, 10 years?
3. Score each dimension taking the timeline into account, for example using a 5-point scale (very low, low, medium, high, very high), percentage or 1-10 score.
4. Identify the causes behind the four dimensions. What factors make the situation more, or less, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous?
5. Identify actions for how to address the identified levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. What will you do, how will you deal with it?

Impressions: 190K

Engagements: 2.4K

Posted in January

VUCA. You may have heard the term, and you may even know what the acronym stands for. But what does it really mean?

VUCA stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. It has become a widely used term to refer to the increasingly hard to control and understand world around us. This is what it means:

Volatility - The speed and extent of change in an industry, market or the world in general. It is associated with fluctuations in demand, turbulence and short time to markets. The more volatile the world is, the more and faster things change.

Uncertainty - The extent to which we can confidently predict the future. Part of it is perceived and part of it is objective. Truly uncertain environments are those that don't allow any prediction, also not on a statistical basis. The more uncertain the world is, the harder it is to predict.

Complexity - The number of factors that we need to take into account, their variety and the relationships between them. The more factors, the greater their variety and the more they are interconnected, the more complex an environment is. The more complex the world is, the harder it is to analyze.

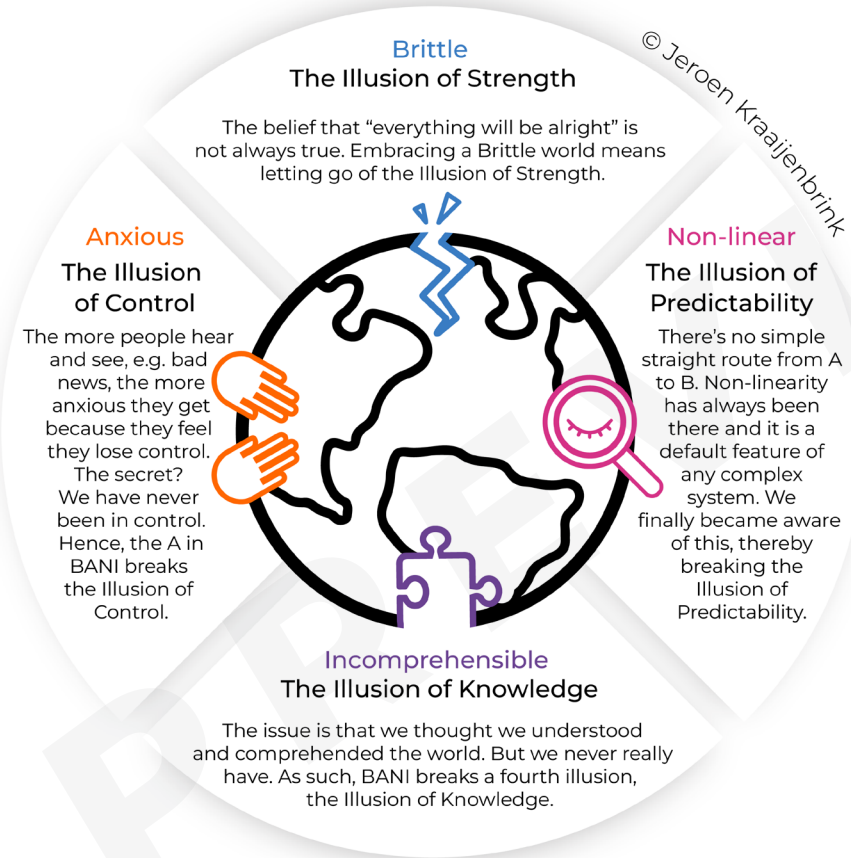
Ambiguity - Lack of clarity about how to interpret something. A situation is ambiguous, for example, when information is incomplete, contradicting or too inaccurate to draw clear conclusions. The more ambiguous the world is, the harder it is to interpret.

In practice, the four terms are related. The more complex and volatile an industry is, for example, the harder to predict and therefore more uncertain

it will be. Yet, all four represent distinct elements that make our environment—the world, a market, an industry—harder to grasp and control.

Knowing this now, which factor is making life in your industry most difficult, volatility, uncertainty, complexity, or ambiguity? And what can be done about it?

What BANI Really Means



How to Use this Tool:

1. Pick one dimension of BANI, brittle, anxious, non-linear or incomprehensible, perhaps the one that interests, surprises or shocks you most.
2. Evaluate your way of thinking and assumptions for that dimension. Is what you thought actually true? Or is it an illusion you cannot sustain any longer? Is it really B, A, N or I?
3. Look back 10, 20, 100 years. Has the world truly changed along this dimension compared to X number of years ago? Has it become radically more B, A, N or I?
4. Think about the consequences of what you see. Does it really matter what you observe, does it really affect your day-to-day life to a large extent?
5. Decide what to do with this information, and move on to the next dimension until you have had all four.

Impressions: 356K

Engagements: 3.5K

Posted in January

After VUCA, there's a new kid on the block: BANI. It stands for Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear and Incomprehensible.

Interesting, but what does it actually mean?

Over the years, many terms have been introduced to describe the challenging world around us: dynamic, complex, high-velocity, disruptive, turbulent and so on. Until recently, VUCA was the newest acronym, but, since a year or two, there's BANI.

Others have clarified the concept before, but have not touched upon what it really represents: a subjective experience. Because, more than anything else, BANI says something about us and how we have mistakenly perceived the world up to now.

In that sense, BANI is a correction, a reality check, shattering four illusions of humanity's current perceptions of the world.

Brittle - The Illusion of Strength

Brittle means being fragile, breakable, while seeming firm. It is illusory strength, the belief that “everything will be alright” and the assumptions that “we all know are true,” except they aren't necessarily true. Embracing Brittle means letting go of this first illusion, the Illusion of Strength.

Anxious - The Illusion of Control

Anxiety refers to a feeling of helplessness and it comes with stress and worrying. It is a byproduct of information. The more people hear and see, especially bad news, the more anxious they get because they feel they lose control. The secret? We have never been in control. Hence, the A in BANI

breaks the Illusion of Control.

Non-linear - The Illusion of Predictability

Non-linearity is already a popular concept for a longer time. It says: there's no simple straight route from A to B. Instead, there's detours, dead ends, and unexpected outcomes. Non-linearity has always been there and it is a default feature of any complex system. BANI shows we finally become aware of this, thereby breaking the Illusion of Predictability.

Incomprehensible - The Illusion of Knowledge

Finally, incomprehensible refers to people's experience that they don't understand what is going on. They can't oversee it, can't grasp it, can't interpret what happens, and why. The issue,

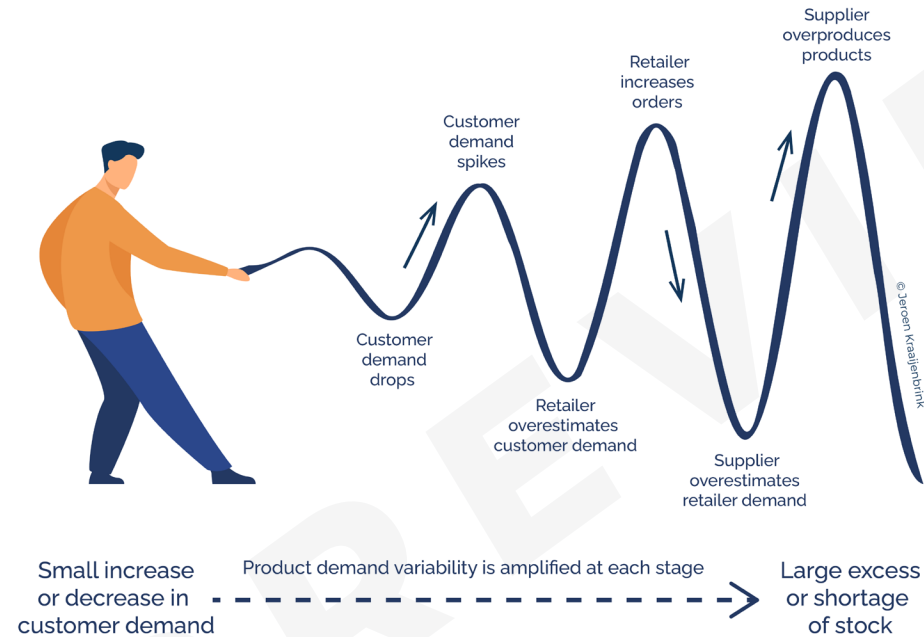
though, is that we might have thought we understood the world. But we never really have. As such, BANI breaks a fourth illusion, the Illusion of Knowledge.

In conclusion, rather than saying something about the world, BANI first and foremost says something about how we perceive it.

It is not the world that has become more Brittle, Anxious, Non-Linear, or Incomprehensible. It is us who finally have to let go of the illusion that it is not.

Which illusion has BANI broken for you (or which one do you still hold on to...)?

The Bullwhip Effect Explained



How to Use this Tool:

1. Identify where in your organization the bullwhip effect plays a role and analyze how the four reasons (overreaction, delays, partial information and no slack) contribute to it.
2. Create more slack—resources, stock, cash, response time, materials, etc.—where needed and possible to absorb small fluctuations.
3. Increase your understanding of the entire chain of events and look at what happens, two, three, five steps further up and down the chain.
4. Anticipate actions based on what you see further up or down the chain, not just based on what happens directly before or after you.
5. Always react mildly, don't overcompensate or panic because that will just enlarge the effect, not just for yourself, but for everyone in the value chain.

Impressions: 331K

Engagements: 3K

Posted in May

Maybe you've heard of the Bullwhip Effect. Maybe not. In any case, it's a crucial mechanism to understand failure, crisis and stagnation.

And once you understand it, you can do something about it.

If you have ever been in a traffic jam, resulting in a rear-end collision, you have experienced the bullwhip effect. Here's how it works:

Car # 1 breaks

Car # 2 breaks a bit more

Car # 3 breaks even more

And so on, until everyone stands still.

You can see the metaphor of the bullwhip here. What starts with a small reaction becomes bigger and bigger with each next step, until it explodes, collapses or comes to a standstill.

While traffic jams are inconvenient, the bullwhip effect

becomes problematic in supply chains. This is also where the term is mostly used. There it goes like this:

- The end customer orders more (or less) than usual.
- The supplier adjusts their order a bit more.
- The supplier's supplier adjusts even more.

And so on, until fluctuation becomes unmanageable.

Why does this happen? For a couple of reasons:

1. Overreaction: to be "safe," people often react just a bit more than strictly necessary.
2. Delays: there's always some time before one can react, implying the response always comes too late.

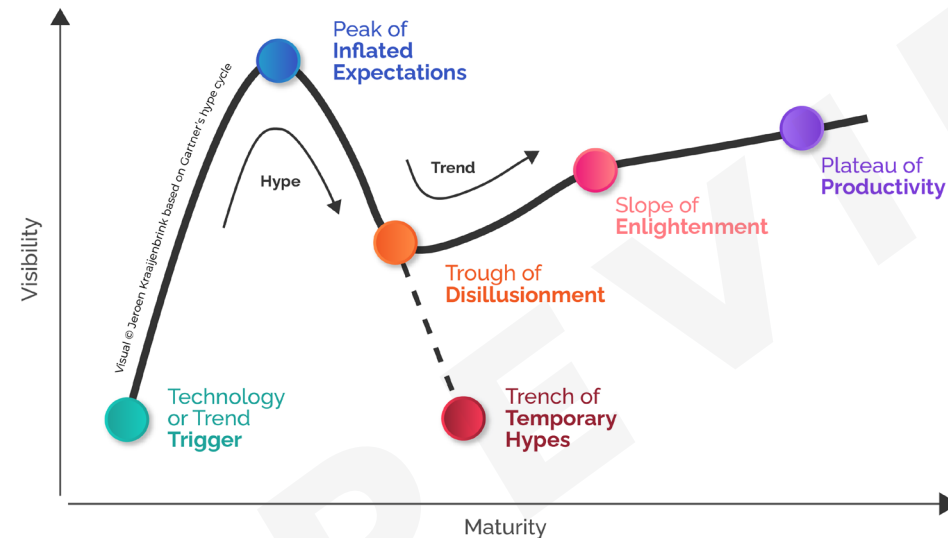
3. Partial information: everyone looks just at the next or previous step in the chain, not at the entire chain.

4. No slack: if there is no stock (or not enough distance in traffic), the need to respond is immediate.

Knowing this in itself is not enough to completely avoid the bullwhip effect. But, the more people in the supply chain (or in traffic!) are aware of this and adjust their behaviors accordingly, the less extreme the bullwhip effect will be.

Where have you experienced the bullwhip effect and what could you have done to avoid or reduce it?

Hype vs. Trend



How to Use this Tool:

1. Decide whether you want to be a hype-type or a trend-type of business. The first focuses on series of short-window peak successes, the second on consistent long-term success.
2. Depending on your type, identify key hypes/trends that influence your business or that you can embrace and leverage. Also look at hypes/trends that are closely related.
3. Use the hype cycle idea to assess whether they are really a hype/trend, or more a trend/hype and where on the hype cycle they should be positioned.
4. Identify which opportunities and threats the hype/trend may have for you, your customers, your partners and your competitors.
5. Define your response. What will you do to seize the opportunities or undo the threats associated with the hypes/trends?

Impressions: 210K

Engagements: 1.9K

Posted in June

To make the right strategic decisions, it is key to know the difference between a hype and a trend.

Both provide opportunities, but in very different ways. Can you tell the difference when you see them?

For any organization, it is key to keep an eye on what is going on in the outside world. After all, no organization operates in isolation and what goes on outside will always impact the organization.

In doing so, it is important to pay attention to hypes and trends—and be aware of the critical differences between them. In short:

Hypes are

- New and exciting
- Overestimated with too much attention
- Short-lived peaks with little impact

- Unpredictable and risky to rely on

- Asking for a fast and first-mover reaction

- Seized by “experts” popping up everywhere

- A potential source of temporary peak success

In contrast, trends are

- Boring and seemingly repetitive

- Underestimated and potentially going unnoticed

- Creating lasting impact and real change

- Relatively predictable and reliable

- Asking for a solid and fundamental response

- Seized by few competent experts gaining position

- A potential source of longer-term consistent success

One is not better than the other. Both can be great sources for successful business, but they require a very different approach. Hypes are for short-window peak success after which you move on to the next hype. Trends are for slower, consistent long-term success that you invest in for years.

A great resource for identifying hypes and trends is Gartner's Hype Cycle (simply search for this term and you'll find relevant information on it), or actually Hype Cycles, plural, since they have different ones for different industries and technologies.

Have a look and ask yourself which hypes and trends will

affect your business most and whether you want to be a hype-type or a trend-type of business.

Want to read more?
The rest of the book can
be purchased on
www.thestrategicleadershipplaybook.com

Closing Notes

Now that we've reached the end of this book, there's not much more to add anymore. Each of the 64 tools, together with their descriptions and instructions, offers a self-contained mini-course in strategic leadership. The main thing to do now is exactly that the title of this book suggests: play with them. Try them, apply them, and learn from them one by one, so that you gradually build up your competence as strategic leader.

Beyond this final practicality, the most important thing that remains to be done is acknowledge that I could not have created this book on my own. I therefore want to thank a number of people without whom this book would not have been there. First and foremost, this is Julia van Montfoort. She has not only been responsible for the beautiful visuals in my posts (and as such a significant contributor to their success), but also for the design of this entire book. Thanks Julia!

I'd also like to thank Monte Pedersen and David McLean. From you I've learned how to be successful on LinkedIn. Thank you for generously offering your invaluable insights and tips for building a strong LinkedIn presence and followership. Also thank

you for commenting on so many of my posts and for posting so many insightful posts yourself. As you may recognize, some of those have been a great source of inspiration for my own posts.

Finally, I want to thank you, my LinkedIn connections and followers. Without your continuous engagement throughout the past year, this book would not have been there in the first place. Even stronger, my entire career would not have been close to where it is now. Through your likes, shares and comments you have made my posts the success they have been. Without you, they would never have reached the wide audience they do now. So, a big thank you!

That's it. Or, at least for now. This was the first volume of The Strategic Leadership Playbook and as you have already seen, I've continued posting and sharing valuable tools also in 2024. Who knows, there will be next volumes of the book as well.

But for now, once more, happy strategizing (and continue to like, share and comment)!

Jeroen

PS, if you like my work and have not already done so, you may want to join my community by subscribing to my Soulful Strategy LinkedIn Newsletter

About Jeroen



Jeroen Kraaijenbrink is an accomplished strategy educator, mentor, author, and consultant with over two decades of academic and industry experience. He empowers people and organizations to design, formulate, and execute their strategies by providing innovative tools for forward-thinking strategy and personal and organizational development.

Drawing from cognitive psychology, humanism, martial arts, Saint Benedict, and a wide range of other sources, he has written innumerable articles on strategy, sustainability, and leadership, as well as authored five earlier books: Strategy Consulting, No More Bananas, Unlearning Strategy, The Strategy Handbook, and The One-Hour Strategy. He is also a contributor to Forbes and a LinkedIn influencer, where he writes about strategy and leadership.

Jeroen has a PhD in industrial management, teaches at the University of Amsterdam, is co-founder of Strategy.Inc, and has helped significantly improve the strategic planning of many organizations across the engineering, manufacturing, healthcare, and financial services industries.

For more information, see: www.jeroenkraaijenbrink.com

About Julia



Julia van Montfoort is a multidisciplinary designer based in the Netherlands, boasting a diverse portfolio of collaborations across a wide range of fields.

She specializes in digital design, branding, web design, and offers various design services to businesses of all sizes around the world. Aiming to enhance their bottom line by crafting creative

solutions to their business problems but ultimately to improve her clients' global presence and impact within their respective circles.

Her work for her clients' has been viewed and shared countless of times in the social media space, sparking numerous discussions in their respective fields. Earning her reputation as a talented visual creator.

As a self-taught designer, her educational background includes a B.A. in Creative Business & Media from the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht, giving her a holistic perspective on all possible design ideas and eventual solutions, whether from a marketing, technological, or human-centered point of view.

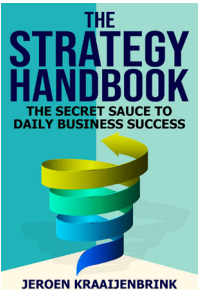
To see more of Julia's work, visit: www.juvmo.nl

Other reads by Jeroen Kraaijenbrink



The One-Hour Strategy (2023)

We follow Martin, the new sales team lead at Waters & Flows, which attracted him because of their unique way of doing strategy. On his journey, he learns all about their surprising methodology: The One-Hour Strategy.



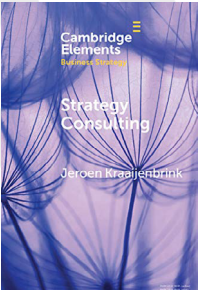
The Strategy Handbook (2022)

This no-nonsense do-it-yourself guide empowers you to generate and execute strategies that work. Through user-friendly charts, graphs, and checklists, it guides you step-by-step through the complete strategy process.



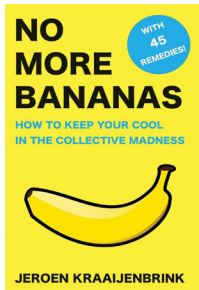
Unlearning Strategy (2020)

The strategy field has clung to a set of myths that persist, even though the world has changed. By busting ten of the most persistent myths, this book paves the way for strategy that actually works.



Strategy Consulting (2020)

Strategy consulting is one of the most highly respected and at the same time deeply detested jobs on this planet. Despite this, there is surprisingly little written about it. This book provides an extensive overview of this fascinating profession.



No More Bananas (2019)

In this age of fake news, individualism and information overload, the certainties of the past are gone. Drawing from a range of sources, this book offers a nine-step approach with remarkably practical advice for keeping a cool head.

In an era where strategic leadership is the cornerstone of business success, Jeroen Kraaijenbrink presents a comprehensive guide that transcends traditional management wisdom. “**The Strategy Leadership Playbook**” is a curated collection of strategy and leadership frameworks, insightful visuals, and step-by-step instructions that empower leaders to navigate the complex landscapes of leadership and strategy with precision and guidance.

Kraaijenbrink, a seasoned thought-leader and strategist, has distilled his wealth of experience into this playbook, offering a multitude of insights that audiences may already be familiar with from his LinkedIn contributions. From the fundamentals of effective leadership to the intricacies of crafting resilient business strategies, this book is a roadmap for executives, entrepreneurs, and anyone aspiring to lead with impact.

What sets this playbook apart is its colorful illustrations of both known and novel frameworks and ideas. Each page is like a canvas, illustrated by Julia van Montfoort, bringing to life the concepts and frameworks from the mind of Jeroen Kraaijenbrink and other experts in the world of strategic leadership.



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