

THE THINKING STRATEGIST

*Unleashing the Power of Strategic Management to
Identify, Explore and Solve Problems*



VICKIE COX EDMONDSON

With a Foreword by Jonas Robinson

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Unleashing the Power of Strategic
Management to Identify, Explore
and Solve Problems, 2nd Edition

By

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vickie Cox Edmondson is an Academic and Management Strategist, known as a Forward Thinking, Business-minded Professor, and Engaging Speaker with more than 20 years of industry experience and business consulting. She served as the first Associate Provost for Student Success at Morehouse College. Her research has been published in the *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *Journal of Management Education*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business and Society*, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, etc. She received a BA from Spelman College, an MBA from Mercer University, and a PhD in Strategic Management from the University of Georgia.

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FOREWORD

In the foreword to the first edition of *The Thinking Strategist: Unleashing the Power of Strategic Management to Identify, Explore and Solve Problems*, David A. Thomas, the 12th president of Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA, described the need for readers at all levels to have and understand the tools presented by Dr. Vickie Cox Edmondson to be able to think strategically about how to respond to conditions in real time. As a Senior Business Finance major at Morehouse, I had the honor and privilege of sitting on the receiving end of Dr. Cox Edmondson's instruction. Not only did she help my peers and I become strategic thinkers, but, like Morehouse, Dr. Cox Edmondson also held a crown above the heads of her students and challenged us to grow tall enough to wear it. The crown was the crown of drive, the crown of determination, the crown of grit, the crown of thought leadership, the crown of trusted advisor, and the crown of excellence. Consequently, I, like many others of her students at Morehouse and other institutions, have been able to wear a crown to drive results, embrace change, and provide a big picture focus at the decision-making table. Not as a king, but as a collaborative and competent leader and team player.

As I reminisce about sitting in the Bank of America Lecture Hall at Morehouse in 2010, the challenges we faced and solved as students in our capstone business course taught by Dr. Cox Edmondson come to mind. Whether it was determining the root cause for Abercrombie and Fitch's discrimination policies and practices or enhancing Nike's supply chain to make it a more efficient company, we used available resources to face those respective challenges. With Dr. Cox Edmondson's thought-provoking guidance, we developed and justified strategies to not only improve profitability, but chart a path for each company's long-term success. While we had textbooks, articles, magazines, and the Internet at our disposal as tools in our quest to become strategic thinkers, we did not have *The Thinking Strategist* textbook to leverage.

But look no further: you, college students and business professionals alike, have in your hands a roadmap to be a thoughtful and skilled thinking

strategist, able to think critically and strategically. Thus, you can enhance your chances of being selected for opportunities and advanced in your career. The global pandemic caused swift changes in business practices and even etiquette. This edition of *The Thinking Strategist* builds on the strategic perspectives evidenced in the first edition and can be used as a textbook or as a reference in professional decision situations. It will help to you develop the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate seas that could be still, turbulent, or experiencing crashing waves. The bonus is the “For Your Toolbox” exercises. I am confident that if you fully examine the challenges, you will cultivate a strategic mindset that will be beneficial for your personal and professional goals.

Reader: *The Thinking Strategist* will stretch you to become the leader you are destined to be. Whether you believe strategizing is in your DNA or you want to learn to be a strategic thinker, please be advised: **this book will not do the work for you.** To achieve what Cox Edmondson refers to as expert status, you must see yourself as the winner you will be in the future, set goals, come up with a plan, execute repeatedly, and learn from missteps. And, depending on where you are in the world today, that plan may evolve and mutate.

Dr. Vickie Cox Edmondson gave my class quite the challenge. Embrace the work irrespective of who (your capstone professor, your boss, your business partner, your mentor) is encouraging you to become a thinking strategist. While attaining that crown was grueling, the content which can be found in *The Thinking Strategist* was and is still relevant. It has paid dividends over my career in banking.

I am forever grateful.

Jonas Robinson
Director, BMO Capital Markets

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the foreword to the first edition of *The Thinking Strategist*, Morehouse College president and scholar, David A. Thomas, wrote that *The Thinking Strategist* is the first book to address changes in how decision making occurs in what he and some futurists have coined a VUCA world. A world that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. According to Thomas, “It describes the tools of strategy making in an accessible way. Professor Vickie Cox Edmondson makes a compelling case for why being a **thinking strategist** is necessary whether you are a senior manager trying to break through to the next level or a person early in your career.”

This revision furthers my commitment to motivate and inspire confidence in individuals from traditionally excluded groups who work in deadline and budget driven roles in high performance and competitive organizational cultures. Much has changed since the first edition appeared in 2018. It can be more difficult to be a person of color working in a predominantly White organization (PWO) given the increased and racial animus and accompanying beliefs toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). On the other hand, organizations that value the business case for DEI have increased their commitment to DEI in words and deeds. Thus, this new edition seeks to better prepare diverse contributors to make a difference at the decision-making table.

Again, I express my sincere appreciation to my students and faculty colleagues at the University of Georgia, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Morehouse College, and Tuskegee University. Over the years, they have forced me to make tough decisions and deliver upon my promises. I celebrate their successes and milestones as they reach their career goals. I certainly want to thank the authors who have provided content for my courses over the years.

Lastly, I want to express my appreciation to my core supporters who I can count on in every endeavor to cheer me on and to provide the practical assistance needed for my success, my legacy daughters: Shantori, Devon, and Brandy.

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NOTE ON SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

A complete set of PowerPoint slides and a study guide is available to assist adopters in preparing for classroom and business presentations. These learning and teaching aids can be found at www.emerald.com.