

THE ULTIMATE STRATEGY

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STRATEGY has become one of those popular words we hear or read quite frequently both inside and outside of education circles. Webster's New World Collegiate Dictionary defines it as "a skill in managing or planning." The essence of a strategy is to achieve optimality. The optimality we seek may be in performance, in management, in quantity, in quality, in convenience, or in any other factor as well. Achievement of this optimality could be in any area of our life experience, personally, professionally, or spiritually.



It is human nature when things go wrong, to resolve to do better next time and immediately seek strategies to improve our current situation. As time progresses and the ill effect of our distress wears off, it is also human nature to fall back into the same old routine - until we meet another crisis. Without consistently employing an effective strategy, we lose much time, energy, composure and efficiency.

A personal reflection on the term strategy brings several flashes of recent associations and usage to mind at Canadian University College.

- Strategy for practice and performance. When I had enough time to fit pipe organ lessons into my life on the campus, the instructor would frequently ask, "What is your strategy?" Meaning, what fingering or pedaling technique did I plan on using to move from one note to the other in an efficient and effortless manner.
- Strategy for teaching. A new component of our education program affords junior high and secondary majors an increased opportunity to explore a variety of methods in the teaching/learning process.
- Strategy for study. We advise our students on how to be successful in their college experience.
- Strategy for documentation. In preparation for the accreditation reviews of the education program in November 2001 by Nebraska State, and March 2002 by NCATE, we devised plans of action for the required documentation.
- Strategy for time management. We discussed how to accomplish the additional demands that an accreditation review brings and balance that with the regular demands of teaching and grading, advising students, meetings and committee work, and practicum supervision.

While browsing in my favorite bookstore a few days ago I encountered the "S" word again. The word literally leaped from the display table and arrested my attention in mid-air. This time it was a 2002 calendar based on the New York Times best seller *Life Strategies*, by Phillip McGraw.

We are surrounded by strategies. Someone, somewhere has probably penned ideas to manage the particular situations that we may experience. Even in spiritual realms there are strategies. Whether we realize it or not, Satan has a strategy for you and me also. "Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures, will be overcome by his attacks (White, 1888, p. 519). God also has a strategy for us. Jesus counsels in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

No matter how good our strategies are, or how well our plans and goals are set, we miserably fail unless there is a core desire. Jack Zuffelt, a motivator of human potential, defines "core desire" as an intense inner drive that causes you to become what you want to be.

Does that same burning desire transcend our spiritual realm? Another author expressed the thought this way, "Let no one say, 'I cannot overcome my defects of character;' for if this is your decision, then you cannot have eternal life. The impossibility is all in your will. If you will not, that constitutes the cannot" (White, 1893, p.10). The will is the core desire of the soul. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:5).

The sure and ultimate strategy that wins every time is to have first an intense hunger and thirst for what you want to accomplish, and then the strategies to achieve will naturally follow.

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