

Planning in expansive times



“Strategic planning and technological disruption”

Nowadays there is a very exotic phenomenon which couldn't be considered news, fashion or just a different way to describe old realities. I'm talking about “technological singularity”.

Singularity could be defined as:

a point where a degree of complexity and potency is reached in artificial intelligence (AI) -as a result of exponential advances in science and technology - which would lead to exceed human intelligence to a point not controllable by us, their creators.

It really is an abrupt change to develop supercomputers capable to process information, learn and remind, at a capacity and speed rates far superior to that of any human being.

From the point of view of Strategic Planning (SP) this phenomenon raises at least two relevant questions:

- how to apply SP while moving us towards the singularity? and
- how much should be SP updated, once we reach the singularity; if SP is still applicable?

In the first case, some factors to be considered are:

- the huge amount of information delivered every day coming from different knowledge areas, which will keep increasing even more in the future
- the continuous emergence of opportunities and risks, many of which may go unnoticed
- the ephemeral nature of technological innovations and the need for evaluate-decide-act very fast regarding new emerging technologies
- the continuous reconfiguration of business environments and organizational structures, including employment redefinition

In the second case, once singularity has been reached, consequences are unpredictable, since the instrument currently used so far to carry out our examinations - the brain- will not be more a constant but a variable element, due to the impressive computing and analysis capacity that artificial intelligence will reach.

But if there is something that we can predict, is that this new power of processing information will be on charge of our decisions and will also suggest action courses to be followed. I like to think that final decision will remain in our hands, that of human beings.

Given this possible scenario, a strategic planning process able to deal with this **new emerging reality, should, at least, include following elements:**

1. **Encourage group intelligence:** Companies should be able to use all his people capacity to notice changes and trends, listening not only to managers, but to the whole organization, paying special attention to

young employees. And assigning responsibilities to specific groups for changes monitoring, in each environment: political, economic, social, technological ...

2. **Fast process of risks and opportunities:** SP should facilitate the systematic recording of enterprise risks / threats and opportunities, and integrate its within company workflows. Establishing response times and alarms based on their potential impact and probability.
3. **Make use of scenarios simulation:** The SP process should allow companies to review all possible scenarios generated by the changes happening in the different environments, and be able to document and monitor action plans and contingency plans.
4. **Boost strategic and innovative actions:** Labor time spent by employees or organizational units should be properly monitored and classified into ordinary, conjunctural and strategic. Time devoted to strategic actions should be encouraged and innovation quotas (goals) set down for each process. People should be trained to release their potential and creativeness.
5. **Contribute to a culture of execution:** SP should raise up commitment and responsiveness of work teams and help to establish "making things happen" as a value into the organizational culture. An increased degree of execution and maneuver will allow groups to change direction in unison ("shoal" effect) every time it's required. Of course, such behavior could only be achieved through a highly committed leadership.
6. **Challenge current authority paradigm:** We need to understand that those in charge today are not necessarily the most capable or the best decision makers and someday -no too far- that people could be replaced by machines. We must open collaborative spaces that encourage employee's participation and empower them to get in more involved in creating value for the organization.
7. **Share benefits with the staff:** Company's economic and financial results should be shared with the personnel, based on achievement of the objectives included into the strategic plan. And benefits should not be paid out just in monetary terms, but also through the "emotional salary";

that set of non-monetary benefits that contribute to increase worker's life quality.

Singularity is in progress -say experts- and there are many things that we can do to take advantage of this expansive process in which we are already navigating, before reaching the tipping point where humanity will enter a new development stage.

Obviously, this change will not happen in the same way, nor at the same speed everywhere; that is, it will be asymmetrical. But what is certain is that sooner or later it will affect all of us.

Strategic planning must adapt to this new reality, not at a cosmetic or superficial level, but in deep. Becoming a useful management tool which may provide organizations with the capacity to integrate knowledge, record challenges, mobilize talents and resources and achieve objectives, moving us within an environment that will surprise us every day more.

[Vladimir Gómez Carpio](#)

Consultant in personal and organizational transformation

www.trinodus.com

Copyright (c) 2017 Vladimir Gómez Carpio