

This doesn't mean I think people are daft but instead that understanding your landscape, the context that you're competing in and having a modicum of situational awareness is not a luxury for strategy, it is at the very core of it. Inspiring vision statements, well trained forces, a strong culture and good technology will not save you if you fail to understand the landscape, the position of forces and their size and capabilities. Colonel Custer is a worthy lesson here and even he had maps which were better than most corporates today. I've seen billions wasted by companies that have charged into battles that they have no hope of winning. I've seen endless SWOT diagrams, stories and other magic thinking used to justify such actions. I've also seen others tear apart industries with ease.

Unfortunately, for those who lack some form of military background then situational awareness is rarely a topic of discussion. It's often a struggle to make executives appreciate that it might matter, that the secrets of success they've recently read about might not work everywhere and you have to apply thought to the landscape. It's the same with chess. I can show you the board (a map) and then teach you the rules of the game (climatic patterns), universally useful principles like supporting or pinning pieces (doctrine) and then specific moves like Fool's mate (context specific gameplay). However, even with all this then you still have to apply thought and decide where you're going to move or use some form of computer to work through billions of permutations. There is no magic guide or 2x2 solution. Games can teach us a lot about management.