

was lost at sea and looking for something to grab hold off, an executive lifeboat. I found little that gave me comfort and after talking with my peers, I became convinced that our strategy was almost identical to competitors in our industry. I was beginning to feel as though the entire field of strategy was either a cosmic joke played by management consultants or that there was some secret tome everyone was hiding from me. I was getting a bit desperate, despondent even. Someone would rumble that I was faking it.

I started using 2x2s, SWOTS, Porter's forces and all manner of instruments. Everything felt lacking, nothing satisfied. I knew the company to the outside world was doing well but internally we had communication issues and frustration over direction and organisation. To improve matters, I had arranged for one of those management courses which bring the entire team together. I had been seduced by a simple idea that with better communication then a strategy would become clear, as if by magic. We just needed to talk more.

I rapidly discovered that despite all of our talking, daily status meetings and our weekly Town hall that beyond the very senior management, no-one really understood our strategy. I also doubted whether the senior management did. I certainly was unsure of it. I turned inward, the problem was me! There would come a reckoning when everyone would realise that behind the success, the profits, the bold pronouncements and confident exterior lurked a mass of doubt. They would rumble that I was making it up. I shouldn't be the CEO. At that point in time, in mid 2004, I was drowning in uncertainty and an