

fit together. We were an online photo service, a consultancy, a European CRM, an Identity web service, a fulfilment engine and an assortment of special projects around 3D printing and the use of mobiles phones as cameras. I had no real way of determining which we should focus on and hence the purpose was a compromise of doing everything.

When I had taken over the company a few years earlier, we were losing money hand over fist, we had to borrow significant sums to stay afloat because we were on our way out. In reality our purpose had been simply “to survive”. In the next few years we had turned this around, we had become highly profitable, we had paid back the loans and had a million or so in the bank and we were growing. But we had done so not through any deliberate focus on the landscape but instead by just grabbing opportunities and cost cutting where we could. The team were already exhausted.

We weren't heading in a particular direction; we were just opportunists. Deng Xiaoping once said that managing the economy was like “Crossing the river by feeling the stones”. Well, we were feeling the stones and being adaptive but beyond simple metrics such as being more profitable than last quarter we had no real direction. We lacked this whole “why of movement” that I had seen in Chess.

But I kept on coming back to whether it really mattered. I felt instinctively as though I needed to pick one or two areas for the company to focus on but since we were doing well in all and in the past we have failed with just one focus then I was unsure whether it