

The Strategist:

Strategy from Contrast

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Jackson Pollock, One: Number 31, 1950; image from <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78386>

“Strategy Needs Creativity”

Adam Brandenburger

Harvard Business Review, March-April 2019

What different kinds of strategy from contrast are discussed?

- Falsifying an assumption

- Reversing the order of a sequence

- Inverting the value chain

How to begin?

- Precisely identify the assumptions that underlie conventional thinking in your company or industry

- Think about what might be gained by proving one or more of them false

- Deliberately disturb an aspect of your normal work pattern to break up ingrained assumptions

What to watch out for?

- Because the assumptions underlying your business model are embedded in all your processes — and because stable businesses need predictability — it won't be easy to change course

FLIPPED

CLASSROOM

“The New Psychology of Strategic Leadership”

Giovanni Gavetti

Harvard Business Review, July-August 2011

Contrasting moves require shifts in one's mental model of the business landscape

What kinds of shift are considered?

Big shifts, which competitors cannot imagine

Categorical shifts, such as envisaging one's business as like that in another industry

Existential shifts, such as redefining the core product one is going to deliver

“The New Psychology of Strategic Leadership” cont’d

What modes of ‘thinking out of the box’ are favored/disfavored?

Associative thinking and, in particular, thinking by analogy are favored

Brainstorming and recombination are disfavored

What players have to buy into these shifts of mental model?

Internal audiences — managers and workforce, not just leadership

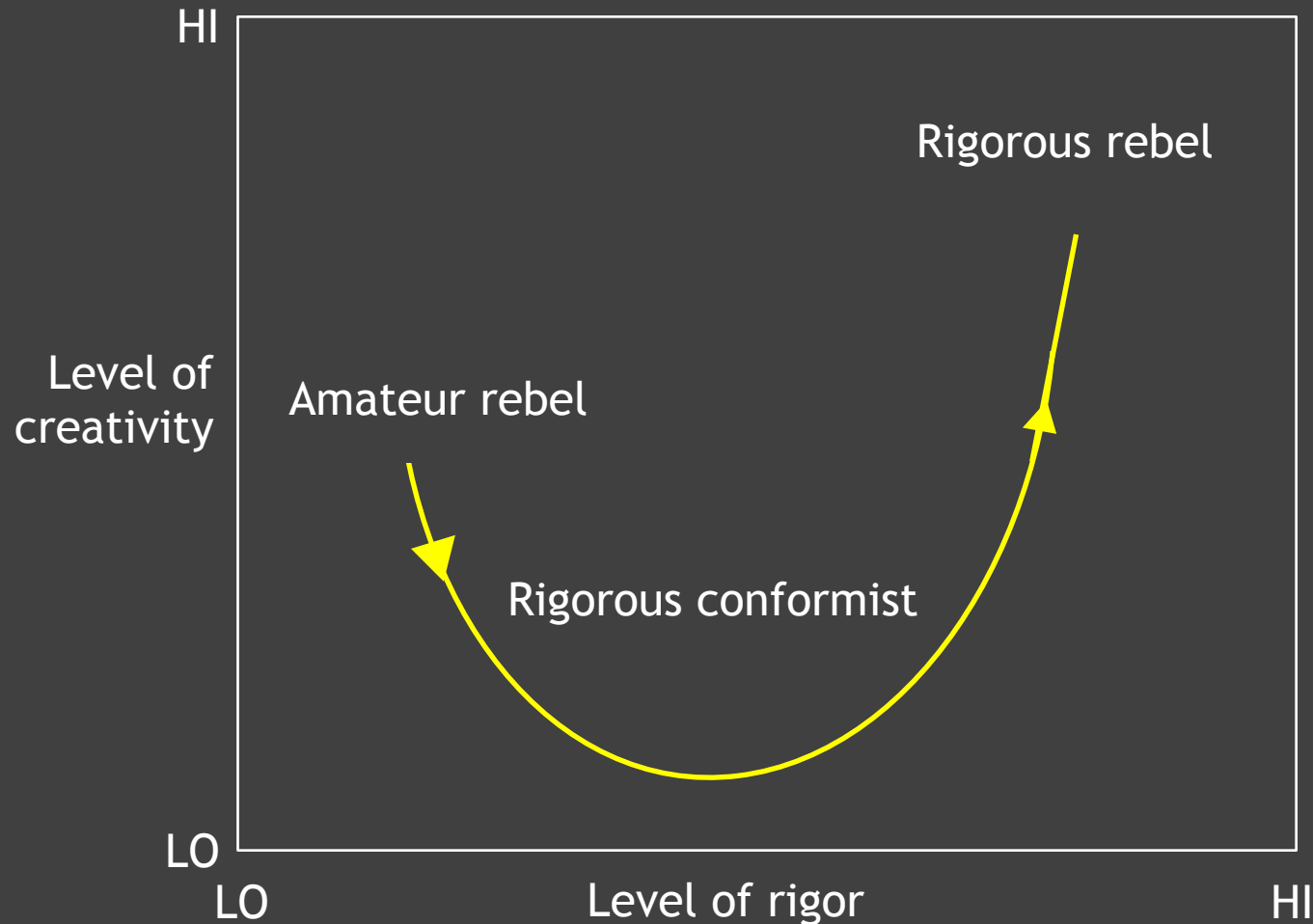
External audiences — customers (actual and potential), capital lenders, financial analysts, media, suppliers, partners (“complementors”), ...



Unsafe Thinking

Jonah Sachs

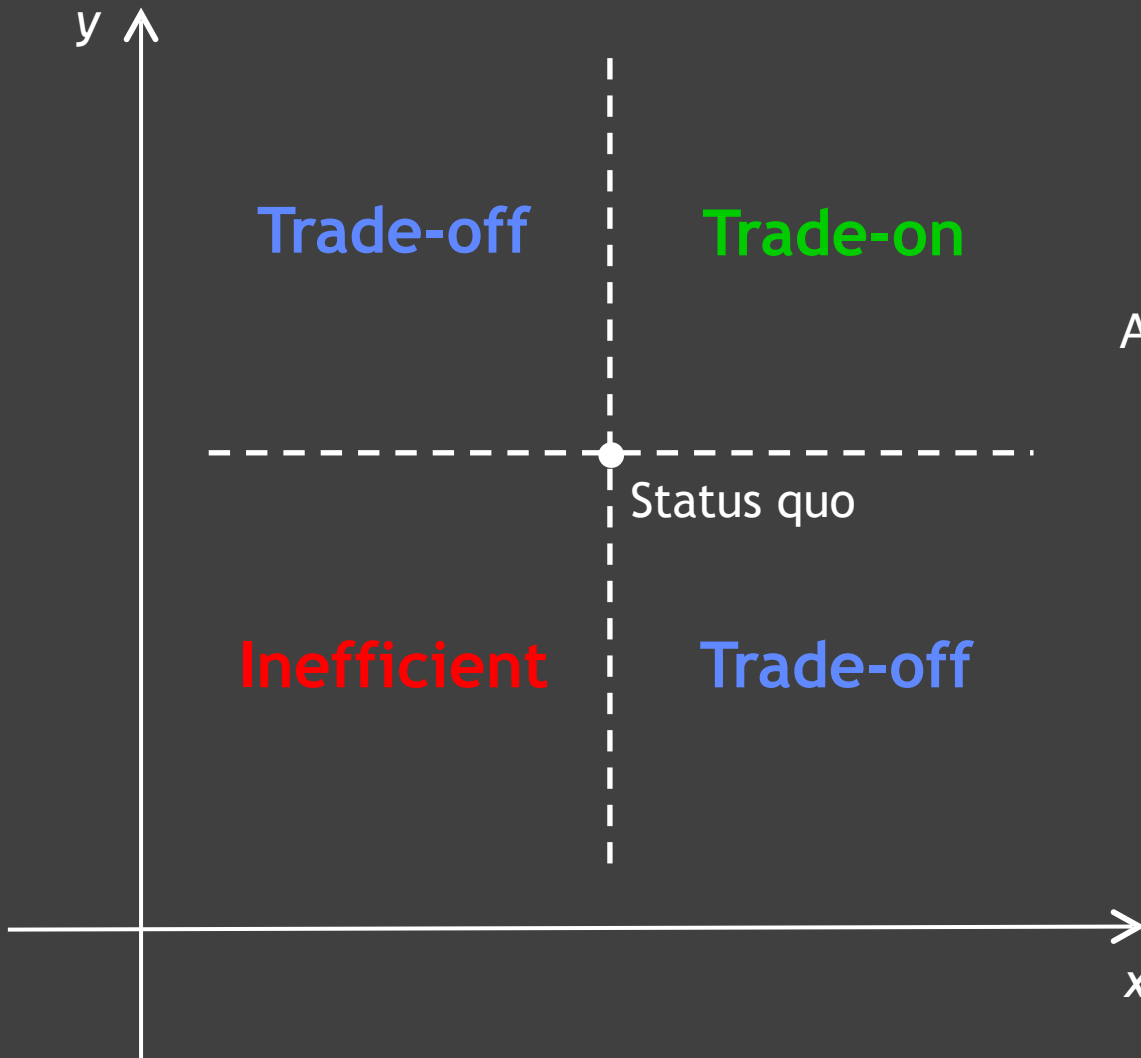
Random House, 2018



Unsafe Thinking cont'd

Jonah Sachs

Random House, 2018

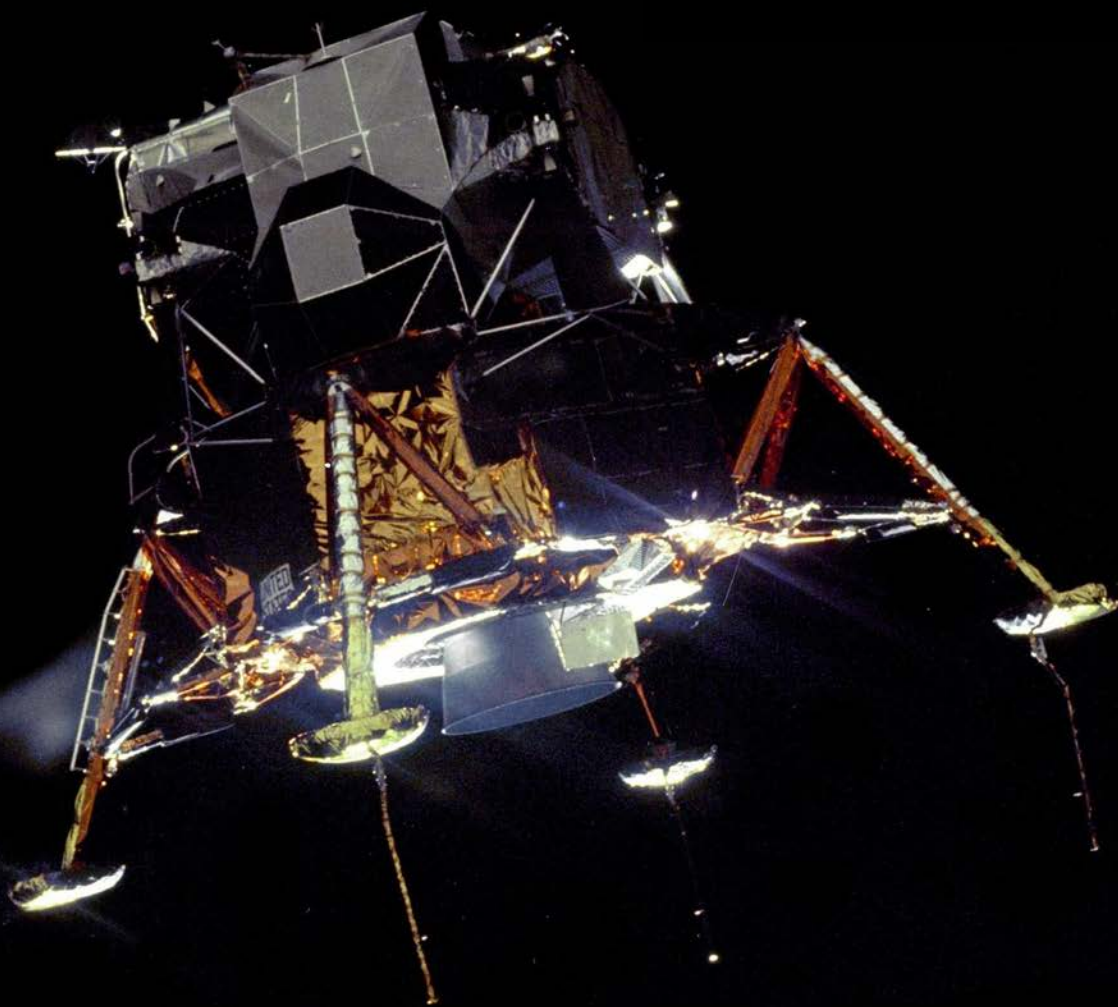


How to transcend the expertise-creativity trade-off?

Add exploration to your expertise
("The Fox and the Hedgehog")

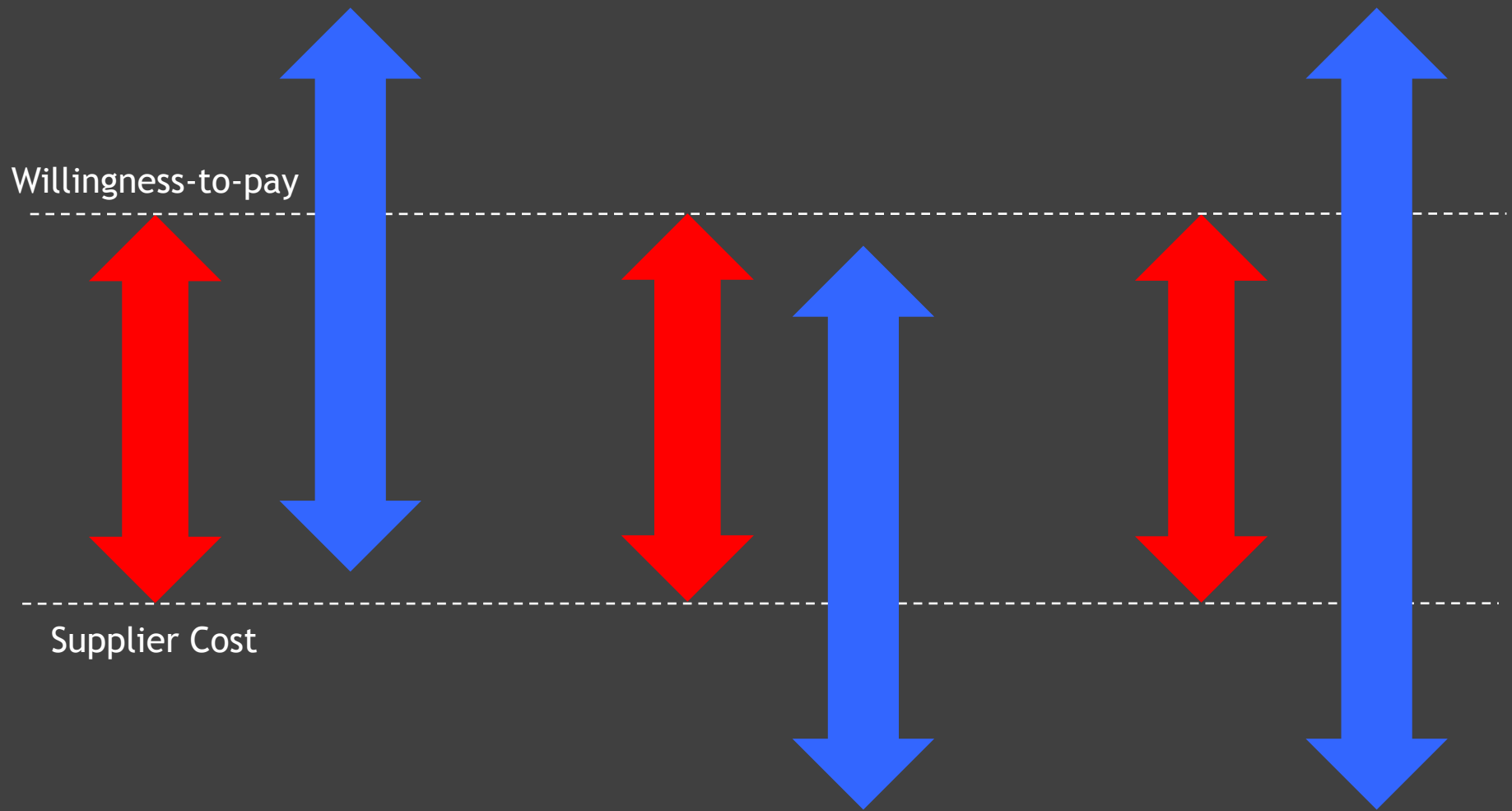
Add an explorer to a team of experts

Be a beginner!



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“Apollo 11 Lunar Module Eagle in landing configuration in lunar orbit from the Command and Service Module Columbia” by NASA - NASA website; description,[1] high resolution image.[2]. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>



Originals

Adam Grant

Viking, 2016

What gets in the way of being an ‘original’?

From the outside --

Being told it won't work or it's already been done

Being criticized for lacking the expertise

From the inside --

Feeling lack of expertise or power

Conforming to the crowd, being reasonable, accepting defaults

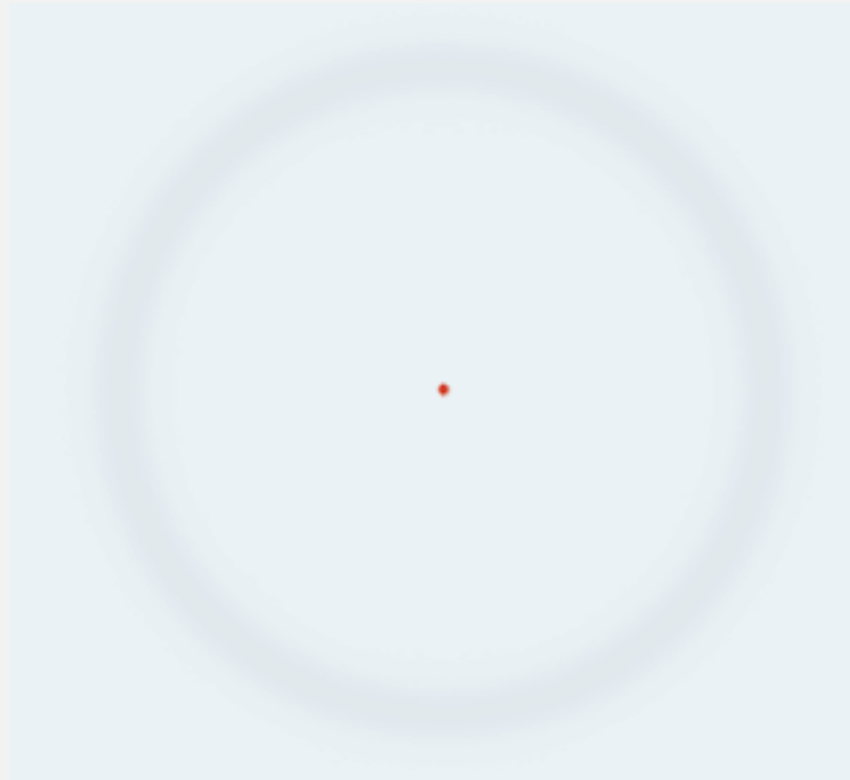
Becoming an “excellent sheep,” being achievement motivated

Choosing surface ways to be different without really being original





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZQSpMiaaxk>



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6e/Lilac-Chaser.gif>



Kyung Woo Han: Green House, 2009; image used with permission; <http://kyungwoohan.wixsite.com>

In-Class Exercise

Each group will:

- (i) identify a piece of conventional wisdom around strategy in some area of life (business, government, arts, sports, games, warfare, ...)
- (ii) state a proposition (a new strategy) that stands in sharp contrast with this conventional wisdom
- (iii) produce a mini-presentation arguing that the new approach could work

When you present, tell us both about the idea you came up with and the process that led to it