

VISION AND STRATEGY: DOUBLE HELIX PLANNING STRATEGIES

A. Flannery, Chow:Hill Total Design

ABSTRACT

This paper describes what the essential components of the double helix approach to planning are and illustrates its application through the Wintec Strategic Planning Study, undertaken by Chow:Hill in 2003.

The double helix approach is all about the optimum integration of vision and strategy. Without vision there is no goal, without strategy there is only chaos. While both perspectives are different, when their dynamics converge exciting things happen.

Double helix planning facilitates the convergence of vision and strategy and requires a champion, a visionary and a strategist. The process necessarily requires the strategist and the visionary to be creative thinkers and involves creative thinking cycles between the known and the unknown. Double helix planning requires the application of holistic team environments. The urban design dynamic, which is inherently collaborative, holistic and facilitative and significantly embraces vision and strategy, has a significant role to play in this process.

The double helix approach was a fundamental component of the Wintec Strategic Planning Study 2003, winner of the NZPI's 2004 Nancy Northcroft Award. The characteristic 7 stages were applied as follows: Information (holistic output from a holistic perspective), Analysis (exploration, profiling, benchmarking, pattern analysis and debate), Creativity (turning problems into opportunities), Judgement (identifying achievable objectives), Development (option appraisal using an analysis matrix), Design (a concept plan that reflects and serves the key project drivers) and Implementation (managing change positively).

1 INTRODUCTION

The Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec) Strategic Planning Study 2003, winner of the NZPI's Nancy Northcroft Award 2004, embodies a “**Double Helix**” approach to strategic planning.

In the Award Citation, the NZPI said:

“...This report demonstrates a true integration of the profession of planning, urban design and architecture and shows the way for the future of ‘planning’ in its wider sense.”

The value of the report rests not so much in the report itself, but in the innovative process involved in producing it. The process, described as “Double Helix Planning”, foreshadows the future dynamics of the planning profession if it is to successfully embrace the challenges and opportunities of the next decade.

2 DISCUSSION

2.1 THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

As the “Traditional Professions” seek predominance and attempt to reposition themselves in an increasingly dynamic and changing environment, “Traditional Debates” rage...

*“It is all about **VISION**.... Without **Vision**, there is no goal... **Strategies** without **Vision** become pointless meanderings!”*

*“It is all about **STRATEGY**.... Without **Strategy**, there is only chaos... **Visions** without **Strategy** are simply dreams!”*

Which is correct?... **Both!**

Which is more important?... **Both!**

Which should come first?... **Both!**

Can the same person be both?... **No!**

Why...? Because Vision and Strategy are not different things, they are simply different perspectives... they require different ways of thinking...but when their dynamics converge....!!!

Surveyors?	Yes!
Researchers & Educationalists?	Yes!
Civic & Community Leaders?	Yes!

2.4 A STRATEGIC IMPEDIMENT...

There is a consistent Strategic Impediment to the promotion of good quality Urban Design and their associated holistic environments (nationally and internationally)?

...The Rules and Regulations of the District Plan!

At risk of being simplistic (and controversial), most District Plans seem to comprise two elements:

Aims and Aspirations:

Visions of what might be

Rules & Regulations

Strategies designed to undermine the achievement of the Aims and Aspirations.

Essentially...

the Visions and Strategies in (most) District Plans are non-aligned!

The majority of current District Plans evolved from within a “Mondrian” Culture – a culture defined by control, rules, regulations and bureaucracy, or during a time when the system was unbalanced through optimisation and overemphasis of the pervading “zeitgeist”.

Holistic Environments evolve from a “Seuratt” Culture – a culture of facilitation, sensitivity, subtlety, complexity and harmony. They require optimisation of all elements of the system. And they fundamentally require a convergence of **Vision & Strategy**.

2.5 STRATEGIC PLANNING STRATEGIES

Double Helix is a dynamic process of facilitation and collaboration

- Double Helix seeks comprehensive optimisation
- Double Helix facilitates the convergence of Vision & Strategy

Double Helix requires three fundamental components:

- A Champion
- A Visionary
- A Strategist

2.5.1 THE CHAMPION:

Most future planning initiatives navigate a route along the boundary between the “Known” and the “Unknown”.

Future Planning Initiatives generally evolve through a distinct sequence of **7 Stages**:

1. Information
2. Analysis
3. Creativity
4. Judgement
5. Development
6. Design
7. Implementation

In order to navigate the route successfully, the Champion must be able to define, articulate and maintain the objective.

The Champion must also bring structure and purpose to the Double Helix dynamic.

2.5.2 THE VISIONARY AND THE STRATEGIST:

- The **Visionary** is usually a “Right Brain” thinker
- The **Strategist** is usually a “Left Brain” thinker
- They must both be “**Creative Thinkers**”

Creative thinking cycles oscillate between the “Known” and the “Unknown”.

- In order to advance creative thinking, you must enter the realm of the “Unknown”.
- In order to evaluate creative thinking, you must return to the “Known”

The cyclical process of advancing through the “Known” and the “Unknown” describes a Helix. The interplay of Creative Vision and Creative Strategy describes a “Double Helix”

2.5.3 THE “ART” OF FACILITATING “DOUBLE HELIX” PLANNING STRATEGIES:

The “Art” of facilitating “Double Helix” Planning Strategies involves:

- Managing the dynamic tension between the Vision Helix and the Strategy Helix
- Facilitating periodic convergence of the two Helixes at key stages of the process

2.6 CASE STUDY: THE WINTEC STRATEGIC PLANNING STUDY 2003

The Wintec Strategic Planning Study resulted in Wintec adopting a radical (and perhaps controversial) future planning strategy for the redevelopment of their City Campus in Hamilton, New Zealand.

2.6.1 THE “PLAYERS”:

The Champion: Mark Flowers, CEO, Wintec

The Visionary: Anthony Flannery, Chow: Hill
(Architect, Urban Designer, Strategic Planner)

The Strategist: Gordon Hassett, Klu’dup
(Quantity Surveyor, Project Manager, Strategic Planner)

2.6.2 THE OBJECTIVE:

“The creation of a visionary concept plan for an inspired, student-centred campus that is fully integrated with a sound and robust financial, operational and service delivery strategy for the institute.

2.6.3 THE 7 STAGES

2.6.3.1 INFORMATION:

For a holistic output, you must have a holistic perspective. Accordingly, Information gathered, collated and mapped included:

- *Governance, Staff and Students (both International and English Language)*
- *Key Stakeholders and Strategic Partners*
- *Processes and Structures*
- *Teaching & Research Programmes*
- *Programme Approval and Monitoring Criteria*
- *Support Systems, Operations & Service Delivery*
- *TAMU and Wintec Performance Assessments*
- *Information Management and Technology*
- *Site, Buildings, Environment & Context*
- *Local and Regional Authorities*
- *Image, Marketing and PR 'Positioning'*

2.6.3.2 ANALYSIS:

Analysis involved exploration, profiling, benchmarking, pattern analysis and considerable debate.

We knew that Wintec was dysfunctional and ultimately unsustainable and exhibiting symptoms to this effect. The aim of analysis, however, is to look beyond the effects and determine the causal patterns, which should be consistent across Sustainability Spectrum appearing throughout the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural dimensions.

The analysis addressed the following:

- Changing Student Study and Living Patterns
- Learning Environments
- Attractive Student Focused Campus Developments
- Operations & Service Delivery
- Financial Control
- Business Performance Indicators
- Facilities Utilisation
- Information Technology

...and concluded...
Fix the buildings!
Fix the balance sheet!
Fix the culture!
Fix the environment!
Fix everything!

2.6.3.3 CREATIVITY

Turning “Problems” into “Opportunities”...

The different perspectives, experiences, insights and patterns of thinking inherent in the “Double Helix” approach are fundamental in this regard.

The ability to probe preconceptions, to explore synergies and strategies from other fields such as health, commerce, industry, information technology and other dimensions of social and urban planning is invaluable.

...Thinking outside the square is critical.

...Thinking beyond professional silos is fundamental.

The conclusion was simple, but far-reaching.

Wintec must evolve from a **Teaching Institution** to a **Learning Institution**

Evolving into a **Learning Institution** requires a **Fundamental Cultural Change**.

A Learning Institution...

- Designed to operate 365/24/7
- Provides for individualised, collaborative & experiential learning,
- Accommodation facilitates different learning styles and preferences
- “Smart” classrooms – agile and adaptable
- Movable / re-configurable furniture
- Outdoor learning areas
- Technologically enhanced learning process, from registration to graduation (& beyond?)
- No Empires! (or Kingdoms, or Feifdoms, or Castles... or Silos!)

2.6.3.4 JUDGEMENT

The Wintec “Double Helix” Strategy determined the following achievable objectives:

- The creation of a dynamic, student focused and community integrated **Learning Environment**
- A facilities consolidation programme whereby Wintec will occupy approximately 50% of its current area, whilst retaining in excess of 100% growth capacity in respect of student numbers and curriculum offerings
- The creation of a “Campus Without Walls” which encourages community interaction whilst at the same time releasing Wintec land and assets for commercial, residential and community developments.
- The redevelopment has been planned with improvements to TAMU Indicators: Return on Assets is improved in all but one year; and Fixed Assets/EFTS improves in each year after the project completion
- An \$80m redevelopment strategy fully integrated and compatible with Wintec’s organisational redevelopment and associated change projects. The redevelopment programme is funded in a ratio of 2:1 between Wintec and private commercial investment.

2.6.3.5 DEVELOPMENT

The Development Stage involved a detailed option appraisal using an Analysis Matrix approach whereby a range of strategic planning options were assessed against a hierarchy of strategic objectives:

1. Wintec's Strategic Aspirations
 - a. *Values*
 - b. *Goals*
2. Perception & PR Positioning
 - a. *Presence In The City*
 - b. *Character And Identity*
3. Social Issues
 - a. *Improved Social Dynamics*
 - b. *Student Centred Environment*
4. Wintec Change Management
 - a. *Programme Sustainability*
 - b. *Future Flexibility*
5. Business Case Drivers
 - a. *Economic Feasibility & Financial Performance*
 - b. *Tamu Performance Benchmarks*
6. Physical Environment
 - a. *Urban Design Issues*
 - b. *Strategic Site Planning*
7. A Learning Environment
 - a. *A Campus Without Walls*
 - b. *Mixed-Use Opportunities*
8. Project Implementation
 - a. *Phasing*
 - b. *Programming*

Establishing the hierarchy is important.

...If it didn't meet Wintec's Strategic Objectives, affordability is irrelevant...

...If it is not affordable, it didn't matter how nice it looked...

2.6.3.6 DESIGN

In summary, the Proposed City Campus Concept Plan reflects the following Key Drivers:

- *A safe, attractive, student-centred, mixed-use environment that is easy to navigate.*
- *A City Campus that is better integrated with Hamilton CBD - "A Campus Without Walls".*
- *High levels of 'visibility' and a strong physical presence within the city.*
- *A modern, high quality environment appropriate to a forward -thinking Institute of Technology*
- *An 'agile campus' providing a high level of integration and flexibility in respect of space utilisation*
- *Good pedestrian access with strong links to the CBD and new Transport Centre*
- *The provision of convenient, adequate and safe car parking for both students and staff.*
- *A planning strategy that serves Wintec's vision and operational / service delivery requirements.*
- *A range of good quality, well landscaped public open spaces encouraging social interaction.*
- *A plan that is pragmatic, affordable and achievable.*

2.6.3.7 IMPLEMENTATION

Remember Asuka!

Change the buildings!

Change the balance sheet!

Change the culture!

Change the environment!

Change everything!

3 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has described what the essential components of the double helix approach to planning are by illustrating its application through the Wintec Strategic Planning Study, undertaken by Chow: Hill in 2003.

The double helix approach is all about the optimum integration of vision and strategy. Without vision there is no goal, without strategy there is only chaos. While both perspectives are different, when their dynamics converge exciting things happen.

Double helix planning facilitates the convergence of vision and strategy and requires a champion, a visionary and a strategist. The process necessarily requires the strategist and the visionary to be creative thinkers and involves creative thinking cycles between the known and the unknown. Double helix planning requires the application of holistic team environments. The urban design dynamic, which is inherently collaborative, holistic and facilitative and significantly embraces vision and strategy, has a significant role to play in this process.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mark Flowers, CEO, Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)
Gordon Hassett, Klu'Dup

5 REFERENCES

Chow: Hill, (2003)., *Wintec Strategic Planning Study*