



Open Research Online

Citation

Meadows, Maureen and O'Brien, Frances (2013). Exploring micro-practices during strategy development. In: British Academy of Management Conference, 10-12 Sep 2013, Liverpool, UK.

URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/38735/>

License

None Specified

Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

Exploring micro-practices during strategy development

Abstract

This paper uses video data of a strategy workshop, based around tools such as SWOT analysis and scenario planning, to explore the micro-practices that can be observed during a strategy development exercise. The paper addresses a gap in the extant literature concerning how strategy tools such as SWOT are used in practice, and in particular within a strategy workshop setting. The study also suggests that a strategy workshop can be analysed as a number of 'micro-practices', labelled here as 'preparing and orientating', 'generating and working with content', and 'reflecting and validating'. Our findings are of significance for both academics and practitioners, as they have the potential to influence the future design of strategy tools, as well as their appropriate introduction in workshop settings. Future research should focus upon gaining a better understanding of the role played by middle managers in strategy development, and the range of micro-practices that they engage in.

Keywords: strategy development; strategy tools; micro-practices; strategy workshops; video analysis.

Introduction

This paper explores video data of strategy workshops, based around tools such as SWOT analysis and scenario planning, to explore the micro-practices that can be observed within a strategy development exercise. The exercise formed a key component of a leadership development programme for senior managers in a major organisation in the UK transport sector. The study reveals how a strategy development exercise can be analysed as a number of 'micro-practices', labelled here as 'preparing and orientating', 'generating and working with content', and 'reflecting and validating'. Our findings are of significance for both academics and practitioners, as they have the potential to influence the future design of strategy tools, as well as their appropriate introduction in workshop settings.

Surveys of senior managers report that strategy tools are widely used in practice (Rigby and Bilodeau 2007; Stenfors, Tanner et al. 2007). In a study of how senior executives engage with methodologies and tools as they develop competitive strategy, Jarratt and Stiles (2010) report that methods are adapted as they are contextualised in alternative practices.

Surveys typically focus on reporting which tools are used rather than exploring how they are actually used in practice. This has led to calls for further research into the practice of tool use (Gunn and Williams 2007).

Use of tools such as SWOT in strategy development

One of the most widely reported tools in use is SWOT analysis (Gunn and Williams 2007; Stenfors, Tanner et al. 2007). Barney (1995) defines SWOT as a simple framework that points to the importance of external and internal forces for the purpose of understanding the sources of competitive advantage. Over the years the SWOT tool has attracted much attention in the academic literature. Helms and Nixon (2010) classify papers into three categories:

- Cases describing an application of the SWOT tool, e.g. Vrontis and Vignali 2001; Ahmed, Zairi et al. 2006
- Papers focusing on the use of SWOT as a tool for strategic planning either used alone or in combination with other tools, e.g. with the analytic hierarchy process (Ho 2008); balanced scorecard (Ip and Koo 2004); Porter's Five Forces (Ruocco and Proctor 1994); and scenario planning (O'Brien, Meadows et al. 2007). Included in this category are surveys of tool use for strategy support, e.g. Gunn and Williams 2007
- Cases targeted for student analysis, e.g. Elrod 2008; Xie and Lin 2008

The development of SWOT has been driven by its application and it has received little attention from a research-based or theoretical perspective (Chermack and Kasshanna 2007). Many accounts of the use of SWOT are largely descriptive and from single case studies (see for instance Dyson (2004); Sorensen, Vidal et al, (2004)).

SWOT analysis has received much criticism in the literature, for example Hill and Westbrook (1997) found that "the terms used to describe factors were general and vague and that no analysis or verification of any point was undertaken" (p48). They were also concerned that the output from the tool use did not feed into subsequent strategy development work. They conclude that the SWOT activity and its outputs ".....do not constitute analysis at all,

for they do not go beyond description, and description in only the most general terms” (p50). Other criticisms suggest that the procedural guidelines for using the tool consist largely of “..catchall questions devoid of explicit theoretical underpinnings” (Valentin 2001) and that confusions can arise for example in recognising new opportunities (Morris 2005). Additionally, (Helms and Nixon 2010) highlight issues that arise when attempting to categorise variables and classify challenges while using the tool. Overall, the literature suggests that there is a lack of empirical evidence with regard to how a strategy tool that is very popular with managers is actually used in practice to support strategy development.

A decade after Hill & Westbrook’s demand for a ‘product recall’, SWOT analysis is reported as being one of the most widely used strategy tools (Clark and Scott 1995; Stenfors, Tanner et al. 2007), and some authors continue to argue that the use of strategic tools like SWOT has a place in contemporary strategic management (Gunn and Williams 2007). Users of SWOT report that they prefer tools which are transparent and simple to use rather than tools based on sophisticated analysis (Stenfors, Tanner et al. 2007). Other research (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009) suggests that the popularity of such tools can be explained by three features. First they are considered to be flexible and thus easy to adapt to different situations. Second they are easy to remember and so can be used by novice tool users and in groups unaccustomed to working together. Finally, such tools are well known and thus have established technical, cultural and linguistic legitimacy.

Much of the critique of SWOT in the extant literature is conceptually based or derived from reports of experience, rather than being the result of empirical observation. Some of the criticisms concern methodological issues, which imply that the authors would prefer SWOT to be a methodology for more in-depth analysis, rather than a simple organising framework. It is also noticeable that few studies reflect on the practical issues that individuals or groups report when attempting to use SWOT, or provide any empirical evidence of the experiences of individuals and groups in using the tool. This study provides an analysis of empirical data to gain a greater understanding of how tools such as SWOT are used in practice within a strategy workshop, for instance in support of micro-practices within group activity.

Research setting and analytical approach

The research setting: strategy workshops

Strategy workshops are a common practice in organisational life today (Hodgkinson, Whittington et al. 2006). Schwarz (2009) describes strategy workshops as providing a forum for strategic discourse facilitated through knowledge-sharing and/or promotion of strategic consensus. Many aspects of strategy workshops are discussed in the management literature. For instance, the use of a range of mapping techniques is illustrated (Bougon 1992; Eden and Ackermann 1998; Wallemacq and Jacques 2009), and questions around the facilitation of such workshops are demonstrated and debated (Stewart 2006; Salo, Brummer et al. 2009). Reasons for the apparent success or failure of such workshops are also addressed. For example, Schwarz points out that a strategy workshop may constrain strategy making, through ‘opposition and refusal to participate, which may lead to strategic paralysis with no outcomes, actions or recommendations’ (Schwarz, 2009, p 284).

A study by Hodgkinson et al. (2006) suggests that strategy workshops play an important part in formal strategic planning processes; that they rely on discursive rather than analytical approaches to strategy formation; and that they typically do not include middle managers, rather reinforcing elitist approaches to strategy development. Their conclusion is that strategy workshops are important vehicles for the emergence of strategy, but that surprisingly little is known about many aspects, such as the role played by analytical tools and techniques during strategy workshops. This study aims to address this gap in the literature, by analysing empirical data on tool to support micro-practices use during a strategy workshop.

Data collection: using conversation analysis and video analysis to explore strategic discourse

Our study explores the conversations held by senior managers during strategy workshops. During such workshops, we see that managers use language to develop their ideas about possible future strategies for the organisation, and to build arguments that they believe will persuade others. All of this is done collaboratively, while interacting with colleagues, and accepting or rejecting the verbal contributions that are made by others. Wallemacq and Jacques (2009) view language as “a kind of surrounding environment, a world in which we move rather than something a speaker creates on his or her own” (p 31). Robichaud et al (2004) suggest that the primary function of language is to ‘support collaborative activity, typically associated with some common field of practice’ (2004, p. 619). They use the term *metaconversation* to indicate ‘a conversation that embeds, recursively, another conversation’ (2004, p. 621). This draws upon Weick’s (1995) notion of retrospective sensemaking; in other words that “people can know what they are doing only after they have done it” (1995, p 24).

In order to explore the data we have gathered, we draw upon conversation analysis. O’Sullivan (2010) (p. 21) proposes that conversation analysis (CA) ‘allows researchers to understand conversations ... as sequences of actions that participants perform to create and manage meaning between themselves. In particular, CA focuses on how participants in a conversation anticipate and qualify each other’s semiotic opportunities’. Conversation analysis has been used to analyse many aspects of management team meetings. For example, Nielsen (2009) explored the strategies adopted by middle managers to exercise leadership in their interactions with employees during business meetings. Markman’s (2009) study of virtual meetings using conversation analysis provides evidence of the difficulties that participants in such computer-mediated communication appear to experience when talk is not so tightly coupled with embodied action. The medium referred to as “quasisynchronous chat” presents problems for participants, in that it ‘disrupts the temporal flow of conversation’ (Markman, 2009, p 150), and makes the opening and closing of such meetings more difficult and time-consuming. This gives an indication of the importance of studying the embodied action that normally accompanies talk (e.g. in face-to-face meetings), and video data (alongside audio data) can provide researchers with an opportunity to do this. In this paper, the authors begin to make links between the audio and video data gathered, to understand the strategic conversation that is taking place *in the context of* the embodied action that is an important part of a strategy workshop.

Analytical approach

In this study, the authors drew upon the work of vom Lehn, who points out (2010, p.35) that unlike other forms of data, audio-visual recordings afford the researcher 'the opportunity to share, present and discuss the evidence which supports observations and analysis, a facility that is rare within the social sciences'. Strong interrelationships exist between action and context; conversation analysis has revealed the social and sequential organisation of talk (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984; Sacks 1992). Vom Lehn (2010) argues that the situated character of practical action (such as talk, visual and bodily conduct) can be elaborated by audio-visual data which helps us to understand how participants produce and make sense of particular actions. However, Jones and LeBaron (2002) also note that there is "not widespread agreement about how holistic analyses should be conducted" (p. 500).

Following vom Lehn (2010), the authors began the process of data collection with a review, in which they examined the video data to assess the quality of the images and sound and to identify any issues that might be relevant to further data collection. A preliminary analysis was then undertaken of a selected number of fragments, which led the authors to begin to reflect upon particular actions and activities that informed further data gathering. Heath et al (2010) advocate a similar approach, where the principal data of a video-based study – the recordings - are reviewed a number of times. They suggest that there are likely to be at least three reviews of the data (Heath et al, 2010, p 62) – a preliminary review (including cataloguing the data corpus), a substantive review (e.g. to find further instances of potentially interesting events or fragments), and an analytic review (e.g. gathering, scrutinising and comparing key fragments of data). Our analysis therefore proceeded case by case, with the authors subjecting particular actions to a highly detailed scrutiny and to examine the immediate context and a particular interactional environment in which they arose. Our interest focused on fragments that highlighted the use of SWOT, and the fragments presented below are chosen to draw attention to the variety and contrasts that emerged from our review of the video data, such as the use of the SWOT tool with and without facilitation; the varying use of materials such as flipcharts and post-it notes; and the use of the tool in silence or with conversation.

Vom Lehn also notes that while in conversation analysis there is a long-standing convention for the transcription of talk, a similar convention is not available for the transcription of people's visual and material conduct, such as handling an object (2010, p36/7). However, vom Lehn adopts the approach of transcribing, at least the onset and completion, of the visual and material features of the participants' conduct with regard to the talk and/or silence or pauses (Goodwin 1981; Heath 1986). A transcript of the conversation can be supplemented by a transcript containing photographs of the interaction that is being studied (vom Lehn, 2010, p 37/8). The authors also adopted the practice of separately transcribing the audio and visual recording, noting the activity undertaken by each participant. The audio and visual recordings were organised into five second time slices. An inductive approach to category generation and selection was adopted, through repeated scrutiny of the video data. The activity was coded in relation to each participant's visual and bodily conduct, and it was differentiated between that which resulted in engagement with other participants and that which involved engagement with materials in use within the workshop. Engagement with other participants differentiated between looking at other participants (visual) and gesturing with the hands (bodily). Engagement with materials

differentiated between looking at materials (visual), pointing towards materials, creating materials, working with materials and moving materials (all bodily conduct).

Observing micro-practices: a case study

The client organisation was a large company within the UK transport sector. The organisation was developing a strategic leadership development programme aimed at senior managers within the organisation. The client believed that a scenario-based strategy development exercise would be the most realistic way to develop the strategic thinking skills of its senior managers. The purpose of the exercise was to allow participants to practise developing strategies for their own organisation in response to alternative possible futures. The participants were thus practising managers who had been selected to attend the programme with a view to future promotion to senior leadership positions within the organisation. Indeed during the life of the programme, one previous participant was promoted to a position on the board.

The exercise was run by a team that consisted of one tutor chairing the presentations and panel feedback, two tutors briefing the exercise, observing the groups and providing ‘process’ focused feedback, and two senior executives from the organisation who provided ‘content’ focused feedback.

The participants were provided with two scenario narratives, developed with senior executives, which set out possible future external environments for the UK transport sector. The scenarios included factors relating to government funding of the sector, stakeholder actions, the economy, technological developments, and consumer demand for travel. Participants were invited to use the scenarios to help them develop recommended strategic options for the organisation. To support such development, they were briefly introduced to the SWOT and TOWS frameworks (Wehrich 1993).

The authors obtained video data of one of the exercises which took place over two days. Some short fragments of audio (transcribed) and description of video data, presented below, have been chosen to illustrate how a particular group of five senior managers attempted to develop strategy using the SWOT and TOWS tools. Audio transcript notations (based on Heath et al (2010)) are shown in Appendix 1.

Audio/video analysis of three micro practices

Fragment 1 shows the group discussing and clarifying the process steps that they are about to undertake. At the start of this fragment we see Brian finishing his explanation of the process that he suggests the group should follow. One of the group members asks a question of clarification, which he responds to. Throughout this fragment the group are seated around three small coffee tables, with three members sitting side by side and the other two members sitting opposite them.

Fragment 1

Time	Audio transcript	Brian	John	Terry	Victor	Steve
0,00	Brian: Then what you do is try to match those two	Leaning forward in his chair; looking	Leaning forward in his chair,	Sitting back in his chair,	Sitting back in his chair, looking at	Sitting back in his chair, looking at

	together, so what is it about the opportunities and threats	toward John and Victor; gesturing with his hands	looking at Brian, left elbow resting on coffee table, resting his chin on his left hand	looking at Brian	Brian, touching his right cheek with his right hand	Brian
0,05	that relates to the strengths and weaknesses and by doing that you then start to understand	Leaning forward in his chair, looking around all group members as he speaks, gesturing with his hands.	As above	As above	As above	As above
0,10	what your strategy should be. Basically what are the strategic issues to be faced?	As above	As above	As above	As above	As above
0,15	Steve: Are you linking the strengths and weaknesses	Leaning forward in his chair, looking at Steve	Sitting forward in his chair, looking down at the table, left elbow resting on the table, resting his chin on his left hand	Sitting back in his chair, looking at Steve.	Sitting back in his chair, looking at Steve, touching his right cheek with his right hand	Sitting back in his chair, looking at Brian, gesturing with his right hand
0,20	with the opportunities and threats presented in the scenarios? Brian: Yeah, the ideal world scenarios is one where	As above	As above	As above	As above; also looks back at Brian when he speaks	As above; also stops gesturing and looks at Brian when he speaks
0,25	You've got these huge opportunities that absolutely directly meet with your internal strengths	Leaning forward in his chair, looking at Steve as he speaks, gesturing with his hands	As above	Sitting back in his chair, looking at Brian.	Sitting back in his chair, looking at Brian. Touching his right cheek with his right hand.	Sitting back in his chair, looking at Brian.

This fragment is illustrative of a number of occasions throughout the strategy workshop when the group pause to discuss and clarify the process steps that they are about to follow, using the SWOT as a tool. Whilst the audio transcript tracks the conversation between group members, the video transcript provides an account of what all the group members are doing (including the speaker). Here we see that all except one of the group members is following the conversation as it moves between members – we see their gaze shifting to the respective speaker. The video transcript also captures one group member who seems disengaged from the discussion (John), as the video captures him gazing at the coffee table throughout much of this fragment.

In Fragment 2 (below), the group are working with the content generated using the SWOT framework; they are using a system of voting to jointly select the strategies that they will consider including in their final presentation. The voting is undertaken using pens to record preferences for suggested strategic options; these options have been captured on post-it notes displayed on flipcharts on one of the walls of the room.

Fragment 2

Time	Audio transcript	Brian	John	Terry	Victor	Steve
0,00		Steps up to wall flipchart and marks post-its with pen	Looking at wall flipchart	Looking at wall flipchart	Looking at wall flipchart	Looking at wall flipchart
0,05	John: I don't know where we've got it but we don't seem to have erm- Victor: Have you done your four ticks? John: Yeah I've done four ticks Victor: Correct	Steps to the back of room, picks up cup and takes a drink as he turns back towards the group; starts to walk across the room towards side flipchart	Takes a step back, looking at wall flipchart	Steps to side flipchart and writes on it with pen	As above	Steps up to wall flipchart and marks post-its with pen
0,10	Steve: We're ticking the themes and not the ideas? John: You're ticking the individual, the themes cos we're gonna go for, that looks like we go for strategy	Joins Terry at side flipchart; stands with back to wall flipchart, looking at Terry	Steps towards Steve and points to (touches) wall flipchart and gestures with hand	Looking at Brian	Takes a step to the right, looking at wall flipchart	Looking at wall flipchart
0,15	...and we'll debate exactly what that strategy is=	Looking at Terry and looking to back of room	Steps back, still looking at wall flipchart	Bends down and picks up flipchart from floor	Looking at wall flipchart	As above, and marking post-its

0,20	Victor: And that's in there, the detail's in there.	Walks round back of group and stops behind Victor	Looking at wall flipchart	Walks with it towards back of room, then turns and puts it on side flipchart	As above, also pointing at wall flipchart, touches his right cheek, looks to clock on right wall of room	Looking at wall flipchart
------	---	---	---------------------------	--	--	---------------------------

This fragment shows us that video data is valuable in tracking a number of aspects of the group's activities that would be difficult (or even impossible) with audio data alone. For instance, by describing the video data alongside the audio data, we can understand how each actor is engaging with the group activity (even when they are not speaking); how the actors are engaging with each other (e.g. looking at the speaker, or not); what use they are making of materials such as flip-charts and post-it notes (looking at them, reading them, writing on them, etc.); how each actor is using their body and movement, for instance by gesturing while speaking to emphasise a point, or moving closer to or further away from other actors and materials. It also suggests a possible lack of engagement in some instances, for instance we can analyse which actors have not spoken or moved during a particular fragment.

Fragment 3 (below) shows the group engaging in a micro-review of the materials they have created. Some of these previously developed materials have been displayed on wall flipcharts. Just before the start of this fragment, two members bring additional flipcharts of previously generated material and put them on the floor just in front of the wall flipcharts.

Fragment 3

Time	Audio transcript	Brian	John	Terry	Victor	Steve
0,00	Terry: Do we all want to have a quick look at these and see if there's anything	Standing at the back of the room	Standing next to the floor flipchart, looking at wall flipchart	Standing at the back of the room; walks towards floor flipcharts, looking at them	Standing at back of room, looking at floor flipchart	Standing next to floor flipchart, looking at floor flipchart
0,05,	that jumps out= Victor: Cos we said that at quarter past we will start brainstorming=	As above	Looking at wall flipchart	Walks towards camera, past floor flipcharts, turns and looks at floor flipchart	Walks towards floor flipchart, gesturing with hands	Looking at floor flipchart, moving one of them with his feet
0,10	John: Yep we're very close.	Walks towards floor flipchart and looks at them	As above	Looking at floor flipchart	Looking at floor flipchart	Looking at floor flipchart

0,15	John: You can see I've got Victor: This looks quite clumsy to me, if we can just do the opportunities and threats	Looking at wall flipchart, holding pen in his mouth with his right hand	Pointing to wall flipchart, talking with Victor	As above, both hands on his hips	Walks over floor flipchart and joins John at the wall flipchart, pointing to it whilst he talks with John	As above
0,20	Steve: Now what I said yesterday about human capital, flexibility of the supply chain versus	Looking at floor flipchart, pen still in his mouth	Shifting wall flipchart around on the wall	As above	Turns and faces group, looking at floor flipchart	Looks up towards Brian, who is standing across the floor flipchart from him
0,25	Our in-house staff develops that theme,	As above	As above	As above	Looking at floor flipchart	Points to flipchart on floor with his foot
0,30	Erm, but I'm just wondering where it fitted into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.	Looks up to where Steve is pointing at wall flipchart	Walks across the floor flipchart towards camera at back of room	Steps to the left and looks up at wall flipchart to where Steve is pointing	Looks up to where Steve is pointing at wall flipchart	Turns and looks towards wall flipchart and points at one of the flipcharts

Summary

Taken together, the fragments suggest that the participants engaged in a number of 'micro-practices' as they developed strategy during the workshop. The first micro-practice could be described as 'preparing and orientating'; as we see in Fragment 1, the group found it necessary to spend time preparing by discussing and agreeing their process, and then orientating themselves in the rich array of data that has been provided. A second micro-practice could be summarised as 'generating and working with content'; Fragment 2 illustrates a time period when the group were voting to reduce down a selection of ideas that had emerged from an earlier 'brainstorming' session. A third micro-practice, labelled here as 'reflecting and validating', is supported by the third fragment. In Fragment 3, we see evidence of a 'micro' level of review of the group's ideas and how they relate to the process followed.

Discussion and conclusions

Rouleau and Seguin (1995) identify four types of strategy discourse, which they refer to as classical, contingency, socio-political and socio-cognitive. This study appears to reflect more than one of these forms. The conversation of the participants, as reproduced here, may seem to fit best with the 'contingency' form ("based on a representation of the environment as the determining factor", Rouleau and Seguin, 1995, p 108) in that it draws heavily upon the SWOT framework which emphasises the external environment in which the organisation is operating (as well as some of its internal characteristics). However, the design of the study itself reflects an interest in the importance of groups and the importance of the individual; this speaks to both the socio-political form ("the organization is represented as the outcome of various centres of negotiated activities", p 109) and the socio-cognitive form ("this form reflects the individual as the focal point of interest", p 110) as identified by Rouleau and Seguin. In her 2005 paper, Rouleau argues that there are four micro-practices of strategic sense-making and sense-giving; when middle managers are in the role of interpreters and sellers of change, they engage in 'translating the orientation', 'overcoding the strategy', 'disciplining the client' and 'justifying the change' (p 1413). However, in the study described here, middle managers are being asked to undertake a different role; as part of their personal development, they are being asked to design and plan strategic change, rather than interpret and sell ideas that have been developed by senior colleagues; so the micro-practices we observe are different from the ones proposed by Rouleau. Along similar lines to Rouleau (2005), Rouleau and Balogun (2011) describe middle managers as 'performing the conversation' and 'setting the scene' (p 953); however these activities are once more associated with making sense of and selling existing strategies, rather than validating those strategies and/or proposing new ones, as in the study described here. In this study we observed three micro-practices which were labelled 'preparing and orientating', 'generating and working with strategic content', and 'reflecting and validating', which appear to correspond with strategy development (rather than strategy selling) activities. Such micro-practices therefore highlight the variety of strategy work that middle managers engage in. They also illustrate that engagement with a tool is not only concerned with its use to generate content; SWOT, it appears can play a 'social' as well as an 'analytical' role. Tool use, particularly amongst non-facilitated groups, can entail episodes of clarification and negotiation about how the process of using the tool within the group setting, along with episodes of reflection upon and validation of content previously generated. This allows individuals to build relationships within the group, negotiate their positions, and so forth. Our contribution also extends to the use of video analysis in research to analyse strategy workshops; not all tool use or artefact use can be captured via methods such as conversation analysis (and this is most obvious for the data corresponding to periods of silent activity).

Use of video data

This study throws light on a number of methodological issues around the use of video data. We know that audio data allows us to analyse talk; but what if there is no talk taking place? To understand the activity taking place in the strategy workshop under investigation, it was essential to go beyond audio data, and to make sense of video data too. The video data enabled us to gain additional knowledge of how the group was working together (including their physical activity), particularly at times of silence. Video data helps us to track a number of aspects of group activity which would be difficult, or in some instances impossible, to analyse via audio data alone, such as the engagement of each actor with the activities underway; each actor's use of materials; each actor's use of body and movement in support of their speech acts (e.g. gesturing, or physically

moving closer to or away from someone or something), and the interaction between the actors. However, capturing these insights in a robust fashion remains challenging, as for video analysis (unlike conversation analysis) no established notation exists for recording observations.

Limitations of the study

In a study of this kind, the volume of data generated presents a challenge to the researchers. In this paper, we have presented short fragments taken from more than eight hours of video data. It is also worth noting that the use of static, unmanned cameras made it hard to ensure that all group work was captured on camera. Even though two cameras were used in an attempt to provide coverage of the whole working area, this still remained problematic on occasions during the entire duration of the workshop.

Summary

This study has documented and reflected upon the use of tools within a strategy workshop setting, and observed a group of middle managers engaging in a number of micro-practices. We have observed the use of SWOT, a popular strategy tool, in supporting these micro-practices. Future research should explore the extent to which these findings have wider applicability for varying groups of participants, and whether they can increase our understanding of the use of strategy tools other than SWOT. A better understanding of how tools are actually used in practice is important for both practitioners and academics, as it has the potential to influence the design of strategy tools as well as their appropriate introduction in workshop settings. Future research should also focus upon gaining a better understanding of the role played by middle managers in strategy development, and the range of micro-practices that they engage in.

Appendix 1: Transcription Notations

SYMBOL	EXPLANATION	MEANING
(.)	Period in brackets	Micropause, less than 0.2 seconds
(0.7)	Number in brackets	Pause, measured in seconds
?	Question mark	Rising intonation
.	Period (or full-stop)	Fall in tone
,	Comma	Continuing intonation
!	Exclamation mark	Animated tone
-	Single dash	Used when an utterance is cut off
()	Single parentheses	Used when there is transcription doubt, i.e. the utterance is unclear
(())	Double parentheses	Used to enclose a description of something that is hard to transcribe, e.g. ((cough)) or ((nod))
=	Equals signs	Used when adjacent utterances are 'latched', i.e. there is no interval between them
<i>Italics</i>	Word in italics	Stressed word

References

- Ahmed, A. M., M. Zairi, et al. (2006). "SWOT analysis for Air China performance and its experience with quality." Benchmarking **13**(1/2): 160-173.
- Barney, J. B. (1995). "Looking inside for competitive advantage." Academy of Management Executive **9**(4): 49-61.
- Bougon, M. G. (1992). "Congregate cognitive maps: A unified dynamic theory of organization and strategy'." Journal of Management Studies **29**(3): 369-389.
- Chermack, T. J. and B. K. Kasshanna (2007). "The use and misuse of SWOT analysis and implications for HRD professionals." Human Resource Development International **10**(4): 383-399.
- Clark, D. N. and J. L. Scott (1995). "Strategic level MS/OR tool usage in the United Kingdom: An empirical survey." The Journal of the Operational Research Society **46**(9): 1041 - 1051.
- Dyson, R. G. (2004). "Strategic development and SWOT analysis at the University of Warwick." European Journal of Operational Research **152**(3): 631-640.
- Eden, C. and F. Ackermann (1998). Making strategy - The journey of strategic management. London, Sage Publications.
- Elrod, H. (2008). "Pearl Beer." Journal of the International Academy for Case Studies **14**(2): 33-36.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). Studies in Ethnomethodology. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Goodwin, C. (1981). Conversational Organisation: Interaction between Speakers and Hearers. London, Academic Press.
- Gunn, R. and W. Williams (2007). "Strategic tools: an empirical investigation into strategy in practice in the UK." Strategic Change **16**(5): 201 - 216.
- Heath, C. (1986). Body movement and speech in medical interaction. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, C., J. Hindmarsh, et al. (2010). Video in qualitative research. London, Sage.
- Helms, M. M. and J. Nixon (2010). "Exploring SWOT analysis - where are we now?" Journal of Strategy and Management **3**(3): 215-251.
- Heritage, J. (1984). Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Hill, T. and R. Westbrook (1997). "SWOT analysis: It's time for a product recall." Long Range Planning **30**(1): 46-52.
- Ho, W. (2008). "Integrated analytic hierarchy process and its applications." European Journal of Operational Research **186**(1): 211-231.
- Hodgkinson, G. P., R. Whittington, et al. (2006). "The Role of Strategy Workshops in Strategy Development Processes: Formality, Communication, Co-ordination and Inclusion." Long Range Planning **39**: 479-496.
- Ip, Y. K. and L. C. Koo (2004). "BSQ strategic formulation framework: a hybrid of balanced scorecard, SWOT analysis and quality function deployment." Managerial Auditing Journal **19**(4): 533-543.
- Jarratt, D. and D. Stiles (2010). "How are Methodologies and Tools Framing Managers' Strategizing Practice in Competitive Strategy Development?" British Journal of Management **21**(1): 28-43.
- Jones, S. and C. LeBaron (2002). "Research on the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication: Emerging integrations." Journal of Communication **52**: 499-521.
- Markman, K. M. (2009). "So what shall we talk about": Openings and closings in chat-based virtual meetings." Journal of Business Communication **46**(1): 150-170.
- Morris, D. (2005). "A new tool for strategy analysis: the opportunity model." The Journal of Business Strategy **26**(3): 50-56.
- Nielsen, M. F. (2009). "Interpretative management in business meetings: understanding managers' interactional strategies through conversation analysis." Journal of Business Communication **46**(1): 25-36.

- O'Brien, F., M. Meadows, et al. (2007). Creating and using scenarios: Exploring alternative possible futures and their impact on strategic decisions. Supporting strategy: Frameworks, methods and models. F. O' Brien and R. G. Dyson. Chicester, Wiley: 406.
- O'Sullivan, T. (2010). "More than words? Conversation analysis in arts marketing research." International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research **4**(1): 20-32.
- Rigby, D. and B. Bilodeau (2007). "Bain's global 2007 management tools and trends survey." Strategy & Leadership **35**(5): 9-16.
- Robichaud, D., H. Giroux, et al. (2004). "The metaconversation: the recursive property of language as a key to organizing'." Academy of Management Review **29**(4): 617-634.
- Rouleau, L. (2005). "Micro-practices of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving: How middle managers interpret and sell change every day." Journal of Management Studies **42**(7): 1413-1441.
- Rouleau, L. and J. Balogun (2011). "Middle managers, strategic sensemaking and discursive competence." Journal of Management Studies **48**(5): 953-983.
- Rouleau, L. and F. Seguin (1995). "Strategy and organisation theories: Common forms of discourse." Journal of Management Studies **32**(1): 101-117.
- Ruocco, P. and T. Proctor (1994). "Strategic planning in practice: A creative approach." Marketing Intelligence & Planning **12**(9): 24-29.
- Sacks, H. (1992). Lectures on Conversation. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Salo, A., V. Brummer, et al. (2009). "Axes of balance in foresight – reflections from FinnSight 2015." Technology Analysis and Strategic Management **21**(8): 987-1001.
- Schwarz, M. (2009). "Strategy workshops facilitating and constraining strategy making." Journal of Strategy and Management **2**: 277-287.
- Sorensen, L., R. V. V. Vidal, et al. (2004). "Using soft OR in a small company - The case of Kirby." European Journal of Operational Research **152**: 555-570.
- Spee, A. P. and P. Jarzabkowski (2009). "Strategy tools as boundary objects." Strategic Organization **7**(2): 223-232.
- Stenfors, S., L. Tanner, et al. (2007). "Executive views concerning decision support tools." European Journal of Operational Research **181**: 929 - 938.
- Stewart, J. (2006). "High-Performing (and Threshold) Competencies for Group Facilitators." Journal of Change Management **6**(4): 417-439.
- Valentin, E. K. (2001). "SWOT analysis from a resource-based view." Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice **9**(2): 54 - 69.
- Vom Lehn, D. (2010). "Examining "response": Video based studies in museums and galleries." International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research **4**(1): 33-43.
- Vrontis, D. and C. Vignali (2001). "Dairy milk in France - a marketing investigation of the situational environment." British Food Journal **103**(4): 291-296.
- Wallemacq, A. and J. Jacques (2009). "Exploring semantic fields'." International Studies of Management and Organization **39**(1): 9-33.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). Sensemaking in organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Wehrich, H. (1993). "Daimler-Benz's move towards the next century with the TOWS Matrix." European Business Review **93**(1): 4 - 11.
- Xie, Y. and I.-H. Lin (2008). "Strategic analysis: Blockbuster case study." The Business Review **9**(2): 68-75.