



From the Desk of Dr. Aditya Vijay Kashyap

In the world of strategy, we often think it's all about frameworks, models, and meetings. But real strategy is a mindset — a lived personality trait that shows up in how we think, write, act, and speak truth to power.

I found this insightful visual on 'The 7 Surprising Traits of Highly Strategic Thinkers' by Alex M Smith particularly resonant. As an investment banker and strategist, I've seen these traits manifest in high-impact moments — from billion-dollar boardrooms to grassroots innovation pitches.

Whether you're building a venture, shaping policy, advising a nation, or just sharpening your edge — these seven quirks are worth reflecting on. Especially in a world where action, honesty, clarity, and a bit of mischief often outperform pure intellect.

 Be strategic. Be real. Be you.

– Dr. Aditya Vijay Kashyap
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The 7 Surprising Traits Of *Highly Strategic* Thinkers

ALEX M H SMITH

Strategy is less a skill, and more a personality type. Want to get better at it? Then think about how much your working style matches the following traits...



1. Bad with detail

Contrary to popular belief, strategic thinkers are not detail oriented. Instead they feel uncomfortable with it, and so automatically retreat to “zoomed out” thinking, which is where strategic thinking happens.

How to practice: try to explain the gist of the situation, rather than giving all the info.



2. Naturally contrarian

Insights aren't uncovered just by thinking differently, but by thinking the opposite. Strategic thinkers can't help questioning received wisdom (often to their detriment!), allowing them to uncover fresh angles and secrets.

How to practice: keep asking where you disagree with competitors.



3. Action oriented

There's nothing more useless than strategy that is all thinking, no doing, so true strategists are always about the action. They don't think so much about the analysis, as the *consequences* of the analysis.

How to practice: don't talk about “strategy”, talk about “strategic acts” instead.



4. Radically honest

The effectiveness of a strategy directly correlates with one thing: truth. No matter how inconvenient or ugly it might be. So the strategist must be comfortable with grasping and speaking that truth.

How to practice: explain how your strategy contradicts what you thought before.



5. Takes responsibility

One of the main reasons many struggle with strategy is that they don't want to be responsible for a big decision that then goes wrong. But strategic thinkers crave that responsibility - or at the very least, they don't mind it!

How to practice: admit that your strategy is just an opinion, and own it!



6. Great writers

All strategy is communication. It's a persuasive statement of what should be done and why. So how can you nail that without being a good writer? You can't. So the strategist must hone this skill until it sings off the page.

How to practice: start writing in public (e.g. on LinkedIn) as much as you can.



7. Kinda unprofessional

There's a time for process, and a time for professionalism. But strategising is not it. It requires a free-wheeling, playful, mischievous approach that is more at home in the bar than the boardroom. That's where the breakthroughs occur.

How to practice: take it out of the office!

Not you? No sweat!

Understand, these are not objectively “good” qualities. The reverse personality type would be fantastic at lots of other valuable things. These are just quirks useful for the one narrow skill of strategy. Embrace who you are!