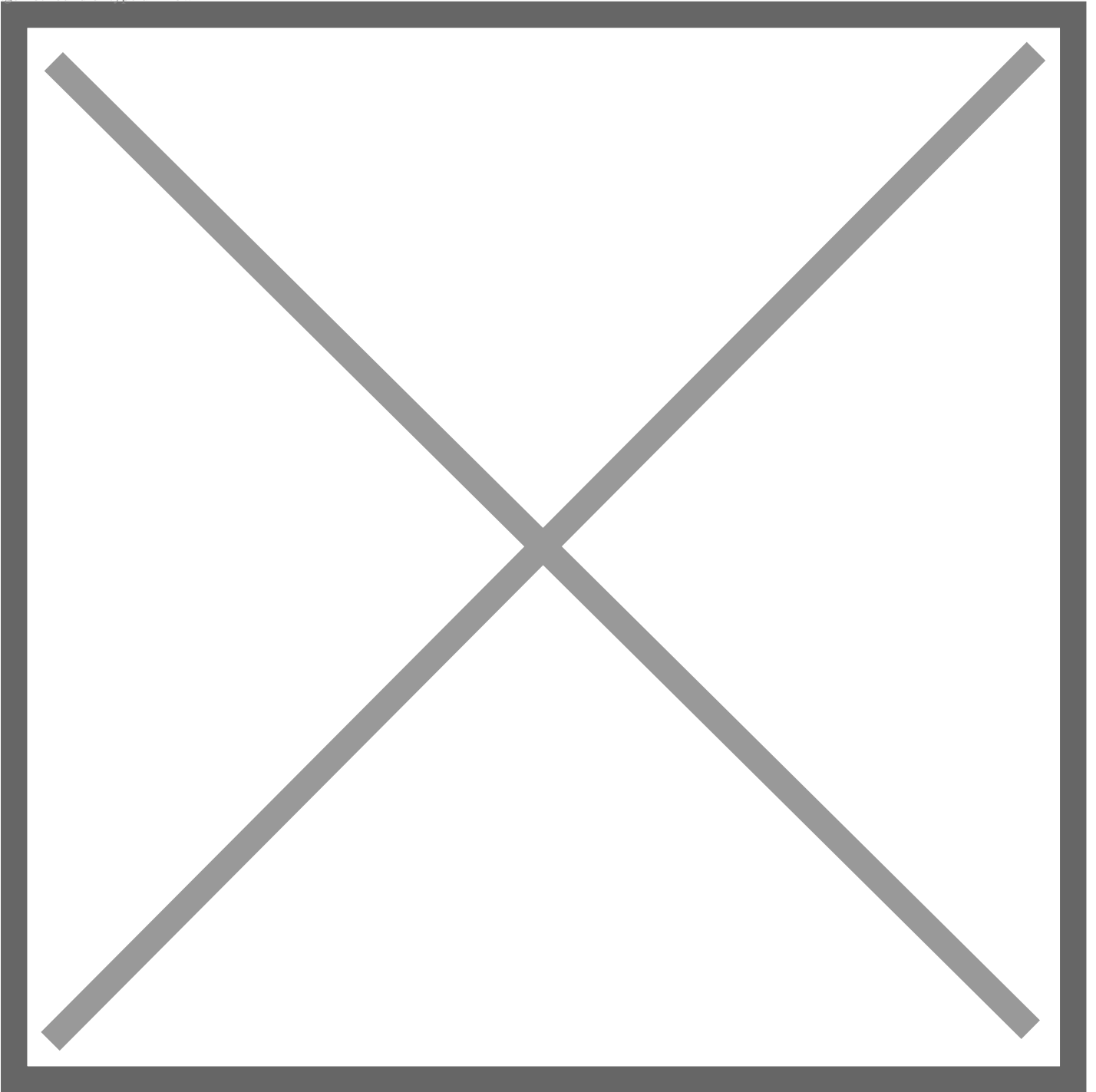


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## Strategy & Tactics

### Description

I was sipping coffee with [my friend Bruce](#) late last week. When he works with groups, he has one key question: What problem are you trying to solve? On the one hand, I love any focus that brings concentration and intentional thinking to an organization, and problem solving does that. On the other, I see all the literature on being driven by assets rather than barriers.

I asked Bruce if he thought problems and opportunities belonged at opposite ends of the same continuum. He said he did not think so and that problem-solving was strategic while opportunity response was tactical. That really prompted me to think deeper.

I get his logic. Problems are long term and durable. We need strategies to solve them. Opportunities are often fragile and short lived. You must take the tide before it has gone out and see where it takes you. This, for me, elevates the term “tactics.” It also frees me from the bromide observation that “every problem is just an opportunity in disguise”. This is such a limiting proposition as it suggests beginning with problems. To find and harness opportunity, I do not need to start with a problem or a strategy. Something looks like it could add value and I jump to try it. This is innovation, which is a superb method of planned change.

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As I think about it most methods are tactical. When I hear organizations proclaim that their strategy is innovation, I typically find little experimentation. They have located trying new things at too high a level. Drop down to the level of what is spontaneous and generate both heat and light. Who has an idea for a new approach that will outperform a present practice? Good tactics may sometimes precede rather than follow good strategy!

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