

STRATEGYMAN

VS. THE ANTI-STRATEGY SQUAD

USING
STRATEGIC
THINKING
TO DEFEAT
BAD STRATEGY
AND SAVE
YOUR PLAN

RICH HORWATH

ART BY NATHAN LUETH

"STRATEGYMAN IS A FUN, EFFECTIVE BOOK THAT PROVIDES MANAGERS WITH VALUABLE CONCEPTS TO UNDERSTAND STRATEGY IN ITS SIMPLEST FORM, AND TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC THINKING SKILLS. IT IS ALSO A GREAT REFRESHER COURSE FOR EXECUTIVES WHO UNDERSTAND THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGY. RICH HORWATH IS A MASTER AT BRINGING THESE CONCEPTS TO LIFE."

JEFFREY SANFILIPPO
CEO, John B. Sanfilippo & Son, Inc.

"STRATEGYMAN VS. THE ANTI-STRATEGY SQUAD IS ANOTHER GREAT RESOURCE TO HELP OUR CUSTOMER-FACING TEAMS STRENGTHEN THEIR STRATEGIC MINDSET. RICH HAS BEEN A VALUED PARTNER AND HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN BUILDING THE STRATEGIC THINKING CAPABILITIES WITHIN ALL OF OUR TEAMS."

KEVIN KUTLER
Executive Director, Head of Training and Development, Novartis

STRATEGYMAN

VS. THE ANTI-STRATEGY SQUAD

USING **STRATEGIC THINKING**
TO DEFEAT BAD STRATEGY
AND SAVE YOUR PLAN

"IN THIS NEW BOOK RICH HAS FOUND A WAY TO TAKE THE ABSTRACT CONCEPT OF STRATEGY AND ADDRESS THE FACT THAT WHILE WE USE THE TERM FREQUENTLY, MANY, IF NOT MOST, DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT EXACTLY A STRATEGY IS. THE COMIC BOOK FORMAT IS A FUN WAY TO CONVEY REAL BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE."

DON SAWYER
Senior Vice President,
Bayer Healthcare

"WORDS MATTER— ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU ARE COMMUNICATING YOUR GOALS AND STRATEGY. THE STRATEGYMAN GRAPHIC NOVEL APPROACH GIVES STRATEGY PRACTITIONERS ANOTHER TOOL IN THEIR TOOLBELT TO HELP CLARIFY STRATEGY WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATION."

ROB PERRI
Senior Director, Global Innovation, Strategy
and Portfolio Management,
PepsiCo

RICH HORWATH



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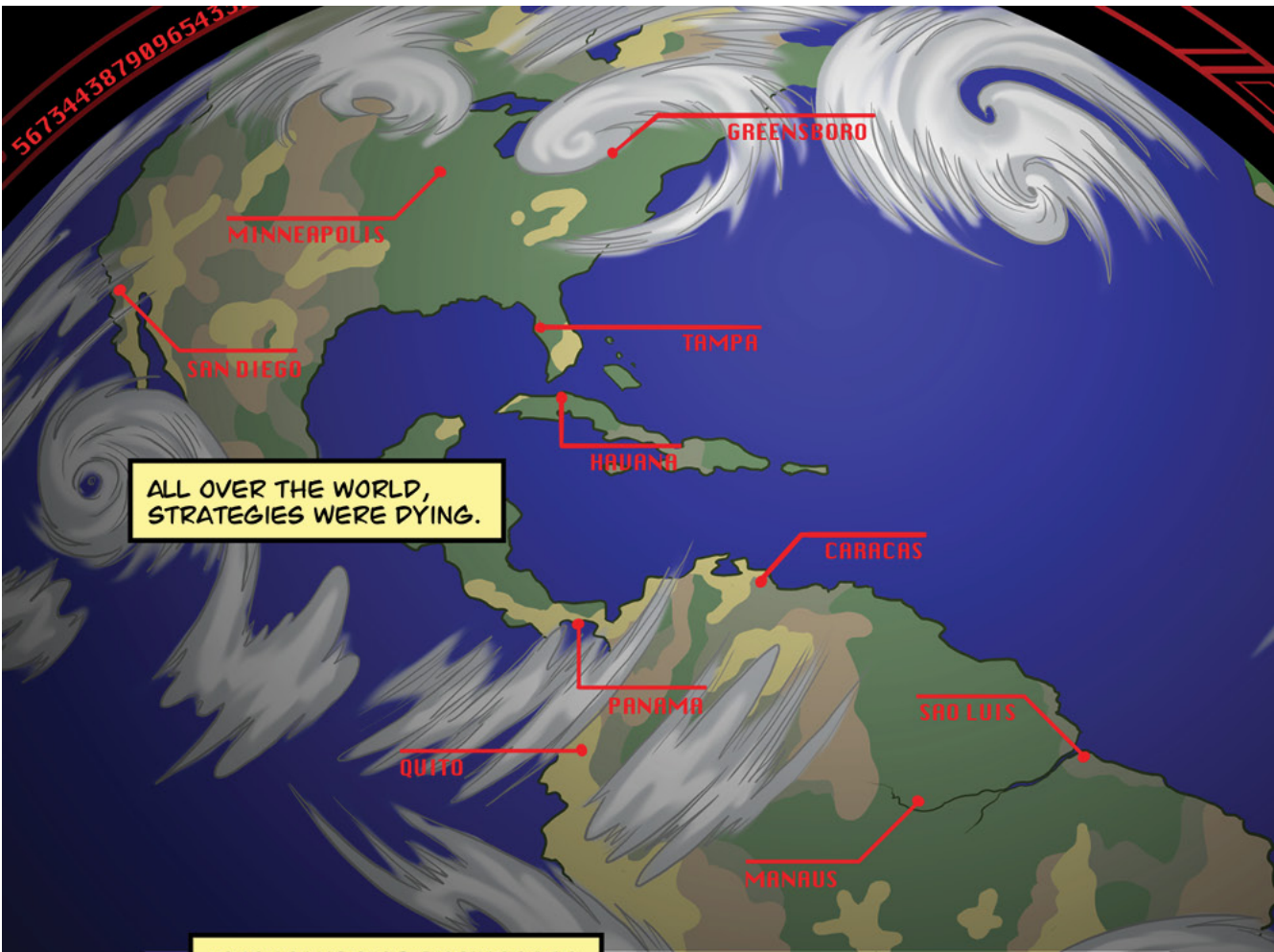

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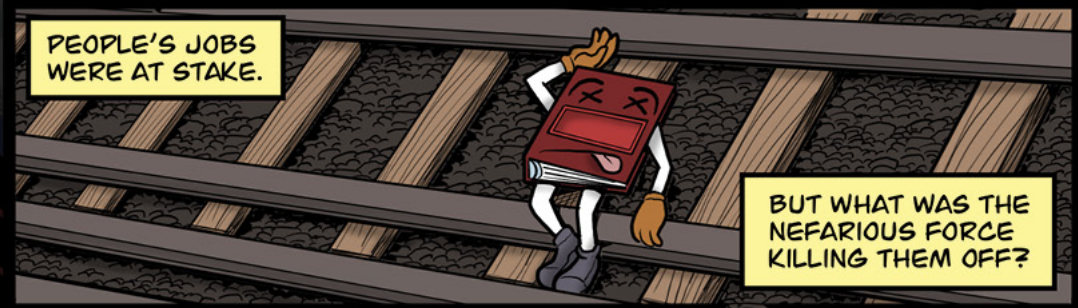
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ALL OVER THE WORLD,
STRATEGIES WERE DYING.



THOUSANDS OF BUSINESSES
FACED BANKRUPTCY.



PEOPLE'S JOBS
WERE AT STAKE.

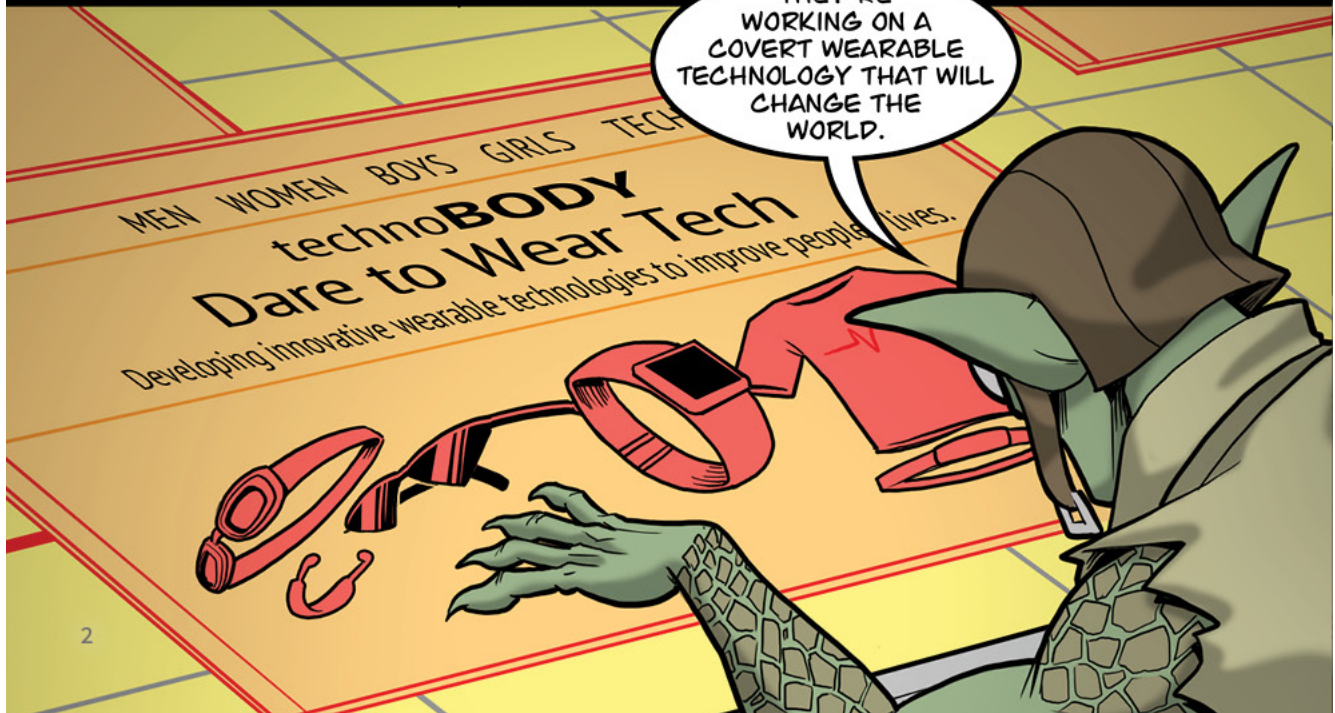
BUT WHAT WAS THE
NEFARIOUS FORCE
KILLING THEM OFF?



AND WHO COULD
SAVE THEM?

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5645
4767
2356
0678
5638
134
0

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√X
1180





ONCE WE GET OUR PAWS ON IT, WE CAN INCREASE OUR STRATEGYCIDES INFINITELY.

"PAWS"?

EVERYTHING IS IN PLACE. AT THIS RATE, TECHNOBODY'S STRATEGIC PLAN WILL DIE IN A MATTER OF WEEKS.



ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS ALIGNED.

OUCH!

SORRY, MISS-ALIGNMENT, MY DEAR.



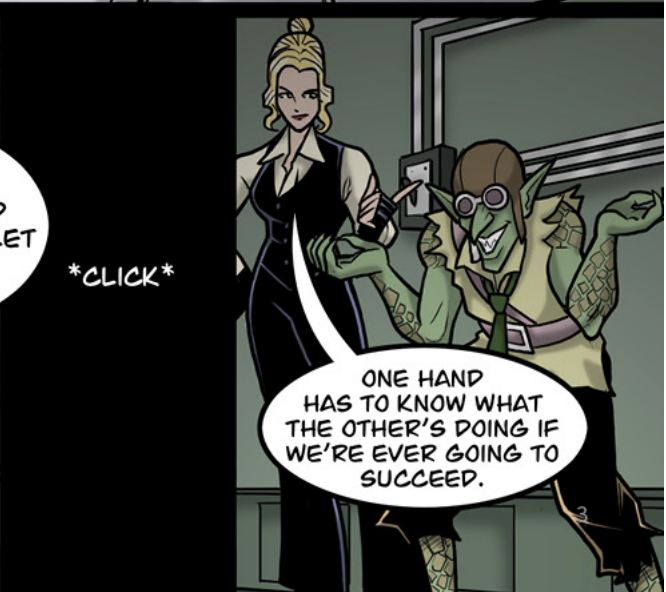
LET'S PASS OUT THE TRIPLE TOP-SECRET MISSIONS.

...AND SOME OF THOSE GLUTEN-FREE, GOOSE LIVER AND KALE CUPCAKES MRS. DR. YES MADE. I'M FAMISHED.



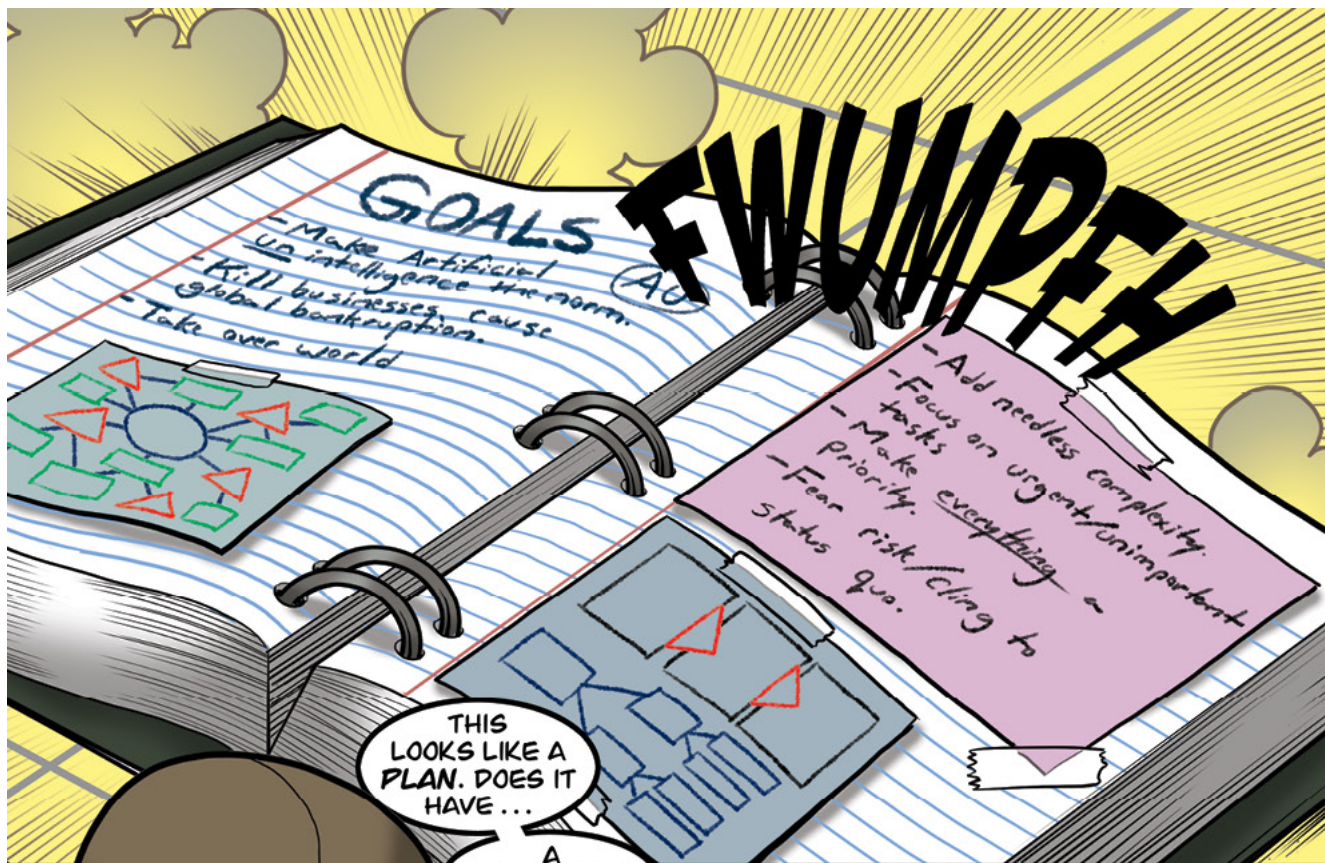
BUT DR. YES, WOULDN'T PASSING OUT TOP-SECRET MISSIONS TO EVERYONE DEFEAT THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THEM BEING TOP SECRET?

I PREFER A CULTURE OF SECRECY AND COMPETITION. LET THEM STAY IN THE DARK.



CLICK

ONE HAND HAS TO KNOW WHAT THE OTHER'S DOING IF WE'RE EVER GOING TO SUCCEED.



THIS LOOKS LIKE A PLAN. DOES IT HAVE ...

A STRATEGY?

NO, NO. IT DOESN'T CONTAIN A STRATEGY.

ACTUALLY, MANY OF THE BUSINESSES WE'VE KILLED HAD PLANS WITH NO REAL STRATEGIES EITHER.

IT'S JUST A BIG TO-DO LIST TO KEEP US ON TRACK.

I'VE MADE CHECKLISTS FOR EVERYONE. ALSO NOT A STRATEGY. A LIST, THAT'S ALL.

A MINDLESS TEMPLATE COMPLETED IS A STRATEGY DEFEATED.

JARGON GOBLIN
*MIX WORDS.
*MAKE THINGS UP, ARE STRATEGIES
*MAKE PEOPLE THINK THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT.

DECISION DEMON
*ELIMINATE DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS.
*KEEP INVESTING IN PROJECTS ADDING NO VALUE.
*FEAR CHANGE.

TODAY ON
MORNING NEWSCASTER,
WE HAVE REPORTS OF
STRATEGYCIDES SPREADING
TO THE WEST COAST, AMID
CONCERNS OF A GLOBAL
EPIDEMIC.

WE'LL
TAKE YOU TO OUR
BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT
DAN STILLS NEXT WITH
AN UPDATE.

BUT
FIRST, NEWS
ABOUT COSTAZON.
SHARES ARE
UP 10% ...

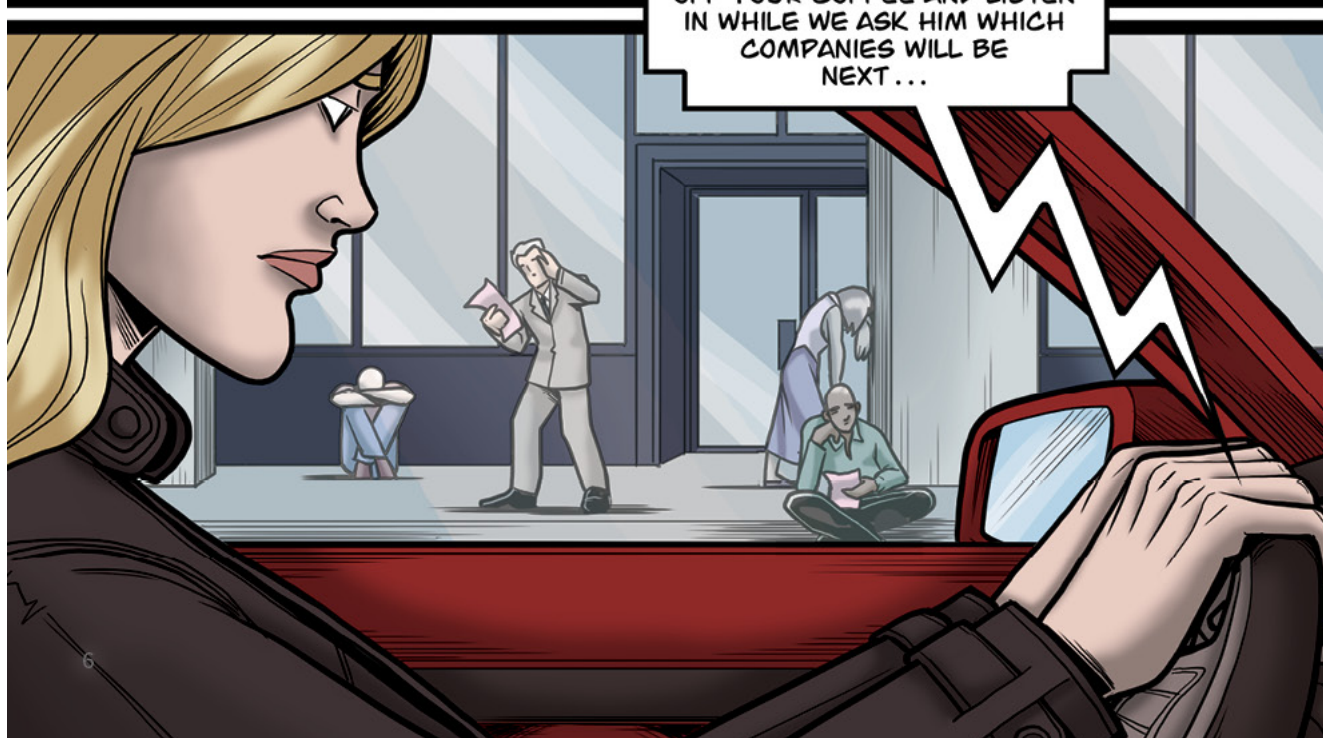
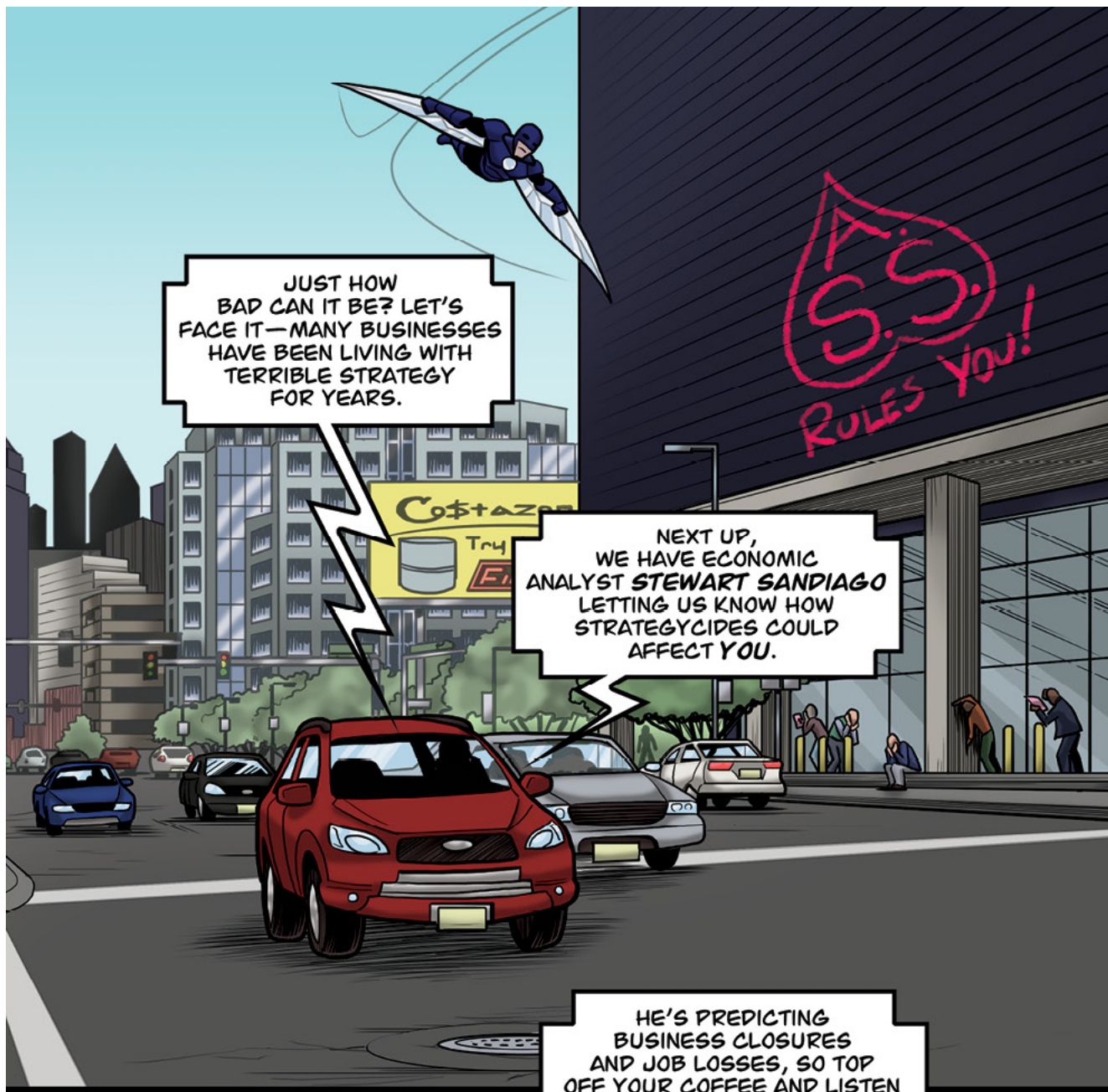
6
LIVE

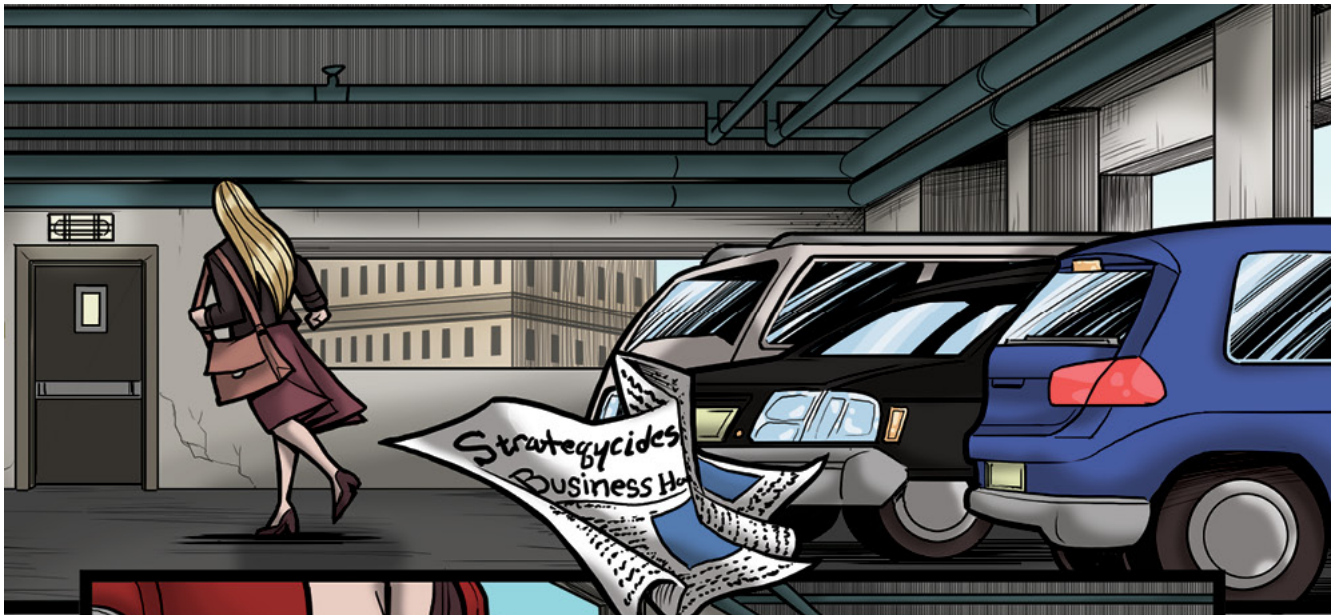
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STRATEGYCIDE

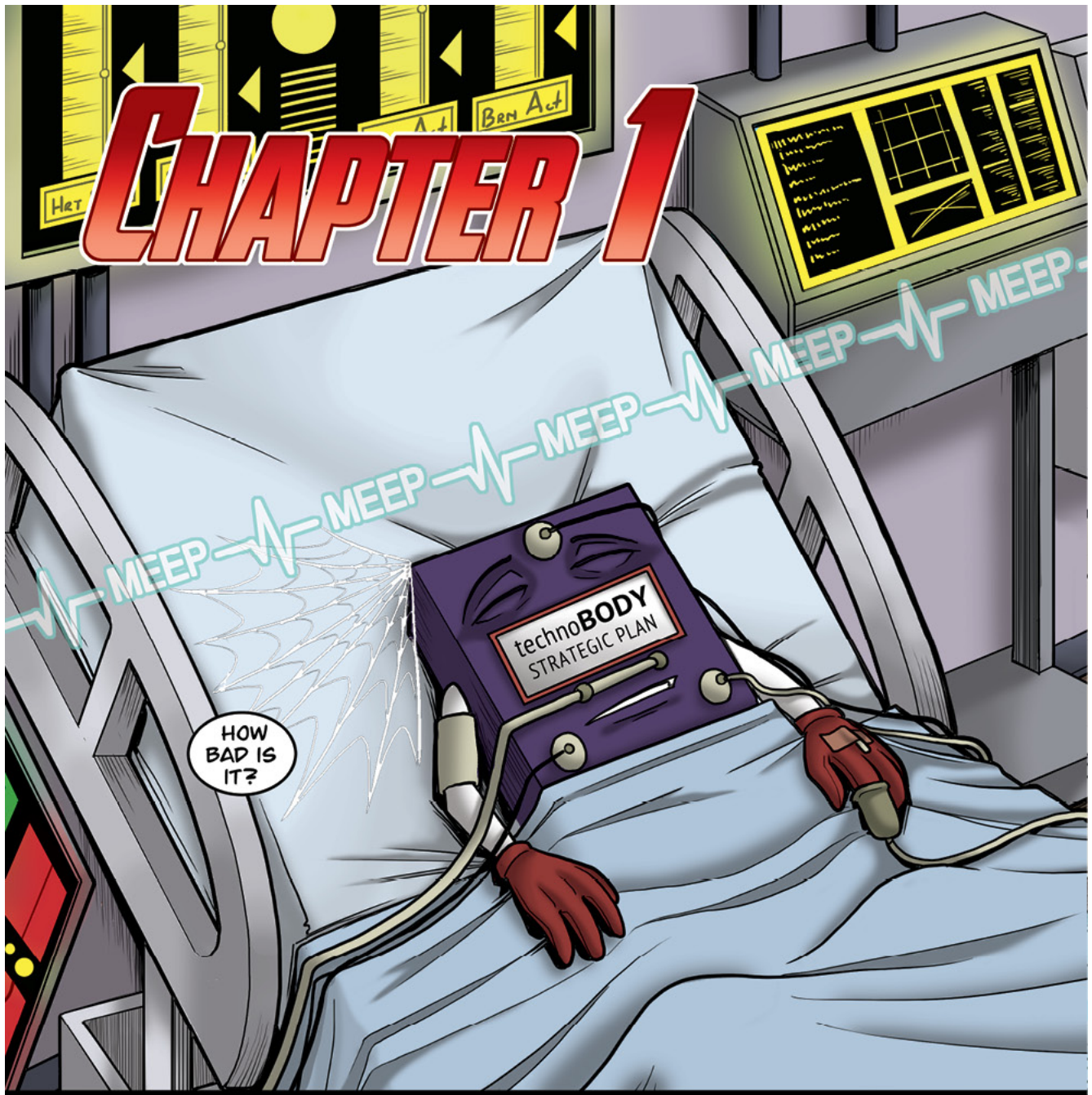
BUSINESS CRASHING WORLDWIDE







CHAPTER 1

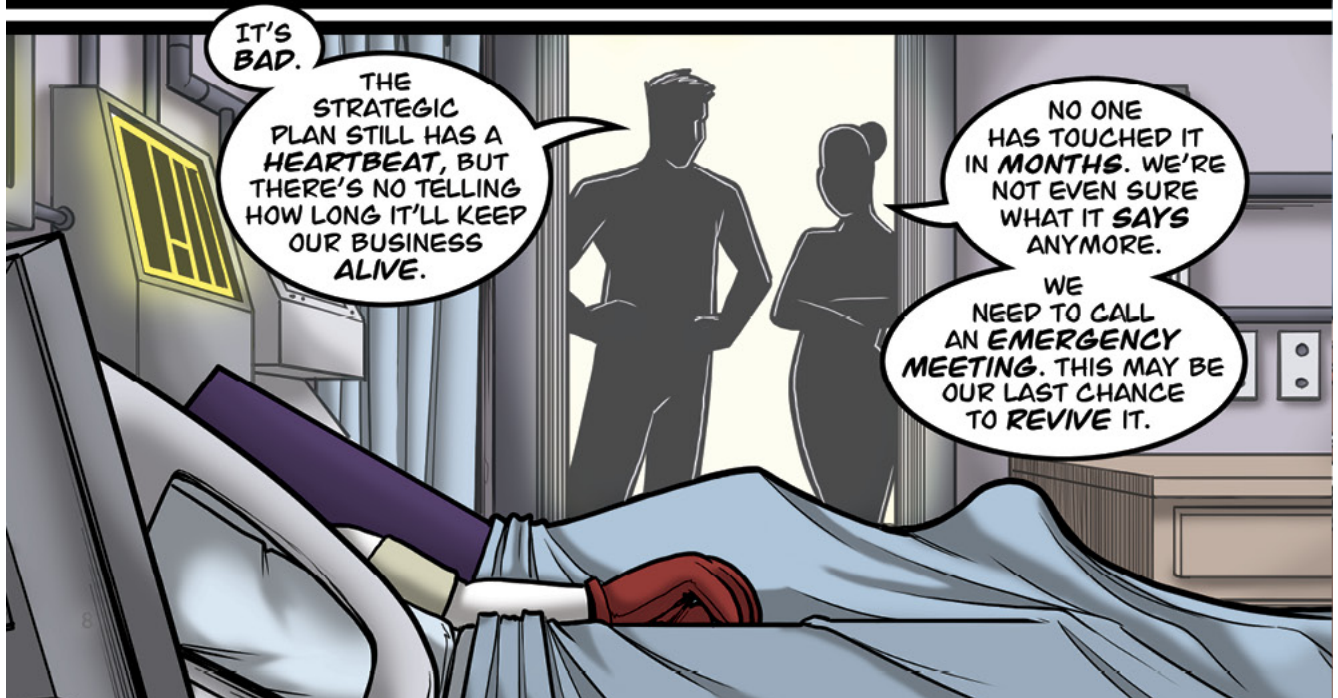


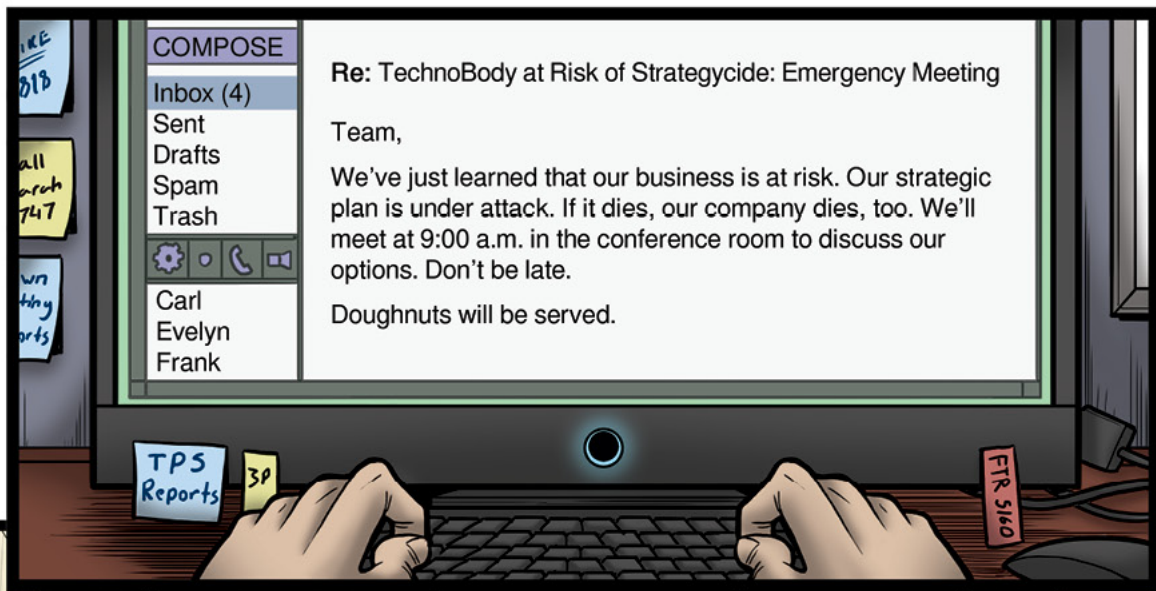
IT'S
BAD.

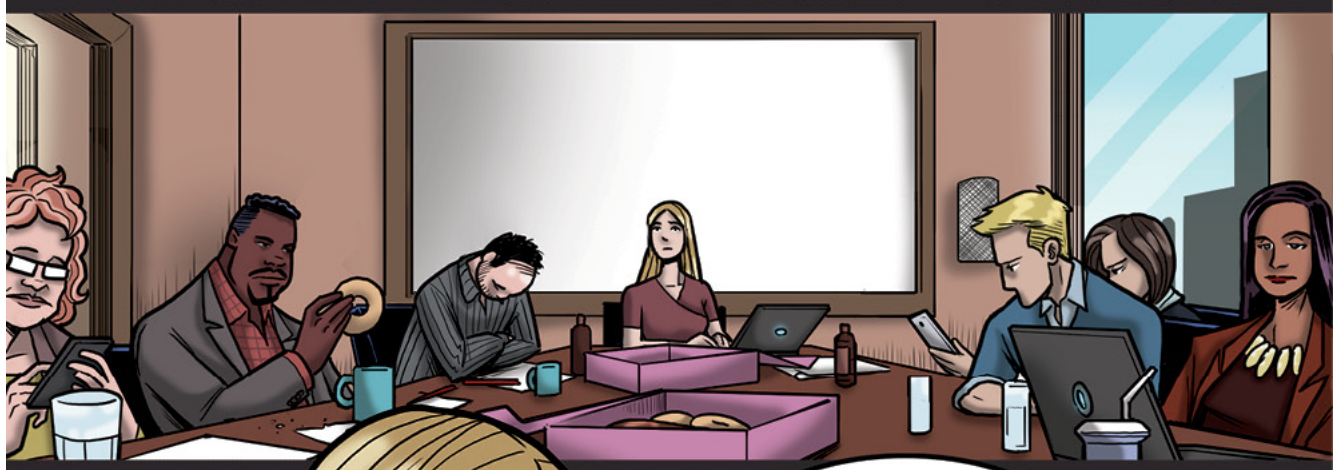
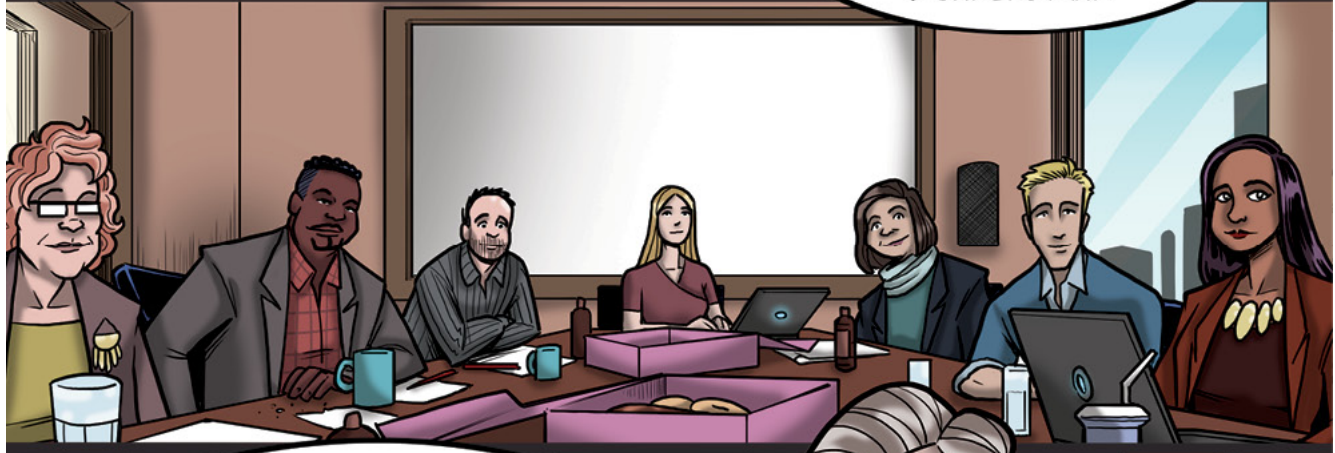
THE
STRATEGIC
PLAN STILL HAS A
HEARTBEAT, BUT
THERE'S NO TELLING
HOW LONG IT'LL KEEP
OUR BUSINESS
ALIVE.

NO ONE
HAS TOUCHED IT
IN MONTHS. WE'RE
NOT EVEN SURE
WHAT IT SAYS
ANYMORE.

WE
NEED TO CALL
AN EMERGENCY
MEETING. THIS MAY BE
OUR LAST CHANCE
TO REVIVE IT.









PERHAPS
I CAN HELP,
FRANK!

SEEMS
LITTLE MISS
MARKETER HERE
DOESN'T QUITE GET IT.
IT'S NOT THE WORDS
THAT MATTER, IT'S THE
GENERAL IDEA OF
THE THING.

THIS GROUP
HAS USED PHRASES LIKE
"STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES,"
"STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES,"
AND "STRATEGIC BIG
ROCKS" FOR YEARS AND
EVERYTHING'S BEEN
JUST FINE.

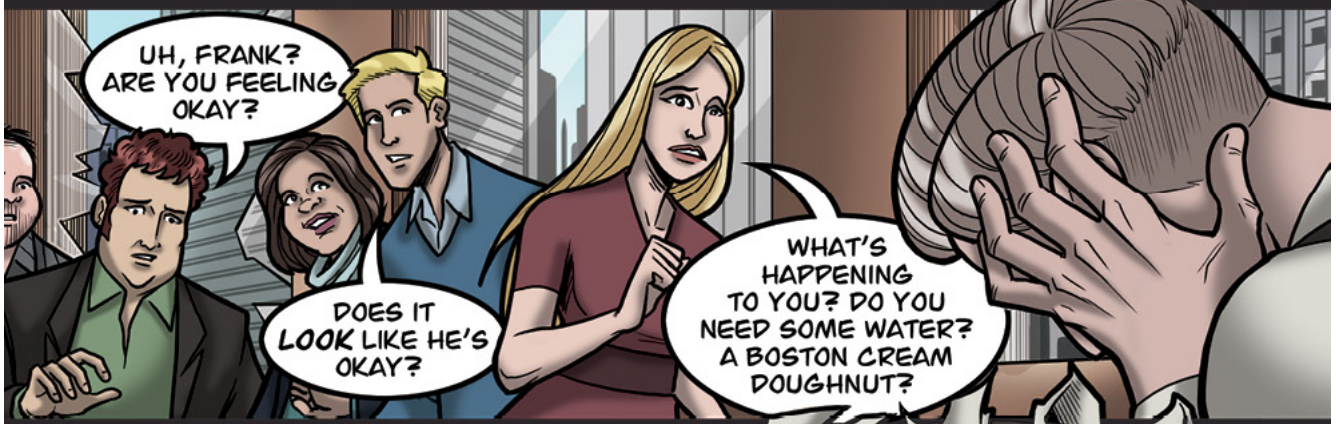
AS LONG
AS "STRATEGIC" IS
ATTACHED TO ANOTHER
IMPORTANT-SOUNDING
WORD, THEN IT **MUST** BE
RIGHT.

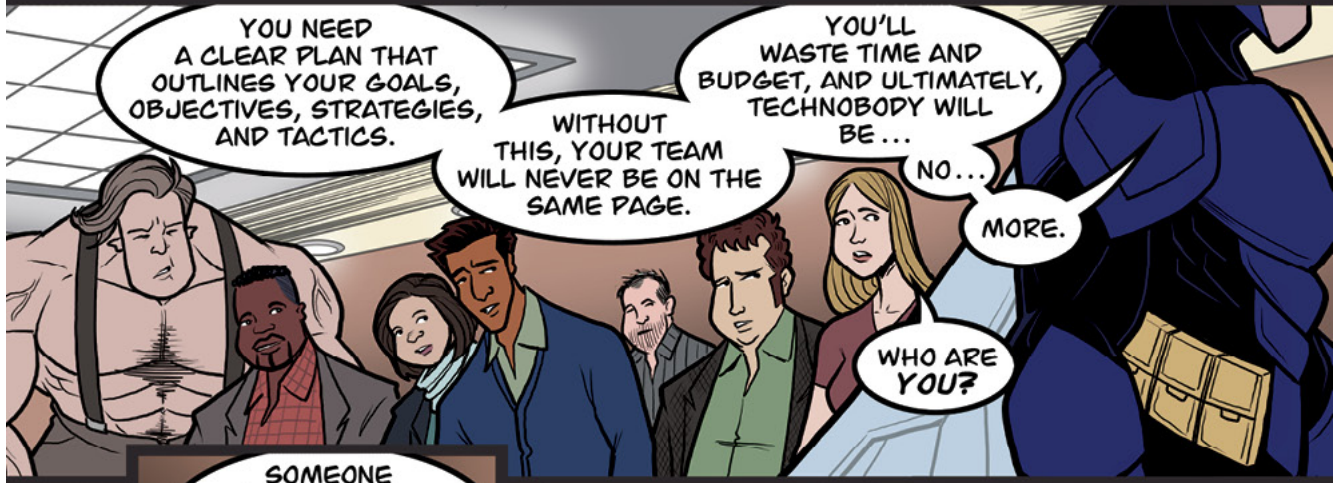
A-ACTUALLY,
I'M A BIT CONFUSED
MYSELF.

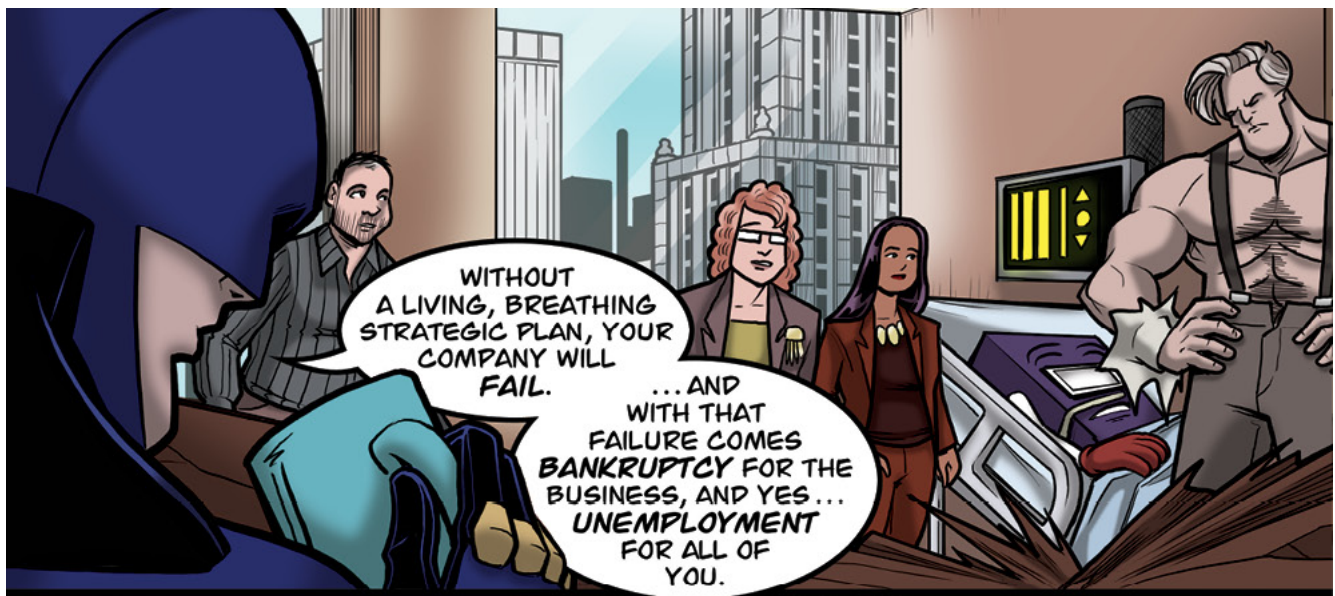
WE SEEM
TO MASH TOGETHER
LOTS OF WORDS WITH
"STRATEGIC" AND PRETEND
THAT EVERYBODY GETS IT.
BUT I'M NOT SURE
WE'RE ALL ON THE
SAME PAGE.

WORDS, SCHMERDS!
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY,
IT'S HOW **IMPORTANT**
IT SOUNDS.

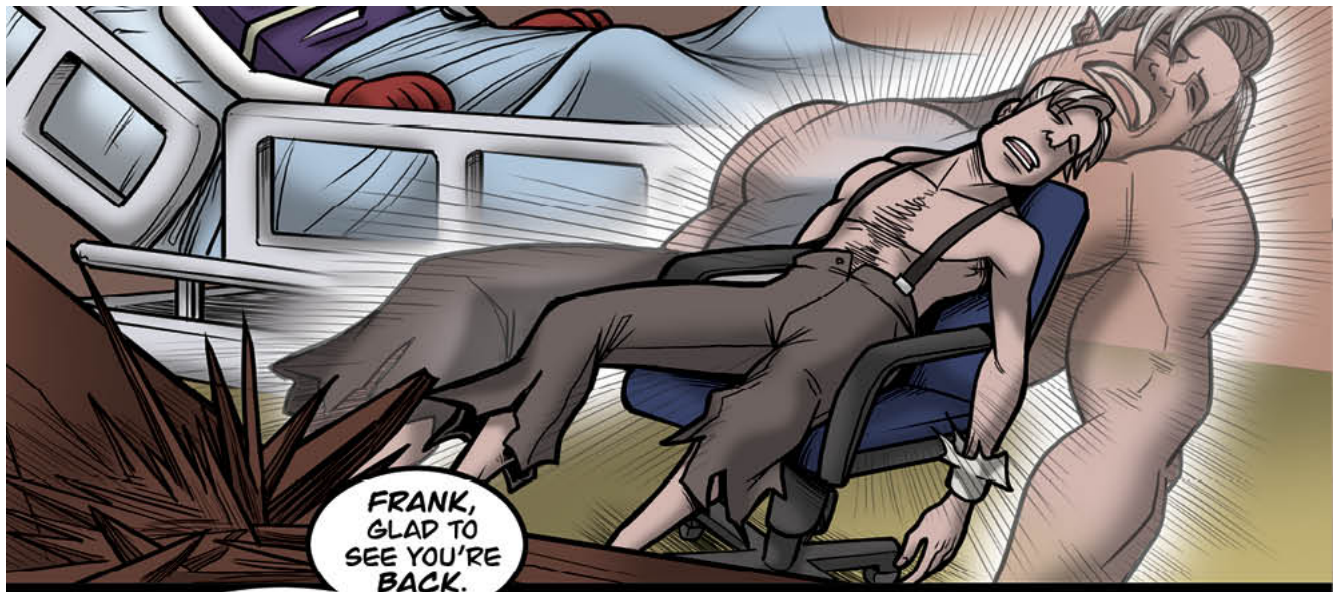
WASN'T
IT **PINK FLOYD**
WHO SANG, "WE
DON'T NEED NO
STRATEGY"?



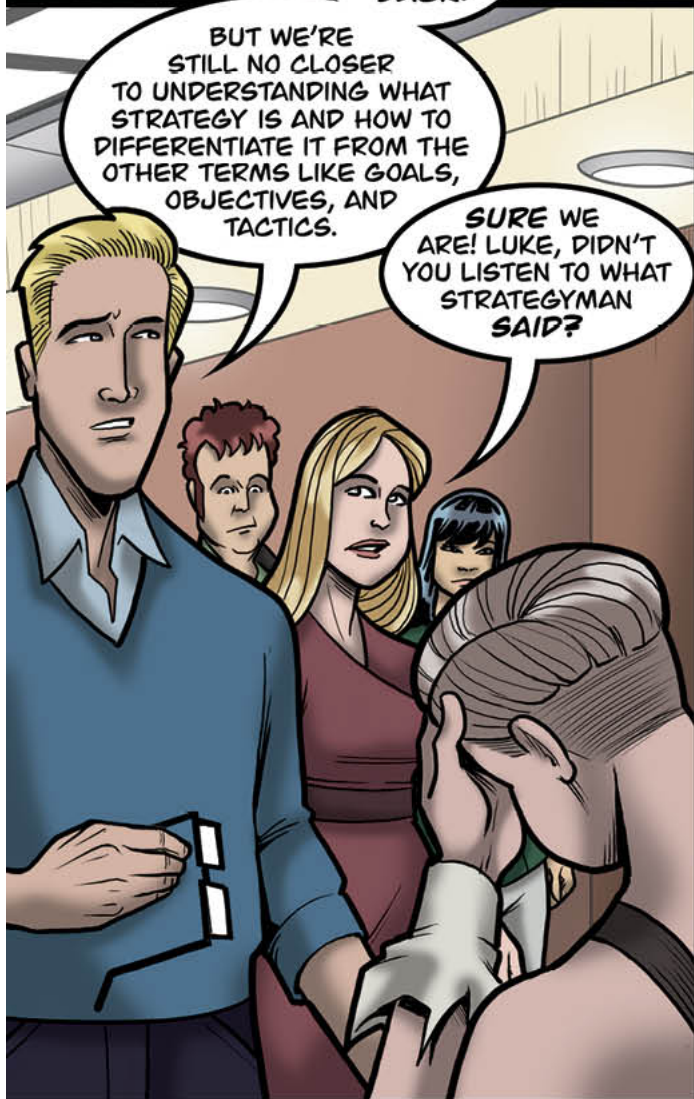








FRANK,
GLAD TO
SEE YOU'RE
BACK.



BUT WE'RE
STILL NO CLOSER
TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT
STRATEGY IS AND HOW TO
DIFFERENTIATE IT FROM THE
OTHER TERMS LIKE GOALS,
OBJECTIVES, AND
TACTICS.

SURE WE
ARE! LUKE, DIDN'T
YOU LISTEN TO WHAT
STRATEGYMAN
SAID?

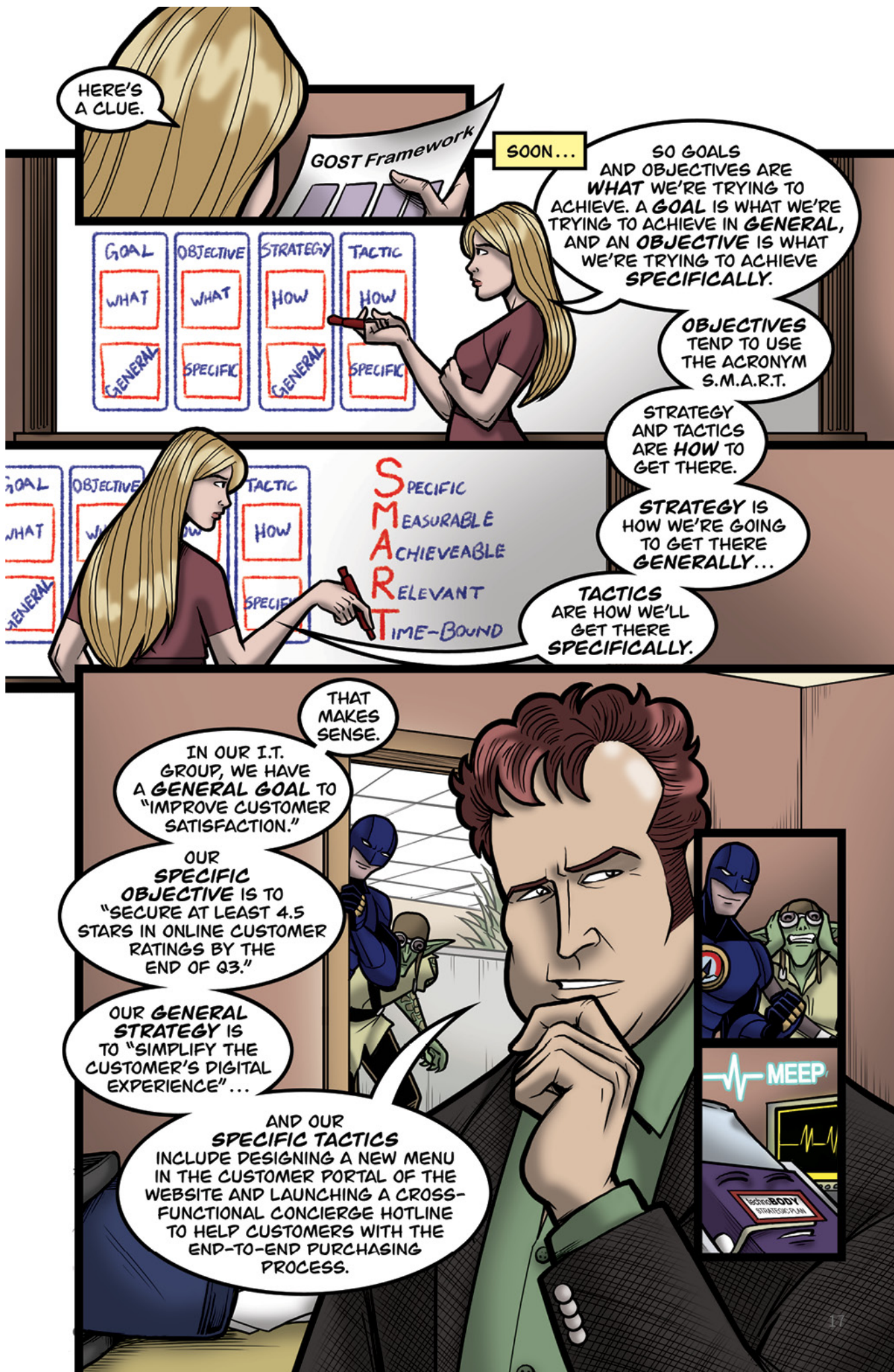


YOU
MEAN THE
ABBOTT & COSTELLO
ROUTINE? I WAS A LITTLE
TOO FREAKED OUT BY
FRANK'S ALTER EGO
TO FOLLOW
IT.

HE SAID
THAT A GOAL IS
WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO
ACHIEVE, AND A STRATEGY IS
HOW YOU'RE GOING TO GET
THERE. ISN'T THAT
RIGHT—



STRATEGYMAN?

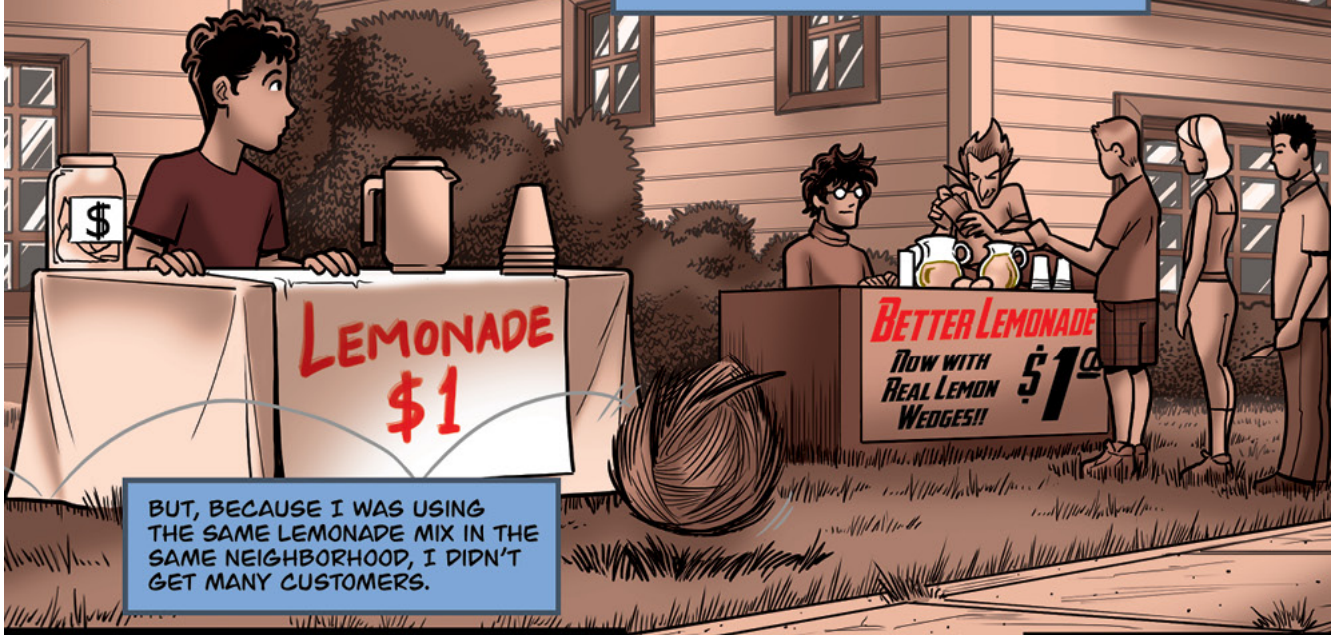






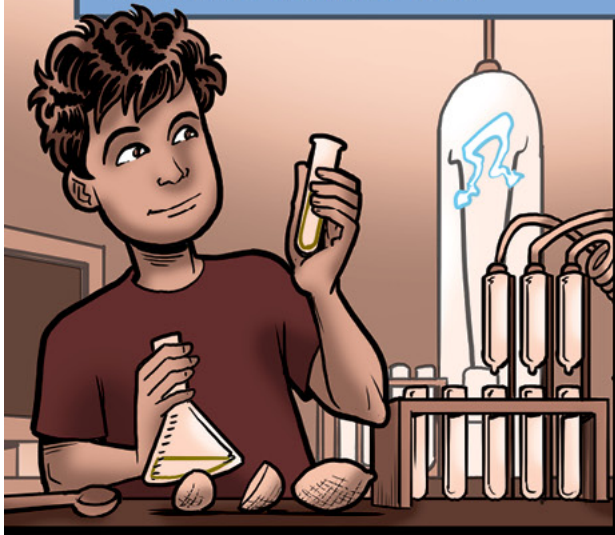
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, SOME OF THE OTHER KIDS STARTED A LEMONADE STAND IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

I WANTED TO HELP, BUT THEY WOULDN'T LET ME. SO, I OPENED MY OWN STAND.



BUT, BECAUSE I WAS USING THE SAME LEMONADE MIX IN THE SAME NEIGHBORHOOD, I DIDN'T GET MANY CUSTOMERS.

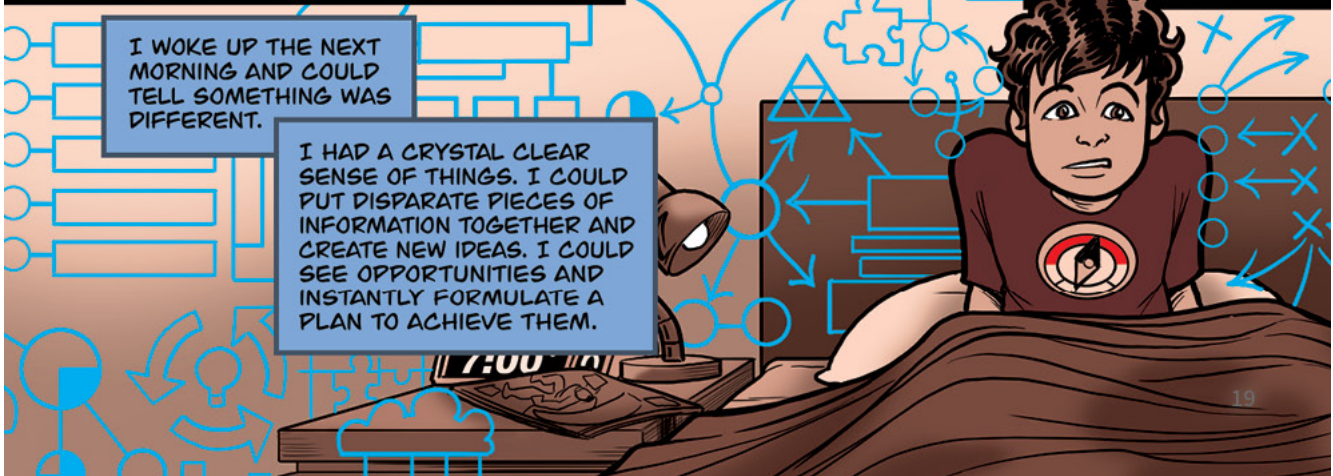
THAT NIGHT, DETERMINED TO CREATE SOMETHING DIFFERENT, I EXPERIMENTED WITH LOTS OF NEW CONCOCTIONS, HOPING TO FIND JUST THE RIGHT TASTE.

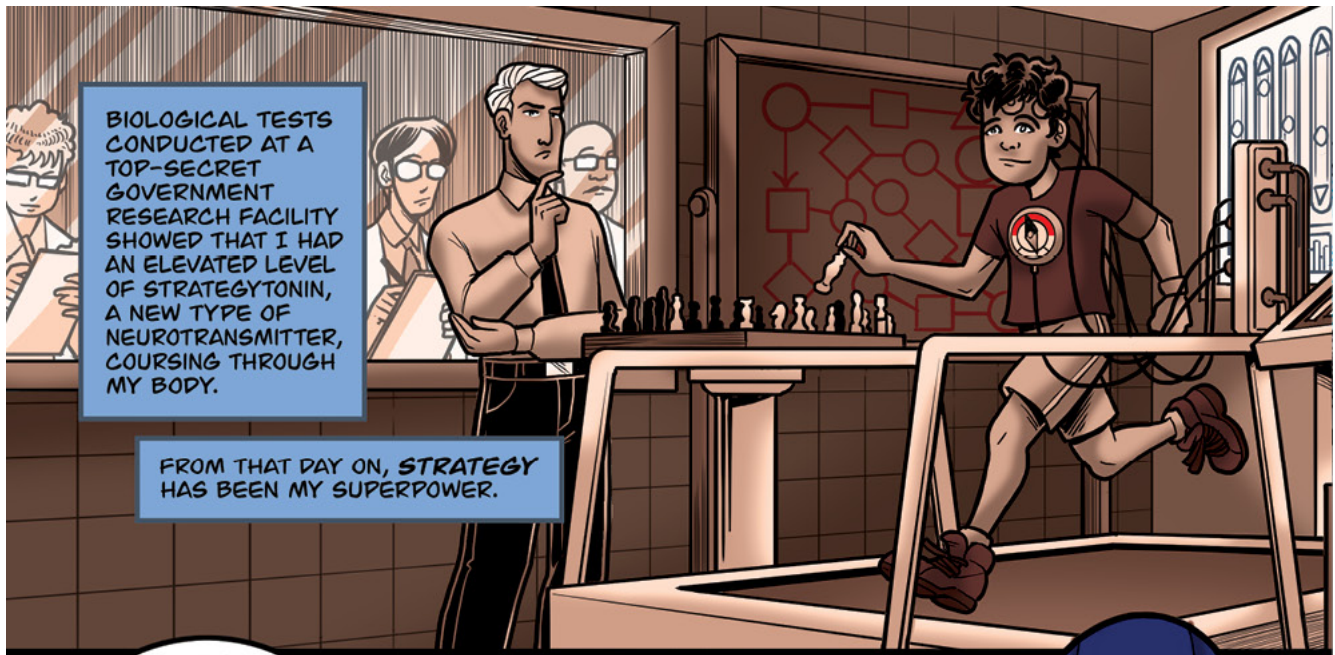


BUT SOMETHING WENT TERRIBLY WRONG.

I WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING AND COULD TELL SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT.

I HAD A CRYSTAL CLEAR SENSE OF THINGS. I COULD PUT DISPARATE PIECES OF INFORMATION TOGETHER AND CREATE NEW IDEAS. I COULD SEE OPPORTUNITIES AND INSTANTLY FORMULATE A PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEM.





BIOLOGICAL TESTS CONDUCTED AT A TOP-SECRET GOVERNMENT RESEARCH FACILITY SHOWED THAT I HAD AN ELEVATED LEVEL OF STRATEGYTONIN, A NEW TYPE OF NEUROTRANSMITTER, COURSEING THROUGH MY BODY.

FROM THAT DAY ON, **STRATEGY** HAS BEEN MY SUPERPOWER.

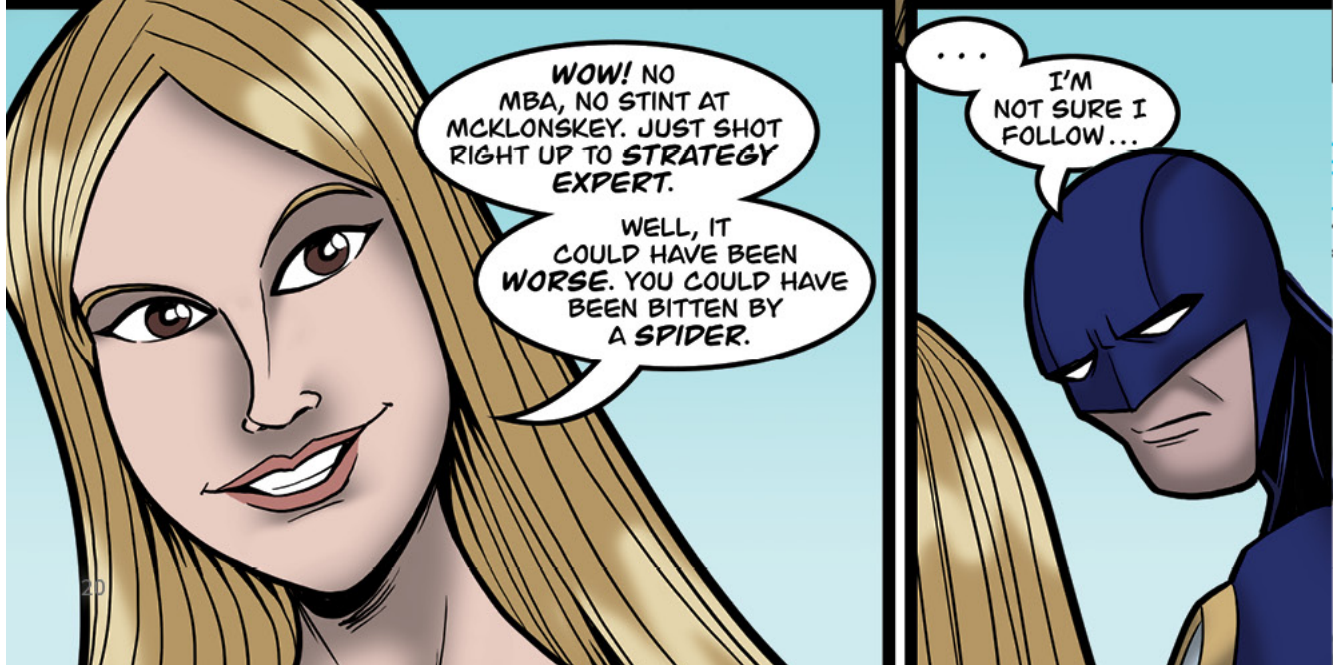


AND WHAT ABOUT THIS STRATEGY DIAL?

IT'S A COMPASS OF SORTS... AN INDICATOR OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION.

IT USES THE STRATEGYTONIN IN MY BODY TO GAUGE STRATEGY. ANYTIME I'M NEAR A GROUP WITH A CLEAR STRATEGY, IT GAINS ENERGY AND POINTS TRUE NORTH.

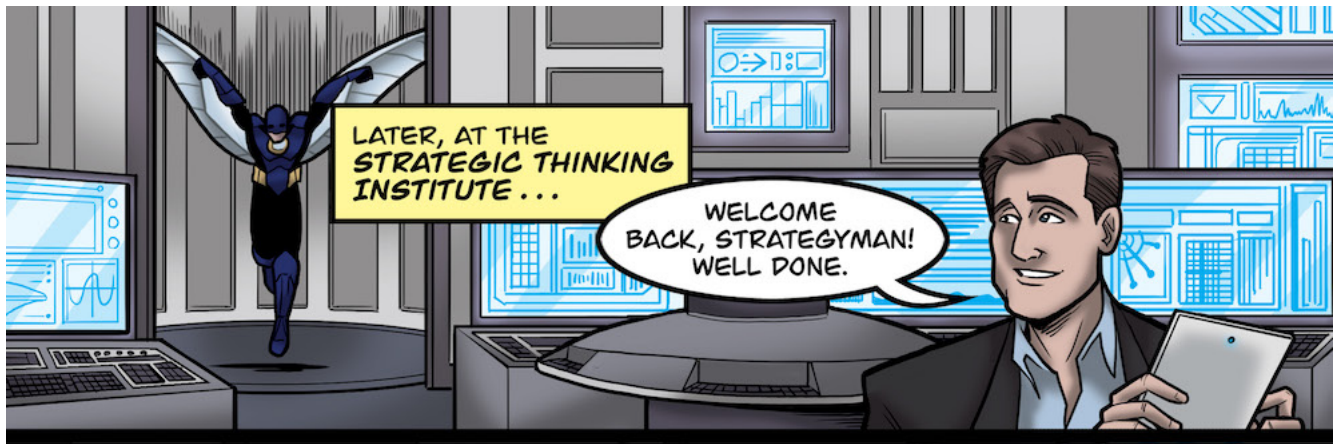
WHEN I COME IN CONTACT WITH A BUSINESS THAT LACKS STRATEGY, IT SPINS AIMLESSLY AND LOSES POWER.



WOW! NO MBA, NO STINT AT MCKLONSKY. JUST SHOT RIGHT UP TO **STRATEGY** EXPERT.

WELL, IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. YOU COULD HAVE BEEN BITTEN BY A SPIDER.

... I'M NOT SURE I FOLLOW...



MAKE NO MISTAKE—BAD STRATEGY CAN LITERALLY KILL A COMPANY. IN A 25-YEAR STUDY OF 750 BANKRUPTCIES, RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF BANKRUPTCY WAS BAD STRATEGY.⁴

ANOTHER STUDY SHOWED THAT DECISIONS ABOUT STRATEGY WERE AT THE ROOT OF POOR PERFORMANCE 70% OF THE TIME. BY COMPARISON, ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS ONLY ACCOUNTED FOR 4%.⁵

AND ANYONE WHO HAS WORKED FOR A MANAGER THAT DIDN'T HAVE SOUND STRATEGIES KNOWS ALL TOO WELL THE FRUSTRATION OF DRIFTING AIMLESSLY WITH NO STRATEGIC DIRECTION.

STRATEGY CAN BE DEFINED AS THE INTELLIGENT ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES THROUGH A UNIQUE SYSTEM OF ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE A GOAL. MORE SIMPLY, STRATEGY IS HOW YOU PLAN TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL.

STRATEGYMAN'S LOG

Case #: 0867

WE CAN SEE THAT A LACK OF CLARITY AROUND THIS DEFINITION CAN DERAIL EXECUTION BEFORE IT BEGINS BECAUSE PEOPLE WILL BE WORKING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

WHILE RESEARCH WITH TALENT MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVES HAS SHOWN THAT STRATEGIC THINKING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY FOR SENIOR MANAGERS, JUST 24% OF ORGANIZATIONS TEACH STRATEGY SKILLS.⁶

THINKTION:
*Transforming thinking
into action.*

How to Defeat Jargon Goblin and Ignormous



1. Stop mixing words.

Since "strategy" is an abstract term, it's challenging enough to define it without combining it with other words to make it that much more confusing. Many companies use terms such as "strategic goals" and "strategic objectives." Why? Goals and objectives are different than strategies, so cramming the words together into one term only serves to muddy the waters. To refresh, the goal is generally what you are trying to achieve (e.g., increase sales). The objective is specifically what you are trying to achieve (e.g., increase sales by 15% in the east region by Q4). The strategy is how you will achieve the goal/objective (e.g., develop a real-time service model to support top-tier product users). Keep your plan simple by using the right word, and *only* the word, that you mean.

2. Stop making things up.

Creativity is great. However, when it comes to setting strategic direction, creating new terms is inefficient and potentially harmful. Words such as "goal," "objective," "strategy," and "tactic" all have concrete definitions that originated in the military arena thousands of years ago. Terms like "strategic imperatives" or "business drivers" are not foundational planning terms. And because they are not foundational concepts, they can be interpreted in lots of different ways. This can lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misdirection. When planning, use real words, not made-up ones.

3. Stop pretending.

If a leader in your company passes down a strategy that isn't really a strategy, stop pretending it is. Correct it! In the examples listed earlier, many of the so-called strategies are actually goals or operating initiatives. Anyone working under similar "strategies" should choose the right forum and appropriate time to talk to leadership about how to modify their statement to more accurately reflect a strategy.

