September 2018

The Strategic Edge

ASP's monthly update on strategy news, tools, resources and upcoming events

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THE PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

The Fall of Rome: Disruption or Mismanagement?

Last month I reflected on the special trip my family would be taking to walk along Hadrian’s Wall. It was an amazing eight days of navigating many farms, sheep, cows, and cars 80 miles across Northern England. We visited Vindolanda, a Roman town and fort that is an active archaeological site. Great history, but the literature nor the movie talked about the Fall of Rome. Hadrian’s Wall was a marvel of technology. The parts of the Wall that still exist is a testament to Roman engineering. Imagine an 18-foot wall supported by a two-way transport system, ditches, and a vallum some 60 feet wide running across the width of Britannia. The Wall was as far north as the Romans ever got, even though another Wall was created closer to the current Scottish border some years later (and then abandoned to pull back to defend Hadrian’s Wall).

Walking from Bowness Upon Solway Firth near the Irish Sea eastward to Wallsend near the North Sea, I couldn’t fathom how the Romans were defeated (I forgot my high school Roman history apparently). The Wall was an impressive show of force. In addition to the Wall, the Roman’s built a small fort every mile along its length and more than 50,000 Roman soldiers defended against the “barbarians.” As I walked and stood in the fort ruins I tried to imagine how a mighty army could fall to “barbarians” who either outlasted them or outwitted them.

Many have speculated as to the cause of the Fall of Rome. In re-reading the opinions of several historians I learned that many of the potential reasons can serve as how not to run a company, or any organization for that matter. Money, labor, expansion, corruption were all at play:

- **Overspending** – maintaining Rome’s expansion did not come cheap. Military spending continued to rise as Rome expanded past Hadrian’s time for another 40 or so years when Aurelius tried to right the ship. Hadrian pulled out of Mesopotamia which was the first contraction of the Empire. Proping up the military pulled vital resources away from other areas of development and some believe their technological advantage was compromised. Lesson: make sure you invest correctly and mind the budget!

- **Corruption** – the third, fourth and fifth centuries were not kind to Rome. In one stretch, there were 20 emperors in 75 years! Assassinations from within was the primary reason as loyal members of the army didn’t trust their leaders. The corruption spilled over to the Roman Senate and every-day Romans soon lost faith in their leaders. Lesson: transparency and moral behavior are important for leaders.

- **Labor Issues** – as Rome conquest a country or kingdom, they quickly converted men into service as part of the Auxiliary force of the army. On paper, giving 25 years of service to Rome was a good deal. You got to become a Roman citizen and received a house and plot of land – if you made it! As Roman farmers became wealthy, they were able to pay more to these conquered souls and Rome soon had a labor issue on its hands – too small of an army to defend its empire. In fact, some conjecture that Hadrian’s Wall was too strung-out to defend, let alone the entire empire. Later during the fifth century after Rome let Visigoths in (as they fled from the marauding Huns from the north and east) the Visigoths were treated brutally and the Visigoths revolted and killed Emperor Valens. In turmoil, the Vandals and Saxons surged across borders to take not only Britannia, but Spain and North Africa. Once North Africa fell, the Vandals acted as
pirates on the Mediterranean cutting off supply lines. Lesson: treat employees well; they are your greatest asset.

- **Disruptions all around** – I concluded that the “barbarians” north of the Wall were true disruptors because they would not let their land be ruled by others. It was personal. The reasons above also led to the Fall of Rome. Other reasons cited include the rise of Christianity with the Edict of Milan and the decision by Diocletian to set up a satellite “HQ” in Constantinople. His thinking was that the Empire was too big to manage effectively. Unfortunately, this decision caused the Eastern Roman Empire to increase its wealth (from trade from the Middle East) and the Western Empire to lose its prominence. Constantinople was fortified and lasted nearly 1000 years more once Rome was sacked in 410 AD. Lesson: think wisely how you organize and diversify!

So, as I close out my summer, I realize how important it is to stick to the basics whether running a global company, a small non-profit, or a government agency. Strategy management 101!

Jim Stockmal  
President, ASP

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**ASP'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**2019 ASP ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**CALL FOR PRESENTER'S OPENING SOON!**

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**KEY PARTNER**

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**BRIGHTLINE INITIATIVE**

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**PLATINUM**
GLOBAL WEBINARS


**Date:** Monday, September 17, 2018  
**Time:** 1:00 - 2:00 PM (EDT)  
Presented by Steve Sanford

Members attend for FREE!

Join us as ASP’s 2018 Richard Goodman Award Winner, U.S. Government Accountability Office, share what qualities make a successful strategic plan! This presentation will be delivered by Steve Sanford, Strategic Planning & Innovation Manager at the GAO.

This webinar will cover tools and techniques used in development of GAO’s quadrennial strategic plan. Of particular focus will be how foresight is integrated into the planning process, innovations used in the most recent plan, and how strategic planning is integrated into business operations across the entire enterprise. This webinar will also cover how to overcome common barriers to stakeholder collaboration and change management.

"As part of our strategic planning process, we emphasize foresight, continuous environmental scanning, and trend analysis as core activities. By exploring trends, key uncertainties and their implications, we can better highlight national issues of greatest concern to the Congress and the American people..."
If you would like to host a webinar, please reach out to jennie@strategyassociation.org, we would love to hear from you!

Missed a webinar? Click here to view our recorded archives.

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**CHAPTER EVENTS & WEBINARS**

**ASP Chicago Presents: The 2018-2023 Regional Transit Strategic Plan for Chicago and Northeastern Illinois**

*Date:* September 11, 2018  
*Time:* 5:30 - 8:00 PM (CDT)  

[Register >](#)

**ASP National Capital Area Presents: Scenario-Based Planning by Robin Wales**

*Date:* September 12, 2018  
*Time:* 6:00 - 7:30 PM (EDT)  

[Register >](#)

**Global Webinar Presents Richard Goodman Award Winner: U.S. Government Accountability Office**

*Date:* September 17, 2018  
*Time:* 1:00 - 2:00 PM (EDT)  

[Register >](#)

**ASP Presents: Welcome Webinar for New Members**

*Date:* September 19, 2018  
*Time:* 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (EDT)  

[Register >](#)

**Second Chance to Rock Your Business Model Design with ASP NorCal and Business Models Inc.**

*Date:* December 5, 2018  
*Time:* 1:00 - 2:00 PM (EST)  

[Register >](#)

Click here for additional information about upcoming events in your area!

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Save the Date! First Mondays Return on Monday, October 1st!**

ASP's Nonprofit Center of Excellence's First Mondays discussions return on Monday, October 1st. First Mondays, are monthly community conversations on topics relevant to strategic plan development, implementation and management. Notes from each session will be shared with participants and a recording will be posted to the ASP YouTube channel. To learn more about or to sign up to receive communications on First Mondays, visit our website [here](#).

Call for Volunteers!
Are you interested in furthering your career, building your network of professionals, strengthening your leadership skills, and implementing new ideas within the strategy community? If so, please contact Rachel King at executivedirector@strategyassociation.org to discuss our exciting volunteer opportunities!

CERTIFICATION CORNER

Are you studying for the Fall 2018 exam cycle? Here are some tips to enhance your study plan!

Form a study group!

Study groups can be an effective way to tackle studying and keep you accountable. You have a few options to form an informal study group to prepare for the ASP certification exams.

- Let your local chapter leaders know you are looking for peers to form a study group. They will help you locate others in the chapter who are in the same pursuit.
- Convince your peers to go on this journey with you. Make a commitment inside your company and do this together. Sharing the journey will make you a tighter team and a stronger department.
- Let your HR department know you are pursuing strategy certification. Department personnel may be able to support you in finding peers to mentor or study with.
- Post on LinkedIn that you are looking to form an online study group. Virtual study groups can be just as effective as in person.

For more tips on forming a study group, visit the ASP website here or contact certification@strategyassociation.org.

Use our New Certification Terminology & Key Concepts Flashcards!

Our new Certification Terminology & Key Concepts Flashcards will be a great addition to your study plan. Purchase them online today by visiting our online store here.

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

Welcome to new members who joined in August 2018!

Members at Large

- Deborah Allcock, University of Huddersfield
- Paul Collinge, Rural Payments Agency
- Robert Edmund, Marketing Strategy & Planning
- Tony Milns
- Scott Milne, Gaterule
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