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**Contact: Barbara Henricks**

**Cave Henricks Communications**

**(512) 301-8936 or [barbara@cavehenricks.com](mailto:barbara@cavehenricks.com)**

## **BEING STRATEGIC:**

**Plan for Success; Out-think Your Competitors; Stay Ahead of Change  
by Erika Andersen**

*“In *Being Strategic*, Erika Andersen offers a clear, practical, powerful approach for navigating through tough times.”*

*--Bonnie Hammer, President, NBCU Cable Entertainment and Cable Studios*

Whether you're trying to find a new job, juggling the monthly budget, trying to re-energize your 401(k), or dealing with a series of crises at work, strategy is crucial. Every decision we make – large or small – can benefit from a more strategic approach, says executive coach and acclaimed author **Erika Andersen**, who has advised companies such as GE, Pepsico and MTV. In her new book, **BEING STRATEGIC: Plan for Success; Out-think Your Competitors; Stay Ahead of Change** (St. Martin's Press; June 2009; hardcover), she demystifies being strategic, making this critical skill available to everyone.

**BEING STRATEGIC** is more than a book; it's a primer on being truly effective in creating the career, the business or the life you most want – a skill that seems more sorely needed than ever in today's brutal economy.

“I've come to believe,” writes Andersen, “that almost anyone can improve his or her ability to think strategically -- and reap the personal and professional rewards that follow.” The book provides simple models, real-life examples and self-directed activities for making the art of being strategic a skill, and eventually, a habit.

**BEING STRATEGIC** uses as a framework the story of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Welsh nobleman who builds a castle for protection and weaves in fresh and relevant real life stories from Andersen's own work with clients like restaurateur Danny Meyer. These stories consider how being strategic helps a management team torn on the best way to become a category killer; a company trying to fix a communication problem between executive offices and the field and how an overworked sales team copes with a colleague's sudden and unexpected departure. Along with the scenarios, Andersen discusses the bigger concepts like finding purpose, uncovering passion and facilitating change.

The roadmap for consistently making choices that move you toward your goals, says Andersen, comes down to using a simple mental model. If practiced and turned to habit, she believes this approach lies at the heart of becoming truly strategic in everything you do:

- ***What is: Pulling Back the Camera*** Get a clear sense of your beginning point and current reality by taking in all relevant information. This will become your foundation for envisioning what your desired future will look like and then how to get from where you are now to where you want to be.
- ***What's the Hope: Reasonable Aspiration*** For most people, envisioning the possibilities is the fun part in being strategic. But more than just envisioning all of the possible outcomes, this step assures that you clarify the future you intend before beginning to move toward it. The reasoning is simple: if you don't know where you're going, it's hard to know how to get there. Simply put, an Olympic athlete envisions the gold medal hanging from his neck.
- ***What's in the Way: Facing the Facts*** Look closely at the impediments that lie between you and your goal. You have to get clear about the obstacles you're going to have to overcome in order to be strategic.

- ***What's the Path: Roadway First, Then Asphalt*** Now that you know where you are, where you're trying to go and what's in your way, it's tempting to just start "doing stuff." Stop yourself! This is the time to consider and select specific strategies that will form the core of your efforts. Then, you'll decide on the specific tactics that will best implement those strategies.

Using this approach transforms lives, as strategic thoughts become actions that move things ahead – in both business and life.

### **About the Author**

**Erika Andersen** is the founding partner of Proteus International, a consulting and training firm that helps client organizations clarify and move toward their hoped-for future. She serves as coach and advisor to the senior executives of companies such as MTV Networks, Rockwell Automation, MillerCoors, NBC Universal, Union Square Hospitality Group, and Cablevision Corporation. Her first book, *Growing Great Employees: Turning Ordinary People into Extraordinary Performers* was published by Portfolio in 2006. Andersen also blogs at The Simplest Thing That Works (<http://thesimplestthing.typepad.com>).

### **BEING STRATEGIC:**

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**Author: Erika Andersen**

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**<http://www.beingstrategic.com/>**

## **BEING STRATEGIC EVERY DAY**

Author Erika Andersen defines “being strategic” as consistently making core directional choices that will best move you toward your hoped-for future. In her work with top executives and organizations, Erika has developed a method of making strategy an everyday habit, a set of skills that can be used in business and in life. Here are some of the core tenets of **BEING STRATEGIC**:

### **Defining the Challenge: How Can We...?**

Getting clear about your core challenge is the essential foundation for being strategic. In this first part of the process, you define the essence of the problem facing you, so that everyone involved agrees on what needs to be addressed.

### **What Is: Pulling Back the Camera**

Once you’re clear about the problem you’re trying to solve, it’s important to understand where you’re starting from: the key elements of your current situation, relative to your challenge. Pulling back the camera means mentally stepping back from the situation so that you can see and evaluate all the critical factors. Another strategic skill that starts to come into play in this step: being a “fair witness” – looking at the situation as it truly is, rather than how you want it to be, or fear that it may be.

### **What’s the Hope: Reasonable Aspiration**

For most people, this is the fun part of being strategic – envisioning possibilities. By using your understanding of the current situation as a starting point, and then setting a specific time frame and imagining a future where your challenge has been addressed, you can engage your brain’s ability to imagine new realities while overcoming your brain’s almost equally strong ability to generate reasons why a new reality isn’t feasible. You can create a distinctive and achievable “reasonable aspiration” for your future.

### **What’s in the Way: Facing the Facts**

Once you know where you’re starting from and where you want to go, the next step is to look very clearly at the impediments that lie between you and the achievement of your goal – the “trolls under the bridge.” In order to do this, it’s important to manage how you talk to yourself about these obstacles: you bring the “fair witness” skills to this part of the process, as well, so you can get an accurate assessment of what you’ll need to get over, around, or through in order to achieve the future you’ve envisioned.

### **Where’s the Path: Roadway First, then Asphalt**

First, define the core directional choices you need to make to get you to your goal: these are your strategies, and are at the heart of the power of thinking and acting in this way. Next, decide on the specific actions, the tactics, that will take you there. Your strategies are the road to your future, if you will, the tactics are the bricks you use to build it.

Adapted from **BEING STRATEGIC: Plan for Success, Out-think Your Competitors, Stay Ahead of Change** by Erika Andersen; St. Martin’s Press; hardcover; June, 2009;  
<http://www.beingstrategic.com>

## **Advance Praise for BEING STRATEGIC and Erika Andersen**

“Over the past decade, in each of the companies I’ve led, I’ve relied on Erika Andersen to help me engage my senior team in getting clear about the future we want to create for our enterprise, and figuring out what it will take for us to get there. Her vision and strategy process helps us get our heads around complex issues in a way that’s unusually simple: I’m always surprised, at the end of a session, how we’ve made our aspirations practical and built a clear path to achieving them.”

*Doug Herzog*

*President, MTVN Entertainment Group*

“To most of us, the thought of articulating a long-term strategy that is both visionary and practical seems an overwhelming task. The approach used by Erika Andersen enables a team to effectively articulate ideas, reach consensus, and formulate a detailed course of action for achieving their vision.”

*Kathy Dore*

*Former President, CanWest Media Broadcasting*

“When I became President of Women in Cable Telecommunications in 2001, I realized the organization needed to re-invent itself. Since that time, we’ve used the Proteus strategic approach to create a clear, powerful vision of the organization we wanted, and then to continually move toward that vision. WICT is now growing and vital—and Erika’s work with us has been hugely helpful in making that our reality.”

*Benita Fitzgerald Mosley*

*Olympic Gold Medalist and President and CEO, Women in Cable Telecommunications*

“Erika is simply an inspiration. From changing my “self talk” to learning new ways to handle everyday management situations, she gave me tools to really get me to grow. I so look forward to Being Strategic, as her advice is solid and time-tested.”

*Lauren Swearhart*

*Director, Project Management, Comcast*

“The Proteus approach to being strategic enabled me to “de-clutter” my career and personal goals, and to see the big picture more clearly. I came to the realization that I should trust myself more, follow my instincts, and be more diligent in finding the opportunities that I used to wait for.”

*Keely Rose Buchanan*

*Manager of Distance Learning, Time Warner Cable*

## About Erika Andersen



Since 1980 Erika Andersen has become known for promoting learning and change in ways uniquely tailored to her clients' challenges, goals, and culture. She focuses on thoroughly understanding each organization and on collaborating with her clients in ways that are engaging, direct, and "learner-friendly."

Peter Block has said of her work, "You have a wonderful gift and talent for taking the essence of things and expressing them in a simple, yet powerful way." Erika uses metaphor and models to help people learn about themselves and their organizations, and then to decide how to move toward the future they envision. While she encourages clients to think deeply and to examine their assumptions and patterns of behavior, she also offers practical methods and skills for individuals, teams, and companies to achieve their hoped-for-future.

Much of Erika's recent work has focused on organizational visioning and development, executive coaching, and collaborative change and learning. In these capacities she has served as consultant and advisor to the CEOs and top executives of a number of corporations, including MTV Networks, Hewitt Associates, Turner Broadcasting, MillerCoors, NBC Universal, Union Square Hospitality Group, CBS, Madison Square Garden, and Comcast Corporation.

Her books and learning guides have been translated into Spanish, Turkish, German, French, Russian and Chinese, and she has been frequently quoted in national media, including *Glamour*, *Fortune*, *The New York Times*, Forbes Online and BlogTalk Radio. She is the author of **Growing Great Employees: Turning Ordinary People into Extraordinary Performers** (Portfolio, 2006) and **Being Strategic: Plan for Success; Out-think Your Competitors; Stay Ahead of Change** (St. Martin's Press, June 2009). She also blogs at The Simplest Thing That Works (<http://thesimplestthing.typepad.com>).