

# TOOLS, TECHNOLOGY, & YOUR GROWTH STRATEGY

## *Why Dwight D. Eisenhower Puts Today's "Aging Leaders" to Shame*

### THE PROBLEM

At [www.CanadaStartUp.com](http://www.CanadaStartUp.com), we get called upon to help companies build mission-critical infrastructure, overcome challenges, and position themselves for growth. In recent years, we've become alarmed at a regular practice among "aging leaders" in the face of rapid technological change -- to delegate the investigation and ***strategic application*** of "new tech tools" to a relatively inexperienced, unseasoned junior designate. (In fact, assuming there's active "delegation" is giving credit where it may not be warranted. Our suspicions are that many business leaders out there basically hope/assume that someone in the organization is "looking into things.") Now the junior designate may be a whiz-bang when it comes to wielding the tool in question. But he or she may have very little business experience in the broader sense, and lack the more balanced perspective that comes with years of market engagement to understand how a particular technology can best be leveraged (or not) to truly achieve a company's larger strategic goals. Moreover, that tool is likely to be obsolete within a few brief years. Is the junior designate considering the larger corporate legacy when making decisions about a particular technology, and how it should be used? Shouldn't that be your job as the "leader."

### THE CONSEQUENCE

This is a problem. And a fundamental failing. A resistance among senior strategists to regularly self-educate on new (or evolving) business technologies represents a "3-Alarm-Fire," in our view. A lack of discipline to learn (in concept) even the ***basic*** capabilities of an emerging business technology, and what those capabilities may represent as a source of "strategic" growth for one's own company, will lead to failure and lost opportunity. Yet it's becoming more frequent in our client discovery dialogues. It's especially curious given that, every day, technologies are getting easier to use and understand. If your fifth grader can figure things out in short order, why can't you?

Customer relationship management, sales pipelines and deal-flows, retail management, point-of-sale, inventory management, virtual agents, project management, enterprise resource management, auto-marketing & re-marketing tools, social media marketing, and so forth. There are tools and technologies to address all of these functions, and then some. But how many new technologies have you personally explored even on a cursory level in order to understand where your next opportunity for making money, or saving money, may actually lie?

Let's use social media marketing as a simple example. "Facebook" is the single most dominant social media marketing tool across the globe – at least for now. And yet our informal survey of senior business leaders across small-to-mid-sized enterprises leaves us with the impression that many managers don't actually understand "how it works," how it should be applied in their own customer eco-system, what elements they should be "governing" as strategists, and where they may need to manage risk.

- Do you understand the basics of a Facebook Business Page and Ad Account?
- Do you have governance in place around public postings, profanity, permissions?
- Who owns the Facebook passwords? What happens if that person leaves?
- Who's responsible for your Facebook brand and content programming?
- What mandate have they been given? And what is the measurement of success?
- Are you trying to build awareness, generate leads, or trigger an action/sale?

- Are you familiar with the different campaign-types available in Facebook?
- Are you familiar with how a “Look-Alike” marketing function works?
- Who’s executing customer data analysis & target market profiling?
- Who’s evaluating ROI for each campaign? What have they been told to achieve?
- Are you aware of the risks behind “Boost” Campaigns with no ROI metrics?
- Do you understand the threat of “Bots?”

Sounds complicated? Some of it “yes.” Some of it “no.” But it’s your job to understand the **strategic** ramifications of deploying Facebook as a marketing tool for your company. So why aren’t you taking the time to learn the conceptual basics of how it works?

## THE SUPREME COMMANDER

And this is where General Eisenhower serves as inspiration – one that any leader, aging or otherwise, should take to heart. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces during WWII when he was about **52 years of age**. He was responsible for overseeing the successful invasion and liberation of North Africa and Europe during the world’s largest ever military conflict. Yet, this is a man who never previously saw active combat. He oversaw a tank training school during WWI, but was never deployed. The last tank he likely drove was a vintage design built 20 years prior to the landing of Allied forces on the beaches of Normandy. He had no direct leadership experience with either navy or air force operations prior to his designation as Supreme Commander. During the inter-war period, he held largely administrative positions.

Yet this man was ultimately responsible for guaranteeing the success of Allied actions on the North African and Western European continents. Granted he surrounded himself with a cohort of equally competent senior officers and military strategists. They came from multiple countries and all divisions of armed forces. But he himself had to ensure he understood in great detail how each military force, and their respective technologies, could aid him in securing victory. And remember that technology was evolving at a lightning pace during the war; on both sides of the conflict. The top scientists and engineers were constantly at work trying to invent the next winning technological advantage. All services of the combined armed forces (army, navy, air force, marines) were witnessing innovations everywhere - new and better types of tanks, planes, ships, guns, ordinance, radar, radio, apparel, etc. Now did Eisenhower ever need to drive the latest tank or fly the newest plane during WWII? No. Of course not! But most definitely he needed to be **made aware** of the specific capabilities and potential of each technology in order to oversee, strategize, coordinate, and approve major military campaigns. Let’s talk about that newest tank, aircraft, or ship:

- How far and fast could it go?
- How much fuel could it carry?
- How long before it needed to be refuelled?
- How much ordinance could it carry?
- How many crew were required?
- How much maintenance and spare parts?
- What kind of conditions could it handle (rain, winter, desert)?
- How many should be deployed collectively to achieve greatest effect?
- Should it be deployed in tandem with some other technology?

These are just examples of the kind of “data inputs” Eisenhower and his fellow strategists would have required to determine and evaluate how best to deploy technology, in combination, and in a winning way, during a particular campaign, and on a particular front. Even as a former tank specialist, he wouldn’t have driven an M4 Sherman tank during WWII. But he’d certainly need to have understood the combined capabilities of a battalion of M4 tanks heading into a particular European engagement, as well as how artillery, armed personnel, and air support could have complemented the offensive; not to mention what sort of supply logistics were necessary to keep up momentum, and sustain the initiative.

And remember – Dwight Eisenhower was Supreme Allied Commander from when he was roughly **52-55 years of age**. So don’t tell me you’re getting too old. Don’t tell me you’re leaving it to the “young guns.” Because they may know how to aim their technology. But they probably don’t really understand what to aim for, when, where and why. That’s your job as Supreme Allied Commander. And that only comes with years of experience. It doesn’t come from a “tool.”

### **THE TAKE-AWAY?... Saturday Mornings, YouTube, and a “Cup-of-Joe”**

So what does all this have to do with you? We don’t care what business you’re in, and what your leadership role. Keep learning about new technologies on the market. Keep exploring how they may impact your overall business model and strategic options. Don’t understand something? Ask an expert. Ask a colleague who’s one step ahead. Worried about the time commitment? We guarantee that if you spend just 15 minutes watching a few introductory YouTube clips on any given technology, over any given Saturday, with a hot “cup-a-joe” in hand, you will very quickly start to understand the “bigger strategic implications” behind a specific technology.

Remember – you don’t need to be the expert. You don’t have to understand every detailed nuance, nut and bolt. You don’t need to drive the tank!! You just need to understand what that tank might be able to do for you. And then find the driver to get it done.

Lastly, if you learn the capabilities, and learn just a bit of the terminology, behind any given technology, you will also find very quickly that you’ll be able to engage your “experts” in a much more meaningful, productive, and rewarding fashion. For both your sakes. And in a way that will land you “winning results,” and improve your bottom-line.

Start brewing that “Cup-A-Joe.” And begin your “YouTube” search.

Need further insight?

Contact: [info@canadastartup.com](mailto:info@canadastartup.com). 1-800-611-8081