HOW DO WE STRATEGICALLY MANAGE UP, DOWN, AND OUT?

Using the public value approach

What is the public value approach?

Have you been in a meeting where someone mentioned 'public value'? Or the 'strategic triangle' and the 'authorising environment'? What do these terms mean?

Public value, with its strategic triangle and authorising environment, was developed by Harvard Kennedy School of Management professor Mark Moore, as a tool to guide individual managers in determining what they should think and do within their own policy environments. It's an aspirational approach taught in courses such as the Australia and New Zealand School of Government's Masters in Public Administration.

The public value approach is centred around a positive role for the public sector. While it has attracted some criticism for its relevance to Westminster political systems, it resonates for many public servants as a guide to more effective strategy and policy development.

What's a practical example of public value in action?

Louise Gilding, a senior executive in the ACT Government, has used public value's Strategic Triangle with her team to judge which options to recommend:

1. Does the option create *public value* (i.e. does it solve the problem)?

2. Is the option aligned with the *authorising environment* (i.e. will politicians and stakeholders support the approach)?

3. Are the operational *capabilities available* (i.e. is it doable)?
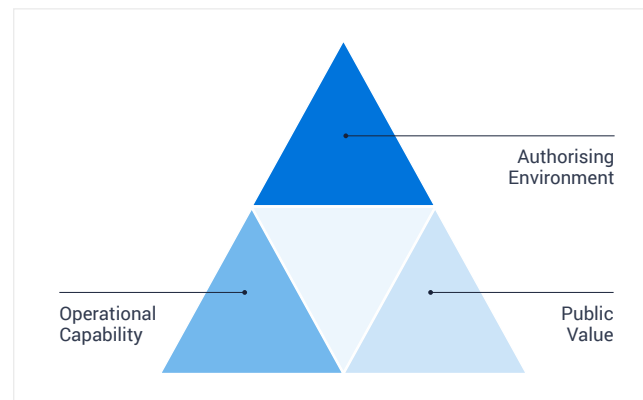
M. H. Moore. Strategic Triangle

How can the Strategic Triangle be employed by public servants?

- To develop a new or revised strategy, or craft policy options for a sticky problem, you can use this *up, down, and out tool* to check if you've covered the bases – especially with key stakeholders in mind

- Reflect on past successes – or failures – in terms of the lessons to be learned from whether the Strategic Triangle was aligned or not

- You can use these terms as an increasingly common vocabulary to talk to others within and outside your team about the complexity of public policy issues.

References

M. H. Moore, *Recognizing Public Value* (2013)

L. Gilding, 'The practical realities of policy on the run: A practitioner's response to academic policy frameworks', Chapter 11 in Mercer, et al. (eds.), *Learning Policy, Doing Policy: Interactions Between Public Policy Theory, Practice and Teaching.* Canberra: ANU Press.

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