

Emergent Approach Drama



Hey, Since When is “No” a Good Thing?

Sullivan is an internal strategy consultant at a large corporation, and Gilbert, the president of a business division, is Sullivan’s client. They are good friends having a drink after a strategy session with business team.

GILLY Shouldn’t “yes” indicate a good thing?

SULLY I know, it annoys people.

GILLY Why can’t the disqualifiers be positive and indicate that you have a good strategy?
Passing your freaky disqualifiers just means you don’t have a bad one.

SULLY Or one at all.

GILLY Oh yeah, that’s even better (rolls eyes). Come on, the objective is to get a good strategy. Right?

SULLY It’s the way adaptation works. You destroy the fallacies, the weak, the unfit stuff.

GILLY We could sprinkle in a few positive “yes” tests, couldn’t we? It would make it easier to sell the disqualifiers to the team.

SULLY Sure, I could roll out some nice affirmative questions: (speaks in a more official tone) “Will your strategy succeed? Yes? Wonderful! Have we eliminated bias? Yes? Excellent! Bless you. Time for doughnuts.”

GILLY Cut it out.

- SULLY I guess I could rewrite the disqualifiers as “yes” tests, something like, “is the positive opposite of your prospective strategy statement not absurd?”
- GILLY Just stop it, will ya? You said that some traditional tests that look for yes answers are good, didn’t you?
- SULLY But they are usually tests of the entire framework, no the strategy component.
- GILLY So wat’s wrong with having a good framework?
- SULLY What if you were designing a new car, and as you are trying to solve a challenging problem with the braking system, people keep asking, “Is it a good car? Does it drive well? How is the performance?” These questions wouldn’t be useful to you, they would just piss you off.
- GILLY It is so much easier to work in the affirmative though. This is what normal people do.
- SULLY Yeah, easier, but not so useful for judging strategy. The probability of predicting whether you will have overall success is just too low. So many things must be right. Affirmative tests seduce us to believe we know more than we do.
- GILLY I guess.
- SULLY The disqualifiers don’t try to do so much. They weed out what you can know with fair certainty to be unfit, making sure that you have real functioning strategies. This clears the ground for getting excellent strategies later when you work the SAM.
- GILLY The SAM is the strategy alternatives matrix?
- SULLY Yep
- GILLY Well, at least the disqualifiers are simple. We can sell that to the team. Is the SAM simple too?
- SULLY Absolutely. Once the team learns some basic techniques like strategy-puzzle solving, how to design fitness criteria, how to integrate external scenarios, and how to make assessments without aggregate financials and weighting, the SAM becomes quite intuitive.
- GILLY Sounds like loads of fun.
- SULLY Massive fun.