

## CHAPTER SIX

# Strategy Creation as Serious Play

Claus Jacobs, Matt Statler

### Introduction

Strategy researchers seem to have struggled to develop a theory of strategy creation. We believe this difficulty might be eased somewhat if the field had a notion of intentionality that allowed us to acknowledge emergent change. We here present *serious play* as a descriptive framework for activities through which the conditions of the possibility of emergence may be intentionally created. In this sense, the purpose of this chapter is *to consider strategy creation as a kind of serious play*.

### Intending Emergence

Recently, Regnér (2003) observed that there are relatively few answers to the question of how managers actually create strategy in practice. Whittington (2003) similarly calls for a more enhanced, detailed understanding of the where and how of strategy creation. Cockburn and Henderson (2000) have taken an important step in this direction and investigated the initial conditions of the origins of competitive advantage in strategy creation. In response to these observations and preliminary efforts, we approach the task of developing a theory of strategy creation with two assumptions: first, that strategy is intentional; and second, that it is emergent. Guided by these assumptions, we consider how and to what extent the emergence of strategy can be intended.

We assume that strategy is intentional. The standard notion of intentionality that is presupposed in strategy research refers to actions that are *deliberately directed* towards the achievement of some *purpose*. For example, Chandler (1962: 15) referred to strategy's generic purpose as the "determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals". In a distinct, but similar formulation strategy has been characterized as a rational, top-down process through which goals are identified and achieved by the firm (e.g. Ansoff, Declerck, and Hayes, 1976).