

# The 600 MOST POWERFUL STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS\*

Mike Brown

The Brainzooming Group

for

Developing Strategy

Branding and Marketing

Boosting Innovation

Enabling Extreme Creativity

Implementing Successfully

**\*That The  
Brainzooming  
Group Uses.  
So Far.**

**Brainzooming™**



Catalyzing Your  
Innovative Success.

# The 600 Most Powerful Strategic Planning Questions\*

**\*That The Brainzooming Group  
Uses. So far.**

by

**Mike Brown**  
The Brainzooming™ Group

© 2016, The Brainzooming Group

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.



# Value of Strategic Planning Questions

Productive strategic thinking exercises are at the heart of The Brainzooming Group methodology. Great brainstorming and strategic planning questions encourage and allow people to talk about what they know including factual information, personal perspectives, and their views of the future.

## The Value of Strategic Thinking Exercises

I tell people who ask about how we developed The Brainzooming Group methodology that a big part of what motivated me were the business people I worked with who didn't know how to fill out strategic planning templates and worksheets.

What they did know a lot about were the businesses, customers, and markets they served. We found we could ask them strategic planning questions and brainstorming questions to capture information to create strategic plans.

Since I could write the plan, knowing which strategic planning questions to ask (within a fun, stimulating environment) was key to developing creative, quickly-prepared plans infused with strategic thinking.

And when you combine “creative,” “strategic thinking,” and “quickly-prepared,” you get Brainzooming!



Photo by: Leslie Adams

Here are links to 600 of the most powerful brainstorming and strategic planning questions we incorporate within strategic thinking exercises we use at The Brainzooming Group.

Yes, 600 questions!

Who could ask for more?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MB' followed by a flourish.

**Brainzooming™**



Catalyzing Your  
Innovative Success.

# THE 600 MOST POWERFUL QUESTIONS

	Page
<b>73</b> Developing Your Overall Strategy	<b>3</b>
<b>25</b> Articulating a Strategic Vision	<b>4</b>
<b>53</b> Setting a Strategic Foundation	<b>5</b>
<b>64</b> Branding and Marketing Strategy	<b>6</b>
<b>64</b> Customer Experience	<b>7</b>
<b>37</b> Creative Cool Names	<b>8</b>
<b>120</b> Innovation Strategy	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b> Great Strategic Thinking Questions	<b>10</b>
<b>24</b> Extreme Creativity	<b>11</b>
<b>44</b> Looking Forward Strategically	<b>12</b>
<b>84</b> Implementing for Impact	<b>13</b>
<b>8</b> Asking What Others Think	<b>14</b>

Rather than asking only familiar strategy questions, we employ **strategic thinking detours**. Like a road detour routes you in a new direction, strategic thinking detours lead you to new strategic perspectives and ideas.

## [The First Question](#)

The 1 question that's the granddaddy of all strategy questions within the Brainzooming methodology.

## [Strategic Questions on What Matters for a Brand](#)

10 questions for getting to the heart of what is strategic for your brand.

## [Identifying What Matters in Your Organization?](#)

7 more questions to signal whether a topic or effort is strategic for a brand.

## [3 Questions to Decide What's Strategic](#)

If 17 questions are too many, try these 3 questions about what is strategic for your brand.

## [4 Questions to Decide If You Need a Strategic Plan](#)

A strategic plan is not always the right answer to your organization's needs.

## [12 Strategic Planning Questions Before You Start](#)

Make sure you start your strategy planning in the right direction.

## [Two Questions to Ask for Your Strategic Plan](#)

Quickly identifying focus areas for planning.

## [3 Questions for Prioritizing Your Thinking Time](#)

Decide where you should prioritize your strategic exploration.

## [9 Strategic Thinking Questions to Start Strategic Conversations](#)

Turning business talk into strategic talk.

## [5 Strategic Thinking Questions for Integrated Listening](#)

Listening is a vital part of turning talk into strategy.

## [10 Questions for Crafting Startup Strategy in Any Business](#)

Even an established organization can move into startup mode.

## [Anticipating Non-Traditional Competitors](#)

4 questions for anticipating non-traditional competitors and strategic threats your organization might miss.

## [Checking for Simplicity in Your Strategy](#)

3 questions to see if your strategy is simple enough to drive change in your organization.





# Articulating a Strategic Vision

25  
of 600

Any big strategy statements your organization is developing or already has in place should sound the way your organization talks – not like corporate gobbledygook. That's where these questions are incredibly useful, and provide you with powerful results.

## [Strategic Planning Doesn't Have to Kill Creativity](#)

5 questions that will help you better articulate your vision statement.

## [Look Inside for Distinctive Talents](#)

5 questions to identify talents and capabilities that can set both organizations and individuals apart.

## [What Are We Trying to Say?](#)

7 questions to improve the understandability, emotion, and impact of your organizational vision statement.



## [Look and Ask Around](#)

3 questions to assess where your organization provides the most and least value, along with where you should focus more effort to improve the value you deliver.

## [5 Questions to Test Your Vision Statement Impact](#)

Is your vision statement (or other big statement) working as hard as it can?

# Setting a Strategic Foundation

53  
of 600

It's easy to go from year to year, never challenging your organization's strategic foundation in meaningful ways. This set of questions pushes your strategy team to think afresh about strategic opportunities, challenges, and assumptions.

## Varying a SWOT Analysis

### [11 Ways to Reimagine the SWOT Analysis](#)

A Brainzooming eBook with 11 ideas to spice up your organization's SWOT analysis.

### [A 16-Part SWOT Analysis to Push Thinking](#)

Thoroughly push a team's thinking to look at all aspects of a SWOT.

### [4 SWOT Analysis Modifiers Nobody Expects](#)

Who says the S, W, O, and T in a SWOT can't mean something different?

### [Competitive Strategy – 7 Ways to Avoid “Never and Always”](#)

7 ways to ensure your brand isn't always using the same, predictable competitive strategies.

## Identifying Strategies and Assumptions

### [Ask and You Shall Receive with Great Strategic Questions](#)

5 questions to help someone expand on their ideas.

### [Resolving Contradictory Assumptions Easily](#)

2 questions to sort through assumptions that seem to point in opposite directions.

### [Don't Overthink It? 5 Key Questions for Quick Decisions](#)

5 questions to make decisions more quickly.

### [There's No Accounting for Taste](#)

3 questions with criteria more beneficial than “I like it” to determine if your creative work is on strategy.





When you develop clear branding and marketing strategies collaboratively, you set the stage for team members to understand their individual roles and bring the brand to life consistently and effectively.



## Branding Strategy

### [4 Ways to Examine Brand Performance](#)

4 areas to check to see how your brand is doing.

### [8 Questions for New Product Ideas in 30 Minutes](#)

A quick sequence to develop new product ideas for your brand.

### [6 Ways to Freshen an Old Brand](#)

If your brand needs a refresh, here are 6 paths to pursue.

### [7 Strategy Questions from Woody Bendle](#)

Fundamental questions for setting your direction.

## Marketing Strategy

### [How 1 Strategic Thinking Question Will Make You a Better Marketer](#)

A single question to guide stronger marketing.

### [8 Questions on Launching Campaign-Specific Marketing](#)

Can your new marketing fit with what you've done before or does it require something new?

### [Nobody Cares About You!!!](#)

2 questions to test whether your communications efforts are audience-oriented.

### [7 Questions for Smart Marketing](#)

Develop a marketing strategy that maximizes your ability to perform and profit from it.

### [11 Questions Behind a Messaging Strategy](#)

A quick way to identify what needs to go into your marketing messages.

### [10 Questions to Identify New Partners](#)

Who are the most intriguing and best brands you can collaborate with successfully?

# Customer Experience

64  
of 600

It's impossible to separate your brand's in-person and online customer experiences. These sets of questions, while presented in two categories, are integral in supporting the overall brand experience for customers.

## Customer Experience

### [7 Strategic Thinking Questions on What Happens on the Way to Your Brand?](#)

Understand what experiences your customers have before they get to your brand.

### [3 Questions to Test Customer Segment Innovation](#)

Determine whether a brand innovation fits your audience targets.

### [It's the Most Memorable Time of the Year](#)

8 questions to look for ways to strengthen personal interest and better integrate emotional dimensions for customers.

### [7 Questions for Creating High-Performing Customers](#)

Create an environment where your customers can realize the greatest success.



## Online Experience

### [Is Your Brand Personality Present Online?](#)

10 questions to gauge whether your social media content conveys your brand personality.

### [See Me, Feel Me, Criticize Me](#)

8 questions to ask on the accuracy, ease, and user

experience of your digital presence.

### [11 Buying Process Questions for Blog Topics](#)

Translating the prospect / customer journey into content marketing topics.

### [5 Exercises for Audience-Oriented Topics](#)

Accessible ways to employ

outside-in content thinking to develop social media content.

### [5 Questions for Planning Online Content](#)

These 5 questions help identify numerous recurring content opportunities for your brand.



# Creative Cool Names

37  
of 600

What's in a name? What's in a lot of new product names: unrelated syllables, parts of words, and edgy-sounding acronyms. If, instead, you'd like to explore cool, high-impact options, these questions are for you!

## [8 Creative Thinking Questions for Creating Cool Product Names](#)

8 questions to go beyond bland names for new products and develop names that stand out from the crowd.

## [Another 21 Creative Thinking Questions for Naming Cool Products](#)

Even more questions to stimulate creative ideas for cool product names!



## [8 Questions to Create Innovative Job Titles](#)

8 questions to enliven current job titles within your organization and create bolder horizons for your team.

# Innovation Strategy

120  
of 600

We see it again and again: asking questions from a wide variety of diverse directions yields the most powerful new ideas. Here are more than 100 questions we use with clients to catalyze innovation.

## Innovation Strategy

### [What is the first innovation strategy question to ask?](#)

One innovation question is the most important!

### [14 Innovation Starter Questions](#)

Get your team thinking about innovation possibilities.

### [16 Ways to Find New Resources to Innovate](#)

An eBook devoted to finding new resources to boost your innovation strategy.



## Innovative Perspectives

### [9 Questions for Finding Your Brand's Strategic Analogs](#)

Identify intriguing brands to track for innovation ideas.

### [17 Questions to Find Innovation Case Studies](#)

We use these questions to find analogous situations to inspire innovation possibilities.

### [Innovation Opportunities When New and Innovative Becomes Status Quo](#)

3 questions to figure out when it's time to innovate your previous innovation.

### [15 Innovative Questions for Better Business Results](#)

More questions, more innovation opportunities!

### [A Spoonful of Unconventional Makes the Conventional Go Down](#)

4 questions to help you find unexpected innovation opportunities in your market.

## Disruptive Innovation

### [11 Questions for Disruptive Market Innovation](#)

11 questions to explore potentially disruptive moves.

### [9 Questions to Break a Business](#)

Questions to foster thinking on weak spots and new business model opportunities.

## Boosting Innovation

### [A Great Way to Be More Creative Each Day](#)

8 creative questions to change your current situation.

### [9 Questions for Innovative Ideas from Experts](#)

Ask the right types of questions to get experts to share their knowledge more effectively.

### [Trying to Finish the Previously Unfinishable](#)

5 questions to identify ways to turn incomplete ideas into something salvageable.



# What characteristics lead to great strategic thinking questions?

These three questions about questions provide a smart formula for expanding your own set of powerful strategic planning questions!

Don't make the mistake of asking employees for their big ideas. Instead, pose BIG QUESTIONS to them. Let them fill up the thinking space these questions create with extreme ideas of all types!



## [Our Original Extreme Creativity Questions](#)

9 questions to push new possibilities to reach extreme creativity levels.

## [10 Brainstorming Questions from Diners, Drive-Ins, & Dives](#)

Guy Fieri visits crazy restaurants where they serve up incredible food and extreme creativity questions galore!

## [5 Questions to Harness Extreme Creativity](#)

Bring extreme creativity back to today's reality and get started implementing!

Sometimes the biggest strategic issues are right now – or right around the corner. Other times, you need to push your thinking further out. That's when you can turn to these questions.

## [20 Innovative Questions for Your Next Marketing Plan](#)

20 questions from various marketing and strategy experts to improve a marketing effort through strategy, communications, and content marketing.



## [15 Future-Oriented Questions to Explore](#)

Forward-looking strategic thinking questions to extend your horizons.

## [9 Big Questions to Address Now](#)

Big questions to answer now to prepare for what's ahead.

Developing strategy for your organization or brand needn't be stressful.

See page 17 to learn more



Planning is great, but successful implementation is everything! These questions lead the way in transitioning from great thinking to killer DOING!

## [Do You Have What It Takes for a Plan?](#)

15 questions to ensure you have everything in place for a complete marketing plan.

## [7 Questions to Create Report Shrinkage](#)

Cut your plan down to size before you share it with the organization.

## [10 Questions to Ask about Your Strategy](#)

A quick check on whether your strategy is ready for implementation.

## [13 Point Change Management Checklist](#)

Determine whether your leadership team is effectively managing strategic change.

## [9 Questions to Help Teams Execute Strategy](#)

Start a team on the right track to more successfully implementing a new strategic initiative.

## [10 Project Planning Questions for Launching New Programs](#)

Make sure you start implementation with these 10 effective questions.

## [5 Strategic Questions for When You Can't, You Don't, and You Won't Stop](#)

Challenges will happen, but you can use strategic thinking to move beyond them.

## [7 Strategic Thinking Questions for When Things Aren't Working](#)

Identify current problems and figure out how to fix them.

## [Learn from Your Mistakes...Once!](#)

8 questions to dissect what didn't go right with strategic implementation so you don't make the same mistakes multiple times.





**If you've been  
counting as we go,  
that's 592 questions.**

**Compiling this eBook, we weren't sure how  
many questions to include. There was no  
specific starting goal.**

**But 592?**

**592?**

**Why couldn't it have just been 600 questions?  
That would have been so easy, so remarkable.**

**Instead of falling short of this newly-  
important goal, however, we've made it so you  
can turn the page for 8 MORE valuable  
questions we use!**

# Asking What Others Think

8  
of 600

Unless you're doing something locked in a room all by yourself (and we won't ask questions about that), people will likely have varied perspectives of how a plan, initiative, or event went. For ongoing improvement, gather these rich perspectives with questions!

We ask a variety of open-ended questions after any type of significant activity to solicit perspectives from other participants.

The questions have grown and morphed over the years. The original critical thinking questions was from the Plus Minus Interesting approach developed by Dr. Edward de Bono.

The original questions were:

1. What worked or was successful?
2. What didn't work or failed to meet expectations?
3. What things were intriguing about this?

We later added another question to solicit new ideas from participants:

4. What recommendations do you have if we do this again?

Shortly after that, we added another

question to see if people had, well, questions:

5. What questions do you have following this?

In some situations, people may be reluctant to share negative reactions. When we suspect that may be the case, we'll substitute a failed-to-meet-expectations question with these two questions:

6. What would you like to see more of if we do this again?
7. What would you like to see less of if we do this again?

We also often ask a catch-all question to cover anything that falls through the cracks:

8. Is there anything else you expected to happen / be covered that we didn't do?

**So! With those 8 questions, you now have...**

The  
600

**Most Powerful  
Strategic Planning Questions\***

**\*That The Brainzooming Group Uses. So far.**

# **What if you only have a hard copy and need links to the 600 Powerful Strategic Planning Questions?**

**Download your  
very own eBook at:**

**[Info.brainzooming.com/600Questions](http://Info.brainzooming.com/600Questions)**

# **Just one more thing.**

**Want to take the stress out of strategic planning for you AND your organization?**

**Get in touch to have The Brainzooming Group facilitate your strategic, brand, and innovation strategy planning using our collaborative and streamlined Brainzooming methodology. We'll get your plan done quickly and right—leaving you with plenty of time to do what you do best!**



# The Brainzooming Group

helps smart organizations expand strategic options and create innovative, efficient-to-implement plans for success. We:

- Help generate innovative thinking across diverse environments and teams
- Use techniques your organization can easily and successfully implement
- Offer certainty, since we developed our process on the client side in a Fortune 500 organization

The Brainzooming Group works with you to identify variables that shape your strategy development process. Via a [free, 30-minute collaboration](#), we'll explore your:

- Most important end results from your strategy
- Intended strategic direction and degree of desired change
- Current and potential strategy team members
- Optimum strategy process dynamics

We'll take it from there. And we'll get back to you with a customized strategic planning approach, tailored for your success.

# Are you ready to develop a new corporate or brand strategy faster than you ever imagined?

If you want helpful, results-oriented input on how you're thinking about approaching your organization's strategy, let's schedule a FREE, 30-minute consultation call. You'll walk away with a stronger sense of which next steps make the most sense for your organization.

Visit [info.brainzooming.com/strategy-consultation](http://info.brainzooming.com/strategy-consultation) and we'll reach out to you to schedule your call!

Get started and request  
your free call!



**Brainzooming™**



Catalyzing Your  
Innovative Success.

**[www.Brainzooming.com](http://www.Brainzooming.com)**  
**816-509-5320    [info@brainzooming.com](mailto:info@brainzooming.com)**