



Strategic Thinking Exercises: Reimagining the SWOT Analysis

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Brainzooming™



Catalyzing Your
Innovative Success.

Strategic Thinking Exercises: Reimagining the SWOT Analysis

by

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“Where wicked smart questions become the new currency of creativity.”

– Joe Batista, The Chief Creatologist



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**Are your
strategy
meetings
always
snoozefests?**

Yes, strategy meetings commonly turn into snoozefests.

This is especially true when you're going into a strategy meeting with the same old people, the same old strategy exercises, and the same old expectations to just get a plan done so it can sit on the shelf with other strategies while the organization keeps doing the same old things.

But, guess what?

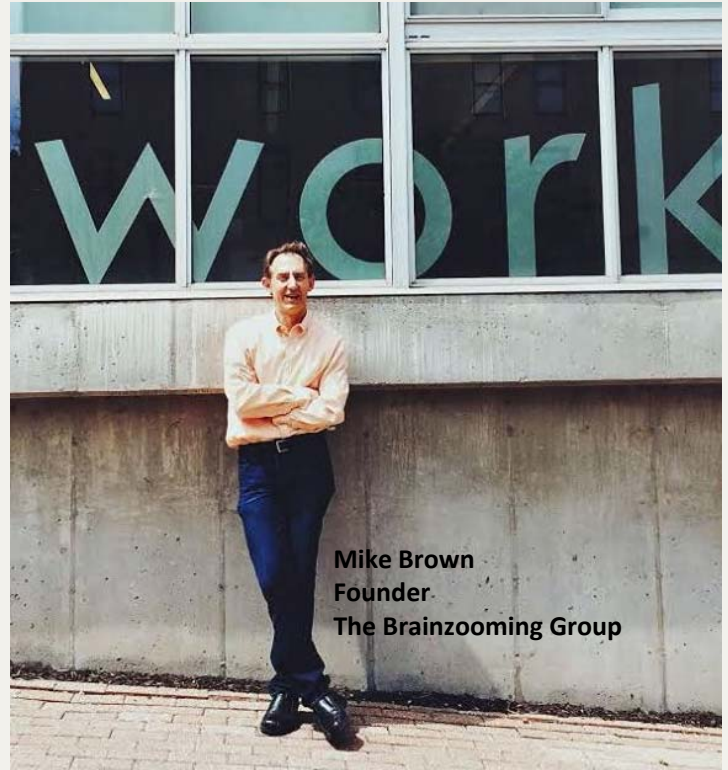
There's hope. You can change all that!

One quick way you can turn a typical strategic planning meeting around – so that it stimulates both minds and business – is by introducing alternatives to traditional strategy exercises. This helps your meetings avoid hitting a strategy rut.

REIMAGINING THE SWOT ANALYSIS

You've no doubt heard of a SWOT analysis.

A SWOT analysis highlights your organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



Mike Brown
Founder
The Brainzooming Group

Photo by Leslie Adams

In many companies, the list of items on the SWOT analysis doesn't change all that much from one year to the next. That's because strategic planners ask the same questions, and everyone already knows the comfortably familiar answers they used in previous years. It's easier to repeat those answers than to come up with fresh, relevant insights.

If you're up for changing that, this eBook is for you!

Here, we offer fresh takes on the standard Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats analysis. They're ready to use as-is or to modify and integrate into your planning (to create stronger insights and results).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "MS" followed by a flourish.

Nobody is stopping you from reimagining one of the most-used strategic thinking exercises!

PIECES

Creating a SWOT from Multiple **PIECES**

Page 4

SWOOT

Trying a Twist with a **SWOOT** Analysis

Page 5

BOLDER

No One Ever Expects a **BOLDER** SWOT

Page 7

FOUR

X 4

Going Deeper with a **FOUR X 4** SWOT

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7 MORE

7 MORE Ideas for SWOT Reimagination

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CREATING A SWOT FROM

MULTIPLE PIECES

If your team is coming up with the same list of opportunities and threats year after year, we recommend using a **strategic thinking detour** to stimulate new thinking. By reworking standard questions and asking them in unusual ways, people have no choice but to look at new possibilities and take their thinking down different paths.

Rather than asking individual, straightforward questions about threats and opportunities, this strategic thinking detour has participants piece their answers together.

The directions are simple: Participants first consider prospective customers, competitors, markets, and their own brand hold. They then use these “equations” to compare perspectives and generate insights.



SWOT-BUILDING EQUATIONS

Opportunities come about when . . .

- Customers Want It + We Do It Well
- Customers Want It + We Do It Well + Competitors Don't Do It Well
- Customers Want It + Nobody Does It Well
- Customers Want It + We Do It Okay + We Can Improve How We Do It



Threats come about when . . .

- Customers Want It + We Don't Do It Well
- Customers Want It + Competitors Do It Well
- Customers Aren't Wanting It as Much + Our Business Is Built Around Offering It
- Customers Want It + We Do It Well + Competitors Are Moving to Do It More or Better
- Our Business Is Built Around Offering It + Market Forces Are Working Against It

This approach leads participants to combine insightful perspectives and develop actionable ideas about opportunities and threats.

Who says there can only be one O in a SWOT analysis?

How about doubling up on the O and creating a SWOOT analysis for a strategic thinking twist?

What alternative O word would add new depth, clarity, or insight to the standard SWOT analysis? Which possibilities will enhance the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats you've uncovered in the classic strategic thinking exercise?

Here are seven O words to consider tucking into the middle of your SWOT analysis (along with related strategic thinking questions) to add different dimensions to your insights.

SWOOT

Objectives – Relative to the strengths and weaknesses already identified, what are the most important and/or challenging goals?

Occurrences – What events took place during the last year that will most shape future opportunities and threats?

Obsolescence – What things or ideas are no longer relevant as you explore your future situation?

Opinions – What are the most strongly-held opinions relative to the analysis, and which of them are fact-based?

Ordinary – What things have become part of the backdrop, but could emerge as big positive or negative issues?

Objections – What are the most serious objections to conclusions from the current-and-future-situation analysis?

Organization – Where is the organization ready or not ready to capitalize on the opportunities and threats it will face?

If you find the SWOOT particularly productive, maybe you'll **try doubling up on the S, W, and T**, as well!

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Ideas - 12 High-Impact Strategy Questions for Leadership Teams



Great strategy questions enable business leaders to efficiently identify priorities, uncover innovative ideas, and select the smartest strategies.

The Brainzooming eBook ***Ideas - 12 High-Impact Strategy Questions for Leadership Teams*** shares twelve of the most productive strategy questions we use for client engagements.

This actionable eBook helps you:

- Identify your most important strategic opportunities
- Differentiate your brand benefits and customer experience
- Stretch your organization with new, innovative initiatives to grow your business

This FREE eBook turns unproductive leadership team interactions into focused, results-producing strategic conversations.

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WHAT? NO ONE EXPECTS

A BOLDER SWOT

Chances are good no one walks into a strategy meeting expecting a different SWOT approach.

And even if they ARE expecting you to throw them a SWOT curve, they won't be expecting you to push for extremes by changing up the S, W, O, and T.

Here's how this approach works: Replace the standard SWOT questions with new modifiers that force strategy participants to think about possibilities and challenges your organization typically shies away from considering.



- What important things do we avoid doing (that we should do) because they are **SCARY** for our brand?
- What **WILD** and creative ideas are our competitors or other relevant companies doing that we should consider?
- What can we do next year that would be **OUTRAGEOUS** and bold?
- What would be the most strategic and effective **TAUNTING** we could heap on competitors?

As you use this approach, look for and protect crazy ideas that emerge, particularly as potential opportunities. You can always adjust those ideas to make them more realistic. Try harvesting them for great new strategies you might have never generated, had you not been looking for ideas that initially seemed outrageous or scary!

GOING DEEPER WITH A

FOUR X 4 SWOT

The last two variations played with the meaning of the SWOT letters. This one keeps the standard strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

What adds depth and breadth to this SWOT are four strategic questions within each area. This helps your strategy team work more thoroughly and effectively to generate ideas. Use this strategic thinking exercise with a group to push thinking into areas they might otherwise overlook – purposely or by accident.

What are our **STRENGTHS** relative to...

- How we deliver value for customers?
- Creating lasting relationships with stakeholders?
- Moving with greater agility than competitors?
- Creating engagement with our employees?

- Delivering the product attributes and performance most important to customers?
- Staying ahead of competitors' strategic moves?
- Instigating market disruptions?
- Cultivating a workforce with the greatest potential to create an amazing customer experience?

What are our **WEAKNESSES** relative to...

What are our **OPPORTUNITIES** relative to...

- Market needs we have yet to address?
- Delivering a more incredible brand experience?
- Entering markets providing underdog advantages?
- Converting attractive prospects not currently doing business with us?

- Emerging competitors playing by different rules?
- External forces redefining competitiveness?
- Customer-perceived gaps in how our brand delivers its promise and experience?
- Basic systems whose failure would jeopardize success?

What are our **THREATS** relative to...

7 MORE IDEAS FOR SWOT

REIMAGINATION

Additional ways to avoid snoozefest strategy meetings

EMBRACE COMPETITIVE PERSPECTIVES

Prepare a complete SWOT analysis from the standpoint of one of your major competitors. Then complete another from the perspective of an emerging or obviously disruptive competitor.



LAUNCH CONCURRENT TEAMS

If you are working on the SWOT in a meeting setting, divide your strategy team into two or four groups of five or six. Have separate groups working on each of the four areas, then rotate the small groups to review, add to, and subtract from a previous team's work.

GIVE EVERY PRODUCT A SWOT

Consider preparing a SWOT analysis for every significant product line your company offers. You may also want to prepare a SWOT based on how your stack up in a particular market segment you serve or hope to enter.

KEEP SMALL GROUPS SEPARATE

Split your strategy team into smaller groups, but instead of having them work separately and then reviewing what other small groups did, have each small group complete a full SWOT. Then compare and contrast the insights from each group to generate additional learning.

GET OUT THE SWOT MICROSCOPE

You can complete a SWOT analysis for specific parts of your brand to help create more targeted insights to shape your strategy. You might prepare a SWOT based on your customer experience, manufacturing processes, service delivery systems, etc.

START WITH FRESH THINKERS

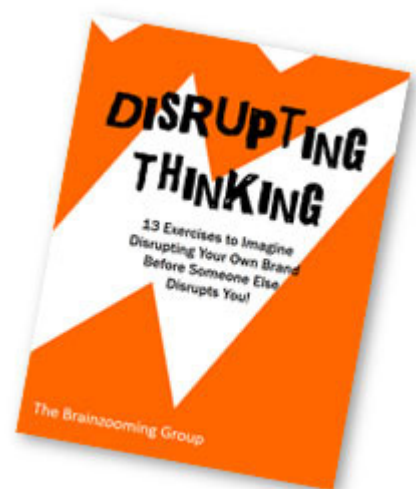
Include employees that are new to your company after working other places in your industry. Take advantage of their fresh perspectives to develop new insights on what's happening in the market.

EMPLOY MULTIPLE INPUT METHODS

Beyond using these strategic thinking exercises at in-person meetings, you can also use the questions during interviews and in online surveys to expand the number of perspectives you are able to bring to the in-person meeting.

IF YOUR ORGANIZATION IS
COMFORTABLE WITH ITS
CONVENTIONAL APPROACH,
**DISRUPTING
THINKING**
WILL SOON CHANGE THAT!

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filled with actionable tools
to change thinking & drive
successful innovation!**



info.brainzooming.com/DisruptingThinking

TURNING IDEAS INTO A

STRATEGY

to **Boost Results**

Looking for simple ways to generate ideas and great strategies that drive growth?

Let's work together to dramatically boost your brand and engage your audiences.

The Brainzooming Group can design, facilitate, and implement a streamlined, results-driven brand strategy for you. We'll maximize your time to focus on implementation and reaching new levels of innovative success.

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