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Don't settle for drawn-out, overly long, strategy planning meetings. You can abbreviate and speed up strategic planning IF you know the short cuts that work best.

How long does it take The Brainzooming Group to create a realistic, 25-year roadmap for a strategic planning process?

For one client, we used these roadmap building steps:

- Describing the organization's future state
- Imagining the major activities necessary to achieve the future state
- Selecting and organizing initiatives across 4 strategic areas
- Identifying critical success factors and milestones

Start to finish, we did all of that in 2 hours and 45 minutes. UNDER THREE HOURS! Even we were amazed!

What do we do that you can emulate to dramatically accelerate the process of imagining your organization's future activities?

All of the ideas in this eBook are techniques we use to focus and accelerate strategy planning. See which ones you can apply to your own situation, and enjoy the benefits of developing strategies faster!

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## SHAPE YOUR OWN PROCESS THAT FITS

Don't lift a strategic planning process straight from a management book. Design your strategic planning process to fit your organization and team – not the other way around.



## ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY PARTS

2

Frankly, the typical strategic planning process is rife with steps and processes that you can skip. If the benefits of an activity or task aren't immediately clear, get rid of it. Also, do away with all the complex templates. You don't need them.

# TO SPEED UP STRATEGIC PLANNING

# INVOLVE MORE PEOPLE IN STRATEGY

It's not true that involving more people in planning MUST slow things down. If you expand the participants in a smart way, you'll get greater diversity and can benefit from small groups working simultaneously. More people doing things at once increases the planning pace in a major way.

## **THREE**

## HEAVY UP ON PRODUCTIVE EXERCISES

Don't get lazy and depend on the same strategy exercises you use every year. Who wants to deal with something that boring? Incorporate exercises that pose new and different questions. Unfamiliar and unusual questions are an important way to efficiently stimulate new thinking.



## **MANAGE THE GROUP'S TIME**

Set time limits for strategic conversations, exercises, and activities.

When people get long-winded, remind everyone of the time restrictions.

Encourage people to address relevant issues, avoiding unnecessary details and topics.

## SEVEN DON'T RUSH INTO

## BIG GROUP STRATEGY MEETINGS

There are times when having a big group meeting is beneficial during strategy planning. Do it when you can get the group simultaneously collaborating and moving ahead faster. Other times, use individual, small group, or even online activities. You will typically find these more productive and efficient. Be ready with whatever format maximizes solid progress and speed.



Just because people think of strategic planning as addressing big, far-off issues doesn't mean you should waste time on intriguing, esoteric ideas with little business applicability. To save time, continually tie the strategy work to what your organization does or will do in the future.



## **MAKE IT FUN!**

Only a small part of making strategic planning fun involves bringing toys to meetings.
What makes strategic planning fun and engaging is shaping the process so people can actively participate and succeed at it.

Want to go deep on fun strategic planning? Download our FREE Brainzooming eBook detailing ideas to enliven strategy planning.



# USE ALL STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS & COMMENTS FOR INPUT

When you're using robust strategy exercises and actively listening to participants, they will share elements of what needs to go into the final strategy, whether they realize it or not. It's the planner's job to listen and record anything that is valuable for planning – whether it's relevant now or will be later. Doing this can shave an hour or more off a typical day-long strategy meeting.

# CONTINUALLY TWEAK THE PROCESS FOR SPEED

Just as you want to customize the strategic planning process design before starting, make productive changes as you go. If you see an opportunity to do something differently or eliminate it without changing the impact, go ahead and make the change mid-stream.

Trying any of these ten ideas will remove time from strategic planning. Implement all ten, and you may be able to take days or weeks off your previous strategic planning efforts!



5 THINGS TO DO

When Your Planning Deadline Looms . . .

## and You Haven't Started!

To speed up strategy planning, you must have already STARTED a strategic planning process. What if you haven't started strategic planning yet? Are there ways you can catch up quickly and still get a plan done? Here are five steps to help save time and get back on top of planning for your organization's success in the coming year:

**INVENTORY HISTORICAL INFO** 

**Inventory what you know** about customers, markets, and competitors. Focus on what you know and think. Also determine whether what you can gather is still relevant or not. Then prioritize updating ONLY blatantly out-of-date information.

RAPIDLY GATHER INPUT

**Identify effective ways to reach out broadly** inside and outside your organization to understand new perspectives on customers, markets, and trends. Look for whether others have already answered the questions you face. This can cut significant time from planning.

GET A TEAM TOGETHER

Assemble a team of smart, diverse people to help get your strategic planning process going. Even if it's only one or two people, their strong participation will be a HUGE help.

UPDATE THE FOUNDATION

**Gather documents and strategic messages** addressing your direction over the last two years. Identify whether or not they align with what has been actually happening. This foundation provides important direction and saves management time spent re-creating what already exists, but lacks solid documentation.

SCHEDULE TIME NOW

**Book time with your organization's other leaders NOW** for when your planning team will need them for individual input, group meetings, and plan reviews. Don't delay in grabbing this time, especially since it helps make sure you advance the plan on a pre-defined schedule.

# Start Using Twelve of Our Best Strategy Questions!

## **Your FREE Download!**

## 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 12 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.

Download your FREE *Ideas* eBook TODAY!



## ASK THIS ONE CQUESTION

## TO FOCUS AND SPEED UP STRATEGY MEETINGS

If you are already in a strategy meeting, what can you do to focus and speed it up? One of the best ways involves asking a powerful question in just six words:

## WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

## Employing this question provides multiple benefits. It helps you to:

**Create strategy** – If you can pin down what you are trying to achieve, you can apply creative thinking to how you accomplish it.

**Prioritize initiatives** – Knowing the various things you need to achieve allows for prioritizing them in order of importance.

**Focus activities** – As things morph and people suggest ill-founded strategy changes, you can come back to strategic priorities to re-focus.

**Produce metrics** – You can begin to put numbers to what you are trying to achieve and determine related metrics suggesting whether you're on the right track.

**Gain supporters** – The answer to what you are trying to achieve helps communicate with others and build enthusiasm and action.

**Grow in influence** – Being a consistently strategic leader sets you apart from individuals inside the organization focused solely on tactics.

With all these benefits, no wonder we call this the granddaddy of all strategic thinking questions!

# ISTHERE ANYTHING ELSE?

Are you in a position to know that you've done everything you can to

speed up and streamline your strategic planning process, to save your organization time **AND** 

improve planning impact?

Run through this thirteen – idea checklist to **identify additional opportunities** for making planning more efficient and effective!

#### **PROCESS**

- ☐ Spelled out where we were starting from and clearly stated what *done* would look like
- ☐ Removed all unnecessary steps
- Made everything we do count / contribute to the results
- Identified all the reasonable already-known, decided, and too late to change items for planning
- Managed the process for speed

### PLANNING STANDARDS

- Made decisions to go with what was acceptable vs. perfect
- Accepted a few smart risks in going with what we strongly suspect vs. expecting complete proof
- Limited the time we spent on each section and then called it good

#### PEOPLE AND PRODUCTIVITY

- ☐ Found ways to get people to do more planning
- ☐ Found ways to help people be more efficient during planning
- ☐ Involved more people in planning

#### **IMPLEMENTATION FOCUS**

- ☐ Identified only those strategies and tactics we're likely to do
- ☐ Didn't revisit sound decisions that we made previously



Looking for simple ways to effectively 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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## **The Brainzooming Group**

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