



Can You Say What Your Strategy Is?

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Adapted from David J. Collis and Michael G. Rukstad - Harvard Business Review, April 2008 pp 82-90

A canvas to storyboard your organization's strategy.

In this guide, we will cover:

- [The Strategic Sweet Spot](#)
- [The Importance of Vision, Scope, & Advantage](#)
- [A Canvas to Review & Storyboard Your Strategy](#)

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Can You Say What Your Strategy Is?

01

Does Your Team Know Your Strategy?

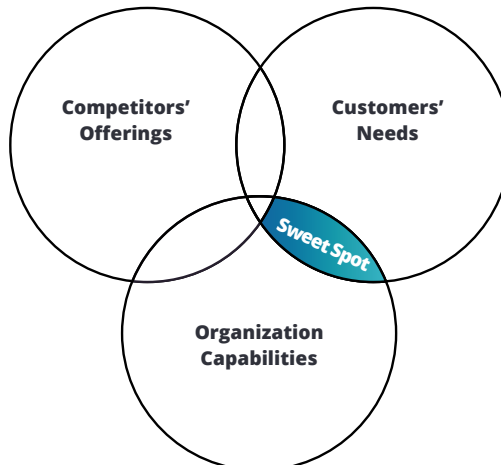
Can you summarize your company's strategy? If so, would your colleagues put it the same way? Few can give an honest answer affirmatively.

Many organizations fail to appreciate the necessity of having a simple, clear, succinct strategy summary that everyone can internalize and use as a guiding light for making choices.

Three components of a good strategy summary are vision, scope and advantage.

The Strategic Sweet Spot

The strategic sweet spot of a company is the intersection between customer needs and your company's distinct capabilities or offerings that your competitors do not offer.



Vision

Your vision defines the end your strategy is designed to achieve. If your firm's strategy [and vision] can be applied to any other firm, you might consider revisiting your vision and strategy. It needs to be unique and differentiated. Period.

A vision like, "Maximize shareholder value over the next several years," is too generic to set your team up for success. A clearer vision might be, "Maximize shareholder value by..." followed by a set of KPIs to show the organization is making progress toward its vision with the clarity of direction and what will be measured.

Need help developing a Vision Statement? [Check out our whitepaper on Visioning here!](#)

Example:

"To be the most desired and successful transport solution provider in the world." - Volvo

Scope

Scope includes the domain of your business—the part of the marketplace landscape in which you operate. For clarity, it defines the boundaries for which you will [and will not] venture.

Scope encompasses three dimensions:

- 1. Customer or Offering**
- 2. Geographic Locations**
- 3. Vertical Integration**

Clearly defined boundaries in those areas should make it obvious to managers which activities they should concentrate on, and more important, which they should not. This should be clear to your entire organization, not just your leadership team.

Example:

"Helping Chief Sales Officers of Fortune 500 companies design, implement, and manage sales force effectiveness." - Sales Company X

Advantage

Your Competitive Advantage outlines how you'll achieve your vision. It's the essence of strategy that drives value proposition—it explains why the targeted customer should buy your product above all other alternatives and clearly describes how your unique internal activities must be aligned so only your firm can deliver that value proposition.

Need help developing a Competitive Advantage? [Check out our whitepaper on Competitive Advantage here!](#)

Example:

"We are the first company to adopt end-to-end sustainable business practices in our sourcing, manufacturing and distribution of outdoor apparel." - Apparel Company X

Making Trade-Offs

Defining the Vision, Scope, and Advantage requires trade-offs, which Michael Porter (Harvard Strategy) identified as fundamental to strategy. The trade-offs companies make are what distinguish them strategically from other firms!

Developing a Strategy Storyboard

The process must involve a rigorous, objective assessment of the firm's capabilities and resources and those of competitors—factors such technology, industry, demographics, and regulation.

Example:

Edward Jones's Strategy Statement: To grow to 17,000 financial advisors by 2012 by offering trusted and convenient face-to-face financial advice to conservative individual investors who delegate their financial decisions through a national network of one-on-one financial adviser offices.

Using the Storyboard Canvas

Have each team member complete the exercise to review and communicate your vision, scope, and advantage throughout your organization. It's most important to complete this exercise with members outside of the planning team as a means to review and communicate your strategy!

Strategy Storyboard Canvas

Have each team member complete the exercise to review and communicate your Vision, Scope, and Advantage throughout your organization.

Org Name:

Date:

1

Vision

Where is your organization going in the future?

Where do you see the business in the next 3-5 years?

What will have to be achieved?

2

Scope & Focus

What is the domain of the business? How does it fit within the three dimensions?

Customer Offering:

Geographic Location

Delivery Mode/Method

3

Advantage

What do you do better than your competitors?

1.

2.

3.

4

Can You Say What Your Strategy Is?

Now take the elements from the 3 areas to the left to craft a strategy storyboard by completing the following sentences.

In the next five years, success looks like...

We will know that we are reaching our vision because...

The scope of our business is delivering unparalleled value to...

Focused in...

And reaching our customers by...

We will win because...



Need help implementing and communicating your plan? We'd love to help.

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