

How to test your sales strategy



The success of any business is underpinned by a plan; a plan that shows how the business will achieve both its short and long term goals to ultimately realise its vision. A key part of that plan is the strategy which defines the route that will be taken to connect the current position of the business to both the short and long term goals, ultimately realising the vision. The strategy defines the markets, geographies, customers, applications and product focus. It defines the sales channels that will be used to reach the customers, how the business will organise itself to support the customer effectively, the financial investments and other resources necessary.

It is important that when we develop a strategy we test it for robustness and suitability for purpose. The following set of questions, which of course are far from an exhaustive list, are the ones most often used by our customers when stress testing their strategy. They may not all be applicable of course, and some may prompt further questions as regards the strength, depth and breadth of your strategy.

1. What is **your vision** for the business/area of the business you have responsibility for and how does it relate to the vision for the overall business?

2. What are the primary **differentiated strengths** and business **critical weaknesses** of your part of the business and how do they relate to your strategy?
 - a. Which differentiated (against the competition) strengths will you build on and why?
 - b. Which business critical weaknesses (those are weaknesses that will have a major negative impact if they are not addressed) will you or can you minimise/eliminate and how?
 - c. How will you minimise the influence of any business critical weaknesses you cannot immediately address?

3. What are the **major opportunities** that you have identified for growth? What is their potential?
 - a. Which will you focus on, which will you place on hold for now and why?
 - b. How will you maximise the value from the target ones?

c. What data did you use to evaluate size, access, timescales etc.? How well can you trust the data source?

4. What **threats** have you identified and which are most likely to threaten the success of the strategy?

a. What volume of business is at stake?

b. How will you defend against the threats identified?

c. Which threats have you ignored and why?

5. How does what you intend to do in the future differ from what you do now? How and why have you selected these changes, why do you feel it will make a difference and how have you validated this view?

6. How have you or how are you intending to **optimise the structure** and/or size of the organisation to execute the strategy relative to the current structure?

7. How will you bring the **strategy to life at all levels**? Do the people you employ have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to execute it? Do they fully understand your vision and are they motivated by it? Do you know how to measure this? What is your plan to bridge any gap?

8. Will you need to hire additional experience/resource or develop new skills in your team in order to execute the strategy and if yes is this budgeted for? If yes have you an optimised plan and process to do so? What is the lead time on recruitment and training of new hires and the existing team members?#

9. **How will the competition most likely react to your strategy** and how quickly? How will you counter any moves you envisage they may make?

10. How will you maintain or **increase customer satisfaction** as you execute your strategy, maximising customer retention and referrals? (often key in any growth situation)

11. How do you see your role developing in the execution of the strategy and do you have the time, skills and resources to deliver?

12. In what areas of the business will you face most resistance and how do you intend to overcome this?
13. What processes and systems will need to be **strengthened, introduced** or **eliminated** in order to execute the strategy?
14. Which are the key inter-departmental relationships that need to be strengthened in order to execute the strategy and how will you achieve this?
15. How do you intend to communicate your plan and how often? Who needs to understand it or be aware of it internally and externally (PR & Marketing)? **Who are the main players/ stakeholders?**
16. What is your financial plan to support your strategy? What assumptions have you made re phasing, buying cycles of key customers, lead times, new product introduction dates?
17. What Sales, Support, Service and Administration tools will need to be developed in order to ensure people are appropriately equipped?
18. **How does your financial plan relate to the expectations of the company** from the top?
19. What mechanisms do you have in place to **monitor** and **review progress?**

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