The 600 Most Powerful Strategic Planning Questions

for

Developing Strategy
Branding and Marketing
Boosting Innovation
Enabling Extreme Creativity
Implementing Successfully

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The Brainzooming Group
*That The Brainzooming Group Uses. So Far.*
When strategic planning is too complicated:

- time is wasted,
- executives get wasted,
- the CEO is pissed off,
- participants and ideas are uninspired,
- resources are squandered,
- managers wait for missing information,
- valuable data goes unnoticed,
- great ideas go unshared,
- jargon masquerades as intelligence,
- rock-paper-scissors becomes the best way to make decisions,
- ingenuity leaves the building,
- the wrong people make decisions,
- infighting becomes a way of life,
- pet projects get all the resources,
- everyone goes home depressed,
- implementation is short-changed,
- competitors steal your market share,
- costs skyrocket,
- competitive advantage evaporates,
- customers run from your brand,
- your best salespeople abandon ship,
- revenue falls off the table,
- and the strategists who can’t figure out how to make strategic planning simple and fun lose their jobs.

When strategic planning is simple, engaging, and fun:

- everybody’s happy,
- and you achieve real results.

To make strategy planning simple & fun, visit: brainzooming.com/simplestrategy
Our 600 Most Powerful Strategic Planning Questions

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!

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?
Access your team's best ideas online without a single, "Sorry, go ahead!"

info.brainzooming.com/blast

Blast! is an innovative online experience where you and your team answer questions that propel you to impactful breakthroughs. Proven questions, candid responses, and your team’s imagination create amazing results. There’s no software to download. And it all gets done in 30 minutes. Yes, really. It’s a whole new way to collaborate.
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Developing Your Overall Strategy

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

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?
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.

**Identifying Strategies and Assumptions**

Ask and You Shall Receive with Great Strategic Questions
5 questions to help someone expand on their ideas.

**A 16-Part SWOT Analysis to Push Thinking**

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

Resolving Contradictory Assumptions Easily
2 questions to sort through assumptions that seem to point in opposite directions.

**4 SWOT Analysis Modifiers Nobody Expects**

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

Don’t Overthink It? 5 Key Questions for Quick Decisions
5 questions to make decisions more quickly.

**Competitive Strategy – 7 Ways to Avoid “Never and Always”**

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

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.

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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

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.

**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.

*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.
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!
Innovation Strategy

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!
Looking Forward Strategically

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
Implementing for Impact

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

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
One guy sitting in the corner office is not going to come up with the best strategy for what’s ahead now.

The old days are over.

If you are looking for ideas on how to engage your organization to collaborate and shape strategy, schedule a FREE, 30-minute chat with a member of the Brainzooming team. You'll walk away with innovative ideas on what the right fun and productive strategy formula looks like for you.

Visit info.brainzooming.com/lets-chat-about-strategy
There’s a new, productive way to collaborate, no matter where your team is working from.