



Some exercises for strategic creativity

The challenge

When developing the strategy, it is highly recommended to generate many creative ideas, as materials on which to build in defining strategic avenues. But this creativity doesn't occur spontaneously. Indeed, confronted all year long with the need to be realistic, people often have trouble suddenly generating novel ideas. Proposing exercises that help them to imagine what could be possible rather than what they judge probable helps to unlock their creative capacities.

Four exercises to liberate strategic creativity

INSTRUCTIONS

Describe the company without using the five words that best correspond to it.

E.g.: The leaders of Castellane Champagnes tried to describe their company without using the words *alcohol*, *beverage*, *champagne*, *bottle* and *spirits*.

OBJECTIVE

- Encourage people to look beyond conventional definitions. E.g.: Executives realized that the role of their company was not only to supply an alcoholic beverage, but also to contribute to all sorts of celebrations. This thinking led to a series of product and marketing innovations.

TIPS

- Help participants warm up, for example by asking people to introduce themselves with an unusual detail.
- Give examples to start the exercise.
- Initially encourage the expression of numerous definitions, as imperfect as they may be.

Imagine that your company has disappeared.

E.g.: "It is now 2020. Your company has disappeared. What happened? How did the company sink? How could it have been avoided?"

- Encourage people to leave their comfort zone by reminding them that the things they take for granted can be challenged.
- Have people express taboos about vulnerabilities, industry risks, etc.

- Encourage people to imagine a broad range of potential causes.
- Have people formulate catastrophic scenarios concretely by illustrating them with fictitious numbers and examples.
- Do not tolerate personal attacks.

Imagine that you have to set up a joint-venture with an organization very different from yours.

E.g.: What joint-venture could your company create with Facebook, McDonald's, the tax authorities, Starbucks, the Red Cross?

- Encourage transpositions with other sectors of activity.
- Play on analogies and combinations to come up with all sorts of innovative ideas.

- Start by choosing companies or organizations that inspire you.
- Encourage the largest possible number of ideas, even the most eccentric.
- Periodically re-stimulate participants: "If we push this idea as far as it can go, what would we get? What would that mean for us? What else could we imagine?"

Write the newspaper headlines in 20XX.

E.g.: "It is now 2020. *The Wall Street Journal* and *Newsweek* have recently published an article on your company. Draft the headlines of these articles."

- Have the group project itself into alternative futures.
- Initiate discussion around the long-term future desired for the company.

- Have break-out groups imagine different scenarios. For example, a worst-case scenario, a best-case scenario, and a left-field scenario.
- Then guide thinking with questions such as: Describe the situation with one key number. What obstacles will have been encountered and surmounted to get to this point? Which cultural changes will the company have experienced? Etc.