

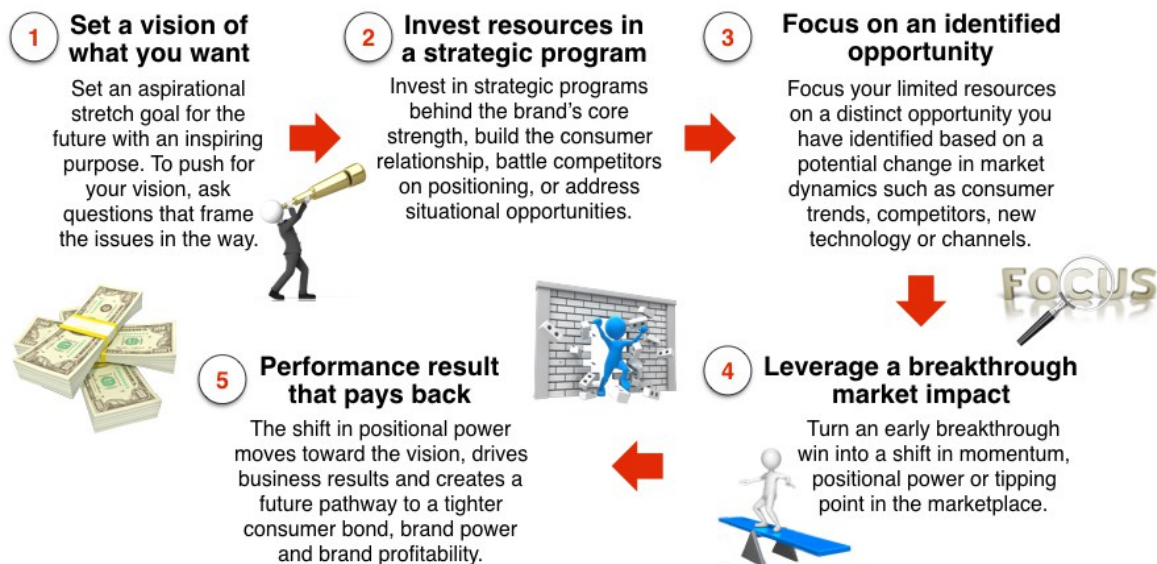
How to use the five elements of smart strategic thinking on your brand

Posted by [Derek A. Lackey, Editor](#) / August 06, 2018

Everyone says they are a strategic thinker, yet few are. Early in my career, I confess that I was more of an instinctual marketer. To be a strategic thinker, we need to learn to slow down and organize our thoughts. You need to set a vision, invest your limited resources against an identified opportunity. And, then you need to create a market impact that can be leveraged into a performance result.



Five elements of smart strategic thinking



1. Set a vision of what you want for your brand

A vision sets aspirational stretch goals for the future, linked to a clear result or purpose. Write a vision statement in a way that scares you a little and excites you a lot. It should steer everyone who works on the brand to focus on finding ways to create a bond with your consumers. This will lead to power and profit beyond what the product alone could achieve. As Yogi Berra famously said, If you do not know where you are going, how will you know if you get there?

To be a visionary, you must be able to visualize the future. Imagine it is five or 10 years from now and you wake up in the most fantastic mood. Visualize a perfect future and write down the most critical milestones you need to achieve. Even think

about words that will inspire, lead and steer your team towards your vision.

As strategic thinking starts with asking questions, a smart strategy must ask interruptive questions that frame the issues in terms of what you want to achieve. By raising those issues early on, you can focus the team on the significant problems that need to be solved to get you on the path to your vision.

2. Invest resources in a strategic program

Think through the options of where you should invest to move your brand into a more powerful and profitable position. The programs you choose should solidify the brand's core strength, build a brand idea that tightens the consumer bond, battle competitors on positioning, or address the situational challenges and opportunities.

3. Focus on an identified opportunity

Focus your limited resources on a distinct opportunity you have identified based on a potential change in the market, including changes to consumers, competitive situation, technology or sales channels.

In today's data-driven world, everyone has access to the equivalent information and in turn, can see the same opportunities. You must use speed to seize the opportunity before others can take action, and then that opportunity is gone.

The best brand leaders never divide and conquer. They force themselves to focus and win. The smartest brand leaders use the word or more often than they use the word and. If you come to a decision point, and you try to rationalize doing a little of both, you are not strategic. Force yourself to make choices.

Many marketers struggle to focus.

Myth 1: The most prominent myth of marketing is to believe that your brand will get bigger if you have a broader target market.

Reality: Too many marketers target anyone. I will always argue it is better to be loved by a few than tolerated by many. You have to create a tight bond with a core base of brand fans, and then use that fan support to expand your following.

Myth 2:...

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