

Questions to start the strategic thinking process

Our Business

1. Why do we exist?
2. What is unique about us, especially compared to our counterparts in our industry?
3. What business(es) are we in, and why are we in it (them)?
4. How do we make money?
5. What, specifically, is making us money today that will *not* make us money tomorrow?
6. What, specifically, is making us money today that will make us money tomorrow?

Our Environment

1. What relevant trends are changing our industry?
2. How does technological development in our industry threaten us, or offer us new opportunities?
3. Who are our competitors? ...now? ...emerging?
4. What are our competitors doing?

Our Customers and Products/Services

1. Who are our customers? Are they a growing or shrinking entity, and why?
2. What do our customers *really* want? How do we know this?
3. How do our products/services improve the lives of our customers?
4. Will these same products still achieve these benefits one, two or five years from now?
5. What might they get really *excited* about that they don't know they want or need yet?

Our History and the "Baggage" We Carry

1. How do things really work around here?
2. How has our business changed in the last five years?
3. What are our most valuable capabilities? How might we exploit them further?
4. How do the employees view our intent?
5. What are we doing to attract and retain talent? What can we do better on this front?
6. What is our commitment to our stakeholders?
 - employees?
 - owners?
 - investors?
 - Board of Directors?
 - shareholders?
 - suppliers?
 - the local community?
 - society at large?

Future

1. What business(es) should we be in, and why?
2. What is stopping us from getting into that (those) business(es)?
3. Where do we want to be in five years?
4. What are the top three issues that we need to address to get there by then?