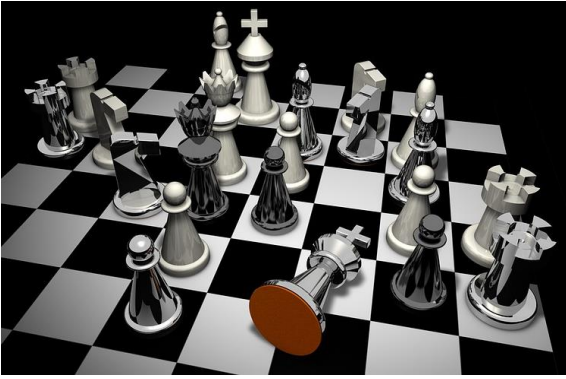


Twenty Tough Strategy Questions



1. Strategy is a response to reality. What is your organization's response to reality and is it working? Is your organization thriving, striving, barely surviving or nose-diving? A mixture? What's going on?
2. For a strategy to be good, it needs to be simple and understandable. Why do complex strategies often fail?
3. Strategic planning, strategic thinking and strategic execution are not the same thing. How are they different?
4. If you had to reduce the services your organization provides down to one essential service, which one would you choose and why?
5. Is your organization always in "startup mode" for operating funds? Why?
6. There are many forces that prevent strategy execution. Some of them are: barriers to entry, lack of market understanding, competitors, suppliers, regulations, etc. What are some of the forces your organization is facing?
7. A strategy is only as good as the thought process that created it and the decisions and actions used to execute it. How is strategy created and executed in your organization?
8. What is your competitive advantage? What can your organization provide that is not easily duplicated and is of high value to your varied customers?
9. Few organizations anticipate "Black Swans" until they occur. A "Black Swan" is a highly unanticipated event that is traumatic or highly disruptive to an organization or community. What "Black Swans" do you need to anticipate? What "Black Swans" have occurred?
10. A good starting point for strategic execution is providing the most value with the least amount of time, energy and resources. What services are you providing that offer the highest value with the least amount of time, energy and resources needed?
11. How much does your organization's money cost? How much does the lack of money cost?
12. Strategy is infused throughout all levels of the organization – think of both a lattice and a cascade. How well does your board, staff, volunteers and stakeholders understand the strategy – the mission, vision, values and direction – of your organization?
13. How flexible and adaptable are your operations to an ever-changing environment? What are the flexible and not-so-flexible parts?
14. Who is emotionally committed to your organization? Who is "all in" and why?
15. If your organization were to operate efficiently and effectively, what changes and difficult choices would you have to make? What would you have to ruthlessly let go of?
16. What is your organization doing that is creative (providing something new, refreshing or generative) and innovative (adds lots of extra value)? Are creativity and innovation necessary for your organization? In what areas?
17. What indicators of success in accomplishing the mission of the organization have actually been reached? How were they reached? When they weren't reached, what was the cause?
18. Who is disrupting your organization's ability to operate effectively? Staff, customers, competitors, for-profits, board members, governmental organizations, etc.?
19. How can strategy be operationalized? In other words, how can strategy become a daily practice within your organization that is relevant, inspiring and effective?
20. After answering some of these tough strategy questions, what recommendations and advice would you give your organization if you were a consultant?