

Brainzooming™

THE BRAINZOOMING GROUP



**Strategy for Success:
Strategic Planning Made Simple
Lab Book**

**Making
Strategic Planning Fun!**

This Lab Book is an excerpt from the Brainzooming eCourse, **Strategy for Success: Strategic Planning Made Simple**



Strategy for Success: Strategic Planning Made Simple includes hundreds of real-world learnings, tools, and tips we use with Brainzooming clients to streamline strategy.

This easy-to-use resource features:

- Targeted video lessons
- Downloadable guides
- Ready-to-use exercises for your team
- Full availability on your schedule

[To see a sample video, learn more, and buy the Strategy for Success course, click here.](#)

MAKING STRATEGIC PLANNING FUN!



Strategy for Success: Strategic Planning Made Simple Lab Book

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MAKING STRATEGIC PLANNING FUN!

Yes, strategic planning can be fun—if you know the right ways to liven it up while still developing solid strategies!

Chances are that you dread the typical, traditionally-run strategic planning meeting. Everyone dreads them because attendees so infrequently see the connection between participation and positive changes developing for their organizations and customers.

While a strategic planning process may promise to deliver real objectives and tactics, it often never happens as promised. Senior executives may say they want disruptive ideas, but really they just want ideas that are easy to grasp and fit the current system. And who wants to waste precious time trying to imagine and plan things an organization *should* pursue but ultimately never will?

Fortunately, there IS a different way to do strategic planning!

Fun Strategic Planning? Really?

Let's first define what we mean by "fun" as it relates to strategic planning. *Fun strategic planning* is a mentally stimulating, very collaborative experience among highly-engaged groups to want to participate in strategic planning in the future.

Wrapping strategy meetings in creative thinking exercises and fresh, mentally-stimulating activities turns strategic planning into a productive, enjoyable, and fun experience for organizations, senior executives, and internal teams.

Enabling Breakthrough Strategic Thinking

Invite broader participation and adapt accordingly

There's little fun in the same executives having the same conversations about the same challenges or avoiding the same topics that they do every year during strategic planning. Increasing the diversity of people and thinking provides an almost immediate impact. New thinking leads to new possibilities and opportunities.

Look for ways to diversify who participates in strategy meetings (or at least contributes to strategic planning):

- People who are new to the company
- People from multiple generations
- Individuals that have recently worked at competitors or in other industries
- Interns that haven't thought much about your organization but have lots of ideas
- Anyone else who doesn't look like or think like the executive team that's been in place for years

Those are just a few possibilities for diversifying the strategic thinkers.

Importantly, as you include people that may be unfamiliar with the organization's leaders or are apprehensive about participating in strategy, you need to make sure that it's easy, safe, and fun for them to participate.

- Let them speak before executives weigh in
- Give them selected topics upfront to think about and come prepared with ideas
- Use language to discuss strategy in the meeting that is familiar and inviting

Finally, as you try to stretch everyone's thinking, don't leave any meeting participants behind. If you see someone struggling, figure out how to rearrange small groups, change the interaction practices, create a suitable role on the spot, or do something that helps them to actively participate and share their thinking.

Prepare work that isn't fun outside organized meetings

One reason that strategic planning meetings are deadly? Because when planners can get everyone in a room together, they try to throw all kinds of necessary *work* at them – including many activities that are not suited for a big group meeting. To make strategy meetings more engaging, address these types of activities *before* a big meeting:

- Gather all the **data** you think you'll need – Doing this bypasses frustrating, unproductive time as everyone waits for one person to track down or share information.
- Complete necessary **individual work** – Use interviews and online surveys to gather all the individual input you'll need during the meeting.
- Prepare your **homework** – Don't have the group performing analysis and developing insights that the strategist should be doing ahead of time.

Think through and plan on how manage the group's entire experience to maximize interaction. Keeping group participation broad and frequent provides more opportunities for fun engagement through interactive exercises.

Make Strategy Exercises Fun

One of the most significant things a strategist can do to make planning engaging is to employ *fun* exercises to develop strategy. What makes strategy exercises fun?

- They are easy for participants to understand, while still holding a few surprises
- People can clearly see how to participate in productive ways
- They provide rewarding experiences, as participants see and feel progress
- The exercises have enough structure to focus interactions while allowing space for productive strategic conversations and imagining new possibilities
- Participants aren't forced to deal with complex outputs, enabling them to easily contribute their expertise and creative thinking

When you ask people about familiar things in new and unconventional ways, there is a real opportunity to combine fun and bold thinking.

**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

Delivering a Fun Strategic Planning Experience

Pick a Venue that Says Fun...And Safe

The pandemic created a pressing need to space people out in meetings, but we've advocated for years to give people more space to move and think. While we never called it social distancing, we knew that giving people more physical space and a different setting translates into freeing their minds for more innovative thinking. Consider separate large rooms for small groups to maintain space and manage sound. If going outside isn't an option, another alternative is to use an online platform so that groups can work together from home or their own office workspaces.

Bring Humor to Ice Breakers and Introductions

An enjoyable strategic planning session should start on a light note, and never settle for boring introductions focused on name, title, and tenure. As you invest the time for a fun strategic planning icebreaker, try to use one that directly contributes to a fun environment or helps the group to network and collaborate more effectively during the meeting.

Consider these icebreaker possibilities:

- Ask a question that people that work together would have never asked and discussed previously.
- Have people quickly pair up (or multiple up) and create something they will need during later strategy activities.
- Ask a most, least, best, or worst question that everyone answers.
- Ask a first question: What was your first job? First new idea this week? First thing you did this morning? The first thing you do in a new city?
- Ask a last question: Last thing on your mind? Last time you felt like a kid? Last time you were shocked? Last time you did something that scared you?
- Ask a never question: What are you never doing? Have never done but would like to? Never thought (when you were young) that you would (or wouldn't) be doing this all the time? Something you never thought you'd admit to a group of co-workers but here it is?

Another great idea? Post questions with a choice of two answers. Have everyone pick an answer that will help you divide the group into smaller work groups later in the meeting.

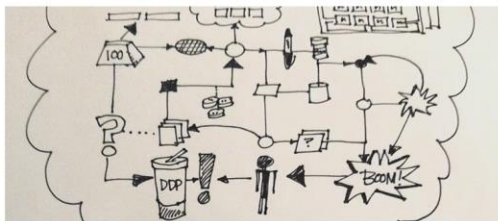
Let People Know You Expect Outrageous

Strategy participants are often reluctant to push strategy ideas very far. That's natural. If they feel on the hook to make a big idea happen, they may hold back in sharing it. That's why it's important to let them know boldness is okay. It's even better to clearly and blatantly ENCOURAGE complete outrageousness!

If requesting outrageous thinking is new for your team, you may need to provide a bolder innovation vocabulary. This will help them describe a bigger, more dramatic vision for the future and the innovations that it will take.

Tweak strategy exercises to lead people to bold thinking. For instance, change a typical strategy exercise (say Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) so people are imagining the most outrageous possibilities for each area. Once you have outrageous ideas, you can always dial extreme ideas back to be more realistic. You can accomplish that by working to find what part of an outrageous idea can most quickly progress toward implementation.

Disrupt Expectations to Create Fun



TURN UP THE SPEED & VARIETY



REARRANGE SMALL GROUPS



CREATE A COMPETITION



MAX OUT ON BREAKS, FOOD, & DRINKS

DISRUPT EXPECTATIONS TO CREATE FUN

To spread the fun and engagement opportunities throughout any strategy meeting, create a varied meeting environment:

- **Turn up the speed and variety** - Make strategy exercises more fun by spending only seven or eight minutes with an exercise or set of questions before changing the thinking perspective. For the next round, address the same issue from a different customer, competitor, or industry supplier perspective.
- **Continually rearrange working groups** – Divide a large group into smaller ones so everyone can actively participate more actively. Repeatedly vary the



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

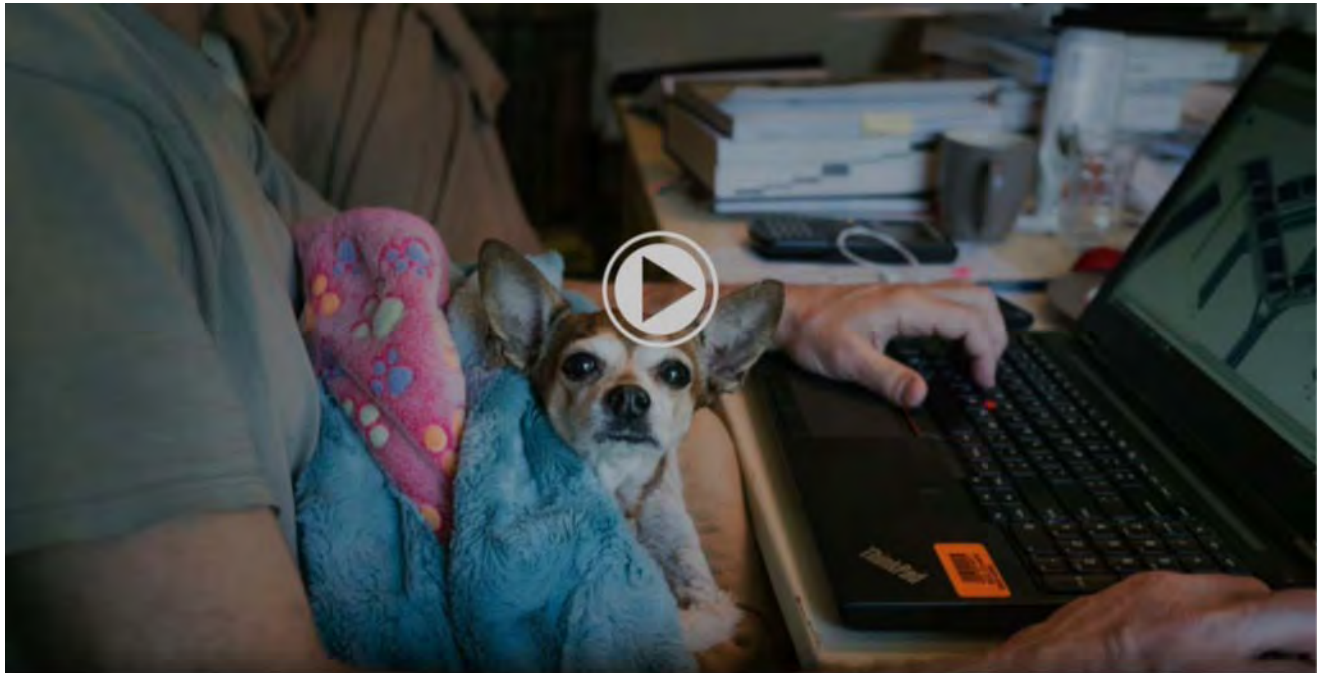
info.brainzooming.com/blast

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.

- small groups. Ensure that every person has a chance to work closely with many other people in the group. This type of interpersonal variety breaks up the monotony of a boring strategy meeting.
- **Hold competitions among small groups** – Create competitions among the smaller groups working on strategy exercises. Challenge each group to do more than the other groups of whatever it is you need – number of ideas, bold variations, diverse scenarios, outrageous market disruptions. Cheer for the team that wins, then give everybody another chance to win with the next small group exercise.
- **Increase breaks, adding fun food and drinks** - Schedule short, frequent breaks. Provide people time to stand up, move, and even do jumping jacks, stretches, or relaxation techniques. even do jumping jacks, stretches, or relaxation techniques. Order fun food for an upcoming break for delivery. If you have remote participants, arrange for a special care package of treats to be sent to them in advance to be opened at break time. Looking forward to something enjoyable at the next break can alleviate tedium and provide a charge during challenging strategy discussions.



While toys provide fun distractions visually and as things to play with and throw around, the fun in fun strategic planning comes from active participation, engagement, and the opportunity to productively contribute to the organization becoming more successful!



There's a new, productive way to collaborate,
no matter *where* your team is working from.



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