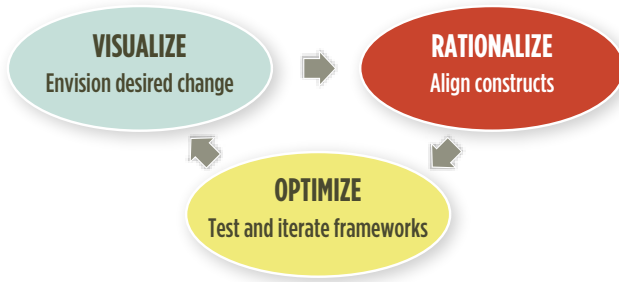


Frame-changing tips to build strategic value

Value creation is the new charter for thought-leading marketers. A 2007 Booz Allen Hamilton study showed that growth in revenues and profitability is strongest among companies that elevate marketing's role to the highest possible level.

Yet seeing and seizing opportunity is still a challenge for many organizations. Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton, authors of *The Knowing-Doing Gap*, stated it well: "There are many situations where people in organizations know what the best practices are, or have a very strong belief about what it'll take to make their organization as effective as possible. But there's something about the organization that makes it difficult, or impossible, to turn that knowledge into action."

Strategic frameworks provide a foundation for growing the business by crystallizing guiding principles and packaging them in a way that the organization can execute and measure against.



Creating a foundation for change

Marketing frameworks shape thinking and drive action by creating a model that puts marketing strategy and execution in the context of the company's larger agenda and concretizes it in a way that people can understand and act upon. They can be used to align marketing and sales execution with corporate strategy, accelerate cultural change, shift market perceptions, or drive adoption. Begin by analyzing the frames your firm currently uses, and assess which ones fit where you are going and which are aligned with an outdated strategy.

"A framework is a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality."

—American Heritage Dictionary

3 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

1.

Visualize vividly.

Draw a picture of the change you are trying to drive, comparing the current state vs. desired state, to help your audience envision the evolution in concrete terms.

2.

Construct consciously.

Inventory, rationalize, and cull the existing constructs related to the concept you want to convey as well as the constructs you are leaving behind. Less is more: incorporate the synergistic, and eliminate the incongruent.

3.

Optimize continuously.

Test direction early and often to understand strengths and weaknesses of the new model. Then track and iterate to overcome roadblocks to adoption over time.

Four flavors of strategic frameworks

- **Planning frameworks** facilitate ideation when developing corporate or marketing strategy. For instance, models that depict shifting market trends, changing customer needs, or boundaries of territory owned by competitors vs. white space that could be yours to claim.
- **Positioning frameworks** shift perception of the brand's relevance and value and explain, align, and embed a common view across the organization. Examples include storytelling constructs, value proposition pillars, and solution concept frameworks.
- **Selling frameworks** connect to the business' value chain and develop clear executable strategies to create a clear picture of desired behavior for the direct sales force or channel partners. Such frameworks may be expressed as value chains, engagement models, or sales plays.
- **Usage frameworks** accelerate adoption of technology or new solutions and grow revenue by increasing usage. Solution blueprints, journey guides, or progression networks are just a few types of frameworks to drive adoption and usage.





Redefining marketing skill sets

Model-making requires a special blend of talents that not all marketers have. Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*, defines new skills needed to thrive in today's world as "high concept" and "high touch." High concept is the capacity to detect patterns and opportunities, craft a satisfying narrative, and combine seemingly unrelated ideas into something new. Meanwhile, high touch refers to the ability to empathize with others and to understand the subtleties of human interaction.

Strategic frameworks are best built by integrated thinkers who understand content and context and bring an objective perspective that draws on a wide range of sources and influences.

"People's views of the world, of themselves, of their own capabilities, and of the tasks that they are asked to perform, or topics they are asked to learn, depend heavily on the conceptualizations that they bring to the task."

—Albert L. Stevens and Dedre Gentner, *Mental Models*

Building strategic skills

Key capabilities to look for in your strategy team include:

- Analytical and intuitive dexterity; intellectual curiosity balanced with mental discipline.
- Openness to experimentation and agility to test, iterate, and adjust all along the way; principle-driven rather than template-driven thinking.
- Discipline to institutionalize learning and change; commitment and persistence to reinforce the model despite possible resistance.

Shifting mindframes

Driving change is a complex challenge. Strategic frameworks create mental roadmaps that move people from where they are to where you want them to go. In order to shift mental models, you must first be cognizant of the frames that your target audience currently holds in their mind, whether you're talking to customers, sales reps, or partners. Then meet them where they are by mapping the new model to their point of view, and framing the benefits of the change in terms of what's in it for them.

It can be difficult to anticipate all the repercussions that a new model might generate. Taking an iterative approach can help minimize the downsides and maximize the impact. Start by developing a straw man for the new model, then test with representative stakeholders to gauge which aspects are most or least understood and where support or resistance lies. Tweak accordingly, incorporating learnings into the model, and adjust your rollout strategy to remove roadblocks to change.

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