



Test Your Strategies

Duration: 3 hours

Group size: small groups of 5-8 people

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to assess the robustness of strategy options. You will see how they stand up under a wide range of conditions representative of possible futures.

Outputs

- An assessment of how each strategy options fares in each of the 4 scenarios
- An analysis of stakeholder support for each strategy option
- A summarization of strategy evaluation criteria

Preparation

- Decide the strategy options that will be evaluated and the stakeholders to be considered
- Pre-print copies of the worksheets
- Set up the room for small groups

Materials:

- √ Several copies of the Scenario/Strategy Matrix
- √ Several copies of the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix
- √ Several copies of the Strategy Evaluation Factors Matrix
- √ Several sets of green, yellow, and red markers
- √ Paper and pens for each small group

Guidelines

Step 1 – Scenario/Strategy Matrix

- Return to small groups of 5-8 people
- On the Scenario/Strategy Matrix write down the strategies to be evaluated
- Read each of the four scenarios to refresh your thinking
- Discuss how your strategies would fare in each scenario
- Would the strategy leave you unprepared for that possible future?
- Write down the challenges each scenario presents to your strategy
- On the Scenario/Strategy Matrix, color the boxes to represent your group sense of whether the strategy passes the test for each scenario. Like a traffic light, green means move forward, red means stop, and yellow means be cautious.

Step 2 – Stakeholder Analysis

- On the Stakeholder Analysis matrix write down the stakeholders to be assessed
- Discuss the degree of support you could expect from your stakeholder groups for each of your strategies
- Write down the pros and cons for your stakeholders for each of the strategies
- On the Stakeholder Analysis matrix, color the boxes to represent your group sense of whether the strategy can expect the support from the stakeholders: green for ‘will support’, yellow for ‘unsure’, and red for ‘will not support’.

Step 3 – Strategy Evaluation Factors

- For this step, you will use the Strategy Evaluation Factors matrix.
- There are four evaluation criteria: 1) the **scenario test** (based on the Scenario/Strategy Matrix already complete), 2) **stakeholder support** (based on the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix already completed), 3) **congruence with organizational mission and vision**, and 4) an assessment of **financial risk**.
- Using the completed Scenario/Strategy Matrix, judge the overall robustness of the strategy under a variety of scenarios and color the ‘Passes Scenario Test’ box accordingly.
- Using the complete Stakeholder Analysis matrix, judge the overall enthusiasm of stakeholders and color the ‘Stakeholder Support’ box accordingly.
- Discuss whether the strategy is congruent with the stated mission and vision of the organization. Color the ‘Match Mission & Vision’ box according to group consensus.
- Discuss the financial risk the strategy poses for the organization and color the ‘Degree of Financial Risk’ box according to group consensus.

Step 4 – Report Back

- Reassemble the full group.
- Give each group spokesperson an opportunity to summarize the group’s findings on the Strategy Evaluation Factors.
- Capture on a flip chart any patterns that emerge from the group reports.

Tips for facilitating group activities

- Consider changing the usual meeting environment to stimulate creative thinking.
- Keep the end goal of decisive action in mind for the duration of the activity.
- Open with a brief overview of the activity so participants know what to expect.
- Be careful and consistent to maintain pre-set boundaries of time and task.
- Encourage small group self-management; suggest that each group select a recorder, a reporter, a time keeper, and a discussion leader.
- Work with the people, ideas, and motivations you have to find enough common ground to act rather than being bogged down or sidetracked with an attempt to resolve “deeper issues”.

- Seek global perspective on issues by allowing all opinions to be expressed, validating polarities, and by agreeing to disagree on issues that cannot be resolved quickly.
- Encourage people to stay engaged in spite of differences. Resist the urge to intervene unless you observe movement toward 'fight or flight'. Allow the group to resolve its own differences or agree to set them aside.
- Provide plenty of easily available nutritious snacks and beverages
- Consider using a Church Futures consultant to add depth and breadth of experience.

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