

# Play-to-Win Strategy Canvas

## 1. Winning Aspiration

What bold and measurable outcomes define our strategic ambition?  
What defines winning with customers? Against top competitors?

### EXAMPLES

*Lead U.S. airline industry in customer satisfaction and profitability*  
*Become the global leader in life-preserving biopharmaceuticals*

**!** A winning aspiration is a future-oriented statement that focuses outward on winning with your most important customers and against the very best competitors. Avoid playing to play, e.g. "improve sales 10%."

## 2. Where To Play

What should be our playing field? In what spaces will we compete?  
What current spaces should be changed? Where will we NOT focus?

### EXAMPLES

*Geographies; customer segments; channels; products/services; production stages*

**!** Choosing where to play requires choosing where not to play. Do not attempt to be everything to everyone, everywhere. Strategy is about focusing resources.

## 3. How To Win

What are the sources of our sustainable competitive advantage?  
What key offerings differentiate us and provide superior value?

### EXAMPLES

*Quality; price; speed; ease of use; design; convenience; style; unique experience*

**!** The key to winning in a given space is to consistently offer a better value equation than everyone else. The two basic ways are low cost, or differentiation. NOT both.

## 4. Capabilities Needed

What critical skills and core activities must be performed at the highest level in order to achieve the advantage in each of our chosen spaces?

### EXAMPLES

*Brand building; deep customer understanding; R&D; channel relationship-building*

**!** Avoid simply listing all current strengths. List only those that produce a competitive advantage in chosen spaces and that are relevant to customers.

## 5. Systems Required

What key management systems, processes, and structures must we have in order to sustain our competitive capabilities and support our strategic choices?

### EXAMPLES

*CRM system; leadership development; salesforce management; performance reviews*

**!** List only the critical management systems that will be needed to operate, monitor, measure, support and sustain the unique set of core capabilities listed above.

## 6. Reverse Engineering

What must be true in order for this strategy to be a set of winning choices?  
What conditions must be met? What are the potential barriers to success?

### EXAMPLES

*Industry remains stable; channels will upgrade; competitors won't wage turf war*

### INDUSTRY

what must be true about the structure of our industry?

what must be true about the attractiveness of our segments?

### CUSTOMER VALUE

what must be true about what our end customers truly value?

what must be true about what our channels truly value?

### RELATIVE POSITION

what must be true about our capabilities vs. our competitors?

what must be true about our costs vs. our competitors?

### COMPETITION

what must be true about how our competitors will react?

**!** Asking "what must be true?" is strategy's magic question. Answering this question in key areas reveals the guesswork to be tested before execution.

NAME

VERSION

DATE

## 7. Strategic Tests

How will we test our "what must be true" conditions?

TEST LEVEL:

\_\_\_\_\_ *Lean*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Small-scale*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Definitive*

**!** Start with the most worrisome assumption, and run a simple, fast, and frugal test.

### 1. CONDITION

what condition are we most worried might not be true?

why is it so worrisome?

### 2. HYPOTHESIS

what is it that we must learn?

what is our testable belief? (i.e. "if we do X, then Y will happen")

### 3. EXPERIMENT

how will we test our hypothesis?

what target measure will be the standard of proof?