



Vantage Point Associates LLC Profile of the Strategy Design Process

What is the product?

A process to help cross-functional teams design and execute strategy. Using a robust, application-validated approach, teams define the business and market in which they operate, determine customer needs, wants and preferences, evaluate their competitive situation within the business environment, establish a preferred approach to segmenting their market, and draw conclusions about their major strategic issues and opportunities. Building on this foundation, they choose which segments to target, define the positioning they would like to establish with customers, create segment-specific value propositions for delivering against positioning and establish a plan for obtaining approval for and implementing their strategy.

The process is organized into discrete units and is driven by a planning leader. The planning process leader employs a practical, issue-focused approach—explanation of concepts followed by involvement of the team in applying relevant concepts directly to the business task on which the team focuses throughout the process. A typical project involves a team of 6 to 8 individuals in a number of two-day planning sessions extending over a 12 to 16-week period.

What does it do?

The process focuses an organization's resources on those customers and customer groups it can serve most effectively and profitably. One manifestation of the process is a strategic plan document that can be used as a blueprint for implementation. Additionally, during execution of strategy, output from the process helps the organization align itself toward key customer groups. By working through the process, teams also learn how to use the concepts in other applications. They thus acquire a transferable set of skills and competencies. Through experience and certification, organizations can acquire the skills needed to lead and facilitate the process using internal resources.

What does it look like?

A set of guide books that integrate instructional text, examples and presentation charts to impart market-focused strategy concepts. Each guide book incorporates 'worktools' to enable team members to complete intermediate analytical steps and 'summaries' that team members can use to display the results of the analysis and conclusions drawn. Worktools and summaries guide the teams in channeling and framing their thoughts. Each worktool and summary contains fully-developed examples to help the teams model the output they seek in the application to their business.

Each unit is self-contained. Participants receive a set of units for those topics incorporated into the process, adapted to the specific requirements of their business situation. Electronic files of the worktools and summaries are available to participants so that teams may record information as they proceed through the process.

How does it work?

Teams are introduced to concepts by the planning process leader, who uses a combination of presentation materials and discussion to set the context, establish understanding of concepts, and explain work assignments.

After each short instructional segment, team members work under the guidance of the planning leader, as process and concept expert, to complete the analyses, make decisions, and formulate summaries. The planning process leader intervenes as required to ensure that the team's work is both rigorous and on target, using questions and suggestions to help the team achieve sound, valid, actionable output.

The planning process leader's role is an important ingredient in achieving both superior learning and the desired planning outcome. To be fully effective, a planning leader must be well versed in the business in which the team is engaged, or have extensive knowledge about the ins and outs of designing strategy in a range of businesses or industries. The planning leader must also be fully qualified in leadership and facilitation of project teams and have in-depth knowledge about the application of the Vantage Point Strategy Design Process. Vantage Point works with its clients to train and certify internal process leaders.

Who are the likely customers?

Organizations with a need to improve market performance and increase external orientation through a rigorous application of market and business planning discipline. Any organization can make use of the tools but, in general, the process will more likely appeal to larger organizations that are capable of distributing the investment in delivery across a range of products and markets. Senior executive groups, general managers, directors of marketing, business unit leaders and human resources / training executives could all be purchasers.

Where can it be purchased?

The product is available from Vantage Point, and is implemented through sessions conducted by the firm's associates.