

Rejuvenating Strategic Management - Through the Strategic Option Grid

In this paper we use a single framework “The Strategic Option Grid” to help give clarity, imagination and insight into strategic decision-making.

The paper is laid out as follows:

- The strategic option grid – and managers’ experience of it to date
- Interdependences and the “deep-dive” techniques for creative option generation
- Testing the scores – or the “challenge and build” process
- Practical applications and implications – of the Strategic Option Grid
- Future possibilities – for practice and research
- Conclusions

The Strategic Option Grid – and Managers’ experience of it

The Strategic Option Grid – probably like most novel management techniques – was developed in an accidental context. A small division of (what was then) British Rail was about to be privatised. Whilst it had a turnover of around £2 millions, its costs were just £4 million – leading to an annual loss of £2million. The business unit was responsible for servicing telephone enquiries.

Unsurprisingly, the senior management team faced some rather difficult dilemmas. Prima-facie, the business was not viable. But should that business have been closed down, besides the loss of fifty jobs, this would have led to a loss of service to the rest of the railway network.

Indeed, closure might have resulted in some significant disruption – not only operationally, but also, politically - to the privatisation process. Had the media become aware of any proposal to close down this essential service, there might well have led to some adverse publicity.

In order to help the team to come up with a new way of thinking about the business, a facilitator suggested:

“Perhaps we should look not only at a number of options – and as many as we can – but also we may need to set down a number of criteria for judging these options against”.

The five criteria were thus set as (see Figure 1 – the Strategic Option Grid):

- Strategic attractiveness
- Financial attractiveness
- Implementation difficulty
- Uncertainty and risk
- Stakeholder acceptability

Typically each criteria is scored as:

- ✓✓✓ - very attractive
- ✓✓ - moderately attractive

✓ - low attractiveness

Figure 1
The Strategic Option Grid

Options Criteria	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Strategic Attractiveness				
Financial Attractiveness*				
Implementation Difficulty				
Uncertainty and Risk				
Acceptability (to Stakeholders)				

Score: 3 = very attractive, 2 = medium attractive, 1 = low attractiveness.

* Benefits less costs, - net cash flows relative to investment

In the course of the next six hours the team managed to come up with not just three or four, but as many as *nine* different strategic options.

One, in particular, actually met the strategic objectives of the business and also had a highly attractive score summed across the five criteria. This particular strategic option was a combination of:

- Price rises (to reflect the true value added to its customers)
- Cost reduction
- And also, increased subsidy – from central sources – in order to sustain the consistency of the former service – both during, and after the privatisation process.

But whilst one particular strategic option *did* achieve the required threshold level of attractiveness – in terms of making business and financial sense – the decisive factor in the decision-making process turned out to be “stakeholder acceptability”. For when looked at from the perspective of certain stakeholders, and once the full consequences of closure were thought through and spelt out, closing did not seem to be an attractive decision.

Figure 2 now illustrates these scores. Whilst each criteria has an equal weighting (for simplicity), clearly in this case “stakeholder acceptability” was of very major importance, making it even more unattractive to choose the closure option, as opposed to a continued strategy to run the call centre with more subsidy.

Figure 2
Strategic Option Grid – Worked Example

Options	Option 1 Cut Costs	Option 2 More Subsidy	Option 3 Closure	Option 4 1, 2 & New Service Stream
Strategic Attractiveness	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Financial Attractiveness	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Implementation Difficulty	✓ ✓	✓	✓	✓ ✓
Uncertainty and Risk	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓
Stakeholder Acceptability	✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Overall Scores	11	10	8	12

This experience of the Strategic Option grid highlights its effectiveness in a number of ways:

- Visually, because the Strategic Option Grid has columns for four, if not more, strategic options, then this in itself can generate greater creativity amongst senior managers.
- The definition of specific decision-making criteria allows managers to think about options in a more objective way
- The specific choice of the five criteria – although originally set instinctively – appeared to very closely reflect the unconscious and informal, decision-making heuristics which managers use – especially the criteria of “financial attractiveness”, “uncertainty and risk” and “stakeholder acceptability”. The two criteria of “implementation difficulty” as “strategic attractiveness” may be slightly lower down at least some managers’ prioritisation preferences – in a financially – driven environment).
(Note that high implementation difficulty and “uncertainty and risk” are scores of 1, and not 3 ticks)
- Each of the criteria can be checked out/or supported by other, more specific techniques – (which we call later the “deep-dive” techniques). By spelling out these criteria separately, they do not merge all together as a single criterion of “attractiveness”

The technique seems to alleviate some of the worst difficulties of politics, because of stakeholder positions and agendas.

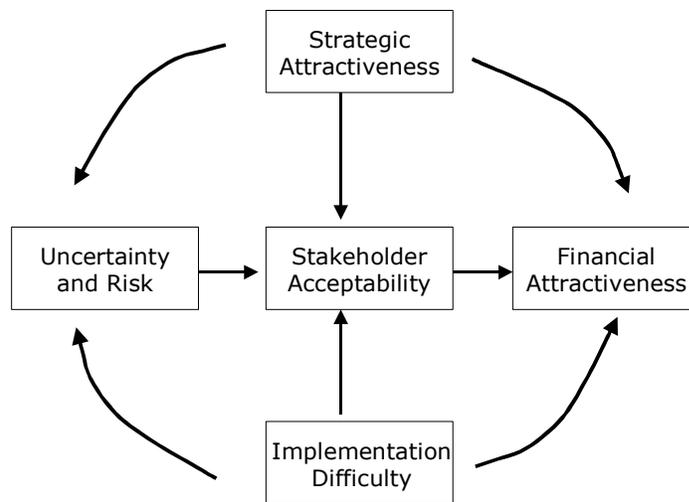
This particular organisation still exists today – ten years later, although its existence is now being challenged by possible relocation to an operation in India. It is perhaps doubtful that if its senior team had just looked at the financials at the time – in their narrowest sense, and tried to evolve incremental strategies to the business that this would have been accomplished.

Since that time, the Strategic Option Grid has been used by a large number of companies. Diageo, Microsoft, Tesco and others have incorporated it into their internal processes. This has allowed us to explore not only what works well for managers and also the limitations of the techniques, and its potential pitfalls. The remainder of this paper helps us to explore the issues in further depth.

Interdependencies and the “deep-dive” techniques for creative option generation

There are some important interdependencies between the five key criteria of the Strategic Option Grid. Figure 3 shows a number of the key interdependencies as follows:

**Figure 3
Key Interdependencies: The Strategic Option Grid**

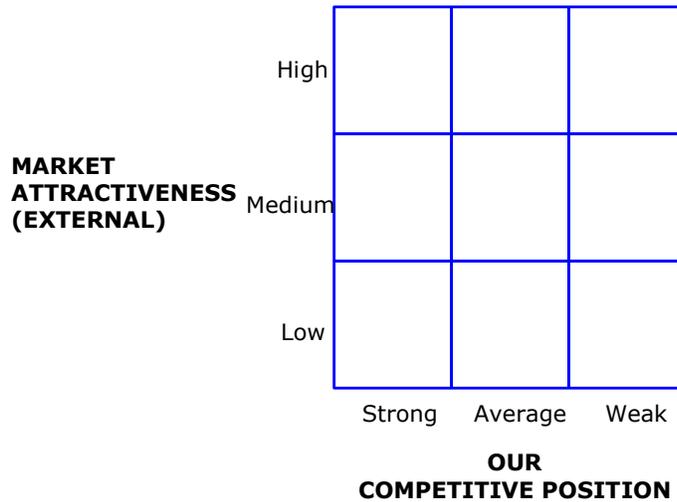


- Strategic attractiveness and financial attractiveness together have some impact on stakeholder acceptability
- Likewise, perceived implementation difficulty and uncertainty and risk will influence stakeholder acceptability
- More minor linkages also exist between strategic attractiveness and both financial attractiveness and uncertainty and risk; and also between implementation difficulty and both financial attractiveness and uncertainty and risk.

Each of the five decision criteria can now be tested out with a number of “deep-dive” techniques, as we now see as follows.

For instance, “Strategic attractiveness (for an externally – facing strategy)” should be checked out primarily with the GE grid or the “General Electric Grid” (see Figure 4).

Figure 4
The "GE Grid" (General Electric)



This GE Grid distinguishes between the external attractiveness of external markets, and also competitive position. “Market attractiveness” can be supported by second-tier techniques such as ‘PEST’ factors, growth drivers and Porter’s five competitive forces. “Competitive position” can be supported by customer value analysis, by competitor profiling, or by these two techniques in combination with relative cost analysis.

Clearly this requires (potentially) a significant amount of thought, and this in turn entails a lot more thinking than more superficial “strategic fit”. (Sometimes “strategic fit” is a tautological concept – ‘a strategy’ is seen as attractive because it fits what we want to do strategically which is a circular argument – this concept is hardly an objective justification or evaluation for the strategies).

Managers have to be continually convinced and persuaded *not* to short-circuit their thinking on this first criteria of “strategic attractiveness”– and to support it with the GE grid and with its second-tier techniques – like growth drivers and Porter’s five forces.

“Financial attractiveness” means essentially those factors which (in combination) will deliver a return on investment, or perhaps the more sophisticated concept of “shareholder value creation” will add incremental economic value

This can be arrived at either by analysing:

- Value and cost drivers (relatively static tools)
- Value over time curve (a dynamic tool)

Figure 5 and 6 give examples of both value and cost drivers. This example covers the cash flow generating characteristics (both the inflows and the outflows) of a hypothetical strategy to deploy a new trend of supermarket trolley which actively goes in a *guaranteed* straight line. Value and cost driver pictures help to ensure:

Figure 5
Example of Value Drivers

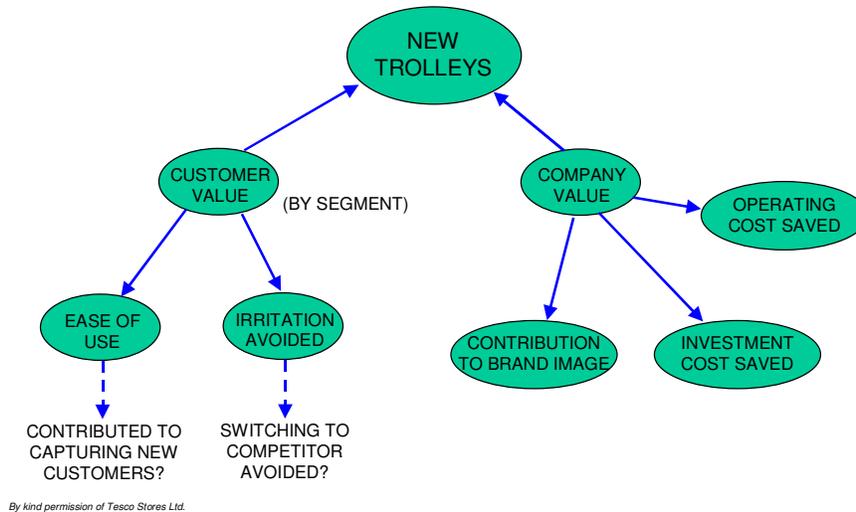
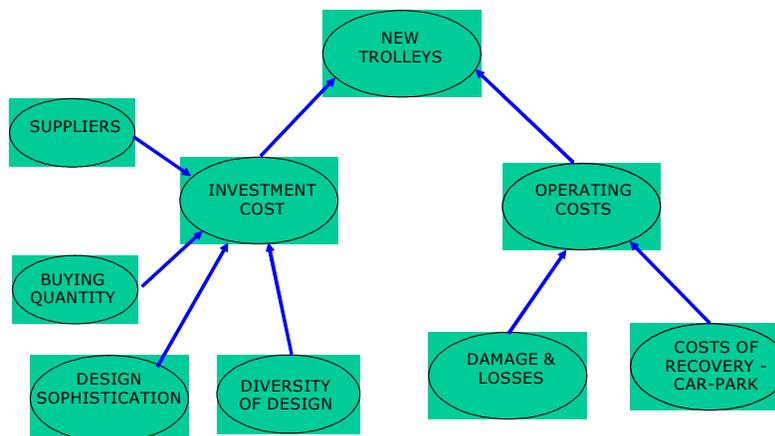


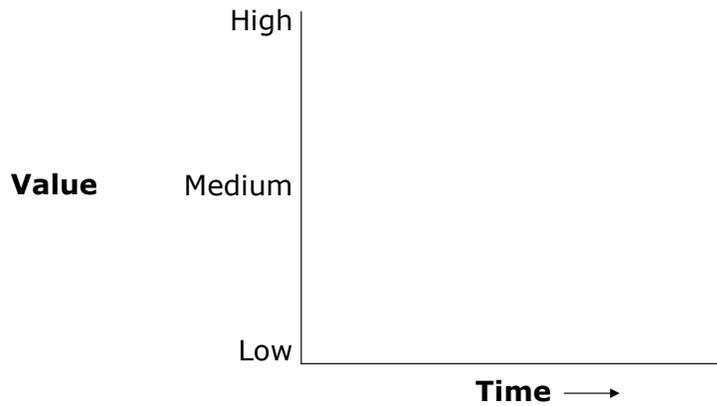
Figure 6
Example of Cost Drivers



- Breadth of analysis: *completeness* of thinking about how value is created by the strategy, and also on the total scope of its costs – direct and indirect, short and long term.
- Depth of analysis: by drawing these as a hierarchical picture, we discover more about the specific causal factors at work in generating cost inflows, and also outflows
- More realistic quantification of value: once we have drawn up these pictures we are now able to quantify some of the parameters which drive cost inflows and also cost outflows.

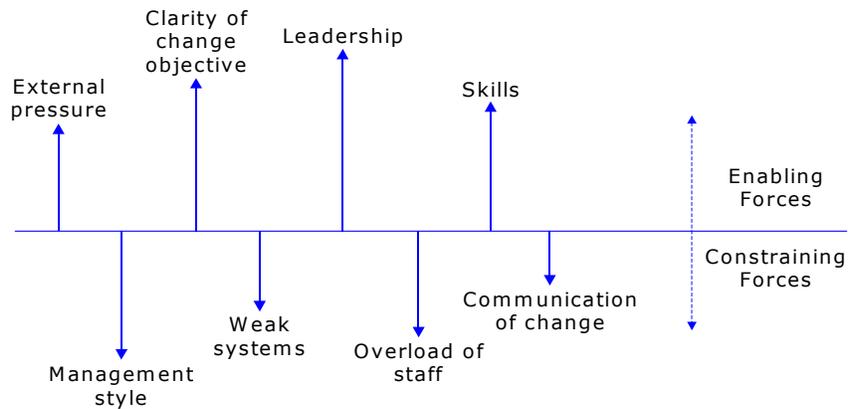
Figure 7 (the “value-over-time curve”) now helps us to get a feel for *when* net cash flows (and thus economic value) will be captured. Using this technique over many years has highlighted that many managers – prior to using this technique – appear to lack a detailed view of *when* they expect to get an economic return from these strategies, especially during the crucial phase of the formulation of a strategy or the definition of a strategic project. They often find this technique particularly helpful at this juncture.

Figure 7
Value-Over-Time Curve



Implementation difficulty: this can either be addressed using force field analysis or through the difficulty-overtime curve. With force field analysis (Figure 8), one separates out the key enables and constraints of implementation using Vector analysis.

Figure 8
Force Field Analysis



These enablers and constraints are thus represented as vector arrows: the length of the arrow reflecting the perceived strength of the force, or influence on implementation. Ideally all the arrows go up, and none go down. Where they are more or less mainly up, you should have a score of three ticks of “implementation difficulty”. When they are two-to-one up versus down, you have two ticks on the strategic option grid. Where you have them almost in balance, or more constraints than enablers it is a one tick score (or ‘very difficult’).

Figure 9, the difficulty-over-time curve now gives us (like the “value-over-time curve”) a good feel of the total sum of difficulty over the duration of the strategy, once again reflecting its dynamics.

Uncertainty and risk is arrived at by using the uncertainty – importance grid (Figure 10).

Figure 9
Difficulty-Over-Time Curve

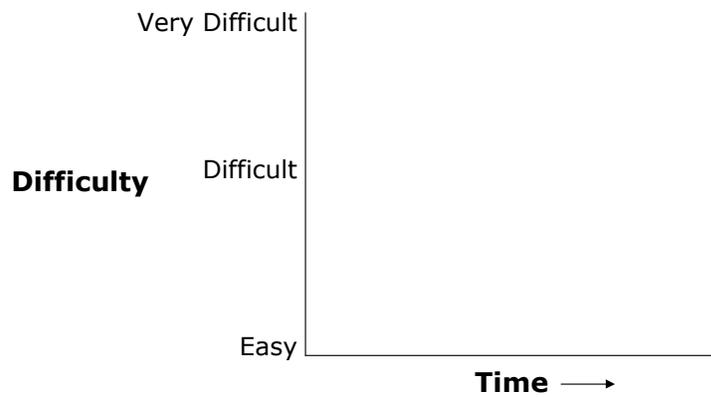
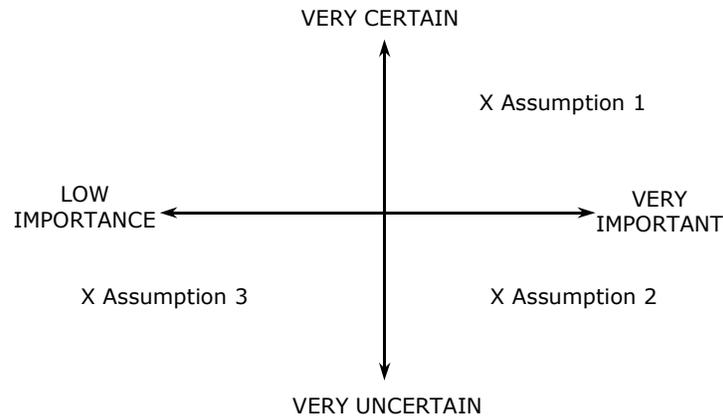


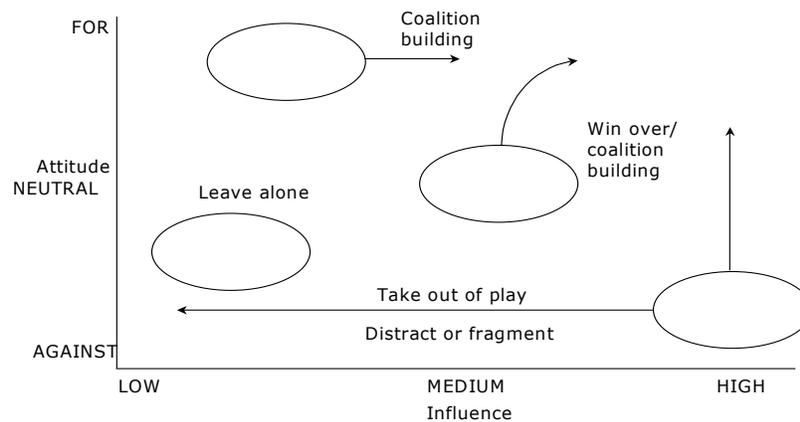
Figure 10
Uncertainty – Importance Grid



First, some of the most critical assumptions about the strategy actually working out alright are identified (perhaps using post-its). Then we begin to position them in terms of their relative importance, and also in terms of how certain/uncertain they are perceived to be. A cluster of several assumptions in the South-East part of the grid (the “Danger Zone”) would suggest a highly uncertain strategy (or one tick).

Finally, stakeholder analysis (Figure 11) allows us to judge how for/against the stakeholders are likely to be – and given their degree of influence (again perhaps using post-its). This requires taking the stakeholders’ own perspective either by asking them directly, or second-best by estimating their positions by imagining we are them (often called the “out-of-body experience”).

**Figure 11
Stakeholder Analysis**



Finally, the positions of individual stakeholders can be assessed by using a similar picture to Force Field analysis, except here the upward arrows represent what turns a particular stakeholder on about a strategy, (or the “attractors”) and the downward arrows, what turns them off (or the “repellers”).

Once again it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that whilst there seems a lot to do in going through this process (for a single option), this process has been applied – and successfully, in a number of companies (for instance at Diageo).

Indeed, the ‘deep-dive’ techniques do raise some dilemmas – as one example experienced by Diageo managers:

A ‘bottom-up’ approach:

- a) Should one use *all* the ‘deep-dive’ techniques for all the boxes of the Strategic Option Grid *and then* do the scores or,

A ‘top-up’ approach:

- b) Should you fill in the scores tentatively *and then* do – either completely or selectively – the ‘deep-dive’ techniques?

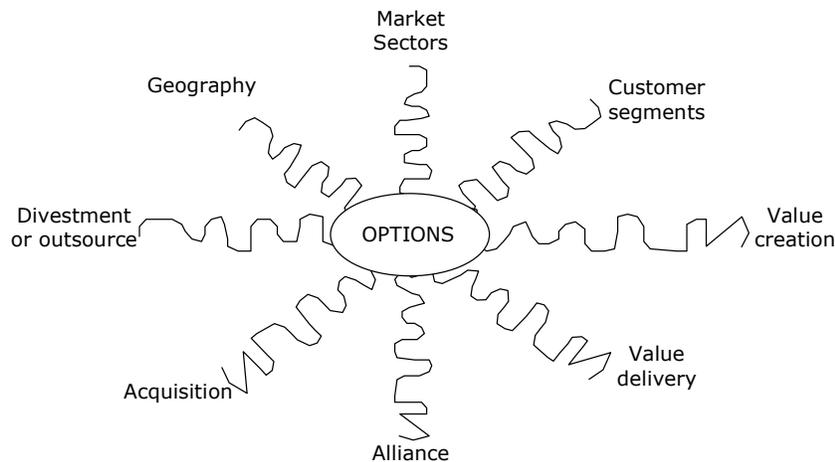
The author’s personal preference is to do b), as in practice there are many options, and it may be better, therefore, to perform some overall evaluation of *all of them*, rather than to spend a lot of time evaluating a small number of options – only to find that they were not the best ones. (This is especially important where the ‘deep-dive’ techniques lead straight into significant data collection). Inevitably, there are trade-offs in how best to use managers’ available time.

Creative Option Generation

Options can be generated creatively for the Strategic Option Grid at both a macro and a micro level, as we will now see.

At the macro level one can use the Strategy ‘Optopus’ (see Figure 12) to tease out new possibilities. The ‘optopus’ has eight dimensions of choice – or “degrees of freedom”. These lines of enquiry can be explored either separately, or perhaps through possible interdependencies. Taking a particular novel example, one possible strategic option grid to enter the funerals business (or “Easy Funerals”) would be:

Figure 12
The “Optopus” - For Option Generation



- Customer segments: agnostic/atheist/ethnic, Income rich, 40-60 years old
- Value creation: the pre-need market, personalised funerals to celebrate death as a positive event, rather than as a negative one
- Value delivery: sold via solicitors – wills, or by satellite TV advertising, or by media publicity
- Alliance: with the basic functions of handling and storing the deceased’s body outsourced
- Outsourcing: to existing undertakers

Geography: initially the UK, perhaps on the South coast – with more elderly

The above idea was generated in around five minutes simply by picking aligned options from a set of eight separate brain-storming outputs from the Octopus' eight dimensions

The 'Optopus' can help to provide some prompts/structure to option generation at a macro level – for competitive strategy, partly de-skilling the creative process and extending the possibilities of strategic options

The Strategic Option Grid scores are only as good as your creative thinking and especially your cunning plan. Whilst the "Optopus" helps to generate more imaginative *content*, they will also need help with the process of being more imaginative. To help to improve the scores at a micro level we have therefore established a number of recipes for creativity as follows. These were originally developed for Dyson Appliances in 2002. We have edited these down a little within this paper.

These are grouped as follows:

- Challenging the constraints
- Working backwards from customers
- Beating your competitors
- Challenging the industry rules
- Creating greater degrees of freedom

These are written as if they are being read by practising managers.

Challenging the constraints

Challenging the constraints can invariably lead to some fruitful lines of enquiry. These prompts help you to step outside your current frame of reference. Many of the resistances to strategic thinking are due to taken-for-granted constraints

If there is a constraint, think why it is there and how it can be avoided"

More specifically, it may help (rather than by resorting to simplistic brainstorming) to consider why a constraint exists in the future. In the same breath, by determining why it is there you are probably halfway to avoiding it.

"Focus on constraints one at a time, always beginning with the most critical one"

Instead of focusing on all constraints simultaneously it is necessary to pick them out one at a time, to challenge and dissolve, usually beginning with the hardest. If that one is simply too daunting, pick off a number of the easier ones first.

Working backwards from customers

Customers are potentially an important source of strategic inspiration for the strategic option grid– and one which is frequently ignored because it is felt embarrassing to ask customers what they think you could or should do.

Customers are a wonderful source of strategic thinking. It has been put by some that they are managers' unpaid strategy consultants.

"Be your own customer (physically)"

In most markets you can actually *be* your own customer. This is easiest in retail, financial services, leisure, publishing and telecommunications. But even in the business-to-business market you can make an enquiry to your own company (or to a competitor) and live through at least the front-end of the process. The main reason why companies do not use this approach seems to be down to fear. Fear that one might find out that one is not as good as the average. But discovering such a thing is precisely the kind of learning which can lead to strategic thoughts.

"How can you add more value to your customer?"

Following on from an out-of-body experience, now think about how you can add *even more* value to your customer. If you were they, what other needs do you have which either are not currently being supplied or are being supplied poorly? Are you delivering value throughout the customer's main phase of consumption? What experiences both before and after that core phase can you also service?

"How can you avoid destroying or diluting value?"

Most writers on strategy focus on value added, but by simply avoiding the destruction of customer value, or even merely its dilution, this can in turn generate real competitive advantage.

"If you are creating lots of value, capture more of it"

Interestingly, many companies create value but sometimes fail to fully capture it. This might be due to highly competitive market conditions, or it might be due to a lack of innovative positioning and pricing.

"When is most value created/least value created over time? (plot a value-over-time curve)"

"How can something be made more convenient to buy?"

By just taking away the difficulties of buying something this can lead to increased sales. Alternatively, by making it easier for the customer to buy more (both mentally, emotionally and physically), this can facilitate sales volume.

"How can something be more absolutely irresistible to buy?"

More stretching still, set yourself the mental goal of making your proposition so compelling that it actually becomes irresistible. This can often be achieved by skilful management of the buying experience – and its psychology – on top of an already highly attractive product and service base.

Beating your competitors

Competitors, too, can be a source of significant inspiration – not merely to copy them but (ideally) to get tangibly better than them.

Your competitors are equally fertile territory for you to generate new strategic thoughts.

“Study your competitors – but then do things even better”

Competitive analysis is not particularly done well by many companies. Some do no formal competitor analysis at all. Doing competitor analysis is however only the first stage to asking the question: “How can we do things even better – that is either better than how they do it or better than how we do it now?”

“Learn from how things are done in other industries”

Other industries can be fertile grounds for creative thought. For instance, many years ago one of the authors helped the British Post Office to think through how it could protect its cost centres by organising a lunch with Securicor service managers, who were able to suggest not building bullet-proof centres but put forward ways of deceiving criminals so that they did not actually know where the real cash was.

“Can you build barriers to imitation?”

Whilst all of us strive to create competitive advantage it is not always so obviously important to protect against imitation. The best forms of protection are to build multiple levels of naturally reinforcing competitive advantage (once known as the “Onion Model” of competitive advantage). Here, whilst in theory each level *might* be imitated, imitating all the layers of competitive advantage would be very difficult indeed.

Challenging the industry rules

Challenging the ways in which value is created and captured – and how resources are managed – typically provokes powerful lines of enquiry.

“How can you change the rules of the game?”

The rules of the game are not fixed – and you can change them. Imagine, for example, if you were starting an estate agency industry from scratch at the present time. Would you have expensive BMWs for your senior sales agents? Why not provide them with cheaper SMART cars?

“If the rules of the game are changing in the future, how can you do this now?”

Rather than respond negatively or defensively to industry change, use scenario storytelling to see into the future. Then work out ways in which you can manifest that future yourselves – to beat competition.

Creating greater degrees of freedom

“Abandon any existing mind-set (at industry, company and personal levels)”

Begin by letting go of your existing mind-set. Forget not only how the industry does things currently – and the company – but also how you do things and even *think* about things.

“Have a ‘Strategic Amnesty’”

A powerful approach is to spend some time (even if just 20-30 minutes) with the team to talk about, and to let go of, past strategic failures. Usually there has never been the time or the safe opportunity to do this. By calling this a ‘Strategic Amnesty’ it is easier to flush things out and to let them go.

“Imagine you just started in the organisation today”

This is a similar thought process to having strategic amnesia. Here you forget your own experience, agendas and thought patterns which you have been socialised into by the organisation. At the same time you can still access the knowledge you have gained from your experience – so you can have the best of both worlds. Besides being a fruitful line of enquiry for competitive strategy, this is also helpful in doing a strategic review (for yourself) of your own role. Coupled to this is an experiment of “if we were not in the market already, how would we now enter it and with what business model?”

“Where you have apparently low influence over something important, how can you get more influence?”

In any situation our attention is likely to be drawn to those areas over which we have most apparent influence. It is less obvious that in fact one can often get further at a creative level by focusing instead on at least some areas over which we have little influence – and then trying to work out cunning plans for gaining more influence over them.

“Forget that anyone might be against your solution – deal with that later”

Stakeholders can sometimes be troublesome, and this can crowd-out your thought space to think differently. One tactic is to simply forget that they might either be against you or even that they exist. Whilst influencing stakeholders is of course very, very important, this needs to be handled mentally quite separately.

“Create ‘White Space’ – set aside exclusive time to focus solely on the problem”

A major problem is frequently the perceived sheer lack of time for strategic thinking. The result of this perception is that managers flit from problem to problem but find it difficult to spend sufficient time to actually resolve any specific problem. Instead, one should focus on a single issue at a time. Also, you do need to allocate sufficient time which is *completely clear* of other concerns, to address it.

“If you can’t think of a creative idea, who might?”

This prompt is *absolutely not* a last-ditch one. Indeed, you should *always* think about who might be able to get you to your goal of having strategic thoughts about a particular issue.

“Look for analogous solutions from other spheres of life”

Many people unconsciously draw help from analogies in other domains of thought, for example from military action or from sport. This is really quite helpful and can actually cast new light on a problematic situation. What you are in fact doing here is constructing an analogous model with refreshingly new and powerful characteristics.

“Imagine you are your own consultant, advising yourself”

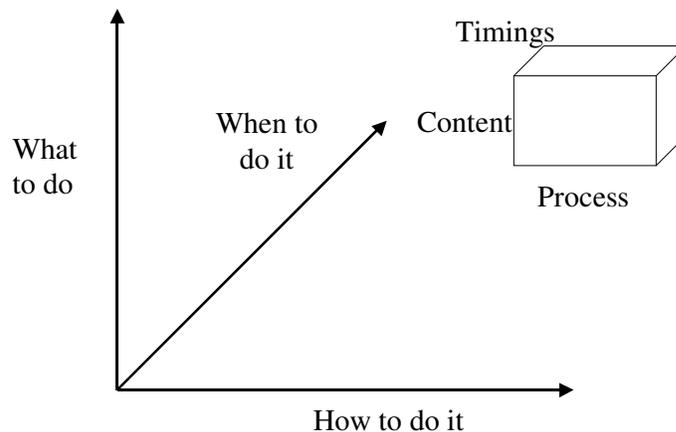
Here it may pay off to conduct a special version of the “out-of-body experience” – of imagining you are your own management consultant. It is useful to couple this with, say, a thought experiment that you are starting your first day in the organisation, or that you are re-entering the industry from scratch.

“Look for a process of solving the problem first, not necessarily the solution”

Einstein once said that the essence of genius was not to solve a problem but to understand the best process for solving it. In a detective-like context, this is about working out recipes for generating fruitful lines of enquiry (for example, here we think about the possible motive for a murder, identifying all of those who might have known the victim, was there anything in the victim’s life or recent activities that seemed dubious or out of character?).

Another important thing to discover and remember is that not only are there different strategic options, but there are also different ways of implementing them, and different option timings. This means that strategic options need to be explored in three dimensions – as per Figure 13. This can produce a myriad of possibilities, well beyond most managers’ mind sets.

**Figure 13
The Strategic Option Cube**



Testing the Scores – or the “Challenge and Build” process

Whilst one might have hoped that (from the last Section) that the Strategic Option Grid now tells us the best possible thinking about each option, often this is not the case. Frequently there is further scope to outline the options to make them better – to make them “cunning”(or more highly innovative) or even (with further refinement); even better, or “stunning”.

To achieve this, it is often useful to narrow the field of attention down to a small number of boxes on the Strategic Option Grid – perhaps, for example, to focus on:

- For Option 1: implementation difficulty
- For Option 2: uncertainly and risk
- For Option 3: financial attractiveness
- For Option 4: stakeholder acceptability

By going back over the creativity checklists (see the previous section) it may be possible to improve the scores – may be by one or even (sometimes) two ticks – by

thinking of better ideas. This can also be done in conjunction with the deep-dive techniques, or perhaps with further data collection. This is known (as it is at Diageo) as the “build” process.

Equally, it may be appropriate to “challenge” the scores, either through specific focus on the uncertainty and “risk” box (with the uncertainty grid), or by asking “what is the one big thing we have forgotten” – across any box. A final approach is to test for the resilience of particular strategic option against different possible states of the world (or “scenarios”). Here the *same* option is scored across the different columns – each one reflecting a different alternative future.

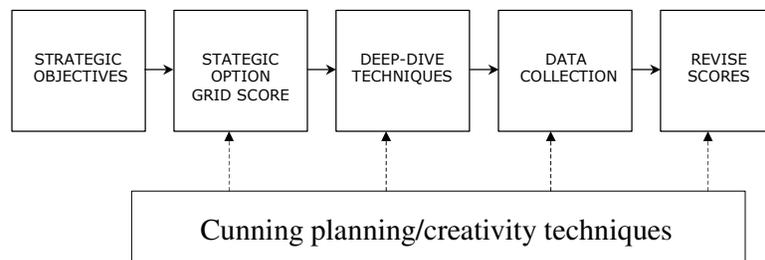
Practical applications and implications – of the Strategic Option Grid

The strategic option grid can be used for a range of applications:

- Competitive (or corporate level) strategy options – new strategies
- Implementation strategy options (for different “what” options)
- To compare *existing* business – as a portfolio analysis
- To rank strategic projects
- For organisational restructuring.

Also, the grid can be used not merely to drive out data requirements for further data collection, but also to prioritise them. Indeed, a schematic process of how best to use the strategic option grid is depicted in Figure 14.

Figure 14
The Strategic Option Grid Process



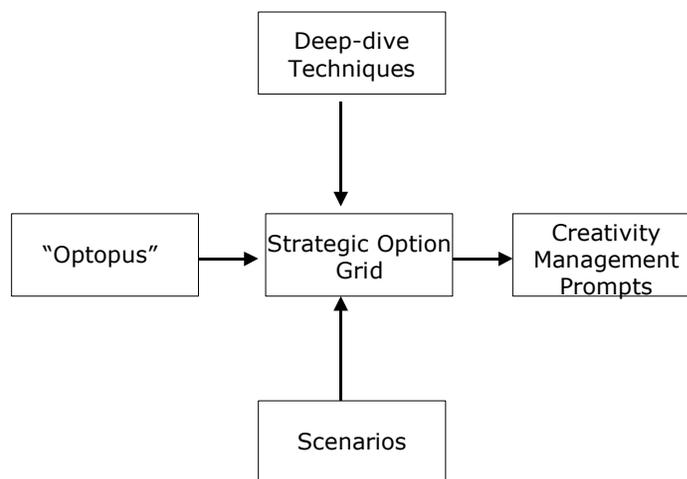
In this process, one might begin by tentatively establishing some strategic objectives (which might well be revised once the strategic option grid has been worked through in full). The initial macro-level scores are then completed, followed by some (or all) of the ‘deep-dive’ techniques. This enables data collection to be targeted, and accomplished in an efficient, and cunning way, and then for the scores to be revised. And at each stage the cunning planning/creativity techniques which we saw earlier will come into play.

Further possibilities – for practice and research

The Strategic Option Grid (see Figure 15) offers an interesting self-contained system for strategic decision-making – which is consistent with and copes well with both “design” and “process” schools of strategy, and can be used for both “deliberate” and emergent strategies. This Figure shows inputs as being:

- The deep-dive techniques
- The creativity management prompts
- The option octopus or “optopus” Figure 12
- Scenarios

Figure 15
Strategic Option Grid – Key Inputs



Besides having analytical and creative benefits, it also has behavioural, processual and even political benefits. Typically it has the effect of helping managers explore their agendas, and also is able to help their decision process and cope with these agenda in a reasonably well-controlled manner.

It is also helpful in making clear and concise presentations – giving managers more confidence in making these presentations, and making them more digestible at the receiving end. Equally, using it will help take managers a long way towards writing business plans, and also in writing more tentative position papers or draft accounts of the state of their strategic thinking at a particular time.

A further benefit is that it will help gain a much clearer picture of the strategy and of its value and cost drivers *before* doing any financial quantification. By including both “financial attractiveness” and “stakeholder acceptability” in the criteria – the grid captures both shareholder value management and also the softer influence of stakeholders. Besides its use for strategic decision-making the Strategic Option Grid is invaluable for developing senior managers develop their strategic thinking skills through formal, management education and development programmes.

In research terms, the Strategic Option Grid also offers us the potential to perform before and after action research, into the effects of introducing a somewhat more deliberate strategy process into environments which are, predominantly ones characterised primarily by of emergent/incremental strategy. A key potential research question is: do managers now actually begin to think or behave in a new way following sustained use of the grid, and if so, are these changes sustainable? Equally, how might changes in analytical processes lead to changes in organisational behaviour, either at the macro or micro (team) level? Also, do these changes have an impact on organisational politics, making the strategic-decision-making process more of a positive - sum game (from managers' own perspectives) between opposing stakeholders, rather than an adversarial, or competitive one.

Also, does the Strategic Option Grid seem to have more fit with and utility within certain types of organisational environments/industries than others, and if so, why?

These are very interesting questions for research which are beyond the immediate scope of this paper.

Conclusions

The "Strategic Option Grid" – with its ancillary techniques – offers some very interesting possibilities for advancing both the practice and research of strategic management. Whilst certain techniques (like SWOT analysis, PEST factors and Porter's five forces) have reached wide-spread use, techniques for strategic options/appraisal have remained in their infancy.

Further, the Strategic Option Grid appears to offer not only analytical and creative and process-related potential, but also significant behavioural and political value. We await further developments both in practice and through research to reveal the full potential of the grid for strategic management.