

Key Growth Planning Questions

I. THE MARKET

- a. How big is the total available market and where is it headed?
- b. What is your market?
- c. What is the total available market? Have you calculated this? By region?
- d. What percentage of the total available market (TAM) are you realistically able to penetrate/win?
- e. Where are you in your reach into the total available market? Entry? Mid? Saturated?
- f. Will you need to diversify to gain more available market share, or is the market large enough for you to sustain long-term growth for the next 5 years?
- g. Are you happy with your growth trajectory?
- h. What tactics are you employing currently to promote growth, sustain growth, or turn around decline? Are the strategies for those tactics formalized into a plan?
- i. What additional “plus” business or high-growth niches have you identified? Do you have numbers that formalize the opportunity? Do you know the TAM for those opportunities?
- j. Who are the salient players in your market and what is their relative standing to you and each other?
 - i. What are their competitive strengths and weaknesses in the market and to you? What are their:
 1. Size/financial strengths?
 2. Assets including:
 - a. Proprietary rights?
 - b. Brand equities?
 - c. Related sale leverage?

- k. Who is your real competition for market share?
 - i. Direct?
 - ii. Indirect?
- l. Do you have any potential vulnerability to:
 - i. Regulation?
 - ii. Off-shore competition (such as products that may be shipped in, or knock-offs causing disruption)?
 - iii. Supply-chain disruption for critical components/supplies?
- m. Does new technology pose a fundamental threat/opportunity?
- n. Do you have any components, products, or technology that may experience end of life?

II. THE CHANNEL

- a. The Seller/Retailer
 - i. Who distributes and/or controls exposure/availability?
 - ii. What are the business and operational conventions?
 - iii. To what degree is the customer captive?
 - iv. Where do you sell? Is there a growth plan for brick and mortar and online avenues that are separate?
 - v. Are you seeing success with sales in one channel versus another? Why? How can this be improved?
 - vi. Are there alternatives now or as the result of applying new thinking or technology?
 - vii. How well is the customer actually being served?
 - viii. Are you providing your customer with sufficient resources to understand your product or service? Or are they informing themselves through other means? What are they?
 - ix. Are they loyal enough to purchase elsewhere?

- x. Is there a win-win delivery that enhances customer satisfaction and trade support?
 - xi. Do you have sales support that is well trained?
 - xii. Does your training include company vision/values/goals?
 - xiii. Does your sales staff have materials available for product education?
 - xiv. Does your sales staff have sales support tools? What are they?
- b. Manufacturer
- i. Do you have a single or multi-channel distribution model?
 - ii. Do you have strong partnerships in rep, distribution, and online?
 - iii. Do you cross-share information between your channels?
 - iv. Do you provide your sales channels with marketing and messaging support?
 - v. Do your channels create their own messaging or marketing?
 - 1. Do you approve it?
 - vi. Do you think your channel partners have a strong understanding of your brand values and visuals?
 - 1. Are they representing you correctly?
 - vii. Do you adapt your messaging support materials to support the values of your various channels in terms of: pricing, features, regional values, societal values, imagery?
 - viii. Do you do any consumer level marketing?
 - ix. How much of your sales are generated through pull marketing vs. push marketing tactics?
 - x. What percentage of your business is sell-in? Sell-thru?
 - xi. Do you see a disparity in sell-thru sales?
 - 1. Do you have a strategy for overcoming soft sell-thru? Have you formalized it?
 - xii. Do you have a separate budget for B > C marketing? What is it?
 - xiii. How does your product reputation affect sales?

- xiv. What is the “field” and what are channel partners saying about your products?
- xv. Are your products hard to sell?
- xvi. How does feedback from channel partner’s sales & marketing resources provide input to your product development plans?

III. THE END USER/CONSUMER

- a. Do you intimately know your consumer?
 - i. What is their income?
 - ii. Do they own a home?
 - iii. Are they married/in a partnership?
 - iv. What other main products/services do they also consume?
 - v. What type of work do they do?
 - vi. What type of values do they hold?
 - vii. What type of emotions lend themselves to their purchase decision?
- b. What do users really want from your product/service?
- c. What do they consider as an alternative to your product/service?
- d. How satisfied are they after purchase?
- e. Do they feel they are receiving value?
- f. How can you do a better job of meeting their needs?
- g. What do they believe about you, and how does it square with reality?
- h. How important to them is the product/service?
 - i. [e.g. To their lifestyle? Necessity vs. desire?]
 - ii. [e.g. To their image? Personal or professional worth?]
- i. Is lifestyle or some other phenomenon likely to change their needs/demand?
- j. Who makes the purchase decision?
- k. Who or what influences the decision?
- l. What triggers a purchase?
- m. How much brand switching, if any, is occurring?

- n. What is the average consumer purchase amount?
- o. How much does an average consumer spend on your products/services monthly? Annually? By region?
- p. How long is the typical initial purchase planning period?
- q. Do they research your product?
- r. Do they rely on other users' opinions or feedback to influence purchase?
- s. Are there other influencers in closing a purchase? (floor salespersons, phone or digital sales assistants)
- t. How much of your sales are contingent on other sales mechanisms/channels/people versus your company?

IV. ADVERTISING

- a. Do you have a formal advertising budget based on a strategic plan?
- b. How does your strategy differ from the competition in terms of:
 - i. Messaging - voice, emotion, values?
 - ii. Choice of media - digital, print, billboard, photography, videography, radio, etc?
 - iii. Visuals - illustration, photography, videography styles?
 - iv. Budget allocation - by region, season, demographic, behavior, etc?
 - v. Message delivery - reach, frequency?
- c. How does your spending compare to your direct or aspirational competition in terms of:
 - i. Expenditure per unit (if applicable)?
 - ii. As a percent of the selling price or total transaction?
 - iii. Share of voice/total spending?
 - iv. By media?
 - v. By region?
 - vi. By consumer demographic?

- d. What evidence do you have that advertising objectives are being met? Do you know your ROI on investment for each campaign by:
 - i. Channel?
 - ii. Region?
 - iii. Demographic?
 - iv. Tradeshow/organization?

V. MAJOR DECISION MAKING LITMUS TEST

- a. Do you belong in this business; does it fit your:
 - i. Vision/mission?
 - ii. Core competencies?
- b. Can you win?
- c. Is it an appropriate use of your resources?
- d. What is the opportunity cost of this investment? Is this higher-yield?
- e. Are risks and returns consistent with stakeholder expectations?
- f. Have you fully leveraged your assets?
- g. What's the impact on other operations?
- h. Are you properly staffed in order to maintain reputation and quality customer service levels?
- i. Do you have the necessary critical mass?
- j. Should you be expanding through acquisition, licensing, etc?
- k. Should you be harvesting?
- l. Would you be more successful in a strategic alliance?
- m. Does your product/service have a real basis to be in the market?
- n. Will this provide greater value with an acceptable return?
- o. Could you serve the customer better by changing your own operations?
- p. What's the story behind the company; the product?
- q. Is it relevant, and, if so, how well known?