

**THE**  
**OUT****THINKER**  
**PROCESS**<sup>®</sup>

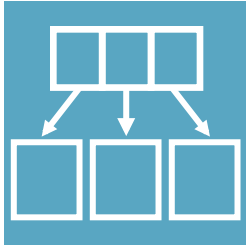
**TOOLKIT**

# THE OUTTHINKER PROCESS®

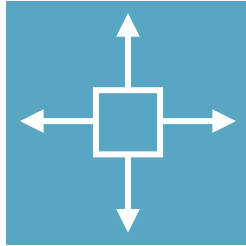
IMAGINE



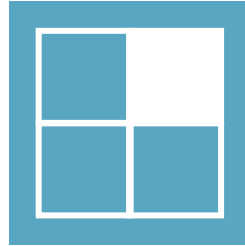
DISSECT



EXPAND



ANALYZE



SELL



## Imagine IDEAS

1. **MESS:** Identify the “mess” you are in—the undesirable, but realistic, outcome you can expect if you continue on your current path.

2. **TRENDS:** List the key trends that will shape the long-term future of your industry and your company.

3. **LONG-TERM IDEAL:** Envision the long-term outcome you most want to achieve and describe it as concretely as possible.

4. **NEAR-TERM IDEAL:** List the near-term indicators or outcomes that must be met to know you are on the right path to your long-term ideal goal.

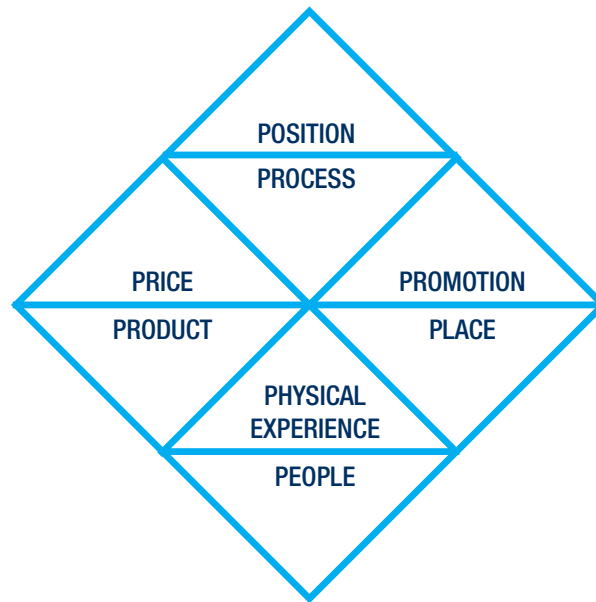
5. **STRATEGIC QUESTION:** Synthesize the near-term ideal into a question that is measurable and time bound.

# Dissect IDEAS

Assess your challenge from each of the 8Ps below, think about where your strengths and weaknesses lie, which leverage point is an obvious one to focus on and which is unexpected. On the next page, select which Ps you will focus on.

Leverage Point	“8Ps” of Strategy	Notes
<b>Position</b>	The core customer we serve, what need we meet with what value proposition and brand attributes	
<b>Product</b>	What our solution is, where we outperform and where we underperform	
<b>Promotion</b>	How we communicate with users including marketing, sales, and PR	
<b>Price</b>	How we charge, how we monetize	
<b>Place</b>	How we deliver our product/value proposition, through what channels	
<b>Promotion</b>	The user/customer experience, their journey, what they see, smell, feel, taste, or hear	
<b>Process</b>	Our operations and processes	
<b>People</b>	Who we hire, how we organize, what culture we adopt, and how we incentivize	

# “8P” Framework



Given your “8P” assessment, what 1-3 areas should your strategy focus on now? Consider where you assessed weaknesses that are critical to shore up, strengths that could be leveraged more effectively, or other issues that call for attention.

1.
2.
3.

## Expand IDEAS

The entire list of Thirty-Six Stratagems can be found on page 12 to help you develop innovative strategies. Here, we will focus on the five stratagems used by companies who have disrupted thier markets: Outthinker's New Playbook.

### Move early to the next battleground (Stratagem #22)

Identify the next battleground and establish a defensible position. When others arrive, use your superior position to win. Where is the next battleground? What can you do to create a defensible position there?

### Coordinate the uncoordinated (Stratagem #34)

Coordinate independent elements within your environment to create greater power. What is uncoordinated that you could coordinate to your advantage?

## Force a two-front battle (Stratagem #7)

Apply your unique capability into a new area, forcing a two-front battle. What is your unique capability? What new area could you extend into?

## Be good (Stratagem #33)

Adopt a strategy that benefits others, then you create no competition. How can you create a situation in which you win by benefiting others?

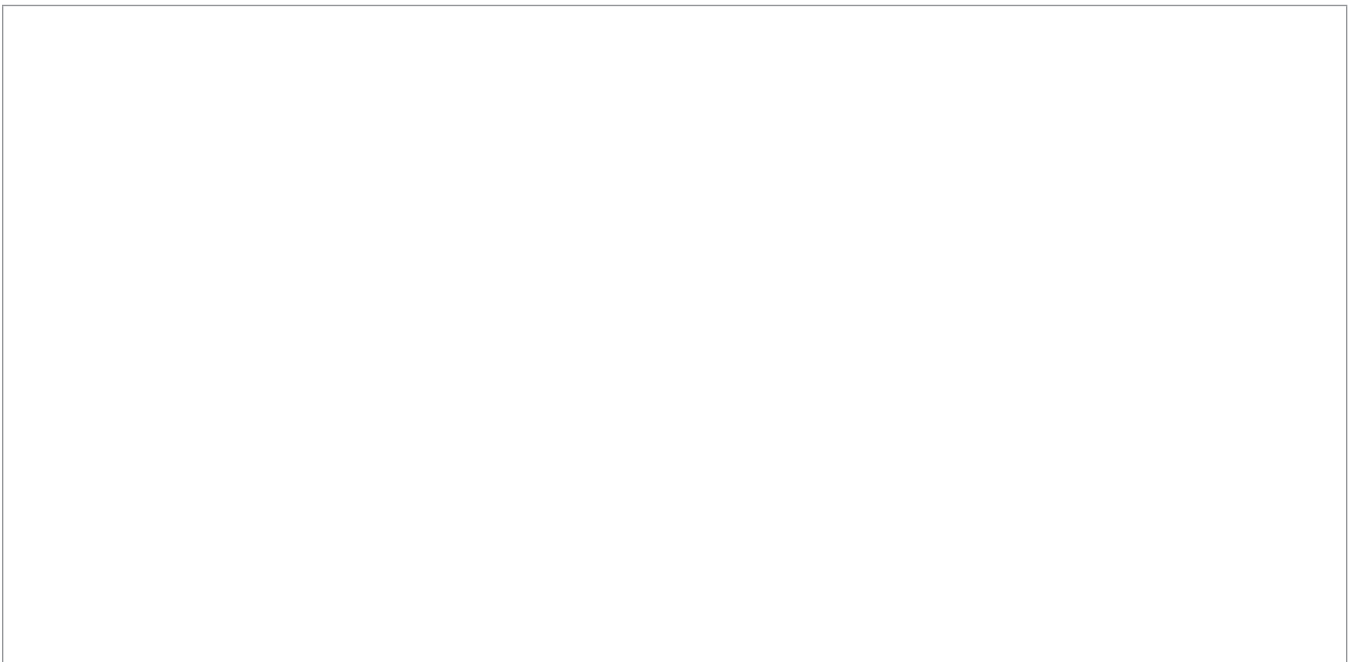
## Create something out of nothing (Stratagem #32)

Surprise them by adding a new piece to the board (e.g., a new category, occasion, need or customer). What would you like to add to your situation?



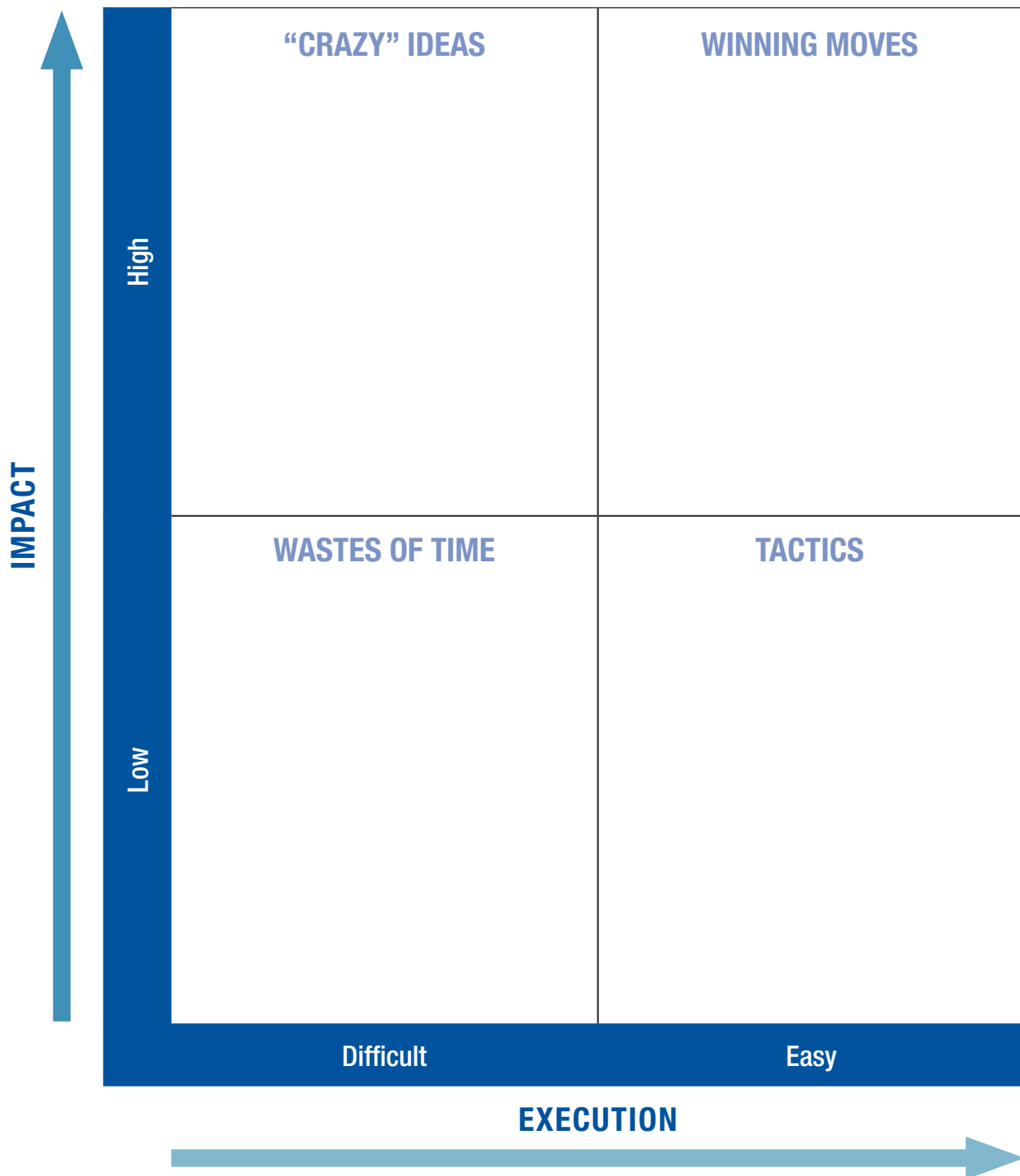
## Additional Stratagems

Consider other stratagems to come up with additional ideas that can lead to a *4th Option*®.



## Analyze IDEAS: Plot Your Ideas

Think about the impact and degree of difficulty for each of your ideas and place them on the matrix.





## Analyze IDEAS: Break Down a “Crazy” Idea

Pick one high-impact, difficult, “Crazy” Idea and list the three biggest barriers that make the idea seem difficult. Brainstorm potential tactics to remove those barriers.

Idea	Barrier	Potential Tactics

## Analyze IDEAS: Define Strategic Priorities

Select your top strategic priorities and list below.

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Prepare a “V2MOM” for your overall strategy or, time permitting, for each strategic priority chosen.

<b>Vision:</b> What specifically does success look like?	
<b>Value:</b> Why is this idea strategically valuable to our organization?	
<b>Methods:</b> How do we get the job done?	
<b>Obstacles:</b> What challenges, problems, and issues will we face?	
<b>Measures:</b> What metrics will indicate that we have succeeded?	

# Sell IDEAS

## Who do you need to convince?

Use the following model to identify key internal and external stakeholders you need and are critical to address for your success.

High Power					
Low Power					
	Advocates	Early Adopters	Fence Sitters	Positive Detractors (+)	Negative Detractors (-)

## What is your message?

Customize the message and the delivery to fit the situation.

Goal	Audience	Message	Engagement
What is your intended outcome? What do you want your audience to do or believe?	What do you know about the audience?	What compelling narrative can you develop?	How can you best engage the audience?
	Beliefs:	Situation:	
	Care/Commitments:	Complication:	
	Interests/Concerns:	Question:	
	Objections/Triggers:	Recommendation:	

# The Thirty-Six Stratagems

Outthinker draws on proven strategies for outperforming competitors from an ancient Chinese text, The 36 Stratagems. Our research shows many companies today have successfully disrupted their markets using similar strategies that are represented in five key stratagems, **Outthinker's New Playbook.\*** All of the stratagems, however, can be helpful in expanding your idea space for developing bold, innovative and disruptive strategies.

Stratagem and Description		Question
1	<p><b>To catch something, first let it go.</b></p> <p>Do not attack; rather let it go and follow close behind.</p>	What would happen if you let your competitor or customer go?
2	<p><b>Exchange a “brick” for a “jade.”</b></p> <p>Give something on which you place relatively little value in exchange for something you value much more.</p>	What “brick” can you give away?
3	<p><b>Invite them in, then remove their exit.</b></p> <p>Entice them to enter your domain then remove their means of returning to their domain.</p>	How can you invite them into your domain then prevent their return?
4	<p><b>Stay out of their stronghold.</b></p> <p>Purposefully stick to your stronghold. This preempts resistance or lures them out to your advantage.</p>	What is your stronghold? How do you avoid theirs?
5	<p><b>Partner with someone unexpected.</b></p> <p>Find and partner with someone unexpected who benefits if you win.</p>	Who else benefits if you win?
6	<p><b>Influence through a third party.</b></p> <p>Find someone else to influence your target to your advantage.</p>	What third party could influence others to your advantage?
7	<p><b>*Create a two-front battle.</b></p> <p>Apply your unique capability into a new area, forcing a two-front battle.</p>	What is your unique capability? What new area could you extend into?
8	<p><b>Alter a critical relationship.</b></p> <p>Assess the critical relationships that resistance depends on and shift them.</p>	What critical relationships do you want to alter?
9	<p><b>Bundle or disaggregate.</b></p> <p>Combine or separate things into parts so as to alter how others perceive you and remove yourself from direct comparison.</p>	What can you combine or separate?

Stratagem and Description		Question
10	<p><b>Control resources.</b></p> <p>Rather than engage in head-on confrontation, analyze ways you can increase control over critical resources and their supply.</p>	What critical resources can you increase your control over to gain advantage?
11	<p><b>Close the exits.</b></p> <p>When you enjoy a moment of influence, take full advantage of it and prolong it.</p>	What moments of power can you capitalize on?
12	<p><b>Remove key support structures.</b></p> <p>Focus on removing key supports that provide the integrity for resistance, rather than attacking it head on.</p>	What are the “structural beams” of resistance and how can you remove them?
13	<p><b>Appeal to a key desire.</b></p> <p>Find their critical desire and appeal to it to gain advantage.</p>	What is their strong need or desire? How can you appeal to that or capitalize on it?
14	<p><b>Learn through a small-scale advance.</b></p> <p>Launch a “false” or small-scale advance to understand what response a real advance would trigger.</p>	What small advance would garner insight?
15	<p><b>Seize opportunity out of trouble.</b></p> <p>When trouble strikes, others may freeze or retreat. Capitalize on this by advancing.</p>	Where others freeze or retreat, what would happen if you advance?
16	<p><b>Retreat to advance later or elsewhere.</b></p> <p>Rather than persisting with your current fight, retreat to preserve your strength and apply it somewhere else or at some other time.</p>	Where can you retreat in order to win later or elsewhere?
17	<p><b>Seize the “deer in the headlights” moment.</b></p> <p>Advance where a conflicting agenda or distraction will prevent reaction.</p>	What will they not do or defend because they are temporarily distracted?
18	<p><b>Appear crazy.</b></p> <p>In order to avoid being perceived as a threat, appear to be following an unrealistic plan or appear incapable of fulfilling it.</p>	How can you appear “crazy” so they discount you?

Stratagem and Description		Question
19	<p><b>Let them fight.</b></p> <p>When others are engaged in conflict, refrain from acting. Stay out of the fray, let them fight, and move in later when they are weak.</p>	What “fights” should you stay out of?
20	<p><b>Sacrifice one front to win another.</b></p> <p>Give up one front to preserve, even strengthen, your competitiveness on another.</p>	What could you sacrifice to win elsewhere?
21	<p><b>Reveal your strategy.</b></p> <p>Openly reveal your strength, weakness, or strategy to encourage others to call off their attack (e.g., because they fear your strength or no longer consider you a threat).</p>	How could you reveal your strategy so others back away?
22	<p><b>*Move early to the next battleground.</b></p> <p>Identify the next battleground and establish a defensible position. When others arrive, use your superior position to win.</p>	Where is the next battleground? What can you do to create a defensible position there?
23	<p><b>Exchange the role of guest for that of host.</b></p> <p>Enter as a guest, then incrementally build trust and influence.</p>	How can you enter humbly and then build trust and influence?
24	<p><b>Borrow a road.</b></p> <p>Find someone who has better access to your objective. Create an alliance with them to gain passage.</p>	Whose road could you borrow? Who is borrowing your road?
25	<p><b>Create a façade then move the action.</b></p> <p>Create a façade that appears to be the real thing, then move the action somewhere else.</p>	If your current activity were a decoy, where could you move the action to your benefit?
26	<p><b>Injure yourself.</b></p> <p>Injure yourself to win trust or create common good to avoid appearing as a threat.</p>	What action can you take to show vulnerability?
27	<p><b>Embrace what others abandoned.</b></p> <p>Adopt a forgotten or abandoned model, idea, or technology to differentiate yourself.</p>	What has been abandoned that you could pursue?

Stratagem and Description		Question
28	<p><b>Send a covert message.</b></p> <p>Rather than focus on your real target, aim your effort at a different target. This sends a covert message to your real targets that will alter their behavior.</p>	What “covert message” would evoke the behavior you want in others?
29	<p><b>Feign in the east; attack in the west.</b></p> <p>Feign an attack that exposes them to a different attack. Fake left, move right.</p>	What fake attack could you launch to expose them to an alternative attack?
30	<p><b>Take the unorthodox path.</b></p> <p>When others are focused on the direct, orthodox approach, use an indirect, unorthodox path to take them by surprise.</p>	What unorthodox path you could take to give you the advantage of surprise?
31	<p><b>Hide in the open.</b></p> <p>Make your actions appear normal (i.e., appear to be everyday actions) so that others will not see that something new is coming.</p>	What are the everyday activities in which you could hide your actions?
32	<p><b>*Create something out of nothing.</b></p> <p>Surprise them by adding a new piece to the board (e.g., a new category, occasion, need or customer).</p>	What piece would you like to add to the playing board?
33	<p><b>*Be good.</b></p> <p>Adopt a strategy that benefits others, then you create no competition.</p>	How can you create a situation in which you win by benefiting others?
34	<p><b>*Coordinate the uncoordinated.</b></p> <p>Coordinate independent elements within your environment to create greater power.</p>	What is uncoordinated that you could coordinate to your advantage?
35	<p><b>Influence the leader.</b></p> <p>Rather than influence the entire organization, identify and incent just the leader(s).</p>	What actions can you take to appeal to the unique needs of the leader(s)?
36	<p><b>Link strategies.</b></p> <p>Rather than execute one strategy, execute multiple strategies (simultaneously or in succession).</p>	What new scenario can you invent by linking discreet strategies?

# The Outthinker Process® Is Different

*A systematic, repeatable process to develop more innovative strategic ideas that:*

- Defines strategy from the future rather than the past
- Guides you in exploring uncommon leverage points rather than focusing on the obvious ones
- Triggers more strategic options (ten times that of typical strategy processes)
- Prevents you and your team from killing off promising, but seemingly “crazy” ideas
- Leads to strategies that accelerate growth rates by an average of 120%

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## About Outthinker

Outthinker is a growth strategy and innovation consulting firm that collaborates with businesses to step into the future and execute with speed and clarity today. We believe that your biggest, safest, and most sustainable growth sources are organic: introducing new business models, opening new market spaces, and building the capabilities your future demands. In a world that demands agility, we work with companies that recognize the limits and liabilities of their linear organizations.

Outthinker helps companies:

- Find innovative responses to emerging opportunities and threats
- Become disruptors rather than the disrupted
- Solve problems that matter to the world as the smartest path to profit
- Develop vibrant, ongoing, company-wide conversations about strategy and innovation
- Embrace employees as a critical source of advantage rather than a cost
- Create open-networked structures instead of hierarchy
- Employ the transformative power of emerging technology

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## Contact

[info@outthinker.com](mailto:info@outthinker.com)  
+1.212.380.7919

[outthinker.com](http://outthinker.com) | 1140 Avenue of the Americas | 9<sup>th</sup> Floor | New York, NY 10036