

CASE STUDY

WHICH COMES FIRST?



A Case Study in How to Update Strategic Thinking

The Strategic Dilemma:

An industry leader contacted Focused Momentum[®] to bring a fresh approach to their strategic planning.

Their last strategic planning effort defined a significant growth goal for their company but provided little to no strategic direction on how to achieve this big leap ahead. Their BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal), provided initial enthusiasm but left each department head to define how to accomplish goals in relative isolation.

Sales leadership felt the shift and quickly moved to grow existing revenues and find new sources of revenue with little attention to profitability. The firm hired a Business Development VP, reporting directly to the President, to seek out new strategic alliances that would fuel growth. IT and Operations created plans to make

wholesale changes to systems infrastructure to scale for growth. Product Development and Market just kept asking questions for which the leadership team could not answer.

After two years of allocating resources based on the viability of each plan presented, complexity was growing, and unity within the leadership team was in short supply.

There were calls for “a real vision.” Team leaders reporting to the executive team asked, “What is the plan?”

Their BHAG had left them over budget, behind their deadlines, and vulnerable to competitive pressures.

The Engagement and Our Approach:

Over nine months, the Focused Momentum[®](FM) team worked with the executive team and select unit managers to complete a comprehensive strategic planning process (a Strategic Summit[®] engagement). Our work began with a full strategic assessment of the company’s market dynamics, the strengths and weaknesses of their current plan and business model, and to prepare a strategic hypothesis for their strategic thinking.

We used the insights gained from the strategic assessment to deepen the understanding of where the company was today and how it might leverage what it had to a higher degree in the future. We also subsumed the BHAD into a holistic vision of future success that included a draft of their future business model so that the firm

would have a more specific picture of what it was ultimately striving to build over time. The gap between the strategic assessment and the more refined vision established clear priorities for how it should proceed forward, but with resources already committed, we could not stop there.

In the next phase of the project, the FM team guided small groups of strategic development teams through a process to elaborate on the significant shifts to be made and create a recommended plan for each. These “Strategic Initiative” plans were then presented in another group strategic planning session and integrated into one comprehensive company-wide strategic direction.

Results:

This in-depth planning effort resulted in significantly higher clarity for the executive team and much more aligned management priorities. The company was able to increase accountability to this shared plan and make some pretty tough decisions because they had participated in strategy development as a team of leaders, each

understanding what they were ultimately striving to achieve and why shifts would be necessary. Economic shifts and market changes aside, they are still using this plan to guide their decision-making, ten or more years later.