

STRATEGY DESIGN SPRINT

**THE COMPLETE HOW-TO GUIDE TO DESIGNING A
WINNING PRODUCT STRATEGY FROM SCRATCH**



GERARD CHIVA

Preface

Crafting a winning strategy doesn't have to be a daunting task. In this book, I'll not only define strategy for you, but also give you a reliable method for developing a successful strategy from the outset.

If you're frustrated with the haphazard approach to strategy crafting in your organization, this book is for you.

I wrote this book to show you what strategy is and provide you with a validated method to design a winning strategy from scratch.

The goal of good strategy is to fundamentally reinvent the existing competitive space or invent an entirely new competitive space in ways that delight customers and discourage competitors.

The future does not belong to those who own a crystal ball, but to those who are willing to challenge the boundaries, assumptions and constraints of their industries and markets.

The goal is not to predict the future and make a plan to achieve it, but to imagine a future made possible by changes in technology, lifestyle, work style, regulation, global geopolitics and so on and iteratively and incrementally build capabilities and exploit opportunities as future unfolds.

This book is based on my experience working as a product strategy coach in different organizations and it will provide you with a practical approach to design and implement business and product strategy.

The three guiding principles upon which my method is based are:

- *Strategy is design*
- *Strategy is both thinking and doing*
- *Strategy is about winning in the marketplace by establishing positions of power*

In this book you'll learn:

- *Strategy fundamentals*
- *Characteristics of a great strategy*
- *Why strategy is a design problem*
- *How to collaboratively design a winning product strategy*
- *How to implement the strategy with OKRs and roadmaps*
- *Practical tips and recommendations*

Why this Book?

Strategy is one of those business concepts that if we ask people, they will give us very different definitions.

Its practical application leaves much to be desired in general.

In many companies people talk about strategy when in reality they only have illusory plans full of fictitious hopes, more typical of the former Soviet Union than of a modern business.

In my view, strategy is a blend of both art and science, requiring a combination of creativity and analytical thinking. It is a craft that requires careful consideration and skill.

There is a part of intuition, creativity and design supported by an analysis of reality, forecasting of future movements, data, and the scientific method.

In essence, strategy boils down to identifying a guiding policy and designing a coherent action for a given problem. Hence, to create a sound strategy, we must be able to have a clear picture of the situation and the right diagnose, which is where most businesses operate blindly nowadays due to the uncertainty and volatility of current times.

A common pattern we can find in good strategy books and articles is the constant reference to the military. We firmly believe that the military is about 200 years ahead

of us (at least) when it comes to modern strategy. And, if we go to “The Art of Warfare” by Sun-Tzu, then more than 2,000 years of advantage.

For centuries, the military has been at the forefront of developing effective strategies for operating in uncertain and volatile environments, and for adapting to changing circumstances as they unfold.

In this book you will find a step-by-step guideline and recommendations to design and effectively implement a winning strategy using modern techniques such as *Design Sprint*.

Here you can find everything you need to improve the product strategy implementation in your organization or to start from scratch.

I present a proven method that works for me, but as you will see, it gives a lot of room for you to adapt it to your own knowledge and experience, being able to replace some techniques with others to your liking.

Structure of the Book

The book is structured in four sections: [strategy](#), [strategy design](#), [product strategy design sprint](#), and [strategy execution](#).

In the [first section](#) we will explore the concept of [strategy](#) and set the [theoretical framework](#) for the rest of the book.

In the [second section](#) we will review my [general method](#) of [collaborative design of strategies](#) based on *Design Sprint* and *Playing to Win* methodologies.

In the [third section](#) we will go into detail in the adaptation of the general strategy design method to apply it to the [design of a product strategy](#).

The [fourth block](#) is dedicated to strategy execution, including [how to select the right OKRs](#), [how to connect OKRs with roadmaps](#), the [fundamentals of product roadmaps](#), and [how to perform an effective strategic review](#).

As you make your way through the book, it is important to keep in mind that each section builds upon the concepts and frameworks introduced in the previous sections.

By reading the book in order, you will be able to fully understand and apply the ideas and techniques outlined in each chapter.

While it may be tempting to skip ahead or focus on specific sections that seem more relevant to your current needs, I encourage you to take the time to read the entire book and absorb the full range of concepts and tools presented.

By doing so, you will be well-equipped to design and execute a successful product strategy that helps your organization achieve its goals and realize its potential.

Enjoy!

Gerard Chiva

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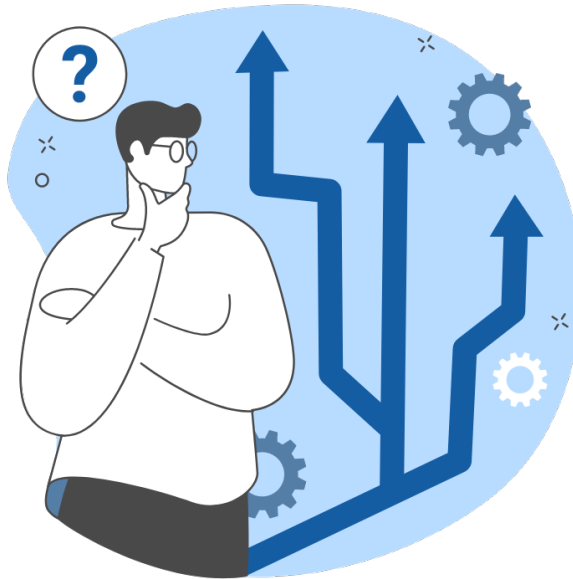
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Strategy



Agility Levels

When we talk about organizational agility, we must first be able to differentiate between the different levels of agility that exist.

In the management of an organization there are different levels of decision making. Known by some as 'flight levels.' The problem comes when we focus on the lowest level and forget about all the others.

Whenever agility topic comes up with my clients, I explain that [true agility is not in operational excellence](#)¹ or in adopting Scrum. True agility is in decision making. In short, it is about having options at a strategic level and from there being able to choose the opportunities to develop to improve the lives of customers and have a positive impact on the business.

¹ <https://aktiasolutions.com/the-age-of-agile-is-gone/>



Strategy

Behind every winning strategy there is a deliberate design process and explicit, coherent, and synchronized decisions.

Strategy means making specific decisions to win in the market.

The first step in making the strategy real is to discover the great revelation to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. That is, an intuition on how to win.

A great strategy comes from a combination of wisdom and design. That is why I use design tools such as *Design Thinking* to help my clients design innovative growth strategies that leverage their intelligence and knowledge of the industry.

A good strategy is a coherent action backed by a challenge, an effective mix of thought and action, whose central content is a diagnosis of the situation in question, a guiding policy to face critical difficulties and a set of coherent actions.



Decalogue of a Great Strategy

In this chapter I explore the governing principles of my strategy design and implementation method.

These are the tenets of every great strategy¹⁷:

- 1. Intent**
- 2. Face a challenge**
- 3. Situational awareness**
- 4. Design process**
- 5. Leverage**

¹⁷ <https://leanpub.com/the-art-of-strategy>



Strategy Design



Introduction

The **strategy design sprint** results from the integration of the 'Playing to Win'³⁰ methodology with the Design Sprint³¹ technique.

As we have seen, strategy is primarily a design problem, and to design a strategy in environments of high uncertainty in a collaborative way what better than a technique like *Design Sprint*, whose purpose is to find solutions to business problems using design principles and techniques.

One common error that plagues many organizations is the lack of a structured approach to thinking and strategic planning. These businesses often confuse strategy with simply defining a vision, mission, and objectives. However, without a clear strategy in place, it is impossible to effectively set and achieve objectives.

³⁰ <https://hbr.org/2014/12/playing-to-win-how-strategy-really-works>

³¹ <https://www.thesprintbook.com/the-design-sprint>

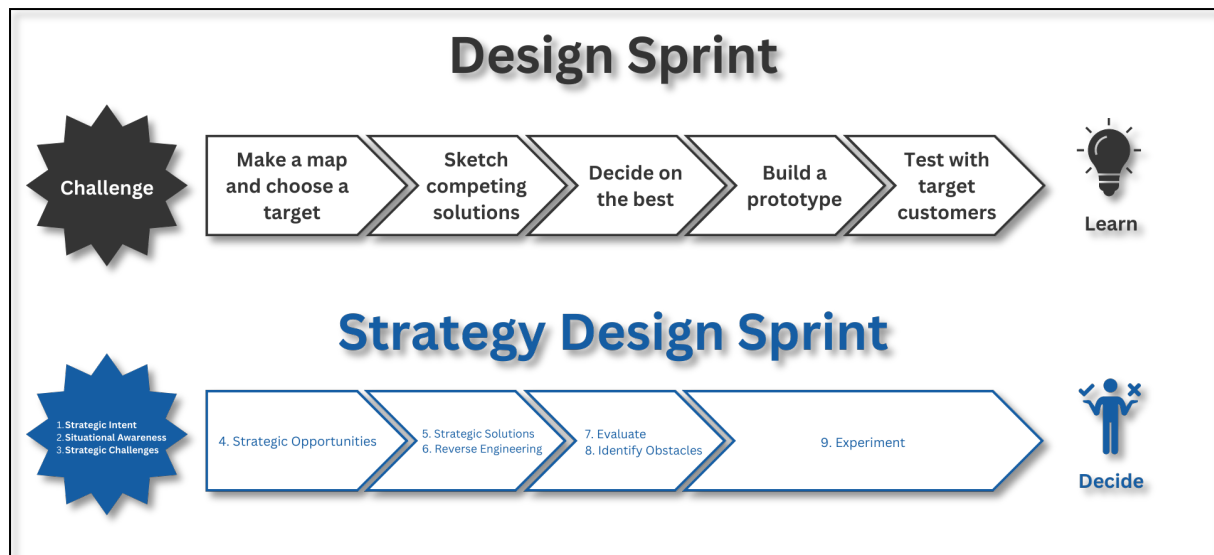


Figure 17 - Design Sprint vs Strategy Design Sprint



The Method

The result of the strategy design sprint is a well-defined and validated strategic cascade that will serve as an input to define the implementation guideline: [strategic goals](#) and [roadmap](#).

In the following image you can see an example of a strategy cascade for a boutique product management consulting firm.



Benefits of Strategy Design Sprint

Knowing the benefits of a strategy design sprint is essential in order to be able to successfully introduce this practice in an organization. Leaders and decision-makers can make more informed decisions, effectively communicate the benefits of this practice, and tailor the process to the unique needs and goals of their organization.

By understanding the benefits of a strategy design sprint, leaders and decision-makers within an organization can:

- *make a more informed decision about whether this practice is right for their team*
- *use this knowledge to effectively communicate the benefits of a strategy design sprint to others within the organization*
- *gain support and buy-in for this process*
- *tailor the process to the unique needs and goals of their organization*
- *customize the process and ensure that it is aligned with the organization's strategic objectives.*



Product Strategy Design Sprint



The Method

The strategic design method that we have seen is applicable to any type of strategy. It is used for corporate strategy, business strategy and product strategy.

In this chapter we are going to see how to specifically adapt the method to the process of crafting a winning product strategy.

The **product strategy design sprint** is composed by the following phases:

1. *Product Vision*
2. *Situational Awareness*
3. *Challenges*
4. *Opportunities*
5. *Solutions*
6. *Evaluate*
7. *Hypothesize*
8. *Prototype*
9. *Test*
10. *Decide*



Strategy Execution



From Strategy to OKRs

It is not uncommon for organizations to confuse or conflate strategy with OKRs, or to overlook the importance of one or the other. However, for effective product management, both the product strategy and OKRs are essential.

In this chapter, we will delve into the differences between strategy and OKRs, examine the relationship between the two, and explore how to effectively translate strategy into actionable OKRs.

By understanding these concepts and principles, we can ensure that our product management efforts are aligned and focused on achieving our desired outcomes.

From Strategy to OKRs

By now, you should have a clear understanding of where you want to compete (i.e., the market or industry), how you plan to achieve success in that market or industry, the capabilities that you need to develop, and the processes and organizational



OKR and Roadmaps

Due to the irruption of [OKRs⁵⁵](#) in recent years and the hype caused, combined with the [bad reputation of product roadmaps⁵⁶](#), many people wonder if they should keep OKRs and roadmaps, or perhaps replace one of them.

In this chapter we will solve all your doubts and explain how important it is to combine both tools for the success of your product and your company.

In case you are not very well versed in OKRs and roadmaps, let's start by answering some preliminary questions, before getting into the subject matter of this chapter.

What are OKRs?

OKRs, or Objectives & Key Results, is a strategy deployment framework originally pioneered during the early days of Intel and later on at Google.

⁵⁵ <https://aktiasolutions.com/okr-framework/>

⁵⁶ <https://aktiasolutions.com/product-roadmap-foundations/>



Product Roadmaps

This chapter offers some basic guidelines for the implementation of a product roadmap. For more information you can read my previous book [*'Product Roadmapping in Practice'*](#)^{63 64}.

We are going to explore the fundamental aspects to consider designing and implementing an effective product roadmap. These tips will be very useful to you, whether you want to improve your current roadmap or you are thinking of introducing it in your organization.

If you ask folks in your organization *"what is a product roadmap and what is it for?"* you will surely get different answers, some of them even contradictory.

We will review what I believe are the product roadmaps of a modern product organization. These roadmaps must be sufficiently light and flexible, but at the same

⁶³ <https://www.amazon.com/Product-Roadmapping-Practice-Drive-Growth-ebook/dp/B0BGPJP7QY/>

⁶⁴ <https://leanpub.com/product-roadmapping-in-practice>



Product Roadmap vs Product Backlog

In this chapter, we will delve into the key differences between these two product management tools and provide some practical tips for integrating them effectively.

Whether you are new to product management or an experienced professional, understanding the distinction between a product roadmap and product backlog is crucial for designing and executing an effective product strategy.

We will cover the key features and characteristics of each tool and provide guidance on how to use them together in order to achieve your product goals and objectives.

The product roadmap and product backlog are two essential tools that play a crucial role in the product development process. The product roadmap is a high-level document that outlines the long-term goals and objectives for the product, along with the key milestones and deliverables that will help the team achieve those goals. The



Product Strategy Review

Product strategy is not a fixed plan that is created once and then simply executed. It must be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis.

In this chapter we will see how to define the appropriate review frequency, involve the right people, and use the right inputs to make the necessary changes.

Purpose of Strategy Review

A product strategy review meeting is a meeting that is held to review and discuss a company's product strategy. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure alignment, manage expectations, share key insights and learnings, select and prioritize initiatives, and review progress towards goals.

One of the main goals of a product strategy review meeting is to **ensure alignment**. This means making sure that everyone involved in the product development process is on the same page and working towards the same goals and objectives. By

Bibliography

Product management and product strategy have evolved significantly over the years, and we have many brilliant authors to thank for the insights and frameworks that guide our practice today.

In this reference bibliography, I have compiled a list of my top sources for product strategy consulting work.

These sources have had a significant influence on my own thinking and approach to product management, and I believe they have the potential to do the same for you.

Whether you are a seasoned product professional or new to the field, I encourage you to explore these sources and gain a deeper understanding of the discipline. They are sure to provide valuable insights and inspiration for your own product strategy work.

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- What Customers Want (Anthony Ulwick)
- Where to Play (Marc Gruber)

About Aktia Solutions

[Aktia Solutions](#) was born in 2018 with the purpose to inspire a modern product mindset and practice in companies developing software-based products or services.

We are a boutique management consulting firm with a pragmatic business approach focusing on the most important opportunities for our customers today and setting the ground for future growth.

We work with you to achieve your strategic objectives in this fast paced and uncertain world, by helping you become a modern product-led organization.

We help you develop your [product leadership](#), [design a value-driven product organization](#), [unleash new sources of growth](#), and [make sure value reaches the market fast and effectively](#).



About Gerard Chiva



Product Discovery and Strategy Coach

I help companies build better products and executives to build leading product organizations

I am Managing Director of [AKTIA Solutions](#), a Management Consulting Firm.

[I collaborate with companies as Product and Strategy Coach.](#)

I developed my professional career for the last 20+ years in roles related to technology. As an engineer, manager, consultant, Agile Coach, Product Coach and Executive Coach.

I have extensive experience, combining professional coaching, management, consulting, engineering, and entrepreneurship.

I have worked in different types of industries and different roles, giving me a broad perspective on how organizations work.

I am also an [author](#), startup mentor and investor.

Other books by Gerard Chiva

As an experienced product coach and consultant, I have always been fascinated by the challenges and opportunities that come with creating and bringing new products to market. In my writing, I have focused on exploring the key principles and practices that can help organizations effectively discover, develop, and deliver products that meet the needs of their customers and drive business success.

I would like to share with you some of the other books that I have written on these topics. Whether you are an aspiring product manager looking to hone your skills, a business leader seeking to drive strategic growth, or a product development professional seeking to stay up-to-date on the latest best practices, I hope that these works will provide valuable insights and practical guidance.

From exploring the art of product discovery and the principles of lean product management, to examining the role of product roadmaps in product management and the decalogue of a great business strategy, these books cover a range of essential topics for anyone interested in the field.



- All books are available at [Leanpub](https://leanpub.com).
- You can benefit from discounts by [purchasing a bundle](#).
- For buying this book you [get a 20% discount on the book 'Product Roadmapping in Practice'](#).



Driving Product-led Growth