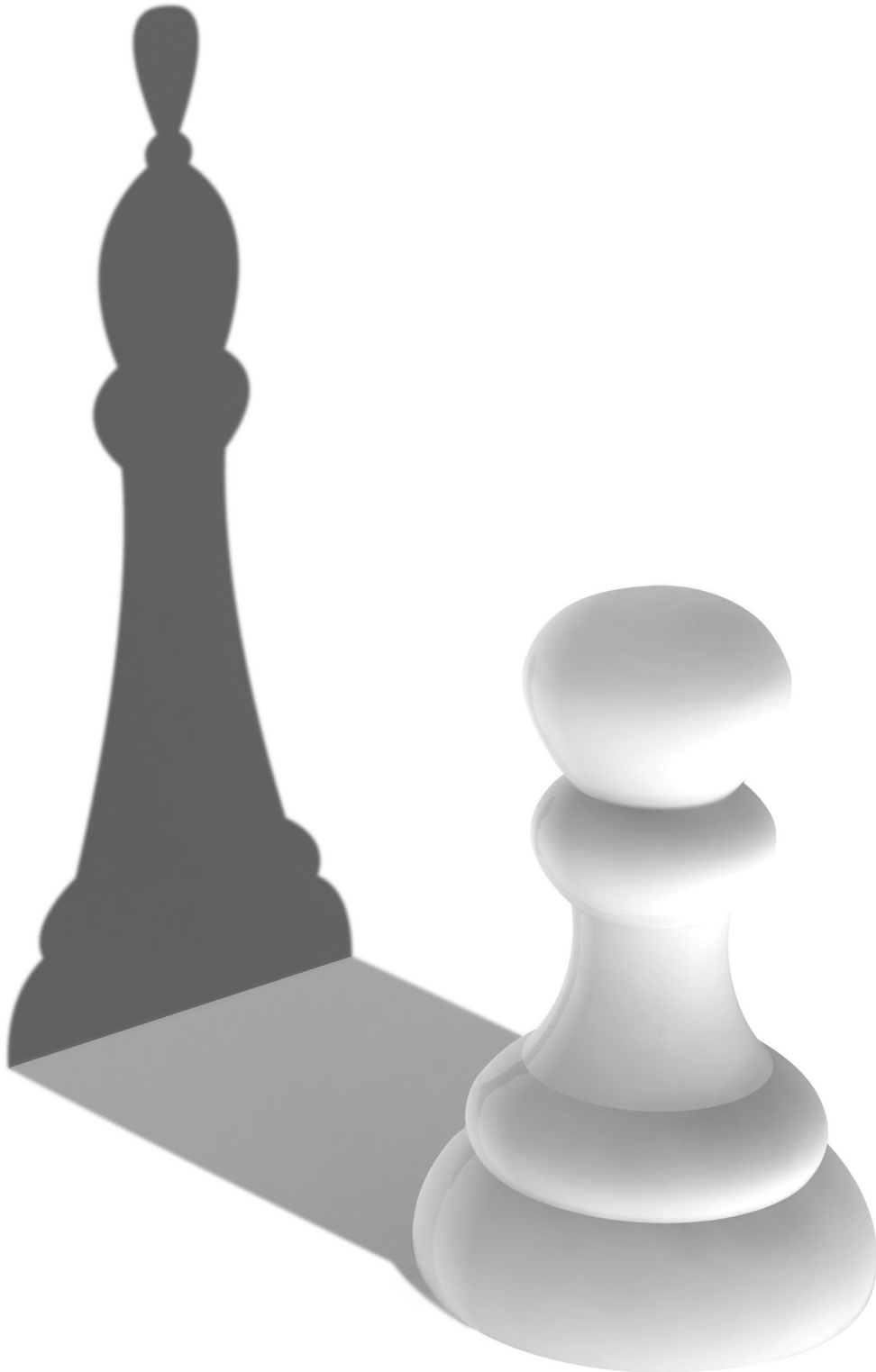


Strategy Research

The Science of Winning the Long-Term Game



The Essence of Strategy

The essence of strategy is the concentration of effort and energy to achieve dominance in a market or market segment. The development of a company strategy or a brand strategy encompasses some or all of the following elements:

- Target-market identification
- Positioning
- Advertising messaging
- Product/Service optimization and differentiation
- Product-line planning
- Pricing optimization
- Packaging optimization
- Promotion planning
- Distribution optimization
- Service and support planning



The Power of Strategy

Companies and brands pursuing optimal strategies tend to grow revenue more rapidly, enjoy higher margins, and benefit from economies of scale as market shares expand. Sound strategy is the lodestar of business and marketing success.

Many companies do not have well-defined and clearly articulated corporate strategies. Likewise, many individual brands are bereft of coherent marketing strategies. The lack of strategy, or lack of an optimal strategy, often dooms companies and brands to inferior long-term performance.



The Pursuit of Strategy

The foundation of any strategy begins with information and analysis. Facts are important. Data are valuable. Reality is essential. But they are only the beginning. Creativity and vision help to define possible strategic alternatives. Then research and analysis play a role in identifying the better strategies and opportunities. Ultimately, senior management must choose its *informed* vision of the future and commit all resources to consistent pursuit of this strategy.

Types of Research Involved in Strategy

Depending on the company or brand and its situation, many different types of research are considered. Here are some of the most widely used techniques:

- Econometric analysis and forecasting
- Market segmentation
- Awareness, trial, and usage studies
- Consumption or usage analyses
- Benchmarking studies
- Technology forecasting
- Geo-analytics and GIS
- Choice modeling and simulation
- Market mix modeling
- Qualitative research (depth interviews, focus groups, observation, etc.)
- Ideation and innovation sessions (not technically research, but are used to elaborate strategic possibilities)
- Strategy concept testing
- Strategy tracking research
- Brand equity modeling
- Sales analysis and modeling
- Pricing research



Steps in Strategy Optimization

1. Hold alignment meetings with key stakeholders
2. Conduct foundational research
 - Review existing research and market data
 - Review secondary research data
 - Conduct additional marketing research, if needed, to fully understand the strategic landscape and market structure
 - Depth interviews (company employees and senior executives)
 - Depth interviews (customers and noncustomers)
3. Review key research findings with senior management
4. Conduct ideation sessions among employees and senior executives to define strategy alternatives
5. Conduct ideation sessions among customers to define strategy alternatives
6. Review strategy alternatives with senior management
7. Conduct final testing of strategy alternatives
8. Consult with senior management to decide on ultimate strategy
9. Implement long-term tracking of strategy

Team Effort

An optimal strategy is best achieved via the combined efforts of company employees, senior executives, and a Decision Analyst team of research consultants. Company employees and executives contribute not only their operational, technical, and market knowledge, but also their feelings, perceptions, and opinions. Decision Analyst brings objective, research-based market and competitive knowledge plus a creative process that helps to identify strategy alternatives. Decision Analyst also tests the strategy possibilities and works with senior executives to fashion the optimal strategic vision and ultimate strategy.

Every Company Is Unique

There are no simple solutions, no cookie-cutter approaches, and no “rules of thumb.” Every company is unique; every brand is unique. Each company or brand requires solutions tailored to its unique situation, competitive environment, resources, and capabilities.



Vision

Formulating strategy is not just about research, data, and analytics, it's also about vision. What do you want your brand or your company to become? How do you envision your brand and business 10 years from now? Or 20 years from now? What do you want your company and brands to stand for? Strategy is a bridge to a better future and a way to influence the shape and character of that future.

Why Decision Analyst?

Decision Analyst has the people, experience, technology, systems, and analytics to help you bring your strategic vision into focus. Our firm offers a synergistic blend of primary research, analytical consulting, modeling, and optimization to help companies win the long-term game.

About Decision Analyst

Decision Analyst is a global research and analytical consulting firm with more than four decades of experience in business and marketing strategy. The firm serves corporate and agency clients in North America, Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Please give us a call if you would like to learn more about the power of strategy.



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