



StrategyKiln

# HOW TO THINK STRATEGICALLY

*Demystify Strategic Thinking with the OCCAM Strategy Razor Framework*



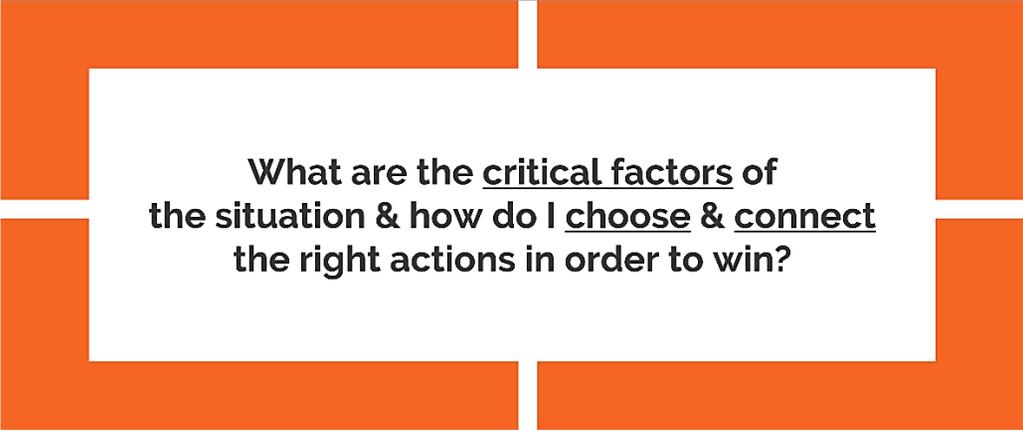
# Strategy 101: What the heck is strategy anyway?

The “S” word is often misused and abused. The OCCAM Strategy Razor makes strategic thinking and planning quicker, easier, and more efficient but before you can tap into it, you need to be able to define strategy. It’s not so simple. Ask ten different people and you’ll get ten different answers. Getting to the heart of strategy without “faking it” is a tall order – let’s look at some of the top definitions:

Influential business strategist Michael Porter defines strategy as “deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value”. Consultants at BCG frame strategy as ‘the pursuit of sustainable competitive advantage’. A Google search brings up military quotes from Sun Tzu. This all sounds great but where does it get us? Not very far. We’re still in strategic obscurity.

At Strategy Kiln, we think one of McKinsey’s definitions “*strategy is a way of thinking, not a procedural exercise*” gets at the heart of the matter nicely. Cultivating this “way of thinking” is what strategy is all about.

Although no one definition can take you all the way there, here is the Strategy Kiln in-house definition:



**What are the critical factors of  
the situation & how do I choose & connect  
the right actions in order to win?**



# A Simplified, Demystified Breakdown of Strategic Thinking

Most strategy definitions are tailored to meet the needs of c-suite executives in ivory towers. For senior management and team leads without multi-million or billion-dollar budgets, this isn't always useful. We founded Strategy Kiln to look at strategy in a more practical way.

Leveraging personal experience, research, and what's happening right now, we simplify and demystify key business strategy concepts for the masses via videos, tutorials, and other [free tools and resources](#).

There's a myriad of methodologies and frameworks for thinking strategically. We've incorporated aspects of our favorites, tried to think like Da Vinci, and compiled them into one user-friendly solution - *The OCCAM Strategy Razor*.



# The OCCAM Strategy Razor

The OCCAM Strategy Razor is a comprehensive framework that provides direct access to (almost) everything you need to hone your strategic thinking.



## Open Up

Open up new opportunities by asking questions, gathering data, and spotting patterns. At this point, you want to take a wide-angle, big picture approach. Someone I worked with once called this the “suspend reality” phase. Even game-changing visionaries need to identify what the status quo is before challenging it.



## Compress

After analyzing the data and resources at your disposal, it's time to identify your competitive advantage and set specific goals. Compression often involves managing trade-offs – it's important to be bold, decisive, and focused on results. Look for the strategic insights that align with what your customers want and what your company can deliver on. Don't choose your focused strategies to placate anyone – choose them because they are the critical actions needed to win.



## Coordinate

Business is a team effort, and any viable strategy involves a coordinated, cohesive approach. Share insights across departments and isolate key objectives to generate a multi-dimensional, flexible strategy that mitigates risk and maximizes impact. This is the stage where you find multiplier effects and leverage the synergies that a larger enterprise may afford. True collaboration and coordination takes a strategic thinker and great relationship builder.



# A

## Activate

The best strategic plan in the world is useless if it never gets put into action. Implementation is everything. To move forward, you need to take initiative and launch your plan. Remain hungry for victory but don't be afraid to fail – a good plan is fluid and can always be adjusted.

# M

## Measure

Be patient but proactive to set yourself up for success. Achieving your objectives is important, but perhaps even more critical is ensuring you have a structured feedback loop to capture learnings and insights so you and your team continuously grow. Review your plan's launch, measure the results, and apply the insights learned to the next iteration of your strategy.



One of the strengths of the OCCAM Strategy Razor is that it incorporates several prominent strategy development tools throughout the framework.

Here are some key strategic planning tools for each stage:

**1 Porter's Five Forces; Consumer Journey Map; SWOT Analysis**

During the Open Up stage, you want to know what's happening within your industry. Big picture tools like Porter's Five Forces and a SWOT Analysis provide excellent insights. We know that the standard approach to SWOT is lame, so you've updated it in a major way with a storytelling format and "Fusion Matrix" approach that leads to high-value actionable insights.

**2 BCG Growth Matrix, Strategy Canvas; Positioning Statement**

Compressing your plan requires you to zero in on critical success factors. Put the data you need to move forward right at your fingertips with a strategy canvas or positioning statement. The Strategy Canvas tool is a great representation of where you stand vs. competitors and/or your industry, and how to pave the strategic way for a better future for your business. We've got a video as well as a strategy canvas template for you here...)



### 3 McKinsey 7; Business Case; Project Milestones

Coordinating is all about identifying and improving upon synergies within your organization. Sync up to your corporate strategy and vision. Find out how your strategy helps deliver value for other departments so they want to be a part of it. Be a relationship builder. The McKinsey 7 strategy framework provides actionable insights that make things easier.

### 4 Launch Plan; Risk Assessment; Crawl-Walk-Run Testing

Before activating your strategic plan, you need to focus on the likelihood of meeting (and exceeding) your objectives. Crawl-Walk-Run testing is a great

way to maximize impact while minimizing risk. Start small and scale as you learn. The GOST framework helps you lay out your Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics, you can check out the video and slide from us here...)

### 5 KPI Dashboard

There are several useful measurement tools but the most effective is a KPI dashboard. This will give you accurate insights into market share; sales growth, awareness drivers, brand equity, or whatever else you're measuring. Elaborate dashboards are the ones that often fail as they become clumsy and time consuming to update. Create a KPI dashboard that links to your main objectives.

**Ready to take a deeper dive into the OCCAM Strategy Razor?**

Download the [free one-pager](#) from our website.



# Strategy is a mindset. Build it by asking the right questions.

The OCCAM Strategy Razor puts strategic thinking on a page, but at the end of the day, strategic thinking is less about following guidelines and more about adjusting your mentality. Can you pause the day-to-day grind to connect the dots and think bigger picture? Can you see the forest for the trees? Once you gain the perspective you need, do you know how to actually do something about it?

Strategy is not linear. You can use OCCAM to identify critical factors, but you expansive thinking to figure out how to choose the right actions and develop a winning strategy. Keep asking questions to develop your mental strategic muscle. Asking 5 Whys sounds cliché, but it remains perhaps the greatest approach to see what others don't and uncovering strategic insight.

## With the right mentality, you can...

- Identify patterns and turn new knowledge into business growth
- Simplify complex concepts and ideas
- **Articulate the why behind your strategy**
- **Empower others to come along for the ride**
- Anticipate risks and predict outcomes
- Create plans that generate measurable results
- **Use insights and learnings to drive continuous improvement**





You've probably heard the expression 'give a person a fish and they eat for a day, teach a person to fish and they can eat for a lifetime'. The same is true with strategic thinking and planning:

**Show someone a strategy plan framework and they *might* succeed for one project. Teach someone how to think strategically and they'll be in position to succeed for an entire career and be able to buy a house on Cape Cod (well that's my dream anyway).**

Through the OCCAM Strategy Razor, Strategy Kiln puts the framework *and* the recipe for future success right at your fingertips. [Visit us online to learn more](#) or reach out to us at [questions@strategykiln.com](mailto:questions@strategykiln.com).

**And remember to download the [free one-pager](#) of OCCAM's Strategy Razor from our website.**

