

Strategy models and frameworks

The Six Elements of Strategy



The **Six Elements of Strategy** model shows six different things that strategy is claimed to be: analysis, choice, positioning, design, storytelling and commitment. These elements are used to synthesise a coherent view of what strategy is.

The Six Elements of Strategy model features in Goal Atlas Director, Mike Baxter's book '[The Strategy Manual: A step-by-step guide to the transformational change of anything](#)' and is also covered in our [Strategy Master Workshops](#).

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How to use it:

The Six Elements of Strategy help to answer the fundamental question 'What exactly is strategy?' By exploring six different things that strategy can be claimed to be (by different individuals or groups, in the strategy literature, in different business sectors etc) you can start to synthesise a more coherent view of what strategy is.

Explanation:

Strategy is multifaceted. It can be seen as being different things by different people in different situations but does, in fact, comprise many different elements. The Six Elements of Strategy in the model are:

1. **Strategy as analysis.** Strategy is all about where you are now and where you could potentially get to, as a result of strategic success. Defining where you are now takes analysis.
2. **Strategy as choice.** "The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do", according to Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter. You must decide, out of all the things you could potentially do, which ones are going to be the most beneficial, the most lucrative, the most competitively advantageous.
3. **Strategy as positioning.** Of all the strategic choices you will make there will be some that 'position' you strategically. Strategic positioning defines where your strategy proposes to locate you on one or more significant dimensions, for example price-value positioning.
4. **Strategy as design.** Design is about devising courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones. Strategy is all about how things ought to be, about how to attain goals and so also about changing existing situations into preferred ones.
5. **Strategy as storytelling.** To ensure the engagement and commitment of the change-makers in your organisation, your strategy needs to tell a compelling, absorbing story that makes those change-makers excited about the future they are striving to bring about.
6. **Strategy as commitment.** Strategy without action changes nothing. Strategy is about engaging change-makers and securing their ongoing commitment to the point that strategic goals have been achieved.

Using these Six Elements of Strategy, you can now synthesise a notion of 'what strategy is':

- Strategy requires **choices** to be made. Which, of the many strategic possibilities, are you going to include in your strategy, and which are you going to exclude?
- These choices need to be informed by **analysis** and they need to add up to a clarification of your strategic **positioning**.
- Strategy is about a lot more than choosing between the options in front of you. Strategy is also about inventing possibilities that don't exist right now. Strategy **designs** a future that you then strive to bring about.
- Strategy is more than just thinking. It needs to turn thought into action and align a multitude of individual actions to bring about transformation. This needs the **commitment** of change-makers and that commitment will be more readily secured if your strategy tells a **story** they can engage with, get behind and make happen.

80 books that informed The Strategy Manual



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The Six Elements of Strategy have been derived from, amongst other sources, an extensive analysis of the strategy literature. The image here shows 80 books that informed *The Strategy Manual*. You can [read more about the 80 books](#) in an article by Mike Baxter, including his top five recommendations for essential readings on strategy, and you can also [download the full list as a pdf](#).

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