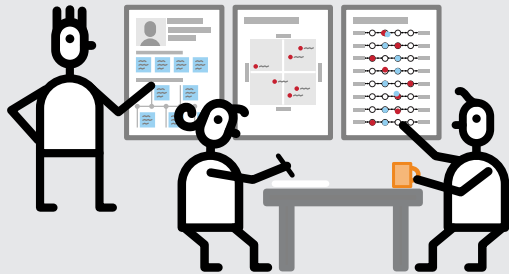


Why your strategy needs visual thinking

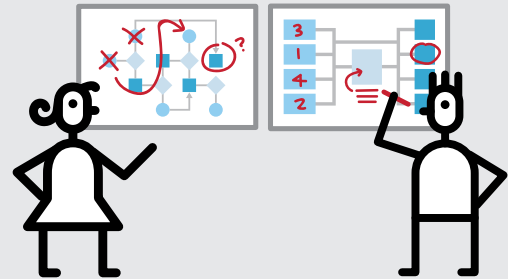
A visual explanation of your strategy is worth more than a thousand words. In fact, it can be the difference between success and failure. Here are four ways to incorporate visual explanations into your strategy development process.

1. Assess current state



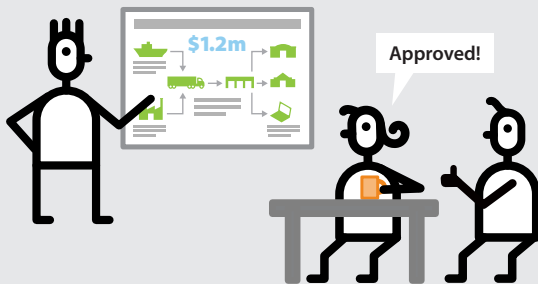
Visual thinking tools can help you define problems and suggest opportunities. For example, creating and analyzing **user profiles** and **journey maps** can help you identify your company's strengths and weaknesses from the customer's perspective. Mapping competitive benchmarking information to **quadrant diagrams** can help you identify gaps in the market. And using a **brand polarity tool** can help you compare your company's attributes so you can define a new position.

2. Identify pathways



Once you've assessed your company's current state for problems and opportunities, you're ready to identify solution pathways. These pathways might be alternative ways of meeting a market need or closing a gap, for example. Be sure to explore multiple pathways, considering all of your options. Using **quick sketches** (no need to be an artist!) can make theoretical discussions more concrete and keep conversations productive. Sketches also make it easier for teams to compare and iterate on pathways by revealing their differences.

3. Select and fund



The greatest ideas go nowhere without leadership approval. And leaders can't approve what they don't understand. So take your sketches and refine them, creating robust **visual explanations**. These visuals help audiences grasp your plan's Who, What, Where, When, and How more quickly and completely than words alone ever could. And don't forget to address the Why. Leaders need to know not just how the system, structures, and processes will work, but also why they will drive value and deliver results.

4. Execute



Once you've secured leadership buy-in and funding, you're ready to execute your strategy. You can expand your visual explanation to include additional, more tactical visuals, such as **process explanations** and **system overviews**. When it's time to get frontline employees on board and taking action, your visual explanation will help them understand and remember the changes they're being asked to make.

If you want to learn more about visual explanations, get in touch at www.thoughtform.com or 412.488.8600.

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