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MAKE NEW MARKETING MOVES

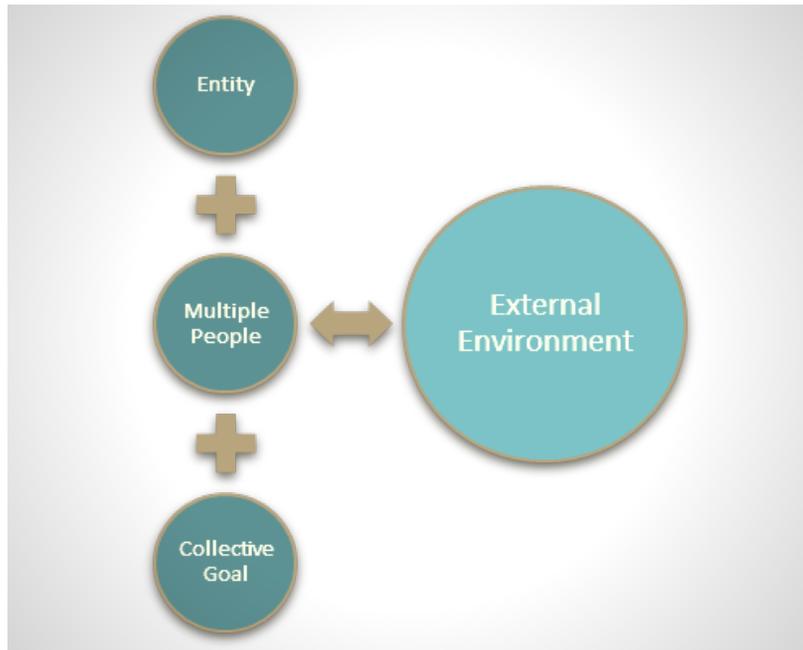
Improve your strategy for success in
an always-changing B2B market.

*From the *Creating a Plan for Success* Series*

BY KELLY STEWART, FOUNDER, ATTRACTIVATE

MAKE NEW MARKETING MOVES

Simply stated, a company exists as a legal entity with multiple people pursuing a collective goal to provide something of value to those in an external environment.



When business leaders want to expand, they typically focus on ways to increase revenue and decrease costs. By giving their attention to only two aspects of an entire system, the inference is that fixing either will resolve all obstacles standing in the way of success. If only it were that simple.

Achieving success in today's informed, connected, and transparent business-to-business market requires multi-dimensional thinking. It requires finding efficient and profitable ways to provide more *value* to *all* of the people essential to the company's success – which can include clients, employees, service providers, bankers, or their community “neighbors.”

Growing and investing in the company's team, developing and introducing new services, and being aware of resources consumed are just a few worthwhile ways to provide more values to others.

Companies that create real value can achieve other business goals such as improved employee engagement, greater client satisfaction, or even waste reduction, leading to more revenue and/or profitability.

When that profit is reinvested back into the company, the stage becomes set for more growth and continued success.

ALIGNING MARKETING GOALS TO BUSINESS GOALS

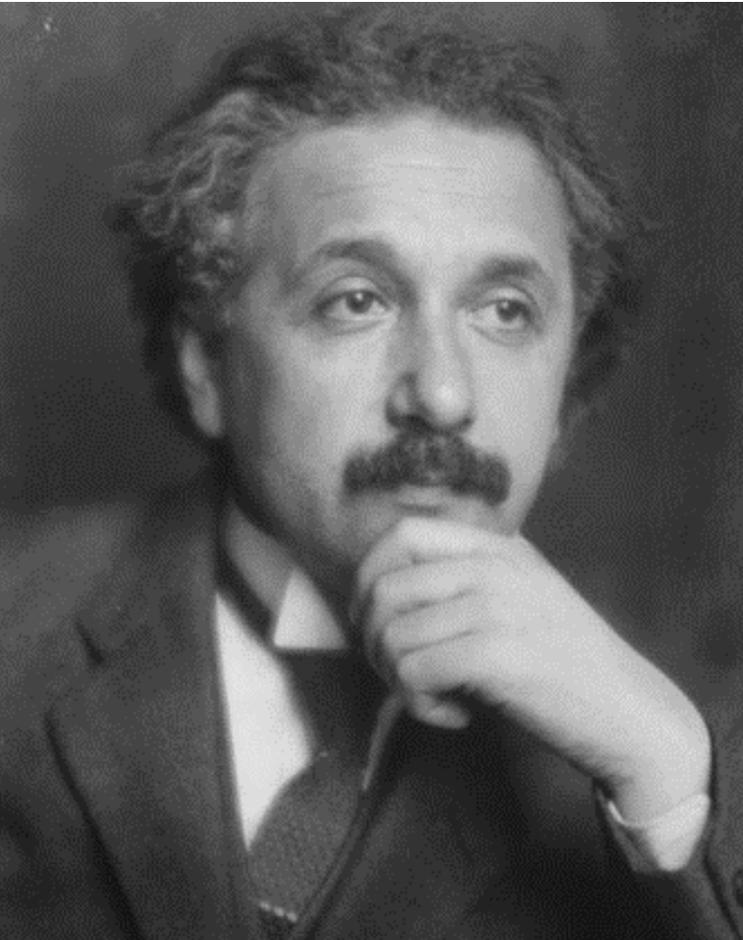
Strategic marketing impacts all of a company's stakeholders and can help achieve a wide variety of business goals – such as boosting brand reputation, improving client relationships, or creating engaged workplaces. When the company's goals are known, then the marketing team can collaborate with other functional areas in the company. They can contribute to and support those efforts with compelling messages and promotion to:

- Acquire new clients
- Engage former clients
- Gain client insights
- Host or participate in community events
- Increase the lifetime value of a current client
- Launch a new or niche product or service
- Promote a cause
- Recruit new team members
- Share thought leadership



"No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world." - Robin Williams

A company that wants to boost its brand reputation may elect to develop a thought leadership strategy. Another company that wants to improve client relationships may ask current and former clients for their insights. Yet another may want to create a more engaged workplace by infusing the brand values throughout its recruiting, onboarding, and development practices. Initiatives like these require thoughtful and detailed approaches in order to come to fruition.



"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

- Albert Einstein

DEVELOPING THE MARKETING STRATEGIES

When it's established what marketing needs to accomplish, the next logical step is to evaluate which of the many marketing strategies will help to move the needle. Here are just a few choices:

- Search Engine Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Content Marketing
- Influencer or Connector Marketing
- Email Marketing
- Affiliate Marketing

It's not uncommon for business leaders to use the SWOT analysis to guide the planning process that follows. The SWOT assesses the company's internal strengths and weaknesses and looks at external opportunities and threats to determine advantages and disadvantages.¹ It was developed in the 1960's when barriers to entry were high making business environments more stable or slower to change than today's constantly changing markets.

To complete the SWOT and motivate those tasked with implementing the plan, business leaders assign targets such as achieving a 10% increase in the pipeline by the end of the quarter. These practices are typical in businesses that are "reactive, hierarchical, and siloed with top-down cultures."²

In a dynamic B2B market, leading-edge businesses value partnership over patriarchy.

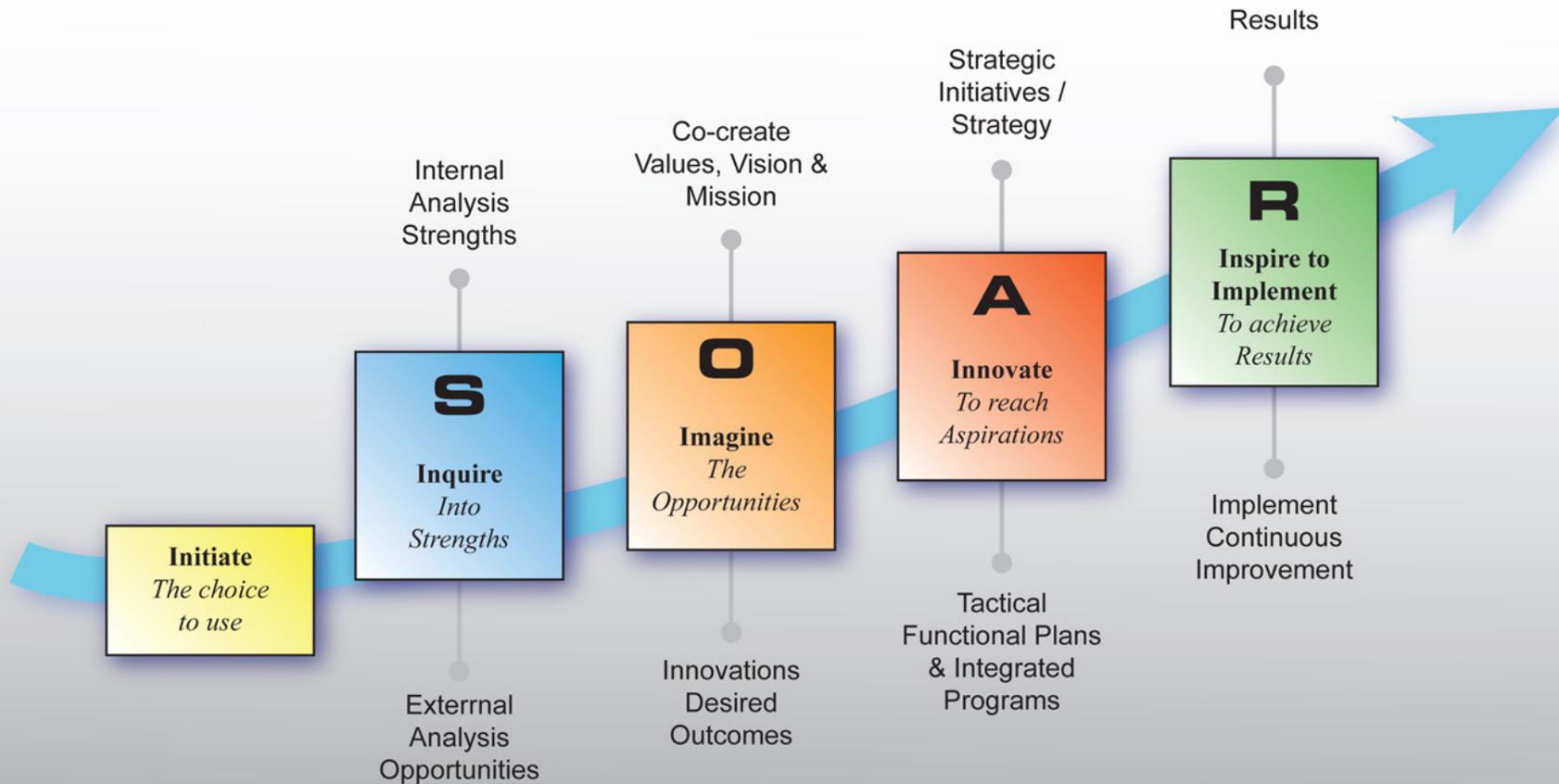
Their business leaders understand that "adaptive, innovative, lean, cross-collaborative, self-managing, high-performing, and fulfilling cultures" helps their people attain goals.³

USING SOAR TO LEVERAGE MARKETING STRATEGY

Today's enterprising business leaders are better served using the SOAR framework for planning by discussing Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results. "SOAR is a strategic planning framework with an approach that focuses on strengths and seeks to understand the whole system by including the voices of the relevant stakeholders." As a facilitated, strategic planning framework, it asks, "What are we doing right?" "What is compelling to those who have a 'stake' in the organization's success?" By including the "whole system," it reaches "beyond senior management to include others in the organization's actions."⁴

When applied to marketing, SOAR help companies reach and relate to people by uncovering issues that may not be apparent in a board room. It also enhances business leaders' abilities to achieve measurable and *sustainable* results because it includes the perspectives *and buy-in* of those tasked with implementing the plan.

SOAR Framework



Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results

Image used with permission from www.soar-strategy.com

Companies that want to utilize SOAR have conversations about their Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results.

Let's apply SOAR by revisiting one of the earlier

examples: the company that wants to boost its brand reputation through thought leadership. This fictional company provides business services to other companies. It employs 35 people in various functional roles – Finance, HR, Account Management, New Business Development, and Marketing. It's been in business for 30 years and is well-regarded in its industry. Utilizing SOAR, many people in the company representing a broad range of perspectives would convene to ask the questions posed in *The Thin Book of SOAR*:

Strengths – *What can we build on?*

In terms of thought leadership, it's the knowledge and insights the company has about the industries it serves, born from experience and shaped over time. Using the SOAR strategy includes asking, "What are we best at in our world?" "How do our strengths help to inform our opinions?"

Opportunities – *What are our stakeholders asking for?*

The next step in developing thought leadership is to identify the thought pillars. Through the SOAR process of inquiry, asking questions such as, "What are the top three

opportunities for our clients?" "How can we make sense of those opportunities considering the external forces and trends?" "How can we reframe challenges to be seen as exciting opportunities?" the team can imagine and conceive ideas that form the basis of the thought leadership.

This process not only benefits future, current, and former clients, it also inspires the team by connecting them to their work and giving them an opportunity to make a positive difference for their clients.

Weaknesses and threats are not ignored in a SOAR strategy.

While the negative headline about a weakness or a threat might attract attention, neuroscience says the positive message is better for helping to get people into plan and prepare mode. This is the perfect mindset to help your audience take a next step or make a decision. Developing thought leadership, then, requires understanding the audience's professional needs and having a unique point of view based on two

organizational strengths – experience and a deep knowledge of the subject matter presented in a way that helps others see opportunities.

Aspirations – What do we care deeply about?

When *sharing* thought leadership, the company can develop an action plan that reflects its purpose and values, puts people first, and is aware of the physical and emotional resources that implementing the plan requires. The format for sharing thought leadership might be developing an entire video series, or convening a “summit,” or hosting on-demand webinars or a completely different and innovative format that everyone involved in the planning feels would be most useful to the audience.

The detailed plan now starts to take shape. It may require an integrated approach with content + email + social media marketing. It may require a micro-site or even its own logo or imagery to help convey the company’s desire to serve others with this knowledge and insight.

Results – How do we know we are succeeding?

Before any plan borne of a well-conceived strategy is implemented, the company should ask, “Considering our



*“To handle yourself, use your head;
to handle others, use your heart.”*

– Eleanor Roosevelt

strengths, the topics we'll cover, and our desire to meet the needs of others, what metrics would indicate success?" "What data do we need to capture and track from the website, email, and social media analytics? What should we be monitoring? How will we respond to comments with creativity, empathy, and integrity?" Just as importantly, leading-edge business leaders ask when evaluating whether or not they are truly succeeding: "What are the best rewards to support those who help us achieve our goals?"

In this example, what emerges from SOAR conversations is the basis for the thought leadership marketing plan that is based on what can be, not what is missing. Happily, SOAR can be used to develop any marketing strategy.



Utilizing the SOAR framework will encourage strategic thinking that helps companies anticipate their stakeholders' desires, wants, and needs. It will solicit input from those who will implement the plan which empowers them to be flexible and make decisions along the way.

"Knowing that things could be worse should not stop us from trying to make them better."

- Sheryl Sandberg

The bonus? This type of strengths-based planning is a refreshing and compelling differentiation from companies that pursue growth at any cost.

Marketing's role is to "create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."⁵ By adopting a "let's build on what's working" strategy, marketing becomes a generative channel for creating success in spite of obstacles.

...AND THAT'S HOW COMPANIES WILL MEET TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES.



ABOUT KELLY STEWART

FOUNDER, ATTRACTIVATE



On-Demand Marketing Director, Speaker, Champion for Positive Organizations and Practical Optimist: I help people speak more authentically about their B2B brands, build on what's working to develop strategic audience-driven marketing plans, and measure results along a Quadruple Bottom Line of Purpose, People, Planet, and Profit. I hope you are as motivated as I am by the independent thinkers included in this eBook, because, as Socrates said, "To move the world, we must move ourselves." If you'd like to eliminate the weight of business as usual, learn how we can work together via Attractivate's [on-demand marketing services](#).

Or invite me to [speak](#) to your team and spark some new ideas in your organization.

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DATA & IMAGE SOURCES

1 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis

2 Source: <https://leadershipcircle.com/patriarchy-to-partnership/>

3 Source: <https://leadershipcircle.com/patriarchy-to-partnership/>

4 Source: *The Thin Book® of SOAR, Building Strengths-Based Strategy*, 2009, Stavros, J. and Hinrichs, G., ed. S. Hammond, page 6, Thin Book Publishing Co., Bend, OR

5 Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marketing>

Image Source - SOAR Framework: www.soar-strategy.com

Image Source - Robin Williams: <http://bit.ly/SfD68e>

Image Source - Albert Einstein: <http://bit.ly/2tujlM0>

Image Source - Eleanor Roosevelt: <http://bit.ly/2uE8gwS>

Image Source - Sheryl Sandberg: <http://on.wsj.com/2oRycPa>



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