

For Leaders Who Value Progress Over Plans

Strategy Sprint Playbook

Strategic Planning

Good strategic planning propels you from **where your organization is now** to **where it wants to go in the future**. It's a visionary articulation of your organization's intentions for the year to come, and a map for how to make those intentions a reality.

Traditionally, most strategic plans fulfill only half of that purpose. They focus on **what** the organization plans to do in the year ahead, but fail to account for **how** the organization will navigate an uncertain future to achieve those goals. This leads to strategic plans that look amazing in PPT slides but struggle when they come into contact with everyday reality.

August has always taken a unique approach to strategic planning. Over time, clients pointed out that our method helps leadership teams avoid the pitfalls of more traditional methods and engage in a dynamic planning process designed for uncertainty.

We start by answering our **why**, and move that vision forward by identifying **what** objectives and results will help us learn as we go. Up to this point, the work is familiar. But we go further: we advance the easy-to-avoid conversation about **who** will be empowered with the authority to lead the day-to-day work. Finally, rather than attempting to predict milestones on

a calendar, we map out **how** we will test and iterate quickly using small bets, and commit to a cadence that guides **when** we will reevaluate and pivot.

The **Strategy Sprint** works because it incorporates the inherent uncertainty and complexity of strategic planning into the plan itself. **It is a plan that is designed to change**. It provides trusted methods for moving through uncertainty, and equips the people in your organization with the focus, tools, and authority to make your plans a reality.

What's special about the August approach?

3 mindset shifts

FROM THIS

*Because strategic planning is about long-term, high-impact commitments, we have to **get it perfect**.*

*If our goals are clear, we can **trust the existing organization** to execute.*

*The leaders who create the plan should be **the senior decision makers** for how the work moves forward.*

TO THIS

- ✓ Because strategic planning is about long-term, high-impact commitments, we have to **be ready to adapt our plans quickly**.
- ✓ If our goals are ambitious, we need to give ourselves permission to **think differently about how we organize** around the work.
- ✓ The leaders who create the plan should empower **the people closest to the work** to own the decisions.



Strategy Sprint Overview

DAY

01

Why and What

We spend this day visualizing and articulating our goals. What do we want to do? What is the purpose of this action? What are we looking to achieve? What does “good” look like?

DAY

02

Who

We identify who will be responsible for which components of the What. Who are the stakeholders? Whose perspectives should be included? Who should have decision ownership?

DAY

03

How and When

We get into the actionable details of our stated goals. What are our key milestones? How do we break the work down? What’s really achievable within our target time frame? How will we know if it’s working or not?

05

DAY

01

Why and What

Objectives: Build a shared understanding of the strategic purpose that will guide our choices; create a map of possible futures; identify 3-5 key objectives.

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Sample Agenda

Check in

Get connected and energized

Context

Share relevant background info and set the intention

Retrospective

Reflect on: What's working? Where are we getting stuck? What might we do differently?

Headlines!

Describe our vision for an ambitious, successful future

Objectives & Key Results

Brainstorm and select specific measures that will help us learn if we are achieving our objectives; for each measure, identify supporting activities/projects over a 3-6 month timeframe

06

DAY

02

Who

Objective: Identify roles, accountabilities, decision rights, and the people to lead the work.

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Sample Agenda

Jobs to be Done

Identify the critical ongoing accountabilities that will be needed to move each objective forward in the next 6-12 months

Team Design

Organize the accountabilities based on interdependence and skill mix, and identify the roles that need to be filled

Team Charter

Identify specific team members to fill roles within each team, breaking down existing functional boundaries if needed

Decision Rights

Identify which decisions should be made within the working team without oversight, vs. decisions that require input from external stakeholders

07

DAY

03

How and When

Objective: Identify near term first steps, and a backlog of experiments that will accelerate our learning.

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Sample Agenda

Hypotheses

Brainstorm and identify hunches and educated guesses about what will need to be true in order for us to realize our long-term goals

Small Bets

Prioritize assumptions according to their risk to overall success, and design small experiments to test them

Backlog

Break down each project, and identify near term next actions: where will we begin in order to move work forward?

Cadence

Outline and commit to a series of regular check-points to reflect on what's working, evaluate metrics and results from your bets, and hold space to adapt as needed

Get *Started*

Email sprint@aug.co ↗

Do you have an upcoming leadership team retreat? Get in touch with the August team to schedule your next Strategy Sprint.

