

The Strategy of Reimagination

When we describe the detailed work of strategy, we often use phrases like “imagining,” “dreaming,” and “getting the big ideas right,” and we always frame our thinking with this question: “How can we reimagine the strategic now?” This act of reimagination is about much more than a vision statement. It can involve anything from a simple, routine process to the existential ideas that started an organization in the first place.

As we reimagine strategies, we focus on the composition of each idea, linking it to the client’s mission and core strategy and then ushering it from inception to experience. The messy, expansive, and wickedly ambiguous problem-solving that this entails requires a mindset far removed from the routine, which is what keeps me coming back day after day to this profession.

Here are eight insights from my experience reimaging what’s strategically possible:

- 1) **Reimagining happens away from your day job.** Reimagining an idea is about more than a moment of inspiration. It’s intense and immersive, requiring dedicated think time, not an hour here and there. Check out *Consider* for a whole book on the topic.
- 2) **Reimagining needs fresh language and a new approach to collaboration.** The ground rule for reimaging ideas is often a “yes, and” conversation: Yes I receive and really heard what you said, and I will build on it. We frequently use this technique in client workshops because it carries conversation forward whereas a “but” statement brings dialogue to a halt. “But” means “no.”
- 3) **Reimagining means a tenfold increase in your communications tempo.** You can’t reimagine something at the annual retreat and then just roll it to everyone and hope for the best. You can begin the process in such a setting, but ideas by themselves are weak; pivoting to animate and put them in front of customers is hard. Communicating what you are doing and why you are doing it can be even harder. Up your communications by orders of magnitude if you want to bring the masses along.
- 4) **An idea’s success is dependent on your culture’s values and behaviors.** When clients ask how they can move and think faster or collaborate more, we ask about behaviors in the current culture. Strategies live and die within the cultures that subsume them.

- 5) **Reimagining should be rewarded.** Praise it, celebrate it, talk about it (see point 3), and then recognize it again. Ideas are as fragile as the souls that bear and guide them. Treat the thinkers well—even when the marketplace (internal or external) doesn't respond in kind.
- 6) **Speed is your friend (and your enemy).** You should move quickly to develop and deploy something in front of customers so that you can gather feedback and iterate on the idea. But you must remember to slow down enough to truly hear your customers' feedback before speeding up again for version 2.0.
- 7) **Always get senior buy-in first.** You can't reimagine something unless the most senior leader responsible for the project (or organization) is on board. If the CEO says, "let's reimagine this," it gives permission for all around the C-Suite to do the same. Executive buy-in engenders fearlessness in those who nurture and actualize ideas. You can't reimagine something without it.
- 8) **Be judicious with funding the big ideas.** For many industries, the days of spending millions before ever launching a new product or service are over. Mock up a minimally viable product and put it in the hands of the people who might use and love it. Fail fast, learn faster, and invest only enough to get the idea to the point where customers can react, allowing you to upgrade to meet their vision.

Every time we are in a room with a client we are asked to question, push, frame, facilitate, and help them reimagine. This is why I often say strategy and culture are contact sports. Great consultants don't just deliver a detached answer to clients; they collaborate and co-create with them. This is a privilege that THRUUE will never take lightly.