

Structure**Purpose & market position**

1. What are we doing now that is at odds with our stated purpose or mission?
2. How does the size of our business help or hinder us? What is our attitude toward growth?
3. How are we ahead or behind the major trends in our industry?

Business plans

4. How well does today's business plan serve the owners' personal goals?
5. How do we balance consensus with communication in our planning?
6. What kind of planning will lenders, investors, and directors expect over the next 3 years?

Family business issues

7. Where do we agree and differ on the priorities among business, family, and ownership?
8. What are the challenges and opportunities facing each generation in the business?
9. How should we include outside managers and advisers in our decision-making?

Mergers & acquisitions

10. What makes a good M&A candidate for us? When should we pursue them?
11. How much time and money should we spend on the due diligence?
12. What are the most important parts of an assimilation plan?

Facilities

13. How do our buildings' location, design, and financing affect efficiency, morale, and liquidity?
14. How does our facility tour help us sell? Where is it weakest?
15. Should we lease or own for the next five years? Afterwards?

Ownership structure

16. How should risks and rewards differ among owners and managers?
17. How might our ownership structure affect our ability to grow?
18. What intellectual property should we protect? What should we share?

Marketing & Sales**Brand & marketing planning**

19. How are we perceived differently in our market segments and channels of distribution?
20. How will the borders of our geographic markets shift over 5 years?
21. What percentage of revenue should we spend on marketing?

Market research

22. Who exactly are our target markets? How can we delight them?
23. How do our customers compare us to our top 3 competitors?
24. Which of our products or services might be outdated next year?

Communications & PR

25. What exciting news haven't we shared with the world? How can we generate some?
26. Which of our messages and media have been most effective?
27. What is the right mix of advertising, networking, social media, PR, and direct marketing for us?

Internet/website

28. How exactly has our website helped us?
29. How have our competitor's websites changed for the better? For the worse?
30. What six things can we delete to streamline our site?

Customer relations

31. What information do we need to measure customer satisfaction?
32. What will we have to do next year to exceed our top customers' expectations?
33. Are there any customers we should stop working with?

Sales management

34. How might our pricing have to change?
35. How can our CRM system be improved to nurture relationships and close sales?
36. What else can we do to keep our sales team informed, focused, and effective?

Operations

Work process

37. How can our workflow diagrams be streamlined?
38. How could new technologies or tools drive process improvements?
39. What have been the trends in our top 3 efficiency metrics?

Job design

40. How well do our job descriptions fit our current work processes?
41. Do our job descriptions really help us measure and manage performance?
42. How else could our supervisors help their staff do their best?

Quality

43. Of all the things we make and do, of what is everyone most proud? Why?
44. Where are there gaps in our quality management and measurement system?
45. How are our customers' quality standards changing?

Innovation

46. Which new product or service most delighted our customers? Why?
47. How do we incorporate service and quality lessons into product development?
48. How can we foster innovation throughout the organization?

Inventory management

49. How can we optimize our picking/staging/storing systems?
50. How do our purchasing and inventory systems compare with our peers?
51. What could we do with the information from an upgraded inventory management system?

Supply chain & logistics

52. How could we help our vendors help us?
53. What can we do to optimize our shipping and delivery times?
54. What are the cost and benefits of leasing, owning, or contracting our fleet?

Information

I.T. planning

55. What are the 6 most important questions our IT should answer in each department?
56. How should we measure return on our IT investments?
57. How will our customers' needs for information from us change over three years?

Software

58. How do we evaluate the benefits of new features?
59. How do we estimate training costs for a major upgrade?
60. When should we shift to on-line applications?

Intranet

61. How do we balance sharing knowledge against information overload?
62. What are our goals for paperwork reduction?
63. How closely integrated can and should our IT be with our customers?

Hardware & systems

64. What are the disruption costs of our next IT projects?
65. What services can now be outsourced or brought in house?
66. What computerized functions are not essential to integrate?

Security

67. What level of threat are we willing to accept?
68. Where are our legal and internal confidentiality requirements most threatened?
69. Where is our IT most vulnerable?

Telephones & other devices

70. What basic communications tools work best for us?
71. What features can both speed up and humanize our communications?
72. What should our telephony and communications look like in 3 years?

Human Resources

Leadership & governance

- 73. How does the leadership team make its best decisions (collaborative, authoritative, etc.)?
- 74. How could we promote better leadership at all levels, including the board and committees?
- 75. How could senior managers improve how they delegate to and develop their staffs?

Compensation

- 76. Is our compensation philosophy fair and effective?
- 77. How will we know if we're providing the right level of pay and benefits?
- 78. What do our employees value most about working here?

Diversity & compliance

- 79. What were the top results of our last HR audit?
- 80. What is the organization doing to have a safe, healthy and respectful workplace?
- 81. How well is our job structure served by our labor pool?

Organization & culture

- 82. What does our organization chart say about who we are?
- 83. What parts of our culture stand out from our competitors?
- 84. How well does our employee manual ensure fairness and high morale?

Retention & recruitment

- 85. How does our recruitment approach support our marketing and operations goals?
- 86. How well do we systematically search out and recruit top talent?
- 87. How does our physical workplace affect recruitment and retention?

Training & development

- 88. Do staff feel comfortable saying they need or want to learn something new?
- 89. What skills sets are needed to be competitive today? Tomorrow?
- 90. What have been the most effective kinds of training for us?

Finance

Analysis & forecasting

- 91. What ratios are most important to managing our financial health?
- 92. How well do we compare financially to competitors and peers?
- 93. How will we live with increasing volatility and uncertainty in our markets?

Financing

- 94. What metrics will investors track most closely?
- 95. What three things can we do to strengthen our ability to raise money?
- 96. What new overall financing approaches should we consider?

Reporting & tax planning

- 97. How do our managers actually use the financial information they're given?
- 98. Do we really know what our products or services cost us to deliver?
- 99. What effort and expense should we invest in tax minimization?

Wealth management

- 100. What are our shareholders' goals for personal wealth, charity, and reinvestment?
- 101. How do we balance short- and long-term expectations for overall ROA?
- 102. How could we more actively help our employees protect their financial health?

Risk management

- 103. What can we do to protect our employee, vendor and customer safety?
- 104. How should we insure, avoid, minimize, or shed our major risks?
- 105. What risks are we accepting in our disaster recovery plan?

Succession & exit planning

- 106. What kind of leadership structure will we need in 10 years?
- 107. When should we have successors in place?
- 108. What can we do today to increase book value and prepare for the sale of the business?

Call Derrick Van Mell or return to www.vanmell.com for more resources.