



## SUCCESSFUL SCENARIO PLANNING

A good scenario planning process blends solid research with organizational wisdom and creativity. It challenges participants to create compelling stories of future worlds, some highly plausible, some less so.

To make a difference, the scenario process also needs a strategy development phase to dissect the future worlds and synthesize the findings into a competitive strategy and the initiatives needed to implement it.

In Janus Global's ten-year history we have found there are seven elements that contribute to a successful scenario planning experience.





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## THE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SCENARIO PLANNING

### 1 Research Depth

Scenario planning is fun. Participants enjoy thinking about and discussing plausible (and less than plausible) futures. But, when the dust settles, everyone involved must be convinced that the resulting scenarios were based on the best available information. Solid, fact-based research ensures a thorough exploration of all the forces, obvious and obscure, that could affect the future of their company.

*Janus conducts its own secondary research, uses outside experts, and taps the knowledge of client organizations. Then we share this knowledge with the company's decision makers in engaging ways, using various approaches to ensure scenarios are rooted in a deep and shared understanding of sectoral and global forces. Examples of approaches include interactive e-learning and games, as well as crisp, well-written background papers.*

### 2 The Right Focal Issue

We recommend the scenario process begin with a focal issue of pressing concern to key client stakeholders, especially senior decision makers. We often work with clients to ensure a proposed focal issue is the appropriate basis for launching a scenario process. If the focal issue is seen as urgent and important by only a few, or lacks top management buy-in, the process is unlikely to produce actionable strategy.

*Janus often works with clients to ensure the focal issue is clearly stated and has attracted champions with the clout and determination to develop a strategic response. We do this by testing the rationale and support for the issue through interviews and focus groups. We recommend changes to the focal issue, if needed, to improve the prospects for successful outcomes.*

### 3 Identifying and Avoiding Blind Spots

Some clients use a specific business idea as a focal issue. In this case, scenarios function as a kind of wind tunnel in which the new model is tested for efficiency. While this is not a bad use of scenario planning, it risks ignoring the basic assumptions supporting the new business idea. Any weaknesses or blind spots in these assumptions can derail the downstream strategy process.



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*Janus Global works through a small steering committee early in the process to reveal assumptions that contribute to the need for a scenario process. If, for example, a specific business idea is the focal issue, we'll recommend a process to ensure all stakeholders understand and support all the underlying assumptions.*

### **4 Shifting to a Strategic Perspective**

One goal of scenario planning is to move people from pre-occupation with operational matters—thinking 'inside, in the present and alone'—to consideration of forces that will shape their company's future, in which their thinking is 'outside, ahead and shared.'

*Janus Global uses imaginative and engaging tools to help participant groups shift quickly from operations mode to a strategic orientation. We call it getting from ground zero to a thousand feet. Examples include strategic forces quizzes and flash cards on trends and events. We've even produced a complete 8-page tabloid set 10 years in the future.*

### **5 Collective Learning**

Scenario planning is essentially a group learning process that creates new knowledge. In addition to learning about potential threats and opportunities, whole organizations develop new insights not possible using more linear, analytical methods. Whatever strategic decisions ultimately are made, a good scenario process shifts mindsets and elevates perspectives. This is possible only if all critical stakeholders are engaged in the strategic conversation.

*Janus Global deliberately sets out to create a scenario learning process to provide a clear and enduring impact on the company's strategic perspective. We have a history of creating imaginative and engaging processes involving senior decision makers in strategic, dialogue-based learning.*

*Learning means lasting. We are committed to transferring scenario planning expertise to clients as well as creating a legacy of knowledge and tools for future use.*



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### 6 Well-Told, Well-Written

Good scenarios are based on sound information and shared perspectives. While these qualities are crucial, more is needed to ensure scenarios have the desired impact. Scenarios need to be created and told in the classic storytelling tradition, then codified to engage a broad readership.

Storytelling is as old as humankind. It is the way we create coherence out of the fragmented experiences we share. In the workplace we tell stories about how we solve problems, how we interact and how we will face the future. Written scenarios capture the lessons of the told story. They ensure that shared perspectives are not lost or distorted and spread understanding beyond those who participated in the process.

*Janus Global supports clients in using classic storytelling methods to create and share scenarios. We also provide writing and editing support to ensure that scenarios survive in a written form that resonates with the broader stakeholder community.*

### 7 Actionable Strategy

Many scenario processes never get much beyond the story telling stage. These exercises are useful in creating new mental models and shared perspectives. The insights they provide may launch new signals-gathering efforts and other individual initiatives.

Most clients need more—specifically a structured approach to developing strategic responses.

*Janus Global is not only an accomplished scenario planner but routinely helps clients assess scenarios and integrate the findings into viable strategies. This phase identifies the risks, opportunities, and success criteria (including resources and capabilities) for each future world and their implications for the focal issue. Ultimately the strategy development process yields a set of coherent and logical premises on which to base specific strategic initiatives and decision-making.*