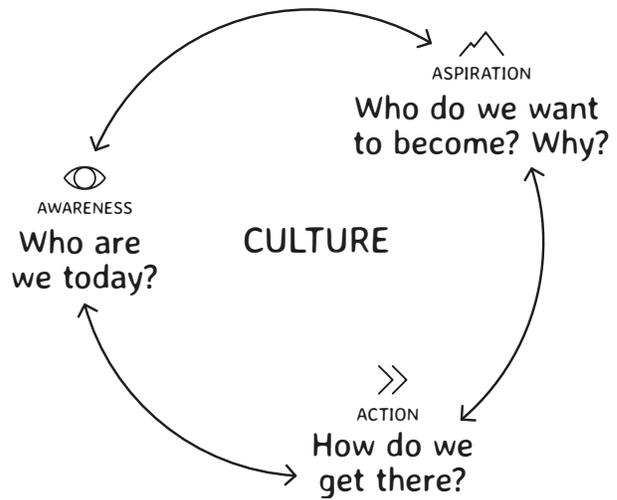


# STRATEGY / CULTURE BICYCLE



Developing an effective strategy and culture is fundamentally about asking the right questions:

- **WHERE** are we now? **WHO** are we today?
- **WHERE** do we want to go? **WHO** do we want to become? **WHY?**
- **HOW** do we get there?

Your goal is to *align* around good, thoughtful answers to these questions... and to hold them lightly, as your answers will evolve as you do the work.

The **STRATEGY / CULTURE BICYCLE** is designed to help you identify and align

around your group's most important questions. It is a quick and effective way to rapidly develop a shared understanding across the group around what it already knows and what it needs to figure out.

The Strategy / Culture Bicycle can be used by individuals and groups of any size. (For groups larger than six people, see the section at the end for tips on how to use this kit.)

The kit includes:

- **STRATEGY** poster
- **CULTURE** poster
- Blue, yellow, and pink **STICKIES**

## ABOUT THE BICYCLE

Eugene Eric Kim (Faster Than 20, <http://fasterthan20.com/>) and Amy Wu (Duende, <http://duende.us/>) created the Strategy / Culture Bicycle as part of an experiment with the Code for America Accelerator in 2014. Many thanks to Dharmishta Rood for not only creating that opportunity, but for testing the toolkit extensively with others and for contributing a number of improvements.

Kate Wing coined the term "Strategy / Culture Bicycle." She and Rebecca Petzel have also helped us tremendously by testing the toolkits in different environments and offering critical feedback and thought partnership.

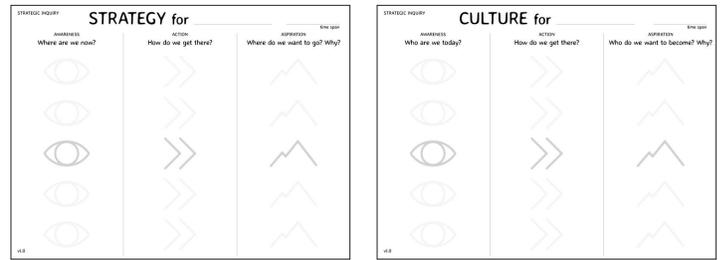
We're currently on our seventh iteration of the Bicycle, which we have been able to continuously improve thanks to our many, many testers.

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# Strategic Inquiry Process

Start by putting the posters up side-by-side on a wall. Allocate 1-2 hours (depending on the size of your group and the depth of your topic) for this process.



## 1. CHOOSE YOUR SUBJECT

- Agree on your **TOPIC**. Be as broad or as specific as you'd like.
- Identify the **TIME SPAN** you wish to envision (e.g., "five years from now").

## 2. ASK QUESTIONS

- For the next five minutes, write down as many questions as you have about your topic: **ONE** question per **BLUE** sticky. This is about *quantity*, not quality, so just write down whatever comes to mind. Include questions to which you are fairly certain of the answers. (See the section on "Asking Good Questions.")
- Stick your questions onto either the **STRATEGY** or **CULTURE** posters under whichever column seems most relevant. If you think it could fit under multiple columns, pick the one that seems most relevant. If you can't decide, duplicate the sticky.
- Stack or **CONSOLIDATE** duplicate questions, and **CLUSTER** related questions.
- Take a moment to **READ** through each other's questions and observe larger **PATTERNS** on the posters. For example, is there a concentration of stickies under any particular column? Are there gaps?
- REPEAT** these steps at least one more time.

## 3. REFINE YOUR QUESTIONS

- Replace each **YES/NO** question with a **NON-yes/no** question on a **BLUE** sticky. (See "Asking Good Questions" for tips on

reframing yes/no questions.) If you feel that your **YES/NO** question adds important context, keep it next to the **NON-yes/no** version.

- If new questions come up, feel free to add them on **BLUE** stickies.

## 4. ANSWER QUESTIONS

- For the next 15 minutes, you're going to write down possible answers to questions, one answer per sticky.
  - Use a **YELLOW** sticky to indicate 80% certainty about an answer.
  - Use a **PINK** sticky to indicate less than 80% certainty about an answer.
- Post the stickies around the appropriate question. If you see a **YELLOW** sticky and a **PINK** sticky proposing different answers to the same question, change the **YELLOW** sticky to a **PINK** one.
- If new questions come up, post them on **BLUE** stickies.

## 5. PRIORITIZE

- Identify **3-5** top priority questions to explore. You can do this a number of ways:
  - **DISCUSSION**: Review the posters together, and point out questions with lots of gaps or **PINK** stickies.
  - **VOTE**: Have each person put dots on three questions, then identify the 3-5 stickies with the most number of dots.

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# Asking Good Questions

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Questions are at the center of the Strategy / Culture Bicycle. Our approach to helping you ask *good* questions is to focus first on *quantity*, not quality. We offer one explicit tip — reframe yes/no questions — but otherwise rely on repetition and peer discussion and feedback to help surface *good* questions.

Good questions open you up to possibilities and generate new thinking. (We often prefer to use the term “generative questions” rather

than “good” for this reason.) Good questions are open, not leading. Action-oriented people are often fixated on **HOW** questions, but the most generative questions are often **WHAT** and **WHY** questions.

Here are some additional tips for asking better, more generative questions. Once again, we’d encourage you to go through the exercise and focus on quantity first, then look to improve your questions.

## REFRAME YES/NO QUESTIONS

*Should we take that client?* → *What is my client criteria?*

*Should we pursue the teenage market?* → *What markets should we pursue?*  
*What are the pros/cons of the teenage market?”*

*Will we make our numbers next year?* → *What are next year’s target numbers?*  
*How will we make our numbers?*

## INCLUDE NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

*What services do we offer?* AND *What services do we NOT offer?*

## FEELINGS MATTER, TOO

*What do I want?*  
*What do I love?*  
*What am I afraid of?*

*How do you like people to communicate with you?*

*How do you not like people to communicate with you?”*

## GET CONCRETE

*What are our 2020 goals?* AND *What are our 2020 revenue goals?*

*How will we work together?* AND *How often will we meet?*  
*What channels will we use to communicate with each other?*

## USE PRESENT AND PAST TO INFORM THE FUTURE

*What are our 2020 goals?* AND *What are our 2020 revenue goals?*

*How will we work together?* AND *How often will we meet?*

## KEY STRATEGIC AND CULTURAL QUESTIONS

What are our goals?  
 What are our revenue goals?  
 What does minimum success look like?  
 What does target success look like?  
 What does epic success look like?  
 What does failure look like?

What are our superpowers?  
 What are our weaknesses?  
 What are our expectations of each other?  
 What are the roles / responsibilities?  
 Who makes the decision, and how?

What are our communication protocols?  
 How will we promote development and learning?  
 What are we not willing to compromise on?  
 How will we work through conflicts?  
 How will we handle mistakes?

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## Groups Larger Than Six People

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You can use the Strategy / Culture Bicycle with groups larger than six people, but it requires a different approach due to physical limitations. The basic approach to using this toolkit with larger groups is to have everyone participate in the brainstorming, but to have a smaller group of people be responsible for consolidating and synthesizing the questions and ideas. For example:

- With a group of 12-20, have everyone participate in the sticky brainstorming, then ask four people to consolidate and cluster the stickies on the posters.

- Have everyone do the brainstorming on their own personal tabloid-sized versions of the posters first, then have them pick five key questions each to put on the poster-sized versions.
- Divide up the large group into groups of 3-6 people, each with their own small posters. Then have them pick five key questions and post them on the larger posters, which the whole group will share.
- Collect the questions before the meeting using an online tool, then consolidate, cluster, and prioritize the questions for the meeting itself.

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## Building on the Bicycle

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Once you've identified gaps in your thinking, misunderstandings, and high-priority questions, your next step is to close those gaps, clear up those misunderstandings, and discuss those questions. The Strategy / Culture Bicycle helps you guide your

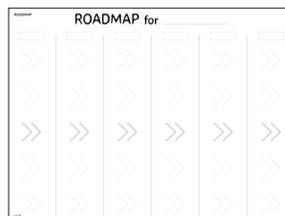
conversations so that they are as productive as possible.

We have additional toolkits that complement the Bicycle and that are useful for follow-up conversations:



### GOALS/SUCCESS SPECTRUM

Helps you get very clear and aligned about vision, strategic goals, and success metric.



### ROADMAP

Explore different scenarios and develop a strategic plan.



### MINDSET CARDS

Get more concrete about desired culture.

# ROADMAP

The Roadmap toolkit is a blank timeline that helps you plan. To use:

- IDENTIFY** the overall **TIME SPAN**. (E.g. six months out, one year out, five years out, etc.)
- DIVIDE** the time span you identified into **SIX PERIODS**, and label the columns accordingly. The time periods do not need to be equal, and you should divide them up in the way that best supports your planning. For example, if you wanted to plan for three years, but get into more detail for the first six months, first three periods could represent two months each, the fourth period could represent six months, and the last two periods could represent one year each.
- Add **STICKIES** for things that need to happen in the appropriate columns, starting from the last column and working backwards. If you're using the Strategy / Culture Bicycle or the Goals / Success Spectrum, feel free to move pertinent stickies from those posters onto the Roadmap.
- Add names of **PEOPLE** responsible for different items to the appropriate stickies.
- GUT CHECK** the Roadmap. Does it feel realistic? Appropriately balanced? Adjust the Roadmap by moving stickies around or by adding or removing them. If you need to revisit assumptions from a previous toolkit (e.g. Strategy / Culture Bicycle), go back to that toolkit, then return to the Roadmap.

The Roadmap is an excellent tool for playing with scenarios and for planning realistically. Don't assume that you will get it right the first time. Take advantage of the stickies and explore different possibilities until the plan feels right.

## CREDITS

Eugene Eric Kim and Amy Wu (Duende) created this toolkit with feedback from Kate Wing.

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# GOALS / SUCCESS SPECTRUM

Getting clear and aligned about goals is a critical practice for any project, big or small. All too often, groups don't take the first step of articulating their goals up-front. Even more often, groups are not specific enough about what success or failure looks like. As a result, groups move forward thinking they have alignment, only to find out later that they don't.

The Goals / Success Spectrum is a toolkit designed to help you get very clear about goals and outcomes. It defines success along a spectrum—from minimum to target to epic—which gives you a much more nuanced and specific sense of what you're trying to accomplish as well as different scenarios for success and failure.

## USING THE SPECTRUM

Start by naming your high-level **GOALS** — what you'd like to accomplish and why.

Brainstorm on stickies different scenarios for what success looks like. Be as specific as possible. If you previously used the Strategy / Culture Bicycle and already have stickies defining different success scenarios, you may re-use those stickies.

Put the stickies in the appropriate column: Minimum, Target, and Epic.

- **MINIMUM:** These are the minimum things that must happen in order to call a project successful. These scenarios should almost certainly happen if the group does its work diligently.
- **TARGET:** These are the things you're hoping will happen. They should be hard, but attainable. They should have a 40 to 70 percent likelihood of happening if the group does its work diligently.

- **EPIC:** This is what success beyond your wildest imagination looks like. Fill this column in twice, as everybody usually self-censors themselves the first time around. Don't be shy! These are not your target scenarios, but it's nice to envision what you really care about.

Brainstorm on stickies different scenarios for failure, and place them in the **FAILURE** column. Be as specific as possible.

Identify the discrepancies on the poster — the same success scenario in different columns, or a minimum success scenario that is more lenient than a failure scenario. Discuss these discrepancies with the group, and adjust accordingly.

Once there are no longer any discrepancies on the poster, do a gut check. Are the success scenarios too hard or too soft? Are these truly the scenarios that matter most? Is there anything missing? If necessary, either reframe the goals or re-adjust the different success scenarios.

## HISTORY AND CREDITS

Eugene Eric Kim and Amy Wu (Duende) created this toolkit. The idea of defining success along a spectrum was inspired by Kristin Cobble. The idea of explicitly incorporating failure scenarios was inspired by Seb Paquet, who also named the "Epic" column.

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