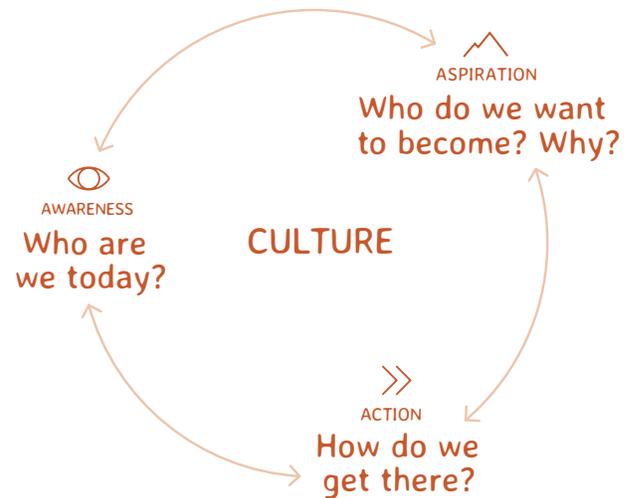


# STRATEGY / CULTURE BICYCLE



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**
- Black marker.

## 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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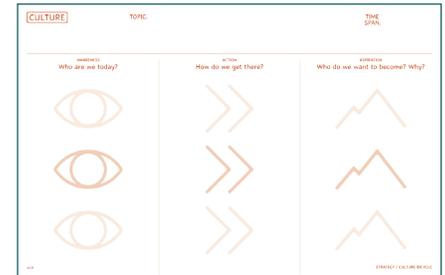
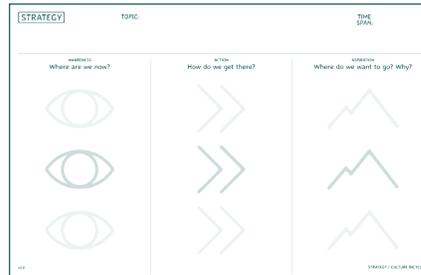
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# Strategic Inquiry Process

Using this toolkit can be a surprisingly emotional experience, especially when using it with a group. It's perfectly normal to feel vulnerable about exploring some of these questions and writing down possible answers. Make sure you create a safe space for doing these exercises, and if you find yourself feeling uncomfortable, take a break.

## 1. Set Up Your Work Space

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



## 2. 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").

## 3. 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.
- 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.

## 4. Refine Your Questions

- Replace each **yes/no** question with a **non-yes/no** question on a **blue** sticky.

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.
- See the *Asking Good Questions* section for tips on asking more generative questions.

## 5. Answer Questions

- For the next **15 minutes**, 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.

## 6. 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.

# Asking Good Questions

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

*How do we want to work together?* **AND** *What has been great about working together in the past?*

## 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?

## Groups Larger Than Six People

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.

## Building on the Bicycle

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:



### GOAL / 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.