

Your ability to think, plan and act strategically will have a greater effect on your sales and profitability than anything else you do. Very often, a single change in your activities can lead to a major difference in your results.

If you do not know the answers to these questions, or if you have the wrong answers, you can make mistakes in marketing, sales and business operations that can be fatal to your business.

Answer each question the best you can. If you do not know the answer, or if you are unsure, it is important that you find out as soon as possible. Let us begin:

1. What business are you in? Define your business in terms of what you actually **do** for your customer to improve his or her life or work:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

2. What is the **mission** of your company or firm? Define your mission in terms of what you want to achieve, avoid or preserve for your customers:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

3. How do you want your customers to talk about your company, think about your company, or **describe** your company to others? What **words** do you want them to use?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. Who is your **perfect customer**? Describe him/her in terms of age, income, education, occupation, location, or whatever other factors are appropriate for your industry.
 1. Age? _____
 2. Income? _____
 3. Occupation? _____
 4. Education? _____
 5. Need or problem? _____
 6. Other? _____
5. What does your ideal customer consider **value**? What benefits does your customer seek or expect in dealing with you?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
6. What are your company's **core competencies**? What special skills or abilities does your company possess that enable you to fulfill the needs of your customer?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

7. What does your company do extremely well? In what areas do you perform in an exceptional fashion? What makes you **superior** to your competitors?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

8. Who are your **competitors**? Who else sells your same product or service to your prospective customers?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

9. Who are your **biggest** or main competitors?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

10. Who are your **secondary** customers? Who else offers an alternate to what you sell?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

11. **Why** do your customers buy from your competitors? What benefits do they receive from your competitors that they don't receive from you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

12. Which of your products or services give you your **highest profit**? Where do you get your highest pay-off? What do you do that gives you your highest return on effort or investment?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

13. Which products, services, markets, customers or activities should your company **abandon, eliminate, or get out of**, to free up more time for higher value, more profitable activities?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

14. What could you do to **attract** your competitor's customers and get them to buy from you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

15. How could you improve your marketing methods to **generate more leads** and attract more potential customers?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

16. What is your company's area of **specialization**? What are your products or services uniquely suited to do, and for whom?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

17. What is your area of **differentiation** or excellence? In what ways are you superior to your competitors?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

18. What is your specific **competitive advantage**? What qualities of your products, services or business make you better than 90% of businesses in your industry?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

19. What **type of customers** can benefit the most from the superior benefits of your product or service?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

20. In what areas of advertising, promotion and selling should you **concentrate your energy** and resources to maximize your sales and profits?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

21. How could you **convert** more of your prospects into paying customers? What methods of sale could you use?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

22. Which customers should you **phase out or abandon** because they are no longer worth the time and energy they take to satisfy?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

23. What **activities** should you abandon or de-emphasize so you can have more time for those activities that offer the highest possible return on your investment of time and energy?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

24. What is your current **positioning** in your marketplace? How do people think and talk about you and your business when you are not there? What **words** do they use to describe you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

25. What is your **brand** in your market today? What are you known for in your market? If you don't have a brand in your market, what would you like to be known for to your customers?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

26. What **should** your brand be? What words or description would you like to own in your customer's mind? What kind of a reputation would be most helpful for you to develop?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

27. What could you **change or improve** about your products, services or business to begin creating a more favorable brand-image in your customer's mind?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

28. What are your three greatest **weaknesses** as an organization?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

29. What are your three biggest **obstacles** to achieving higher levels of sales and profitability?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

30. What are the three greatest potential **threats** to your business today?
What are the **worst things** that could go wrong?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

31. Looking into the **future**, what are three worst things that could happen to hurt your business one year from today?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

32. What three steps could you take immediately to **guard against** these possible dangers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

33. What are your three areas of **greatest opportunity** for the future, based on the trends in your business?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

34. What three steps could you take immediately to **take advantage of** these opportunities?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

35. What three **core competencies** or skills should you begin developing today to assure that you will be ready for the opportunities of tomorrow?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

36. How is **technology** affecting your business? What changes does the Internet cause in the way you do business?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

37. What are you doing today that you wouldn't get into again if you had to do it over – **knowing what you now know**?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

38. **Reorganization** – what changes should you make in your business, with regard to people and expenses, to improve both effectiveness and efficiency?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

39. **Restructuring** – how could you shift more of your time and resources into the top 20% of activities that account for 80% of your profits?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

40. **Reinventing** – imagine your business burned to the ground today. What products, services and activities would you start up again immediately?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

41. What products, services or activities would you **not start up again** today if your business burned to the ground?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

41. **Reengineering** – analyze every step of your business activities. What could you **simplify, outsource, eliminate, or discontinue** altogether?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

42. What could you do to simplify any business process by **reducing** the number of steps in the process?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

43. What activities could you **eliminate** completely to speed up the process of producing your products and services?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

44. What activities could you **outsource** to other individuals or companies to free yourself to sell and deliver more of your products?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

45. What activities could you **discontinue** altogether with no real loss of sales or revenue?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

46. Is there any **person** in your business life – a customer, employee, associate – who, knowing what you now know, you wouldn't hire, take on, or get involved with today?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

47. If you could start your business or career over again today, what would you do **differently**?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

48. What skills, abilities, talents do you have that have been most responsible for your **successes** to date?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

49. If you could be absolutely **excellent** in any one area, which one area would be most helpful to you in achieving your goals?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

50. What one action are you going to take immediately as a result of your answers to the above questions?
