

War Room Strategy Debate Facilitation Guide

Day 1 – 8:00 - 10:30: Strategy recommendation and ROI pitches

- Kick the day off by asking each participant to place their flipcharts on the walls of your meeting room so that they can be seen by all attendees. Number each strategy – at the top right of the flip chart – from 1 to 30. Then give each of your 10 participants fifteen minutes to pitch their recommendations and ROI projections.

Day 1 - 10:30 - 10:40: Break

Day 1 - 10:40 - 11:00: Prioritization exercise

- Ask each participant to spend fifteen to twenty quiet minutes walking around the room and examining all the flip charts, ultimately putting their initials in the top left-hand corner of the flip charts representing the top three strategies they believe will drive measurable ROI.
- If they believe that any of the strategies should be combined, because they are both simply nuances of the same idea and complement one another, they should note that on the flip chart as well (e.g., combine #3 with #7).

Day 1 - 11:00 - 12:30: Top strategy debate

- Determine if any recommendations to combine strategies makes sense. If they do, move those two flip charts together.
- Move the flip charts for any strategy receiving multiple votes, but a maximum of 18, to the center of the room where they can be easily seen by all participants. Then facilitate a debate where your team argues the merits and risks of each of the top performing strategies for roughly 5 minutes per strategy. Make sure you are hearing from everyone in the room, especially the quieter voices. Note that the first time you facilitate a War Room Debate, this step in the process may take you longer than the ninety minutes allotted in the agenda. In time, you'll get faster at your facilitation of this section.
- Ask for another vote, this time with the intention of narrowing the field to a max of 10 strategies, though your number may be smaller. Again votes are cast by attendees placing their initials on the flip charts of the top 3 strategies they believe to be strongest – this time in the lower left-hand corner.

Day 2 - 8:00 - 11:45 (with a 10-minute break in the middle): Top ten questions

- Ask the group the following ten questions about each of your top 10 strategies. These questions are designed to provoke thoughtful analysis and ensure that the strategies discussed are robust, viable, and align with the company's objectives. They will help your team critically evaluate each strategy from multiple angles, considering both the potential rewards and the inherent risks. You will likely cut some of the strategies as you go.
- **Grounded in research:** *Is this strategy grounded in the research? How so?*
- **Feasibility analysis:** *What are the potential obstacles in implementing this strategy, and how can we overcome them?*
- **Alignment check:** *How does this strategy align with our overall business objectives and brand values? How does it align with the sales team's strategies and goals? Will this strategy positively impact the outcomes of any of our other top strategies under consideration?*
- **Market impact:** *What is the expected impact of this strategy on our market position and competitive edge?*
- **Customer value:** *How will this strategy improve our customer's experience or journey?*
- **Innovation index:** *Does this strategy introduce innovative practices to our marketing efforts?*
- **Customer journey:** *Where in the customer journey would this strategy be most useful?*
- **ROI detailing:** *Do you agree with the ROI projections for this strategy? Where might they be flawed?*
- **Risk assessment:** *What are the risks involved with this strategy, and how do we plan to mitigate them?*
- **Scalability query:** *Is this strategy scalable, and how does it fit into our long-term growth plans?*

After you have answered all 10 questions for a strategy, decide as a group if you should keep or kill it. As facilitator, you get a vote, and you are also the tie-breaker when needed.

Day 2 - 11:45 - 12:25: Gaps in the customer journey

- Armed with an agreement from the team on where each of the vetted strategies sits in the typical customer journey, from question 7, ask them to fill in any gaps. What strategies should be considered or re-considered, as they may have already been vetted and ruled out because the ROI isn't easily measurable, to ensure that you're investing sufficiently at each stage of the customer journey?

Day 2 - 12:25 - 12:45: Build the foundation

- Finally, for each strategy still under consideration, ask the team to quickly brainstorm the foundation-building elements that must be in place in order for that strategy to be successful. For example, a successful PPC campaign requires a strong high-converting website or landing page. Or, you may say that your social media ad campaign is not going to break through without first rebranding.
- Note that these investments likely won't give you a directly measurable ROI. The key is to ensure that the ROI on your activities that are measurable more than pay for your activities that aren't -- delivering an overall measurable ROI on your plan.

Day 2 - 12:45 - 1:00: Wrap up

- Thank your team for the spirited debate. Explain that your next step is to take the ideas discussed and further vet them before arriving at a final results-guaranteed marketing strategy. Make it clear that not everything discussed in the room will make the final cut, and through this vetting process, new ideas may emerge.
- Answer any questions they may have about the process going forward.