

Corporate Strategy English

Participant workbook: strategic diagnosis, choices, market analysis, portfolio strategy, growth, M&A, uncertainty, governance, and executive dialogue practice

Audience: advanced ESL learners working in corporate strategy, business strategy, corporate development, transformation, strategic finance, internal consulting, product strategy, commercial strategy, and related roles

Focus: high-level professional English for corporate strategy workplaces, including strategic diagnosis, where-to-play and how-to-win choices, tradeoffs, industry structure, competitive advantage, portfolio strategy, resource allocation, growth strategy, M&A logic, uncertainty, scenarios, operating model, OKRs, executive narratives, and board-level dialogue.

Designed for advanced ESL learners who work in corporate strategy, business strategy, CEO office, transformation, corporate development, strategic finance, internal consulting, product strategy, commercial strategy, or strategy-adjacent leadership roles.

Teaching stance: corporate strategy English is the language of consequential choice. Learners need to frame ambiguous problems, make tradeoffs explicit, connect analysis to decisions, challenge attractive but incoherent ideas, and communicate uncertainty without sounding weak. This course teaches professional communication and judgment, not a single best strategy framework.

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook helps you sound precise and credible in corporate strategy conversations. The goal is not to use more frameworks. The goal is to connect ambiguity to choices, choices to evidence, evidence to resource allocation, and resource allocation to execution.

Your starting point

- Which strategy conversations are hardest for you: problem framing, market analysis, portfolio review, M&A challenge, executive pushback, scenario planning, board prep, or KPI governance?
- Which strategy terms do you understand when reading but avoid when speaking?
- When senior leaders ask for everything, do you become too agreeable, too analytical, too indirect, or too blunt?
- What is one recent strategy meeting you wish you had handled more clearly?

Corporate Strategy Workstream Language

Area	Useful verbs	Example sentence
Framing	diagnose, clarify, structure, hypothesize, prioritize	We should align on the decision question before building the model.
Choices	choose, focus, trade off, sequence, deprioritize	The strategy is not clear until the tradeoff is visible.
Markets	assess, segment, benchmark, map, pressure-test	The market is growing, but value capture may be structurally weak.
Portfolio	allocate, reallocate, fund, harvest, divest	Equal funding would preserve inertia rather than shift resources to the strongest thesis.
Growth	enter, build, buy, partner, integrate	The route to market depends on speed, control, capability gap, and risk.
Execution	govern, measure, escalate, sequence, operationalize	The dashboard should show movement in value drivers, not only initiative status.

Practice Pages

Module 1. Strategy Role, Problem Framing, and Executive Diagnosis

Corporate strategy work begins before analysis. Learners must frame the real decision, separate symptoms from causes, identify the executive audience, and define what would change if the analysis is persuasive.

What you should be able to do

- Distinguish problem statement, symptom, root cause, hypothesis, issue tree, decision question, recommendation, and implementation implication.
- Ask executive-level clarification questions without sounding junior or obstructive.
- Write a concise diagnosis that names the strategic tension rather than listing every fact.

Practice task

Situation

A CEO asks for a strategy but describes a list of projects. Write a response that reframes the work around a decision question and strategic choices.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 2. Strategic Choices: Ambition, Where to Play, How to Win, and Tradeoffs

A strategy is not a slogan or a project list. It is a set of choices about where the company will compete, how it will win, what capabilities it needs, and what it will not do.

What you should be able to do

- Use choice language for ambition, where to play, how to win, capabilities, systems, and management priorities.
- Explain tradeoffs without sounding negative or risk-averse.
- Identify whether an initiative supports the strategy or merely sounds attractive.

Practice task

Situation

Leadership wants to pursue enterprise and mid-market at the same time. Write a tradeoff note that explains operating-model implications.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 3. Industry Structure, Competitive Dynamics, and Profit Pools

Attractive growth is not always attractive profit. Learners need language for industry structure, Five Forces, profit pools, competitor moves, barriers, substitutes, and shifting value capture.

What you should be able to do

- Discuss market attractiveness using Five Forces, profit-pool logic, growth, margin, cyclicity, regulation, and structural change.
- Explain why a growing market may still be strategically unattractive.
- Distinguish competitor activity from competitive advantage.

Practice task

Situation

A fast-growing market has weak profit-pool evidence. Prepare a Five Forces and value-capture summary.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 4. Business Models, Unit Economics, Capabilities, and Advantage

Corporate strategy must explain how value is created, captured, defended, and scaled. Learners need to connect customer value, economics, capabilities, activities, and operating model.

What you should be able to do

- Use business-model and financial terms such as revenue model, gross margin, contribution margin, CAC, LTV, ROIC, WACC, DCF, NPV, and payback accurately.
- Explain strategic advantage in terms of activities, capabilities, cost position, differentiation, switching costs, data, distribution, brand, or scale.
- Challenge business cases that assume growth without credible economics or capabilities.

Practice task

Situation

A business case assumes growth but has weak unit economics. Write five challenge questions and a revised recommendation.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 5. Portfolio Strategy, Capital Allocation, and Resource Reallocation

Corporate strategy often fails because resources do not move. Learners need language for portfolio roles, capital allocation, mature cash businesses, growth bets, divestitures, adjacency, opportunity cost, and management politics.

What you should be able to do

- Use portfolio terminology accurately: core, adjacency, horizon, business unit, capital allocation, resource reallocation, hurdle rate, divestiture, stranded cost, and opportunity cost.
- Discuss investment, hold, harvest, partner, acquire, divest, and exit recommendations.
- Push back when every business unit requests equal growth funding despite different economics and strategic roles.

Practice task

Situation

Every business unit requests the same budget increase. Draft decision rules for resource allocation and a difficult message to underfunded units.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 6. Growth Strategy, Market Entry, Partnerships, and M&A Logic

Growth strategy requires a clear thesis: where growth will come from, why the company has a right to win, what route to market is credible, and whether to build, buy, partner, or wait.

What you should be able to do

- Use terms such as organic growth, inorganic growth, adjacency, market entry, beachhead, build-buy-partner, joint venture, strategic alliance, acquisition thesis, synergy, integration risk, and cannibalization.
- Explain why a market may be attractive but still not a good fit.
- Challenge unsupported M&A or partnership logic with questions about value creation, integration, control, culture, and downside risk.

Practice task

Situation

A corporate development team proposes an acquisition with vague revenue synergies. Write a synergy challenge memo.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 7. Uncertainty, Scenarios, Strategic Options, and Risk Posture

A strong strategist does not pretend the future is certain. Learners need language for scenarios, residual uncertainty, trigger indicators, no-regrets moves, options, big bets, shaping, adapting, and reserving the right to play.

What you should be able to do

- Discuss uncertainty without sounding indecisive.
- Create scenario implications that change decisions, not decorative future stories.
- Recommend strategic moves based on uncertainty level, risk appetite, and trigger indicators.

Practice task

Situation

Regulatory uncertainty could change a market-entry decision. Create scenario implications, trigger indicators, and no-regrets moves.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Module 8. Execution Governance, Operating Model, KPIs, and Board Narrative

Strategy becomes real through operating model, decision rights, resource shifts, milestones, KPIs, governance, and narrative discipline. Learners must convert strategy into accountable execution without turning it into a long project inventory.

What you should be able to do

- Use execution terms such as operating model, governance, decision rights, initiative, roadmap, milestone, dependency, OKR, KPI, leading indicator, lagging indicator, value driver, and board narrative.
- Separate strategic KPIs from activity metrics.
- Build an executive or board storyline that names choices, evidence, risk, resource implications, and decisions needed.

Practice task

Situation

A board deck has too much analysis and no clear decision. Rewrite the opening storyline in five sentences.

Decision, hypothesis, or strategic choice

Evidence, tradeoff, risk, or resource implication

Final strategy response

Phrase Bank

Problem framing and diagnosis

- What decision will this analysis change?
- The issue is not only growth; it is whether the growth creates attractive returns.
- I would separate the symptom from the strategic cause.
- Before we build the model, we should align on the decision question.

Strategic choices and tradeoffs

- This is a choice, not just a priority statement.
- If we choose this segment, what are we explicitly not serving?
- The strategy becomes clearer when the tradeoff is visible.
- We can do both only if the operating model supports both.

Market and competitive analysis

- Market growth is attractive, but we need to test value capture.
- Which force puts the most pressure on industry profitability?
- The competitor move matters only if it changes economics, access, or customer behavior.
- The profit pool is shifting, but not necessarily toward us.

Portfolio and resource allocation

- Equal funding is not the same as strategic funding.
- What role should this business play in the enterprise portfolio?
- The resource shift should follow market attractiveness, advantage, and strategic fit.
- We should define the minimum investment to protect the core and the option funding for future growth.

Growth, M&A, and partnerships

- Attractive market does not automatically mean right to win.
- Build gives control, buy gives speed, and partner gives optionality.
- The synergy case needs source, timing, owner, cost, and confidence level.
- The acquisition thesis should explain why we are the best owner of the asset.

Uncertainty and executive communication

- The future is uncertain, but the decision does not have to be vague.
- Which trigger indicators would cause us to revisit the plan?
- This is a no-regrets move across the scenarios we tested.
- For the board, I would lead with the decision, recommendation, risk, and resource implication.

Personal Action Plan

Situation	Term or phrase I will practice	Evidence I used it well