

## CAN A BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY® WORKSHOP HELP ACCELERATE YOUR PROFITS AND BUSINESS GROWTH?



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We have been Blue Ocean Strategists since 2006 and conduct dozens of workshops for CEOs and their key leaders every year. Throughout the pandemic, we continued to hold these workshops, although virtually, and we have found that the virtual experience has been very productive for our participants. I thought it would be helpful to all of you prospective Blue Ocean Strategists to read about some of the insights I have had working with these CEOs. You might find that you are ready for your own Blue Ocean Strategy Workshop to learn a new way to create a new market, not just compete in an old one.

Remember: Strategy is a top-line and a bottom-line investment. Strong strategies help take you to higher places, and bad ones leave you stuck in the mud. ***What is your strategy***

**today?** Are you ready to rethink it? Is your growth stalled or stuck? Is a Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) just what your business needs?

FYI: You might enjoy reading my award-winning book, [\*On the Brink: A Fresh Lens to Take Your Business to New Heights\*](#), to see how we have successfully helped companies get unstuck.

## How To Think About Your Blue Ocean Strategy Workshop

Whether the workshop is done by an in-person presentation or over Zoom or another platform, the in-house organizer plays an essential role in setting the stage for our work together. This could be the CEO or COO of your company. Perhaps it is your Chief Innovation Officer or the key leader for strategy and planning. It might be the chair of a group such as Vistage International. Since 2007, I have conducted dozens of Blue Ocean Strategy Workshops for clients, and over 500 for Vistage and similar organizations. Each has been transformative, both for the group and even for me.

When the pandemic began, I tried to do what I had done before, only to discover that a virtual experience was just that: virtual. Trying to apply in-person engagement tools took too long and left the participants distracted. Instead, I reset the theme and the process, with great results.

These reviews capture participants' reactions to the new-formatted workshops:

- “Andi really made me think in a very different way about our future customers. It was great.”
- “I love Andrea's content and look forward to engaging with her further.”
- “Andrea managed the virtual environment with in-person participants like a champ. She engaged the members with individualized questions about their business and challenges and was able to respond later in the presentation about their individual situation with clarity and specificity. The members were impressed.”

In each workshop, what I really focus on is the mind-shift that a new strategy requires. We know that the mind does exactly what it thinks you want it to do. The current story in a person's mind influences what the person sees and how they allow unfamiliar things to change their perspectives. So how can a workshop change someone's view of their business and its all-important growth strategy?

These three blogs give you a great foundation for understanding how BOS can transform your company:

1. [How To Survive These Scary Times: Blue Ocean Strategy®](#)
2. [No Time To Be Afraid Of This Blurry Future](#)
3. [How To Stay Moving Forward As The World Moves At Warp Speed](#)

## Blue Ocean Thinking Is A Mind-Shift, Not Just A Strategy Reboot

What I mean by a mind-shift is that BOS encourages people to see things through a fresh lens. They must rethink their approach to their customers and their business. They must start to think outside-in, not push the factory out. In these fast-changing times, they must also stop mimicking others in the market or competing with them. Growth comes from creating new value, innovatively, and opening new markets, not getting stuck in the current ones.

Consequently, what I do is set a new stage for thinking about three things:

1. **Who will be the customer of tomorrow?** This is not so easy. Most of the time, people think that yesterday's customer will be there for them in the future. Rarely is that the case any longer.
2. **What is your strategy for capturing them?** This question is remarkably difficult. All too often, CEOs aren't even sure their company has a strategy for today, which is unsettling to them, and to me.
3. **How do you shift your strategy and business to prepare for the future?** Another scary question. Since the brain likes the familiar, considering something new and unfamiliar makes a CEO or manager resist the new and flee the changes.

To say that people's brains hate to change is an understatement. For CEOs, these questions are a perfect way to bring to the fore something they should be looking at very seriously—those customers of tomorrow and their business's strategy to capture and retain them. Ironically, these are the same questions they should also be asking about their employees.

## More Of The Same, Cheaper, Is Not Going To Work

As participants begin to write down their "customer of tomorrow" story, they start to realize that "more of the same, cheaper" is not going to work as a strategy for tomorrow. Several recurring reasons emerge from their thinking:

- **First is the significant changes in the demographics.** Demography is destiny. Unless you are paying close attention to the next generation as a workforce and a

consumer, you will miss out on the leading indicators or signals they are sending you about what matters to them. Those signs should be driving your future strategy.

- **Second, technology is transforming everything...**how work is done, where it is done, and even the meaning of "work."
- **Third, the pandemic made a hybrid workforce legitimate.** That is driving a rethink of the employee/employer model of the past. No longer are we managing hands. You are managing minds, and they are often across the globe. This requires a very different mindset; a new way to hire, develop and retain employees; a revolution in how to evaluate performance; how to navigate all the shifts in the supply chain; and also how to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and sustainability. Today's changes are demanding a new strategy.
- **Fourth, supply options are exceeding demand.** While consolidations are pulling competitors out of the market, they are also removing potential clients from your markets.
- **Fifth, diversity, equity and inclusion are not just words.** They require action. Women and people of diverse backgrounds have entered the workplace of today with new values, beliefs and behaviors, asking if not demanding that organizations reboot their cultures and create new ones that better embrace the emerging leadership. Your strategic direction is closely connected to your culture, and your employees are watching.
- **Sixth, but certainly not least, the customer's buying journey has changed.** Marketing to your users is changing, and capturing and retaining a new client is not what it was in the past. The Boomer world is not gone yet. Neither is the Gen Y or the Gen X world dominating everything. But the changes are here, expanding and demanding new strategies.

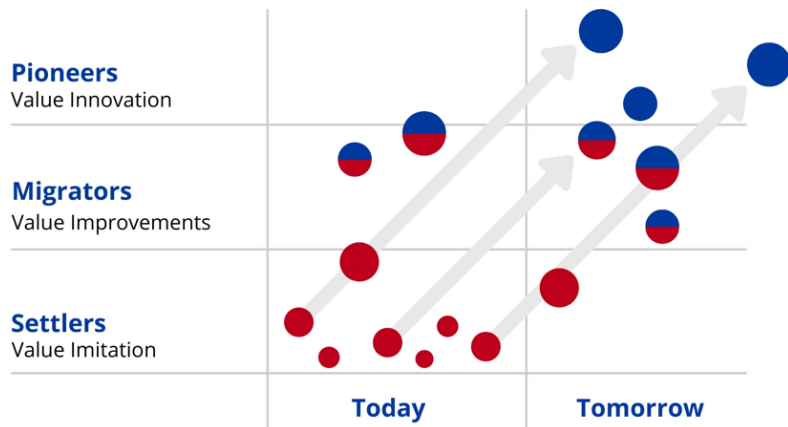
Do you recognize these themes in your business as it adapts to the fast-paced changes coming from all around you? Do you have a strategy that is bringing in new customers—the right ones for your future? Time for some Blue Ocean work?

## Laying The Groundwork For A New Blue Ocean Strategy

Take a look at this video I created just as the pandemic was expanding. Click on the image below or here: [https://youtu.be/\\_JTxqtQxoSo](https://youtu.be/_JTxqtQxoSo)



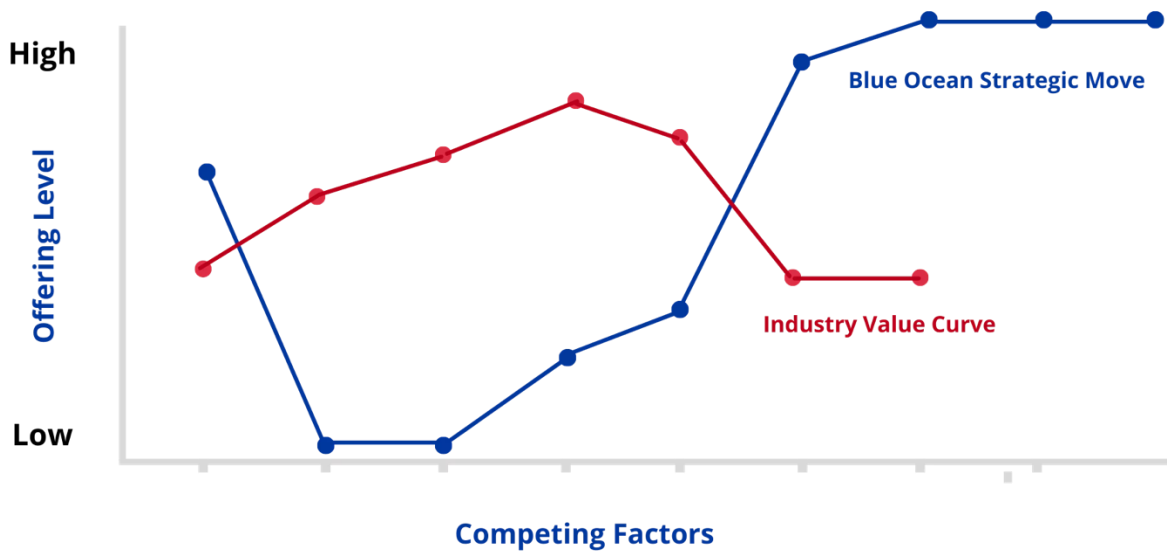
Getting CEOs to rethink their customer, business future and strategy in three hours is ambitious, but it works. Sometimes the timing and pacing move people forward when they would rather stay stalled in the past. We used to say, "If you want to change, have a crisis or create one." Now we warn, "Never waste a crisis." The post-pandemic period is a perfect opportunity to take stock of your current customers, business model, employees, technology, marketing and everything else you have held sacred in the past. The problem is how to let go of the "shiny objects" and move toward a new way of seeing things and doing them. One exercise we have participants do is **Pioneer, Migrator, Settler**. It looks like this, below. You might try it for your own company today:



In the context of “who is the future customer,” CEOs must rethink their products, services and solutions against that customer. Are you developing pioneering solutions that will open a new market for those future customers? Are you incrementally improving your current solutions to tackle old problems in new ways? For many CEOs, they realize that they are happily settled in their market space, imitating all their other competitors and struggling to sustain their growth for the future. They are actually more comfortable being “another” like the rest, benchmarking themselves rather than breaking away and creating new value.

As we work through the workshop, participants find that their eyes are opened. As they have a visual awakening, questioning the status quo is essential.

We then have them draw a Strategic Canvas. Try it yourself.



If you never thought a picture was worth a thousand words, watch what happens when your team draws a picture of your business investments and those of your competitors. It doesn't take long for business leaders to see that they are "another" provider of services in a world with far too many others doing the same things. That is the essence of a "Red Ocean." Careful, you may easily become stuck or stalled. A red ocean is one a business owner or leader should be running to get out of.

## What To Do? Is The Question. What Is An Excellent Future Strategy For Your Business?

This is always the critical moment when a business leader has an "aha" moment that the past will not be the driver for their future. Now, the question: What *will* it be?

What they must do is "go exploring." John Seely Brown once said: "The way forward is all around you if only you can see it." That is the challenge for business leaders today. Can you see what is all around you?

As an anthropologist, I find this to be the best part. I show these leaders how to listen to prospects and current customers through a new set of ears. Listen to the clients' stories about their unmet needs, their pain points and their challenges. Find out about the trends that are disrupting their business. Let the customer of tomorrow help you redesign your business strategy, and also you help them rethink their business. When times change, no one is sitting by the sidelines waiting for the past to come back. Don't you, either.

## Ready For Your Own Blue Ocean Strategy Workshop?

We custom-design our workshops to fit your specific needs. We conduct them with CEOs, management teams, boards and emerging leaders. The mindset and approach are as relevant for Human Resources officers trying to attract and retain staff as it is for management to identify the signs that will disrupt their business...if not tomorrow, very soon.

Let's swim in your new Blue Ocean, as soon as possible. Don't wait until your market leaves you. The future certainly isn't waiting.

## Ready to Embrace Change?

At [Simon Associates Management Consultants](#), our specialty is helping organizations accept, prepare for and adapt to change. Applying the tools, methods and principles of [anthropology](#) is one of the primary ways we do this. We invite you to [contact us](#) to discuss how our team of specialized [corporate anthropologists](#) and [culture change experts](#) can work with you so that you and your business can overcome today's challenges and boldly embrace the future. We look forward to hearing from you.

## About Andi Simon



[Andrea \(Andi\) Simon, Ph.D., corporate anthropologist, author,](#) and executive coach founded [Simon Associates Management Consultants \(SAMC\)](#) over two decades ago to bring the unique perspective of anthropology to businesses and organizations that need or want to change. As a [culture change expert](#) and trained practitioner in [Blue Ocean Strategy®](#), she helps a diverse range of organizations “see, feel and think” in new ways, finding better solutions for their current customers and “big ideas” to attract future ones. [Contact SAMC](#) to find out how Andi and her team can help your organization drive change, overcome challenges and reach your potential for success.

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Andi has authored two award-winning books, [On the Brink: A Fresh Lens to Take Your Business to New Heights](#), and [Rethink: Smashing the Myths of Women in Business](#). To order your copies, click on the images below:

