

Meyer's Management Models

63. Guiding STAR Matrix

Which objectives do I need to set to determine a future direction?

Key Definitions

An objective is something you wish to realize – an aim you want to achieve. If you don't have objectives, any future direction will do, and you will drift around. Or as the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland put it: "If you don't know where you are going, any road can take you there".

So, to have a sense of direction and avoid ad hoc wandering, it is essential to have clear objectives. The more these objectives are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Time-bound – the more intentional and directed the efforts can be of the person, team or organization that sets them.

Conceptual Model

The *Guiding STAR Matrix* gives an overview of the four groups of objectives that are always needed in every situation to set a well-considered future direction, whether it is for an individual, group or entire organization. Often, people will only think about what needs to be strengthened moving forward, but the Guiding STAR Matrix indicates that after the S, objective-setters should follow the other letters of the STAR abbreviation to create a complete picture of what to aim for. Only with all four categories filled will a brightly shining star emerge to guide people in taking the best possible steps into the future.



Key Elements

The four categories of objectives that should always be determined are the following:

1. **Strengthen.** When thinking about the future, it is natural that the first topic that comes to mind is what needs to be *improved*. People will quickly zoom in on what is going wrong or

working poorly, and therefore needs to be fixed. Besides these weaknesses that require upgrading, people can also focus on further developing current strengths. But whether it is correcting faults or building on existing qualities, the common denominator is that a change for the better (*future/+*) is foreseen, requiring the individual, team, or organization to adapt their behaviors, learn new skills and/or embrace different values and beliefs.

2. **Treasure.** In the drive to set ambitious improvement objectives, it is often forgotten how important it is to identify which current qualities are still valuable and need to be *preserved*. This is particularly difficult as familiar characteristics are typically seen as normal and therefore taken for granted. Hence, the second step in determining objectives is to clearly define which current capabilities, relational networks, cultural norms, sense of community and leadership behaviors are highly beneficial (*current/+*) and need to be safeguarded. They need to be explicitly recognized and objectives set to protect them.
3. **Avoid.** After thinking about what to improve and what to preserve, the third step in objective setting is to consider which potential risks are lurking in future that need to be *mitigated*. These risks include intentional negative reactions by other stakeholders, but also vulnerabilities to changing circumstances and the threat of making mistakes (*future/-*). Once these risks have been identified by considering “what if...?”, people can try to find ways to avert the risk from materializing by taking preventative action and/or look for possibilities to minimize the impact when things do go wrong.
4. **Reduce.** Once the future improvements and risk mitigation have been determined, a good way to wrap things up is to explicitly determine which current qualities, behaviors and/or investments shouldn't be preserved, but should be *eliminated* – decreased or even stopped altogether (*current/-*). Some of this scaling down will be because the current way of working is ineffectual or even dysfunctional, but it could also simply be that there are insufficient resources available and priorities need to be determined, or that a clearer focus needs to be achieved.

Key Insights

- **Objectives are needed for directed action.** If you don't know what you want to achieve, any behavior is fine, and you will wander about. But for intentional behavior, it is necessary to set objectives that can be aimed for and can be used to track progress.
- **Objectives are needed at all levels.** Organizations need to set objectives if they don't want to drift about, but so do units, teams, and individuals. Everyone needs direction.
- **Objectives need to indicate desired improvements.** A key part of setting direction is to outline what needs to be strengthened. By specifying that there is a gap between the current situation (A) and the desired future situation (B), it can be made clear what needs to be corrected and/or developed. These change aims are called *improvement objectives*.
- **Objectives come in four different types.** Only specifying what needs to be strengthened can give a narrow and unbalanced view of what needs to be achieved. Besides setting improvement objectives, it is important to simultaneously determine what to treasure (*preservation objectives*), what to avoid (*mitigation objectives*) and what to reduce (*elimination objectives*). All four together give a complete picture of what to strive for.
- **Objectives should be set by following the STAR acronym.** To create a consistent and balanced set of objectives, it works best to go through the four different types in the order of the STAR acronym – start with what needs to be Strengthened, then what should be Treasured, Avoided and Reduced. Be aware that people usually find it easiest to determine what needs to be strengthened but tend to struggle when thinking the others through.

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Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

<i>July 2019</i>	<i>Mind the Gap Model</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2019</i>	<i>Digital Platform Map</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>September 2019</i>	<i>Interaction Pressure Gauge</i>	<i>Interpersonal Interaction</i>
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Revenue Model Framework</i>	<i>Revenue Model Typology</i>
<i>November 2019</i>	<i>House of Engagement</i>	<i>Organizational Engagement</i>
<i>December 2019</i>	<i>Confidence Quotient</i>	<i>Trust Building</i>
<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Competition Tornado</i>	<i>Competitive Strategy</i>
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>11C Synergy Model</i>	<i>Corporate Synergy Management</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>Leadership Fairness Model</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>April 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Agility Model</i>	<i>Strategy Process Approach</i>
<i>May 2020</i>	<i>Control Panel</i>	<i>Corporate Control Dimensions</i>
<i>June 2020</i>	<i>Rising Star Framework</i>	<i>Talent Management</i>
<i>July 2020</i>	<i>Strategy Development Cycle</i>	<i>Strategy Process Steps</i>
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>7I Corporate Center Model</i>	<i>Corporate Organization</i>
<i>September 2020</i>	<i>Storytelling Scripts</i>	<i>Leadership Communication</i>
<i>October 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Bets Framework</i>	<i>Strategic Decision-Making</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>Rebound Model of Resilience</i>	<i>Organizational Resilience</i>
<i>December 2020</i>	<i>4C Leadership Capabilities</i>	<i>Leadership Competences</i>
<i>January 2021</i>	<i>Digital Product Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Digital Distribution Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>March 2021</i>	<i>Empowerment Cycle</i>	<i>Employee Empowerment</i>
<i>April 2021</i>	<i>Innovation Box</i>	<i>Innovation Approaches</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>Knowledge Sharing Bridges</i>	<i>Best Practice Sharing</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Followership Cycle</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>July 2021</i>	<i>Everest Model of Change</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>Fruits & Nuts Matrix</i>	<i>Priority-Setting</i>
<i>September 2021</i>	<i>Powerhouse Framework</i>	<i>People & Organization Strategy</i>
<i>October 2021</i>	<i>Strategy Hourglass</i>	<i>Strategy-Making Steps</i>
<i>November 2021</i>	<i>Disciplined Dialogue Model</i>	<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>
<i>December 2021</i>	<i>Team Building Cycle</i>	<i>Team Building Process</i>
<i>January 2022</i>	<i>Market System Map</i>	<i>External Analysis Framework</i>
<i>February 2022</i>	<i>Strategic Alignment Model</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>March 2022</i>	<i>Creativity X-Factor</i>	<i>Creativity Enhancement</i>
<i>April 2022</i>	<i>Organizational System Map</i>	<i>Organizational Analysis</i>
<i>May 2022</i>	<i>Corporate Value Creation Model</i>	<i>Corporate Level Strategy</i>
<i>June 2022</i>	<i>Change Manager's Toolbox</i>	<i>Change Methodologies</i>

July 2022	Sustainable You Model	Personal Sustainability
August 2022	Value Proposition Dial	Business Level Strategy
September 2022	The Tree of Power	Organizational Power
October 2022	Psychological Safety Compass	Team Dynamics
November 2022	Strategic Action Modes	Strategy Process
December 2022	Corporate Management Styles	HQ Management
January 2023	Thinking Directions Framework	Reasoning Skills
February 2023	5I Innovation Pipeline	Innovation Process
March 2023	Resistance to Change Typology	Change Management
April 2023	Ambition Radar Screen	Motivation Analysis
May 2023	Corporate Strategy Framework	Corporate Strategy
June 2023	Cultural Fabric Model	Organizational Culture
July 2023	New Pyramid Principle	Presentation Approaches
August 2023	Activity System Dial	Value Creation Analysis
September 2023	Customer-Centricity Circle	Organizational Design
October 2023	Status Snakes & Ladders	Leadership Branding
November 2023	Stakeholder Stance Map	Stakeholder Management
December 2023	Best Practice Sharing Modes	Sharing Methods
January 2024	Duty of Care Feedback Model	Feedback Method
February 2024	BOLD Vision Framework	Organizational Vision
March 2024	MOVING Mission Framework	Organizational Mission
April 2024	Leadership Circle Map	Leadership Skills
May 2024	Digitalization Staircase	Digital Strategy
June 2024	Time Management Funnel	Personal Time Management
July 2024	Wicked Problem Scorecard	Organizational Decision-Making
August 2024	Hunting & Farming Typology	Sales Management
September 2024	Guiding STAR Matrix	Objective Setting Approach
October 2024	Performance Assignment Matrix	Corporate Strategy
November 2024	Self-Centered Thinking Framework	Thinking Styles
December 2024	Sustainability Maturity Model	Sustainability Management
January 2025	Triple Diamond Model	Organizational Decision-Making
February 2025	Interpersonal Interaction Levels	Communication Approaches
March 2025	Synergy Value Matrix	Corporate Level Strategy
April 2025	Dynamic Organization Paradigm	Human-centered Organization
May 2025	New Learning Curve	Personal Learning
June 2025	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations
July 2025	Embedded Identity Model	Personal Awareness