Reinventing Brand Management with Scenarios and Competitive Intelligence

Gabriel Anderbjörk
Stockholm, Sweden
For contact details, please see
http://gabriel.anderbjork.se

Keywords: Brand Management, Scenarios, Competitive Intelligence

***Abstract**: Branding has always been imperative to business success and the importance of brand management is only increasing. This paper attempts to illustrate a neccesary connection bewteen brand management and the tools of Competitive Intelligence and Scenario Management.*

The Brand – a board and executive management issue

The more our society is transferred into an e-social, learning- and information society the more complex becomes the task facing the corporate manager. Co-workers expect a new kind of leadership, free of old dogmas and based on trust. Present-day management must adopt a comprehensive view and include a number of different perspectives; a credible business concept, a strong culture and high-quality offers, only to mention a few. Increasingly shorter lead times between a decision and the subsequent expected action also render it more and more necessary for individuals throughout the organization to be given the right conditions to make a correct decision.

The business context – a necessary foundation

One of the greatest challenges facing a CEO in any business environment is to make the entire organization move in the same direction. Doing so will result in higher efficiency with regard to both costs and revenues. The key task of a CEO is thus to establish confidence and stability in the continuum of change associated with today's business. While information technology has admittedly made corporate administration far easier it has, at the same time, made many aspects of management increasingly difficult. An organization is constantly exposed to relevant information, irrelevant information, incorrect information, or to information which in itself is correct but which has been taken out of its context, thus becoming misleading. Without a clear context there is always a risk that employees will start questioning the business concept and, ultimately, the credibility of the management. In order to prevent such a development it is necessary for the management to establish a sound climate, in which employees and management alike feel they are allowed to vent expectations and requirements among each other. The role of a present-day manager is more and more turning into that of a decoder. Managers, in collaboration with their co-workers, constantly interpret the surrounding world and then steer the organization towards the set goals. For a large organization to succeed with this, an active and distributed Competitive Intelligence operation is not a "nice-to-have", *it is a "need-to have*"!

Another aspect of this 'context management' is that 'management through identity' has become a key issue for board and executive management. Everybody, co-workers and interested parties on the market alike, must fully understand what type of corporation they are doing business with.

The brand is the key carrier of a company's entire identity! Nevertheless, the brand is still a concept which far too often is regarded as being synonymous with the logotype of the company and hence delegated to the marketing department. Forgotten is also often the fact that the company's employees are by far the most valuable asset in the process of conveying an identity-carrying brand. The employees carry the company culture and convey its values as well as its objectives in all interactions with the surrounding world. In order to truly leverage this asset, however, a common view of the current and the future business context must be created and in order to succeed in doing so it is imperative to create an internal language in which all terminology and values mean the same thing to all co-workers, throughout the entire organization.

The surrounding world – not you – defines who you are

It might sound like a paradox, but a fact is that the biggest flaw of the information society, which we are experiencing, is its lack of information – that is, qualitative information. This is becoming more and more apparent. Most people have a more or less muddled view of what is going on outside their own immediate world which they can comprehend. We are forced to form opinions, sometimes also on complex issues and about areas of which our knowledge is limited, to say the least. We use our personal networks to quickly form opinions without having to spend more time on this process than we consider being necessary for the time being. Most of our knowledge is, in fact, precisely that – things we *think* we know. The more complex a situation is the higher, also, is the degree of guesswork. We react to signals that we only understand partly; hence we are only partly able to comprehend the ensuing consequences. In this world of often irrational filters, companies are struggling to make their market constituencies adapt to their own messages and values.

Branding to convey a confident understanding

The brand is the conveyer of the business concept, symbolizing all the collective values and customer benefits delivered by the company it represents. Far too often, though, brands are created around historic facts and views. It is also just as common that brand maintenance processes are managed in an equally retrospective fashion. As the market is continuously changing, those who follow this principle risk being overtaken by competitors and, if worst comes to worst, forgotten. Consequently, strategic brand work must rely on a deep understanding of current market sentiments, active competitive intelligence and contain a distinct element of future-related issues.

In such a world one might argue, with good reason, that all brands become communicatively driven. This is true whether the company produces simple staple goods/products with one function only or complex abstract services requiring a multitude of skills in order to fully understand and optimize their potential. The surrounding world, possessing only a very limited knowledge of each company's market presence, is a determining factor for the success of the business.

Therefore clarity is of tremendous importance in all communication. The brand must be positioned in relation to the world around it. Communication must be carried out according to the conditions that apply at that time and one must pursue a market dialogue in order to be able to convey the desired message and also to ascertain that the message is received the way in which it was intended.

Managing identity for the future

The aim of this text is to introduce the reader to an approach to brand management that use "dialogue enabling" techniques with the market, based on a continuous understanding of market sentiment development. Not only for the purpose of managing the own brand, but also to elevate the entire brand issue to the strategically important position it rightfully deserves as conveyer of the corporate culture as well as its business interest. Making sure a company's identity matches the expectations of tomorrow's market ought to be the number one agenda point at every board meeting.

Scenarios – a brief introduction

The use of scenarios is nothing new. People have always employed various methods to help them 'understand' the future, some more serious in nature than others. The reason why the scenario method in particular has become increasingly successful over the decades probably lies in the fairly structural approach, which fits in very well with today's business models. Scenarios are multifaceted, stimulating and very powerful tools that can be employed for looking into the future of a corporation or an industry. The scenario technique can be applied in many different ways, but all of these involve working with different combinations of trends and uncertainties.

Basic scenario models

Scenario techniques involve several different methods. The parameters that separate the methods are primarily:

a) whether the scenarios are characterized by continuous development
b) whether the scenarios are to be used purely for planning purposes or are intended to serve as a basis for strategy analysis

Continuity scenarios are scenarios that describe a continuous development, i.e. scenarios that do not contain any severe shocks to the social system, such as extensive warfare, major technology breakthroughs, a national nuclear power disaster, a global energy crisis or similar disasters. Scenarios whose main components are of this character are usually denoted '*discontinuity scenarios*'. Continuity scenarios, on the other hand, may be described as a grouping together, or cluster, of development processes whose progress can be assumed to follow some form of linear, logarithmic or periodical development.

With regards the intended usage of the scenarios, *Planning-scenarios* are very concrete and directly related to particular actions. With a slight amount of exaggeration they could be compared to the logical function "if => then". *Analysis scenarios*, on the other hand, are more open ended and serve as frameworks rather than directions. Both have their very strong components, but it is important to know when to apply which technique.

When we illustrate these four aspects of scenarios and compare them against each other in a matrix box, as in the figure to the right, we get four types of scenarios.

These four types of scenarios have their very own characteristics and application areas as described in the following paragraphs.

Risk management / Contingency planning

Risk management scenarios are planning scenarios of the discontinuity type. This is probably the most frequently used and also the best known of the four techniques. Shell Oil's famous scenarios of the late sixties were of this type, in that a number of scenarios were created based on assumed changes to the market. One such was an impending oil crisis – completely unthought-of during the energy boom of the sixties. Risk management scenarios are frequently employed as so called 'what if'-scenarios; i.e. '*if* X happens, then what should we do?' This application of scenario technique is a very powerful tool when applied in the right context.

One probable future
Scenarios that create *one* probable future are only used sporadically and cannot be recommended. These are planning scenarios of a continuity character. A common reason for creating a 'probable future'-scenario is that there has been an existing ambition within the company to carry out a scenario program for 'possible futures', see below, but the organization have lacked the capability to handle the results to the full. Instead the organization chooses to lock their 'future telescope' on one single target far off in the distance and proceeds to steer directly towards that goal. This could prove to be very fortunate indeed, provided the target turns out to have been the right one. However, given the time frame associated with such a scenario, the probability of that occurring is extremely low.

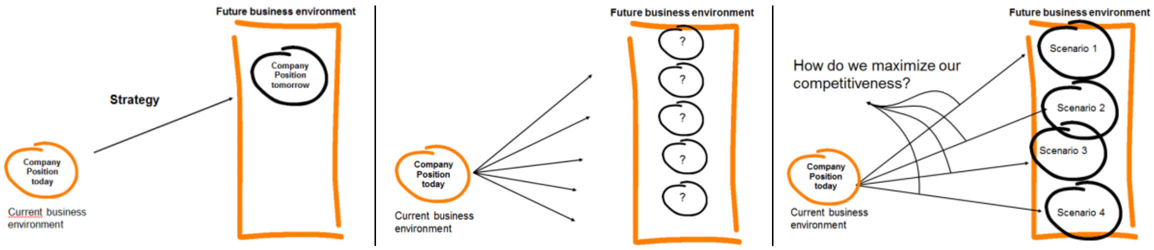
Possible futures
A scenario that illustrate possible futures is as powerful a tool for handling long term positioning as a risk scenario is for managing (and possibly also for making use of) the effect of social- and market shocks. Scenario techniques that focus on exploring possible futures are based on continuity scenarios, but do not in each separate case form the basis of any specific planning. Here it is important to realize that the one thing we do know for certain about the future is that it will probably not turn out the way we thought it would. Work on possible futures, therefore, involves creating a 'range' of possible outcomes that, as a next step, could be planned for.

Wild-cards
Wild-card scenarios mostly tend to be sidetracks that come up while exploring possible futures. They are discontinuity scenarios that have arisen, unassociated with any particularly defined threat/possibility, but that in connection with a given amount of continuity scenarios could have a bearing on the future. When a wild-card scenario appears, the way to deal with it is typically to decide to do one of two things; discard it or make it onto a full risk management scenario.

Scenarios are not forecasts!

The above headline is purposely followed by an exclamation mark. A scenario is not a forecast! A forecast is a description of a future state which is depicted by employing parameters such as 'objectives' or 'highly likely outcomes'. The different forecasts made by listed companies' regarding expected results constitute a good example of this. The market immediately punishes companies whose delivered results do not come close to the expected forecast. Companies are simply expected to have a certain amount of long-term planning with regard to their business.

Scenarios, however, are something completely different. A scenario should take on a very long-term time perspective. What exactly is meant by 'long-term' depends on the industry. A period of thirty years might be considered 'long' if you are in the real estate business, while for the IT industry the term 'long' would rather be applied to a period of approximately five years. A good rule of thumb is that a scenario should be placed so far ahead into the future that no one, with good reason, can be certain that the outcome will prove different, nor be able to state probabilities for the suggested outcomes.



One way of illustrating this is to make a comparison with a traditional intra-corporation strategy process (see image above). Normally you start at the present point in time and then describe a hypothetical future state 3-5 years from now, after which the ‘strategy’ equals the road you have to travel to get there. Unfortunately the true picture tends to be more complex than that. You might be well informed about the present situation but when you look ahead into the future you are, in reality, looking into *multiple* possible futures for all of which, consequently, strategies ought to be developed. The solution is to describe a manageable amount of ‘futures’ and then develop a strategy in order to be able to face the market in the most competitive way, while traveling towards several of these parallel hypothetical futures simultaneously. This process will be further detailed below.

Creating scenarios

The scenario-creating process is usually an appreciated part of the organization’s work. To succeed with such a task, many people must take part. Several corporations do indeed emphasize the importance of the process in itself (on the way towards the creation of the scenarios). During the course of the work a dialogue is created, along with a sense of understanding, not only regarding the ‘unclear future’ of the organization but also of the very concrete and tough reality that exists today.

One company manager stated, at a meeting held one year after the implementation of a scenario project, that the previous business year had generated record-breaking figures as to the number of offers that later developed into contracts. The reason for this development, he claimed, was that the organization never before had taken such a coordinated view on what deals to bid on and why, in combination with increased clarity and value proposal for the customers towards whom the offer was sent. Through the scenario process the organization had become significantly more confident!

Dimension of scenarios

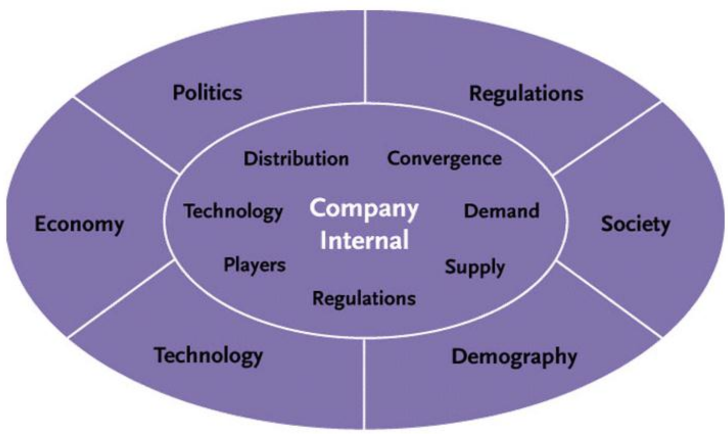
When discussing scenario techniques among practitioners, a very common matter for dispute is how many scenarios there should be. The answer is that it depends entirely on the type of scenario, the model for creation and the intended usage of the scenario. Risk management scenarios may be as many as the company considers worthwhile to maintain, as they usually cover very separate issues. Possible futures scenarios, on the other hand, should typically be limited in number, due to the complex process of keeping them up to date. Models also directly impact the output. ”Cross scenarios”, based on two given development parameters, tend to produce four distinct scenarios. “Cluster scenarios”, on the other hand, can cater for a large number of parameters and be displayed in different ways. A very “user friendly” way of displaying the results of cluster scenarios is in the form of a “scenario room”, thus limiting the number of scenarios to three, due to the three dimensions of a room.

Going forward in this text, Cluster Scenarios, eventually represented in scenario rooms, will be the model of choice to exemplify the scenario creation technique and the direct link to intelligence operations and brand management.

Scenario requirements
To begin with, a scenario must meet four basic requirements:

- **Coherent** description – A scenario must not contain contradicting factors that make the situation impossible. An example: A scenario cannot contain e.g. a technology that both increases and decreases in usage at the same time.
- A scenario must be **plausible** – It is useless to create a scenario which can be immediately seen to contain direct impossibilities. A proposed scenario should, however, 'expand' the frameworks regarding what might be possible.
- A scenario must be **logical** – By this is meant that it always has to be perfectly possible to explain the route (in the form of actions/steps and relationships) which has led up to the creation of the world which is described in the scenario in question.
- A scenario must contain **relevant parameters** – It is useless to create a scenario within a company employing parameters that in themselves have no bearing on the operations.

The relevant parameters referred to are very often extracted from company vs. business environment maps, such as the one to the right. Still, it cannot be emphasized enough, the scenario parameters chosen *must* have a direct bearing on the operations of the company for which the scenarios are being developed.



Trends and uncertainties
A cluster scenario is best described as a combination *of trends or uncertainties*:

Trends –development of events that follow a predicted course, the change parameters being reasonably constant from period to period. The change might be linear, exponential, periodic, etc. A famous example from the IT industry refers to 'Moore's law', which stipulates that processors double their capacity every 18 months, with the price remaining constant.

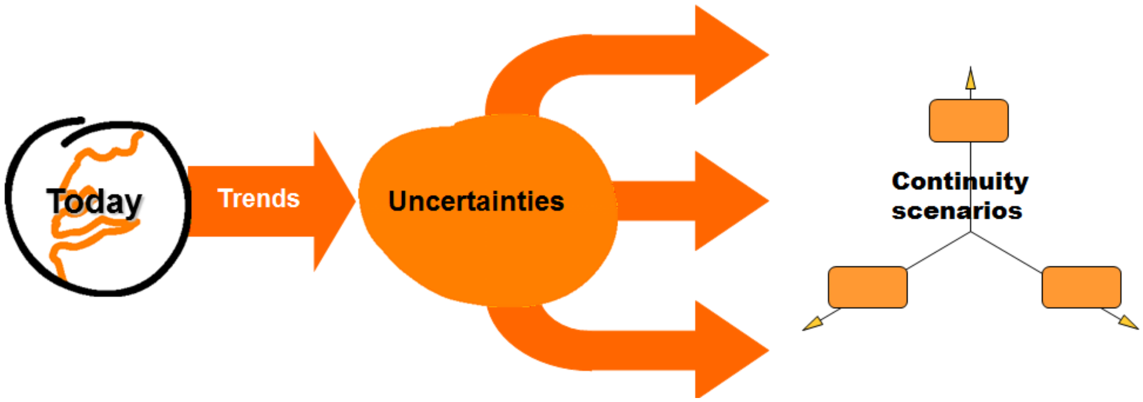
Uncertainties – development of events whose outcome will influence the company strategy or behavior, but for which it is not possible to state, with an accurate degree of certainty, how fast or in which direction they will move.

Trends, as well as uncertainties, are normally defined by four components:

- A **name** that is easily recognizable – people should instantly be able to associate it with the issue
- **Key words** – in addition to the name itself a set of synonyms or sub-concepts relevant to the company in concern are listed, which facilitate internal understanding and adoption of the issue.

- **Description** – a free text description briefly outlining the factor and its relationship to society and to the organization.
- **Monitoring parameters** – figures or distinct events that can prove the evolvement of this trend or uncertainty.

In summary: A scenario, thus, is a given cluster of trends and proposed outcomes of the defined uncertainties. All scenarios are based on the same trends, but these are combined with different outcomes for the specified uncertainties. Hence all trends and uncertainties occur in all scenarios.



Scenario development – a four step process
The work process of developing cluster scenarios involves a set of well-defined steps and outputs.

a) *Interviews* with scenario stakeholders at different levels within the company.

During these interviews the project team should seek to identify the interviewee's personal views on relevant trends and uncertainties regarding the company's long term perspective. The number of interviews can vary but the principle is that all interviewees should be invited to participate in the subsequent workshop. Interviews are to be conducted with key persons, management and representatives at the company's market units. The output from the interviews is solely for project internal work and should be summarized as hypotheses for trends and uncertainties as well as the parameters determining the upcoming scenarios.

b) The *scenario workshop*

Very soon after the interview process has been completed, a workshop should take place. The agenda of the workshop follows a general outline:

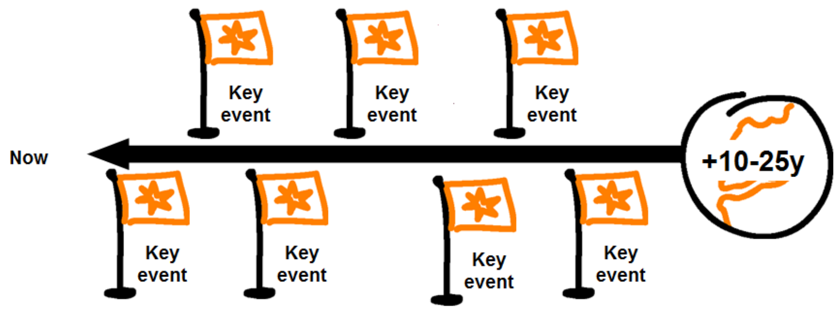
- Defining and agreeing on trends
- Defining and agreeing on uncertainties
- Defining and agreeing on three possible outcomes of each uncertainty
- Clustering of trends and uncertainties into three scenarios
- Initiating "descriptions" of the three scenario worlds.

A key to making the scenarios well known and workable throughout a larger part of the organization is to make the scenario descriptions as straight-forward as possible. The descriptions should focus on "moving" the reader to the future society of the scenario in consideration.

After the workshop the project team develops documentation around each scenario that captures the relevant output from the interviews and the workshop.

c) The *back-casting workshop*

Some weeks after the scenario workshop, the workshop participants are to gather once again to undertake an exercise, usually considered as very entertaining, yet very important for the future usability of the scenarios. Prior to the workshop, the participants are split into three groups, one per scenario, and provided with the documentation from the previous steps.



During the workshop it is the participants' task to mentally place themselves in the future world in consideration and look back, reflecting, with the recurring question: 'what happened?' The task is to develop a "history description" about what actually happened in society in order for the development to turn out according to the scenario.

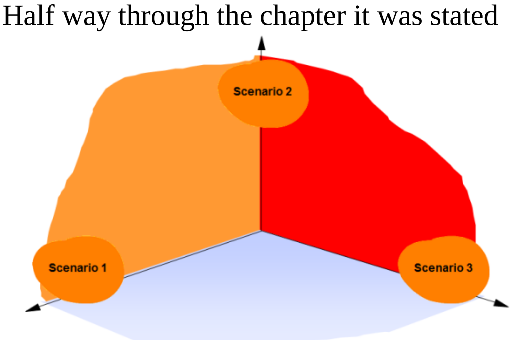
This is a way to create a detailed foundation for the upcoming and continuous analysis of the scenarios, while simultaneously conducting a test case of the logical strength of the scenario. The result is something often referred to as "trigger events" and constitutes an important part of the future scenario tracking work needed for marketing and positioning support.

d) Making the scenarios *communicable*

The final step in the creation of the scenarios is to describe all scenarios, in terms of the different parameters that have been selected, but also in the form of a free text description. The free text could be built up around one given individual going through a normal day in the future society of each of these scenarios. It is not uncommon for these free text descriptions to be disseminated on a broad scale within the organization, as they are supposed to be both easily accessible as well as possible to associate with the organization and its objectives without further explanation.

Scenarios – a summary and a stepping stone to the branding discussion

This very brief chapter on scenario techniques has covered some *scenario models*, *scenario requirements*, a few paragraphs on *trends and uncertainties*, and finally, provided a condensed picture of *scenario development and communication*. Half way through the chapter it was stated that cluster scenarios and scenario rooms (three "orthogonal" scenarios) were to be used for the further discussion. At this stage in the paper it is hence wise for the reader to envisage a point in the development of the branding discussion at which a scenario room has been created, trends and uncertainties have been defined and the tracking parameters specified for the assumed company's business environment. In other words, a scenario room has been created!



Branding - Creating tomorrow's business today

The fact that you have to "pave the way" for a deal is well-known to anyone who has ever worked in sales. Yet people rarely reflect on the fact that there is absolutely no difference between such a process, at the sales level, and the way in which tomorrow's deals have to be '"paved way for"', at corporate level. Positioning is all about securing a profitable interaction between a company's brand and the business environment within which it is active, today and tomorrow. In order to ensure that this happens, the present status, the company's targets, as well as its surrounding business environment, must be continually analyzed and put in perspective of the company's own vision and strategy. In this perspective branding, scenarios and intelligence operations are inseparable.

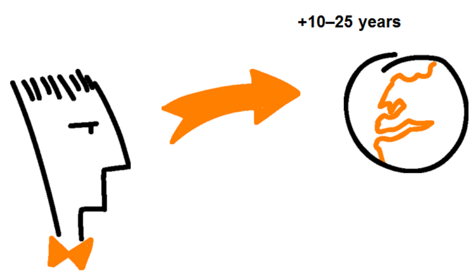
Positioning- making scenarios come to life

Positioning as a concept is used in a number of different ways and with varying meanings. In this text, positioning is referred to as a company's overall standpoint as to how it wishes the market (customers and other interested parties) to perceive the value proposals it offers.

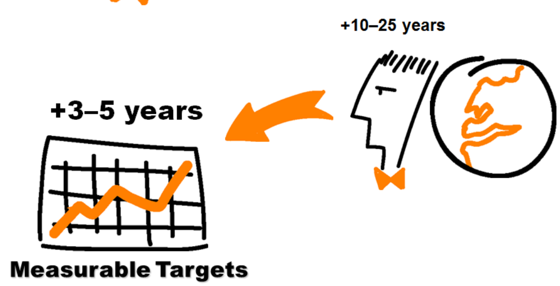
Following the creation of scenarios are two immediate successors;

- Defining a "target position" and
- Crafting the "brand matrix"

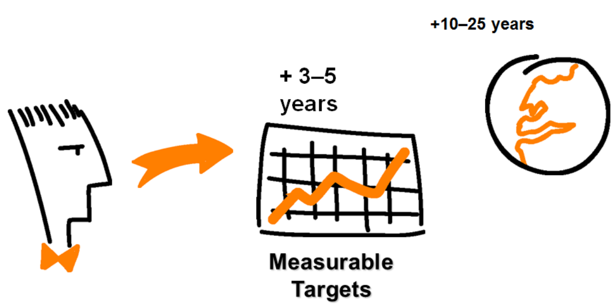
The previous chapte described how to create an awareness of future business environments.



The next step is to use these insights in order to create a solid target position, in which the company is prepared to take on the different possible futures described in the scenarios



Finally, the communication platform, the brand matrix, is developed, to enable the organization to communicate its target position in the most receptive way possible, given the insights provided through the scenarios.



These components are described in the following sections. In the light of the scenario techniques outlined in the previous chapter, the material presented in this chapter might be viewed as a first move towards “re-winding” from the worlds of the future scenarios to a strategically manageable time perspective.

The target position- the core of scenario based branding

The core point of the theory behind scenario-based brand work is that the brand should be developed in relation to its imagined *future* position, not its current position. The underlying logic here is that it will take a certain number of years for a company to establish a desirable level of market awareness regarding its presence. If, then, a company benchmarks itself against the current market, both with regard to its own position as well as to market sentiments in general, then this company will not be considered particularly unique or innovative in comparison with its competitors.

A company must possess the ability to communicate *its* view of the future so that the market is able to regard it in precisely that context - which, naturally, is what the company desires; as it is in this particular context it intends to be the leading player!

The images of the future generated by the scenario work thus form a path towards a target position, around which a communications strategy should be built. This target position, were it to be viewed as a point on a time line, should be placed about one third of the way towards the different futures depicted in the scenario work. If, for instance, the scenario perspective has a time span of 15 years the target position should be positioned about five years from the starting date. The target position should give a clear description of the role which the company intends to take on in order to be as flexible as possible with regard to adapting to the different scenarios (once it is possible to determine in which direction these are heading), and at the same time project a very distinct self-image onto the market. The description model advocated here is based on a combination of target areas and target levels.

Target areas:

- Business – what are we aiming at?
- People – who are we?
- Structure – How do we ensure profitability?

Target levels:

- Vision
- Targets
- Indicators

For each *target area* the company agrees on a number of concepts and parameters which describe each *target level*. This compilation constitutes the most important underlying part of the work towards reaching the final target – the Brand matrix – to be addressed in the following section. A company’s target position should, further, form the basis for all forms of communication directed at the market and must therefore be well-known and firmly established throughout the entire company.

Adapting one’s way of communicating with the market

Once a well-founded target position has been established, developed and communicated throughout the company, only the final challenge remains – getting the market to understand who you are, in what direction you are heading and why, precisely, it is your company above others that the market should consider their favorite supplier, now, and, even more importantly, in the future.

Communicating with one's market is not a one-dimensional task which can be carried out by investing a huge sum of money on advertising campaigns, hoping that these will be spot-on. The market consists of a large number of individuals with whom an ongoing dialogue must be carried out. This is getting more and more obvious in the social media context. As the sheer number of individuals on a market renders an individual dialogue impossible, these people have to be grouped in some way in order for the communication to be as accurate as possible. One effective way of looking at one's counterparts is to view them as interest groups, each group with its own common denominators. Moreover, this communication can not be built around one direction only, but needs to be addressed from several different perspectives. Consequently, in the two following sections *communication factors* and *interested parties* will be treated separately. In the final section these two concepts will then be linked together to form the *brand matrix*.

Communication factors

Different concepts and values that reflect the quality and content of the brand are used internally within a company, as well as externally. It is extremely important that these carry the same meaning throughout the company, at the first stage, so that they may later be communicated externally with the desired effect. Also, when it comes to the selling of concepts, one fundamental requirement is that the counterpart understands and feels comfortable with the terms and phrases used by the company. To ensure that this is actually the case, a 'glossary' of value phrases should be compiled, grouped according to the three following communication factors:

- Market perception of offer
- Treatment of market constituencies
- Market perception of product

A company typically has a multitude of value phrases, several of which with one or more synonyms. Each phrase must be clearly and unambiguously defined, so that there is never any doubt as to its intended usage, possible connotations, etc.

Interested parties

One must never forget that an agreement is reached between two or more *individuals,* not two distant legal departments, even though the former may represent the latter. The question which needs to be asked, therefore, is what specific motives individual employees within the customer organization might have for *recommending* a purchase of your company's products and services. In principle, and as a crudely formulated example, the following might be assumed:

- Personnel managers, when purchasing, focus on work environment
- Financial managers, when purchasing, focus on financial efficiency or flexibility
- Project managers, when purchasing, focus on immediate capacity or flexibility.

Again, the above examples are very simplified, but the message they convey is nevertheless highly important. It is not enough to simply target one's message on e.g. a certain trade or a particular type of companies.

A large number of individuals, enterprises, regulators etc. – interested parties – are affected, in different ways and to a varying degree, by a company's existence and by it running the kind of business it does. Situations arise daily where the fact that a clearly defined view of what the relation to each party is like exists, along with a common attitude, well-established throughout the company, greatly facilitates the work process, and the prospects for success. In a multitude of contexts, social as well as media-related as well as in other, more hands-on negotiation situations, one will benefit from being aware of which interested parties that currently need special focus and for which parties less intense contacts is currently sufficient to keep up the good relations.

How and when a company chooses to communicate with these parties is, of course, entirely dependent on the situation. Therefore, one task which is highly important to perform already at the stage where the brand itself is being created is to identify the interest groups that the company intends to relate to and decide how these relations should be viewed. Who are the primary competitors and what are the threatening factors, for instance? Who are the potential business counterparts (e.g. customers or partners)? This list must not be allowed to grow too long; some 10 or so groups of interested parties is an optimal number, in order to be able to manage future planning and communication in a way which everybody can manage.

Some principal parties which always have to be taken into consideration are:

- Personnel
- Owners/financiers
- Customers
- Partners, if any
- Authorities
- Creators of public opinion

Just like the value phrases in the previous section on communication factors, interested parties, too, must be very clearly defined, so that everybody within an organization knows the company's standpoint with respect to different groups and, further, what type of communication is desirable. Hence, interested parties should be clearly described in terms of:

- Name (for recognition purposes)
- Detailed description – type of business and its relation to your company
- A clear description of the company's standpoint towards each party

As for operative communication, purchasing patterns and behaviors, too, must be taken into consideration. The parameters used in the scenario work leading up to this branding phase should take this into account, in order to cater for tracking of changes in such behavior over the scenario time. This is all in order to continuously stay ahead of competition in the market communication.

Once the concepts have been created and the definition of interested parties completed, the one task that remains is to start constructing the actual matrix.

The Brand Matrix

The matrix is based on *the communication factors* and *the interested parties* detailed above. These should be considered to be permanent factors. The communicative phrases (value phrases) which are placed in the matrix elements might, however, change over time, depending on the development of the market/the surrounding world as well as on the focus of the interested parties. For structural reasons it is recommended that the factors are stated on the matrix X-axis, while interested parties are listed along its y-axis.

The challenge of the coming work process lies in the 'positioning' of the different value phrases on each matrix element. One phrase might occur in many places at the same time. It is extremely important to look back constantly and check *each single phrase* and its position – has it been correctly placed, given the fundamental ideas of the scenarios as well as the operative target position which has been developed. If not, a new analysis of the meaning of the phrase, as well as its position, must be made. The purpose of the matrix is to serve as a dynamic, operative communication carrier of the company's operative strategy. It is to be employed in all decision-making which regards communication and market dialogue. Employees must be familiar with the matrix and understand its purpose and how to use it. The value base, therefore, must remain consistent and unchanged throughout the entire model.

Further, it is precisely the usage and matrix positioning of the value phrases that might change over time, as a result of changes to market sentiments. Factors and interested parties are constant as long as the company's business concept remains unchanged, but the wording of the message has to vary depending on how the market 'listens'. Just because the 'customers' interest group responded positively to a particular way of describing the offer 12 months ago, this does not automatically mean that this group will be as positive to the same approach today. A comparison might be a radio broadcaster wanting, naturally, as many listeners as possible to listen to a particular transmission. Then it would be wise for the broadcaster to find out beforehand what frequency these listeners tend to have their radios tuned into. When seen from that perspective, *competitive intelligence analysis might here be compared to the act of informing oneself about the desired frequency of one's listeners, and the brand matrix compared to the tuning of the transmitter, so that this broadcasts on the same frequency as that which the market listens to.*

The more aware a company is of what groups it presently has a relationship with, and on what grounds, the better the accuracy and the higher the precision with which the company directs these interested parties towards the pre-set targets – i.e. company profitability.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was indeed not to convey a full range text on scenarios and branding. For such a venture, one or two full scope text books would have been necessary. On the contrary, the aim was to illustrate the hitherto not so much used, but immensely valuable, interaction between scenario techniques, competitive intelligence and brand management. The concept of the "brand matrix" was first put forward by the author of this paper, together with Torbjörn Johansson, in 2002 and has since been deployed in several brand strategies.

The key take-aways from this paper are:

a) A scenario room (3 orthogonal continuity scenarios) forms the basis for the company's future environment.
b) Based on the scenario room, a target position is defined and described in terms of target areas and target levels. The target position should be defined so as to cater for all possibilities in the scenario room and thereby convey a very strong competitive message to the market.
c) With the target position in sight, a brand matrix is crafted in order to ensure that the entire company communicates the same future proof and insightful message to all relevant market constituencies independent of communication channel.

Brand management executives and Competitive Intelligence staff will hence have an ever ongoing dialogue in the continuous fine tuning of the long term market understanding and the market communication based on such understanding.