

Looking Ahead: Scenario Mapping for 2021

by Sarah Kinard

Elevate Marketing Advisors recently invited Craig Janssen, a firm owner at Idibri (a multidisciplinary team of technology designers, acousticians, and theater planners) presented scenario planning to the Elevate Marketing Advisors cohort group. Craig is known for his progressive approach to leadership both within his firm and the industry. He uses a framework approach and design thinking to develop and iterate agile plans and strategies – all important when managing A/E/C firms during a pandemic!

Craig framed the discussion around the topic, “Is your strategic plan dead?” noting that most firms didn’t build a strategy that accounted for running and building business during a pandemic. When polled, audience members responded that current uncertainties in their businesses include:

- Economy
- Election
- Environments
- How we work
- How we get work

Certainly, uncertainty is a constant in the best of times. But, COVID-19 has added such a significant layer of unknowns that many firms are abandoning their plans and say they are “winging” it. Or, they’re simply operating under current plans and shifting as they go.

Craig suggests we think differently about our strategic path forward and focus on potential success believing “scarcity creates focus.”

Program attendees said success in 2021 includes:

- Diversity
- Winning profitable work
- Leading well
- Keeping staff
- Staying employed

ABOUT SARAH KINARD



Sarah is a strategic visionary with nearly 20 years of experience in developing strategy, marketing, and implementation for professional services firms. With comprehensive understanding of differing markets around the world she creates tailored strategies rooted in research, business practice, and scale. Contact Sarah: skinard@elevatemarketingadvisors.com

ABOUT ELEVATE MARKETING ADVISORS

Elevate Marketing Advisors develops marketing and business development campaigns to invigorate your brand, differentiate your firm, and drive business to your bottom line so you stay focused on design and delivery of your discipline.

We are driven to help people and firms realize their beyond through relationship, advocacy, and an elevated client experience. We do this through a daily commitment to our guiding principles:

- Embrace Authenticity
- Reject Mediocrity
- Invest in Relationships
- Deliver with Intention
- Have Fun and Kick Ass!

Looking Ahead: Scenario Mapping for 2021, continued

Responses from both polls highlight the challenge firms are facing. And there is a significant gap between how firms define success and our current-day scenario. But, by using scenario mapping to build the muscle of adaptability we've created an essential part of a strategic plan moving forward. And, while there are a variety of strategic planning models, Craig finds that most firms in A/E/C rely on gap analysis or SWOT analysis. He shares that gap analysis works well for firms with a strong mission... "see the hill – take the hill." In the absence of a mission or with a shifting mission, a SWOT analysis can identify where the opportunities are, allowing a firm to focus resources.

“The future is bright and we are building new muscle.”

— Craig Janssen

The challenge is that both gap analysis and SWOT-based strategic planning are designed for substantially stable environments. What's a firm to do when there are as many unknowns as knowns? This is where scenario mapping comes in. Here are simple definitions of these three components:

- **Gap Analysis.** What's my reality, where are we, what does success look like, and how do we get there?. (mission-centric)
- **SWOT Analysis.** (opportunity-centric)
- **Scenario Mapping.** Aligns firm resources with decisions/Find your options, so that if x, then y.

Craig uses Tim Brown's **Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation** to scenario map opportunity. I have used this framework to discuss growth strategies with firms (which helps inform strategy), but I have not used it for overall firm strategy. I absolutely love how Craig defines scenario mapping because he gives great importance to resources, a frequently overlooked asset and path to success.

“Failure comes where you are not ready to pounce on an opportunity.”

— Craig Janssen

Scenario Mapping = Resources + Opportunity + Future Unknowns

Using this formula, you are able to derive key information that informs your path forward:

- What fits within the resources I have? Kill the ideas you don't have the resources for.
- Create a hierarchy of opportunity using the framework.
- Think about how you will tackle your question marks.

Craig's planning framework provides an understanding of what decisions mean and builds consensus with stakeholders. It allows leaders and firm members to know what to expect if x happens, then y. And remember, it also provides a framework for the GOOD things that happen for a firm's plan. If we win THAT project, or get THAT hire, how will it change our opportunity?

For a deeper dive into scenario planning, watch our [webinar](#) with Craig and get direct inspiration by emailing him at: cjanssen@idibri.com

Craig Janssen is an expert in design for spaces where thousands come together to share an experience. An international facility strategist serving architects, venue owners, and developers, Craig leads Idibri—a multidisciplinary team of technology designers, acousticians, and theater planners. Check out Craig's TEDx talk, [Will Future Generations Want What We Build?](#)