**Strategic Questioning Role-Play Exercise**

**Developing Executive-Level Analytical Leadership**

**Exercise Setup**

**Scenario:**

The facilitator will present analytical findings about Grace Kennedy's market position. Participants practice asking Level 3 and Level 4 strategic questions to demonstrate executive analytical leadership.

**Your Role as Executives:**

* You are receiving a briefing from your strategic analysis team
* Your job is to ask questions that elevate the analysis from descriptive to strategic
* Focus on implications, decisions, and actions rather than methodology

**Question Framework Reminder:**

**Level 1 - Comprehension (Avoid These):**

* "What does this metric measure?"
* "How current is this data?"
* "What's driving this trend?"

**Level 2 - Validity (Use Sparingly):**

* "How confident are we in this data quality?"
* "What assumptions underlie this analysis?"

**Level 3 - Strategic (Your Primary Focus):**

* "What decisions does this analysis support?"
* "How does this connect to our strategic objectives?"
* "What are we not seeing in this view?"

**Level 4 - Action (Your Ultimate Goal):**

* "What are the implications if this trend continues?"
* "What scenarios should we model?"
* "What would change our interpretation of these results?"

**Analytical Briefing: Grace Kennedy Market Expansion Analysis**

**Facilitator Presentation (5 minutes)**

**Slide 1: Caribbean Market Analysis** "Our analysis shows Grace Kennedy holds 28% market share in Jamaica, 12% in Trinidad, and 6% in Barbados. The Jamaican market is growing at 4% annually, Trinidad at 8%, and Barbados at 6%. Our primary competitor, Caribbean Foods Ltd, holds 15% in Jamaica, 22% in Trinidad, and 35% in Barbados."

**Slide 2: Financial Performance by Market** "Revenue per customer in Jamaica averages $340 annually, Trinidad $280, and Barbados $420. Our operating margins are 18% in Jamaica, 12% in Trinidad, and 8% in Barbados. Marketing investment as percentage of revenue is 4% in Jamaica, 7% in Trinidad, and 12% in Barbados."

**Slide 3: Growth Opportunities** "Market research indicates untapped demand in all three markets. Brand awareness is 85% in Jamaica, 60% in Trinidad, and 40% in Barbados. Customer acquisition costs average $45 in Jamaica, $78 in Trinidad, and $92 in Barbados."

**Slide 4: Investment Requirements** "To achieve 20% market share in Trinidad would require $12M investment over 18 months. Barbados would require $8M over 24 months. Break-even timeline is estimated at 14 months for Trinidad, 22 months for Barbados."

**Poor Questions vs. Excellent Questions**

**Examples of Poor Executive Questions:**

❌ **Level 1 - Comprehension Focus:**

* "How exactly did you calculate market share?"
* "What research methodology did you use?"
* "Can you explain the difference between revenue per customer in these markets?"

❌ **Level 2 - Validity Focus:**

* "How reliable is this market research data?"
* "What's the confidence interval on these projections?"
* "Did you account for seasonal variations?"

**Examples of Excellent Executive Questions:**

✅ **Level 3 - Strategic Focus:**

* "Given our stronger position in Jamaica, should we be defending market share there or investing in expansion markets?"
* "What strategic capabilities would we need to build to succeed in higher-cost markets like Barbados?"
* "How does market expansion align with our 2026 revenue and profitability targets?"

✅ **Level 4 - Action Focus:**

* "If we can only fund one expansion, which market offers the better risk-adjusted return?"
* "What early indicators would tell us if our expansion strategy is succeeding or failing?"
* "What competitive responses should we anticipate, and how would they change these projections?"

**Role-Play Exercise Structure**

**Round 1: Individual Practice (8 minutes)**

* Facilitator re-presents the briefing (2 minutes)
* Each participant asks one Level 3 and one Level 4 question (6 minutes)
* Group identifies the strongest strategic questions

**Round 2: Advanced Strategic Dialogue (7 minutes)**

* Facilitator provides additional analysis based on participants' questions
* Participants practice follow-up questioning that drives toward decisions
* Focus on building strategic dialogue, not just asking isolated questions

**Advanced Strategic Questions (For Strong Participants)**

**Strategic Portfolio Questions:**

* "How would success in these markets change our overall risk profile?"
* "What other strategic initiatives would we need to delay to fund this expansion?"
* "Which expansion creates the most optionality for future growth?"

**Competitive Strategy Questions:**

* "What prevents Caribbean Foods from replicating our Jamaica success in other markets?"
* "Should we expect price competition if we gain significant market share?"
* "What would make us competitively vulnerable in our expansion markets?"

**Execution and Risk Questions:**

* "What organizational capabilities do we lack for successful expansion?"
* "How would we know within six months if expansion is off-track?"
* "What's our exit strategy if market conditions deteriorate?"

**Synergy and Integration Questions:**

* "How would expansion markets leverage our existing Food Division infrastructure?"
* "What cross-divisional opportunities could accelerate expansion success?"
* "How do we maintain service quality during rapid geographic expansion?"

**Facilitator Response Examples**

**When Participants Ask Level 1/2 Questions:**

**Response:** "That's a good analytical question. As executives, let's focus on what this analysis means for strategic decisions. Given these market dynamics, what strategic question does this raise for Grace Kennedy?"

**When Participants Ask Strong Level 3 Questions:**

**Response:** "Excellent strategic thinking. Let me provide additional context to help answer that..." [Provide relevant additional information]

**When Participants Ask Strong Level 4 Questions:**

**Response:** "That's exactly the type of question that separates strategic leaders from analytical consumers. Here's what our modeling suggests..." [Provide decision-oriented analysis]

**Debrief Discussion Points**

**What Made Questions Strategic:**

* Connected analysis to business decisions
* Considered competitive and market dynamics
* Addressed resource allocation and prioritization
* Focused on risk management and scenario planning

**Executive Question Quality Indicators:**

* **Forward-Looking:** Focused on implications and scenarios
* **Decision-Oriented:** Directly supported strategic choices
* **Risk-Aware:** Considered downside scenarios and mitigation
* **Resource-Conscious:** Understood investment and opportunity costs

**How This Changes Team Dynamics:**

* **Elevates Team Thinking:** Strategic questions train teams to think strategically
* **Improves Analysis Quality:** Teams anticipate executive-level questions
* **Accelerates Decision-Making:** Focus on actionable insights rather than analytical perfection
* **Builds Strategic Capability:** Develops organizational strategic thinking capacity

**Application to Real Executive Reviews:**

* **Start with Strategic Questions:** Set the tone for strategic discussion
* **Build Question Sequences:** Each question should build toward decision-making
* **Model Strategic Thinking:** Your questions teach your team how to think strategically
* **Drive to Action:** End question sequences with clear next steps

**Key Takeaway:** Your questions shape your team's analytical thinking. Strategic questions produce strategic analysis. Operational questions produce operational reports.