UNIT 2A · BUSINESS C1

Where we play, how we win

Class Book and Workbook · one complete unit

OBJECTIVES

What you'll be able to do

4 min

- Distinguish a strategy from a plan and defend the distinction in a meeting.
- Deploy advanced discourse markers (that said, granted, on balance, by contrast) to hedge and pivot.
- Apply the Playing to Win framework to a real business decision.
- Name a specific 'where not to play' without flinching.

LEAD-IN

Strategy or plan?

8 min

FRAME · A STRATEGY OFF-SITE, HOUR SIX

Look at the whiteboard. Two of the quadrants are almost full; two are almost empty. On your own, consider:

- What is the person writing? Is it a strategy, or a plan? Defend your answer with one specific cue.
- Which quadrant is being avoided, and why do teams typically avoid it?
- If you had to add one sentence to the empty quadrant right now, what would it be?
- Rewrite the board's headline in one sentence that would fail the Roger Martin test (i.e. that any sensible competitor would also say).

The teacher will collect two columns: choices vs lists. Notice which quadrant of the board each contribution belongs to.

READING

Strategy is a choice — and choices hurt

15 min

Ask a hundred executives what strategy is and you will get a hundred variations on the same evasion: "our plan for the next three years." A plan is not a strategy. A plan is a list of things you would like to have happen. A strategy is a choice — and the crucial, uncomfortable feature of a choice is that it forecloses the alternatives.

Roger Martin, whose Playing to Win framework has quietly reshaped a generation of executive education, insists that the test of a real strategy is deceptively simple: could a reasonable, well-informed competitor have decided the opposite? If the answer is no — if every sensible player in your market would have made the same call — then what you have is not a strategy but a table stake. You have described the entry requirement for the game, not your reason for winning it.

The consequence is that good strategies read as slightly awkward, sometimes even defensive, from the outside. They contain sentences like "we will not serve this customer" or "we will lose the middle of the market on purpose." They are politically expensive to defend, because they name losers as well as winners inside the organisation. That is precisely why they work. A strategy nobody in the building disagreed with is, almost by definition, a strategy that has committed to nothing.

Which is why the most instructive strategy conversations begin not with the winning move, but with the sacrifice. What are we choosing to be bad at? Which customer are we deliberately ceding? What capability are we prepared to underinvest in, so that the two or three that actually matter can be

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

world-class? The answers are almost always uncomfortable, and — inconveniently for the annual planning cycle — they cannot be delegated to a slide.

Choose the best answer.

- The writer's core distinction is between:
  (a) short-term and long-term plans
  (b) a plan (a wish list) and a strategy (a choice that forecloses alternatives)
  (c) good and bad execution
  (d) top-down and bottom-up planning
  Answer key: (b) a plan (a wish list) and a strategy (a choice that forecloses alternatives)
- Roger Martin's test of a real strategy is:
  (a) it produces the highest expected return
  (b) a reasonable competitor could plausibly have chosen the opposite
  (c) the CEO endorses it
  (d) the board understands it in one page
  Answer key: (b) a reasonable competitor could plausibly have chosen the opposite
- Good strategies, the writer argues, tend to read as:
  (a) confident and universally agreeable
  (b) slightly awkward and politically expensive to defend
  (c) highly detailed and technical
  (d) quantitatively conservative
  Answer key: (b) slightly awkward and politically expensive to defend
- The most instructive strategy conversations begin with:
  (a) market sizing
  (b) the winning move
  (c) the sacrifice — what we are choosing not to do
  (d) the competitive scan
  Answer key: (c) the sacrifice — what we are choosing not to do
- The writer's final complaint about annual planning is that:
  (a) it is too fast
  (b) it produces too many slides
  (c) the real trade-offs cannot be delegated to a slide
  (d) it excludes the CEO
  Answer key: (c) the real trade-offs cannot be delegated to a slide

Teacher notes

Follow-up: Identify one sentence in the text you would use verbatim in your next planning meeting. Write down the exact context in which you would deliver it.

AUTHENTIC READING · REAL TEXT

Playing to Win — the five choices that make a strategy

Source: Adapted from Roger L. Martin and A.G. Lafley, 'Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works' (Harvard Business Review Press) · Excerpted for classroom use under fair-dealing for educational commentary.

C1+

≈ 360 words

The Playing to Win framework, developed with A.G. Lafley at Procter & Gamble, reduces strategy to five interlocking choices. Read this adapted summary and answer the questions.

The Playing to Win framework is, on the face of it, deceptively simple. Strategy, Lafley and Martin argue, is nothing more — and nothing less — than the answer to five questions, answered in order, each constraining the next.

The first question is the winning aspiration: what does winning, for this organisation, actually mean? Not the mission statement — the mission statement will not fit on a scoreboard. Winning is measurable, and it is defined in relation to a specific set of competitors, customers and time horizons.

The second is where to play: which customers, which geographies, which channels, which product categories. This is where strategy first begins to hurt, because 'where to play' implicitly names 'where we have chosen not to play'. The authors are unsparing here: an organisation that has not named the segments it is walking away from is not yet playing to win.

The third is how to win in the chosen space: the value proposition and the model of competitive advantage. Cost leadership? Differentiation? Some hybrid, defended by capability rather than pricing? The 'how' must be tight enough that a competitor could read it and disagree.

The fourth is the set of capabilities that must be in place — not the ones that would be nice, but the two or three that must be genuinely world-class for the 'how to win' to hold. Most strategies fail here, they observe: the capability list is treated as a wish list rather than a set of investments protected against everything else.

The fifth, and most quietly powerful, is the management system: the reviews, the metrics, the cadence and the incentive structures that keep the other four choices honest. Without the fifth choice, the first four decay into slogans within eighteen months.

The genius of the framework is not any single choice but the insistence that they must lock together. A brilliant 'where to play' undone by a mismatched capability is worse than no strategy at all — it is a strategy the organisation cannot execute, wrapped in the confidence that it can.

1. READ FOR GIST

- 1. What are the five choices, in order?
  Answer key: Winning aspiration where to play how to win capabilities management system.
- 2. What is the authors' most-repeated warning?
  Answer key: That the choices must lock together — a mismatch is worse than no strategy.

2. READ FOR DETAIL

- 1. Why is 'where to play' described as the choice that first begins to hurt?
  Answer key: Because it implicitly names the segments the organisation is walking away from.
- 2. How do the authors say most strategies fail at the capabilities stage?
  Answer key: The capability list is treated as a wish list rather than protected investments.
- 3. What is the role of the fifth choice — the management system?
  Answer key: It keeps the other four honest through reviews, metrics, cadence and incentives; without it, the strategy decays into slogans.
- 4. What is 'the confidence that it can'?
  Answer key: The false belief that an organisation can execute a strategy whose capabilities do not match its 'how to win'.

3. GLOSSARY

winning aspiration

the measurable definition of what victory looks like for this firm

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

cost leadership

competing by having a structural, defensible cost advantage

differentiation

competing on a distinctive value the customer will pay a premium for

cadence

the regular rhythm of reviews and decisions

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- Which of the five choices is weakest in your current strategy — and why is it the weakest?
- Where in your organisation does the 'wish list' capability failure most often occur?
- Is there a sixth choice the framework is missing?

5. WRITING TASK · DISCURSIVE

Take a company you know well (yours, a competitor, or a public one). Write a 200–240-word Playing to Win summary — one paragraph per choice, in order.

- State the winning aspiration measurably.
- Name at least one 'where not to play'.
- Identify two capabilities and explain why they must be world-class.

Write at least 200 words.

VOCABULARY

The language of strategic choice

12 min

Match each term to its definition.

- competitive advantage
  the sustainable reason customers choose you over a comparable rival
- moat
  the structural barrier that protects your advantage over time
- value proposition
  the specific promise of value delivered to a defined segment
- trade-off
  the deliberate choice to give up one option in favour of another
- positioning
  the mental space you occupy in a customer's decision
- playbook
  a repeatable set of moves the organisation is trained to execute
- core capability
  the internal skill that must be world-class for the strategy to work
- adjacency
  a nearby market where the same capability can be redeployed

Complete each sentence with a word from the box.

- Their real moat_ isn't the product — it's the two-day delivery network no rival can match.
- Every good strategy is, at bottom, a trade-off_ someone in the room resisted.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- The deck was long on features and short on a defensible value proposition_.
- For a decade, they owned the 'premium but approachable' positioning_ in the category.
- The core capability_ — sub-second search relevance — was rebuilt three times before it stuck.
- SMB payments is the natural adjacency_; the sales motion is almost identical.

Choose the best answer.

- 'A strategy without trade-offs' is best described as:
  (a) a bold strategy
  (b) not a strategy — a wish list
  (c) a low-risk strategy
  (d) a modern strategy
  Answer key: (b) not a strategy — a wish list
- A 'moat' matters chiefly because it:
  (a) scares off investors
  (b) protects margin from competitive erosion
  (c) raises brand awareness
  (d) shortens the sales cycle
  Answer key: (b) protects margin from competitive erosion
- Which is closest to Roger Martin's 'where to play'?
  (a) your total addressable market
  (b) the specific segments, geographies and channels you choose
  (c) your headcount plan
  (d) your product roadmap
  Answer key: (b) the specific segments, geographies and channels you choose
- A well-defined value proposition normally includes:
  (a) a price and a promise, for a defined segment
  (b) a mission statement
  (c) a competitor list
  (d) an org chart
  Answer key: (a) a price and a promise, for a defined segment

LISTENING

Naming the sacrifice — a strategy off-site

12 min

Lia (CEO), Priya (CPO) and Sam (CFO) debate whether to walk away from the mid-market segment entirely. Read the transcript (audio coming soon) and answer.

CEO (LIA): OK, before we open it up — I want to hear the sacrifice, not the plan. Priya, you first.

CPO (PRIYA): Right. We are proposing we walk away from mid-market. Fully. No SDR coverage, no roadmap, no partner motion.

LIA: You know what that costs us next year.

PRIYA: About eleven million in ARR, at our current attach rate. That said, mid-market is where we're losing on price and losing on speed, and there is no combination of features that fixes both.

CFO (SAM): I have to push back on that. Eleven million isn't a rounding error.

PRIYA: Granted. But if we keep serving mid-market at our current gross margin, we cannot fund the enterprise capability that is actually working. Something has to give.

LIA: Sam — what would change your mind?

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

SAM: Honestly? A specific number. If Priya can show me that redeploying that spend into enterprise raises our win rate by even 3 points, I'll sign.

PRIYA: I can show you 4.7, historically. It's in the appendix.

LIA: Then the strategy is: we are, on balance, an enterprise company that once served the mid-market. Say it out loud.

PRIYA: We are, on balance, an enterprise company that once served the mid-market.

LIA: Now we can plan.

Choose the best answer.

- Lia's opening question — 'the sacrifice, not the plan' — signals that she wants:
  (a) a status update
  (b) the trade-off first, so the plan is defensible
  (c) a shorter deck
  (d) a headcount decision
  Answer key: (b) the trade-off first, so the plan is defensible
- Priya's central proposal is to:
  (a) hire more enterprise sellers
  (b) walk away entirely from the mid-market segment
  (c) lower prices in mid-market
  (d) outsource mid-market to partners
  Answer key: (b) walk away entirely from the mid-market segment
- Sam's condition for approving the move is:
  (a) a promise of higher margin
  (b) a specific number showing a lift in enterprise win rate
  (c) a competitor analysis
  (d) a board vote
  Answer key: (b) a specific number showing a lift in enterprise win rate
- The most C1-typical hedging move in the dialogue is:
  (a) 'Granted.'
  (b) 'That said, mid-market is where we're losing…'
  (c) 'We are, on balance, an enterprise company…'
  (d) all of the above
  Answer key: (d) all of the above

Teacher notes

Extension: Assign roles and re-run the scene. Coach students on the pivot markers ('That said…', 'Granted…', 'On balance…').

AUTHENTIC LISTENING · REAL VOICES

The plan that wasn't a strategy — Roger Martin on the trap

Source: Adapted from Harvard Business Review IdeaCast · Roger Martin, 'A Plan is Not a Strategy' (excerpt) · Excerpted for classroom use under fair-dealing for educational commentary.

C1+

 ≈ 3 min excerpt

In this excerpt, Roger Martin argues that most 'strategies' presented in boardrooms are not strategies at all — they are plans dressed up in strategic vocabulary. Listen for the moment he redefines the word.

Faixa em produção. O player aparece aqui — o áudio será publicado em breve. Enquanto isso, use o script completo abaixo.

1. LISTEN FOR GIST

- 1. In Martin's definition, which two words carry the most weight?
  Answer key: 'Choices' and 'win'.
- 2. What is his 'tell' for distinguishing a plan from a strategy?
  Answer key: Whether a reasonable competitor could plausibly have chosen the opposite.

2. LISTEN FOR DETAIL

- 1. What does a document describe when a sensible competitor would have made the same choices?
  Answer key: The table stakes for the industry — not a strategy.
- 2. Why does Martin call plans 'safe'?
  Answer key: Because they are lists; they cannot really be argued with.
- 3. Why does the political economy of large organisations favour plans over strategies?
  Answer key: It rewards documents nobody can argue with — and strategies, by definition, exclude.

3. GLOSSARY

integrated set of choices

Martin's phrase for a real strategy — the choices must fit each other

table stakes

the minimum you must do to be in the game at all

political economy

how power and incentives inside an organisation shape decisions

sharpen

here: for the strategy to become clearer, more focused

FULL SCRIPT

So a strategy, properly speaking, is an integrated set of choices that positions the firm to win. The two words that do a great deal of work in that definition are 'choices' and 'win'. Most of what gets called strategy in the corporate world is neither. It is a set of activities, budgeted and calendared, with a growth target attached — and that is a plan.

The tell, if you want to know whether you are looking at a plan or a strategy, is whether a reasonable person, looking at the same market, could have chosen the opposite. If the answer is no — if the document you are holding describes what any sensible competitor would also do — then you have written down the table stakes for the industry. You have not chosen where to play. You have not chosen how to win.

The reason this matters is not academic. Plans are safe, because they cannot be argued with; they are lists. Strategies are unsafe, because they exclude. And the political economy of large organisations, unfortunately, rewards documents nobody can argue with — which is precisely why so many companies mistake the annual planning ritual for the strategic work, and are then surprised when nothing sharpens.

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- Looking at your own last 'strategy' document — plan or strategy? By Martin's test?
- Where does the political cost of a real strategy tend to fall hardest in your organisation?

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Is there ever a legitimate case for a 'plan' rather than a 'strategy'?

GRAMMAR

Advanced discourse markers

18 min

Concession pivot: Granted, / That said, / Having said that, / Even so, — acknowledge, then push back.

Hedging with authority: Arguably, / On balance, / By and large, / Broadly speaking, — soften without weakening.

Contrast: By contrast, / Conversely, / In contrast, — set up a sharper counterpoint.

Adding weight: Moreover, / Furthermore, / What is more, — escalate the case.

C1+ speakers use these to signal the shape of the argument before the argument arrives — the listener knows where they are being taken.

Choose the correct option.

- The launch was strong. ____, the follow-up quarter was disappointing.
  (a) Nevertheless
  (b) Moreover
  (c) Furthermore
  (d) Similarly
  Answer key: (a) Nevertheless
- ____ its scale, the incumbent could not match our pricing.
  (a) Given
  (b) As long as
  (c) In spite the
  (d) Owing
  Answer key: (a) Given
- The margin is thin. ____ , the volume is enormous and growing.
  (a) That said
  (b) Consequently
  (c) Therefore
  (d) In addition
  Answer key: (a) That said
- The board approved the pivot ____ management delivered a 90-day proof point.
  (a) provided
  (b) unless
  (c) even though
  (d) as though
  Answer key: (a) provided
- The market is soft. ____ , our win rate has climbed for three quarters running.
  (a) By contrast
  (b) As a result
  (c) Similarly
  (d) In sum
  Answer key: (a) By contrast

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- ____ we ought to have moved earlier, but the data simply wasn't there.
  (a) Arguably
  (b) Undoubtedly
  (c) Consequently
  (d) Regardless
  Answer key: (a) Arguably
- ____ , the strategy is defensible; it is the execution that needs work.
  (a) On balance
  (b) As such
  (c) Even so
  (d) By and large
  Answer key: (a) On balance
- The category is crowded. ____ , we occupy a segment no serious rival has entered.
  (a) That said
  (b) Furthermore
  (c) In addition
  (d) Moreover
  Answer key: (a) That said

Complete each pivot with the marker in the box.

- Link the ideas: 'The market is small. It is defensible.' The market is small; that said_ , it is defensible.
- Concede then pivot: 'The competitor has scale. We have focus.' granted_ the competitor has scale, we have focus.
- Add hedged reservation: 'The plan is aggressive.' The plan is, arguably_ , aggressive — but not reckless.
- Contrast: 'Their margins are high.' by contrast_ , ours are climbing faster.
- Summarise: 'The board seems supportive.' on balance_ , the board is supportive.

Discursive practice:

Granted…

That said…

On balance…

DESCRIBE THE SITUATION

Look at the picture and use the grammar you just studied

You are the CEO's chief of staff, called in to draft the first three lines of tomorrow's all-hands. Write 5–6 sentences using at least three advanced discourse markers.

TRY TO USE

Granted…

That said…

By contrast…

On balance…

What is more…

SAMPLE ANSWER

Granted, the announcement across the street is a genuine escalation — I would not insult you by pretending otherwise. That said, the product they have just described is, in almost every dimension that matters to our customer, the version of our product we shipped eighteen months ago. By

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

contrast, the version we will ship next quarter is not competing on the same axis at all. On balance, then, we are in a better position tonight than we were yesterday morning — because a serious competitor has just validated a market we were already leaving behind. What is more, we now know exactly where they are pointed, which is a gift we did not have last week.

VIDEO LESSON · REAL SPEAKERS

A plan is not a strategy

Source: HBR · Roger Martin

C1+

 9 min

Roger Martin, in nine minutes, explains why most 'strategy' documents are actually plans — and what it takes to write a real one. Watch for his repeated challenge: could a reasonable competitor have chosen the opposite?

Watch once for gist, then again pausing on the questions below. Use the original on YouTube for subtitles if needed.

1. WATCH FOR GIST

- 1. Martin's opening claim about most corporate strategies is that:
  Answer key: They are plans dressed up in strategic vocabulary — lists of activities, not choices.
- 2. His single test for a real strategy is:
  Answer key: Whether a reasonable, well-informed competitor could plausibly have chosen the opposite.
- 3. Why do organisations default to plans?
  Answer key: Because plans are politically safe — they cannot be argued with; strategies exclude and therefore create losers.

2. WATCH FOR DETAIL

- 1. What does Martin mean by 'table stakes'?
  Answer key: The minimum a company must do to be in the industry at all — describing them is not a strategy.
- 2. Why does he insist a strategy must be capable of being disagreed with?
  Answer key: Because a document nobody could disagree with contains no real choices.
- 3. What does he say happens to organisations that mistake planning for strategy?
  Answer key: Nothing sharpens — the annual ritual absorbs the strategic energy without producing a strategy.

3. KEY LANGUAGE

integrated set of choices

Martin's definition of strategy — the choices must fit one another

table stakes

the entry requirement, not a source of advantage

foreclose (an alternative)

to close off other options by having chosen one

sharpen

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

become more focused and defensible over time

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- In your last planning cycle, how much of the deck would survive Martin's test?
- Where in your organisation is the political cost of a real choice paid?
- Is there a healthy version of 'planning' that Martin's argument leaves out?

SPEAKING

Rehearse the trade-off

15 min

Task 1 — Solo (2 min): Prepare, out loud, a 90-second answer to: "What is your company's real 'where not to play' — and how much does it cost?"

Task 2 — Solo delivery (8 min): Record yourself answering. Then re-record, forcing yourself to insert one concession (Granted…) and one challenge (That said…) mid-sentence without losing the thread. Compare the two takes.

Speaking challenge: Repeat your 90 seconds and, this time, use at least four different advanced discourse markers. Same content, sharper shape.

Teacher notes

Coaching: Watch for markers-as-decoration ('basically', 'literally'). Reward markers that actually structure the argument — the listener should be able to draw the shape on paper.

Record your answer

WRITING

A memo to the board

20 min homework

Task (240–280 words): Write the first two paragraphs of a board memo titled "What we are choosing not to do next year." Name the segment, quantify the cost, and defend the choice.

Requirements:

- Use at least four advanced discourse markers, at least two of them concessive.
- Name a specific number the choice costs — and a specific number it protects.
- End with one sentence that could plausibly be quoted back to you in six months.

Re-read your draft the following day and mark the discourse marker you used most effectively — and the one you should have used but didn't.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

WRAP-UP

Consolidate before you leave

5 min

Answer each prompt out loud or in a note to yourself.

- In one sentence: what is your strategy's 'where not to play'?
- Which discourse marker do you overuse? Which do you under-use?
- Give one example of a plan in your organisation that is masquerading as a strategy.
- One choice from the reading you want to stop avoiding; one you want to start defending.
- Rate the current strategy 1–5 on: clarity / defensibility / capability-fit / cadence. Which is weakest?

Take-away:

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

WORKBOOK · HOME PRACTICE

Unit 2A Workbook

Do this after class. Answers are marked for your teacher.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

VOCABULARY

Strategic choice — review

8 min

- 'A strategic choice' most naturally implies:
  (a) a preference among equals
  (b) a decision that closes off other options
  (c) a temporary plan
  (d) a routine allocation
  Answer key: (b) a decision that closes off other options
- 'Where to play' in Playing to Win refers to:
  (a) the target customers, geographies and channels you compete in
  (b) the internal team structure
  (c) the pricing tier
  (d) the marketing budget
  Answer key: (a) the target customers, geographies and channels you compete in
- A 'winning aspiration' is best described as:
  (a) a KPI
  (b) a stretch financial target
  (c) a definition of what winning means for the firm
  (d) a mission statement
  Answer key: (c) a definition of what winning means for the firm
- 'Trade-off' most closely means:
  (a) a compromise where gaining X costs you Y
  (b) a negotiation tactic
  (c) an exchange of assets
  (d) a hedge
  Answer key: (a) a compromise where gaining X costs you Y
- A plan that lists 'everything we'd like to do' is, in Roger Martin's terms:
  (a) a strategy
  (b) a budget dressed up as strategy
  (c) an operating model
  (d) a roadmap
  Answer key: (b) a budget dressed up as strategy
- Our winning aspiration_ is to be the default choice for regulated buyers in EMEA — not the biggest, the safest.
- The honest trade-off_ is that focusing on enterprise means walking away from a real SMB pipeline.
- The paper answers 'why' but never really names where to play_ — which segments, which geographies, which channels.
- The 'how' isn't a value proposition yet — it's a slogan. We haven't defined how to win_.
- None of this works unless we build two capabilities_ we currently outsource: pricing analytics and solution design.

GRAMMAR

Advanced discourse markers — review

12 min

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- The board approved the pivot. ____, no capital was released until Q3.
  (a) That said
  (b) Whereas
  (c) Insofar as
  (d) Notwithstanding
  Answer key: (a) That said
- ____ the tone was measured, the underlying warning was severe.
  (a) Whereas
  (b) Provided that
  (c) Given that
  (d) Whilst
  Answer key: (d) Whilst
- We will proceed, ____ the second audit confirms the numbers.
  (a) insofar as
  (b) provided that
  (c) whereas
  (d) on the grounds that
  Answer key: (b) provided that
- The strategy is coherent ____ it names what we will not do.
  (a) insofar as
  (b) whereas
  (c) notwithstanding
  (d) granted that
  Answer key: (a) insofar as
- ____ the CFO's reservations, the committee moved to a vote.
  (a) Notwithstanding
  (b) Provided that
  (c) Insofar as
  (d) Whereas
  Answer key: (a) Notwithstanding
- ____, the plan reads more like a wish-list than a set of choices.
  (a) On balance
  (b) Provided that
  (c) Insofar as
  (d) Granted
  Answer key: (a) On balance
- The offer is generous; ____, the non-compete is unusually broad.
  (a) that said
  (b) insofar as
  (c) whereas
  (d) granted that
  Answer key: (a) that said

Rewrite each sentence using the marker in bold.

- Join with a concessive marker: 'Revenue rose 12%. Margin fell 4 points.' Revenue rose 12%; that said_, margin fell 4 points.
- Rewrite with 'insofar as': 'The strategy works only to the extent that we say no to the small accounts.' The strategy works insofar as_ we say no to the small accounts.
- Rewrite with 'notwithstanding': 'Despite the CEO's objections, the board voted to exit APAC.' notwithstanding_ the CEO's objections, the board voted to exit APAC.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Rewrite with 'provided that': 'We'll fund the pilot if the ops team can staff it internally.' We'll fund the pilot provided that_ the ops team can staff it internally.
- Rewrite with 'whilst': 'The plan is ambitious; it is also achievable.' whilst_ the plan is ambitious, it is also achievable.

WRITING

A short board memo — the choice we're making

20 min

Task (160–200 words): Draft the opening two paragraphs of a memo to the board that names one strategic choice your team (real or fictional) is about to make.

- Name the where to play and the how to win in the first paragraph.
- Name the trade-off — what you are choosing not to do — in the second.
- Use at least three different discourse markers from the lesson (e.g. that said, insofar as, notwithstanding, provided that, whilst).
- Avoid the words excited, synergy and leverage.

Teacher notes

Marking focus: is a real choice named? Is the trade-off honest? Are the discourse markers doing logical work, or are they decoration?