

# Unlocking your brand

Getting the basics right as you enter your market



What I mean by brand ... **Coca-Cola** is of course a hugely popular sticky brown liquid, that's not very good for you.

The Coca-Cola brand – the bit that isn't directly anything to do with the manufacture or distribution of the liquid – has been **valued at about \$80bn**. (But how much does the brand have to do with the **enjoyment** of the consumption of Coke the liquid? A good question!)

Your brand is both intimately connected, and nothing to do, with what you produce day-to-day ... It's out there, talking about you when you're not in the room.

**And what use is an ambassador who has nothing to say?**

In this sense, branding can be viewed as the discipline concerned with managing all of the key ideas associated with your business.

# Developing the logic of your brand

What business ... are you **REALLY** in?

In that context, what's your **positioning**?

Given that positioning – who are your real **competitors**?

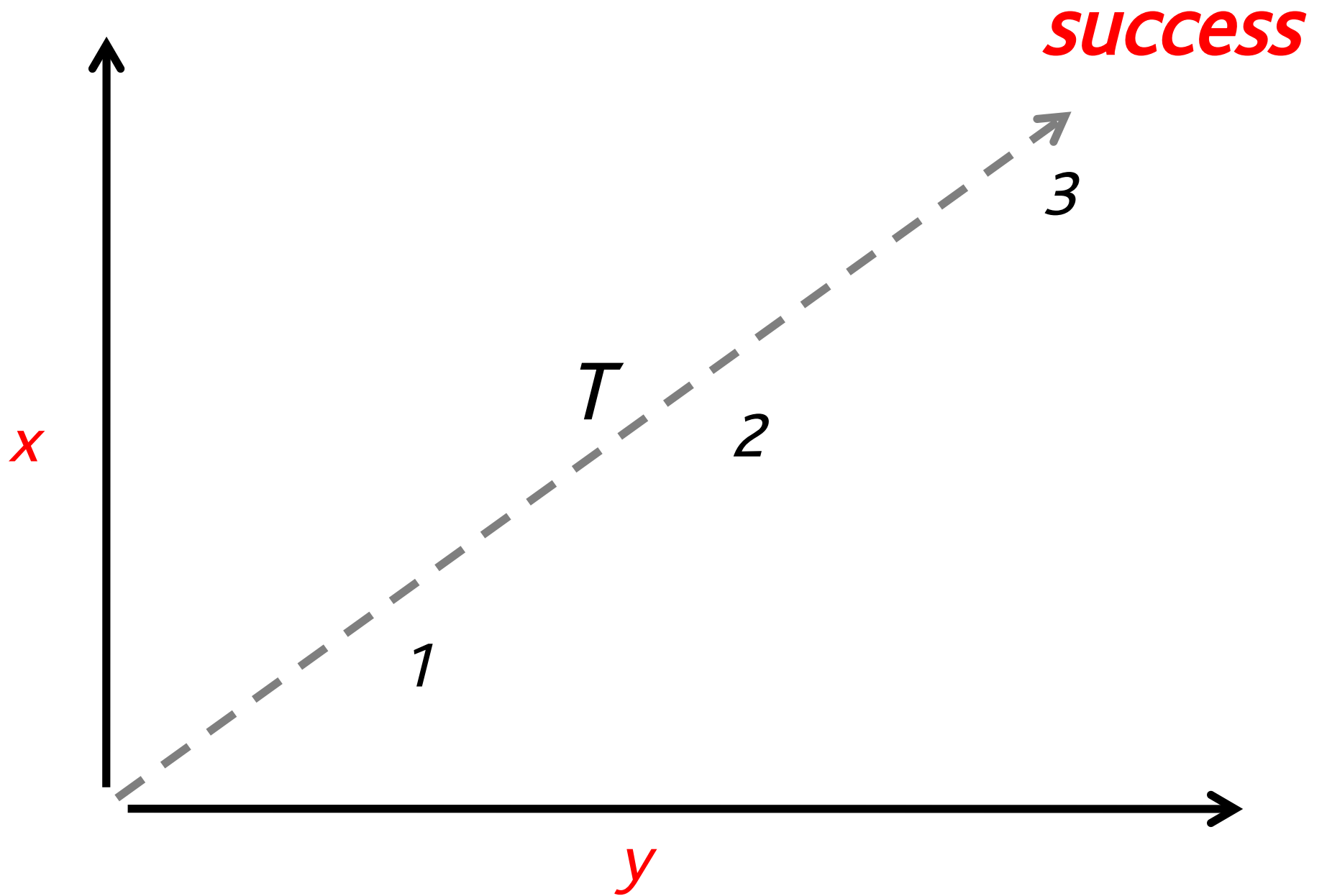
Can you crisply define and communicate the compelling **value** you offer?

Who are your key **stakeholders**? Which are most important, and at which stage of your growth?

What are your core and secondary product and/or service **propositions**?

Having established all the above, are you able - briefly and in plain language - to communicate your **differentiated and powerful branding** to clients, partners, media and investors?

Your business?

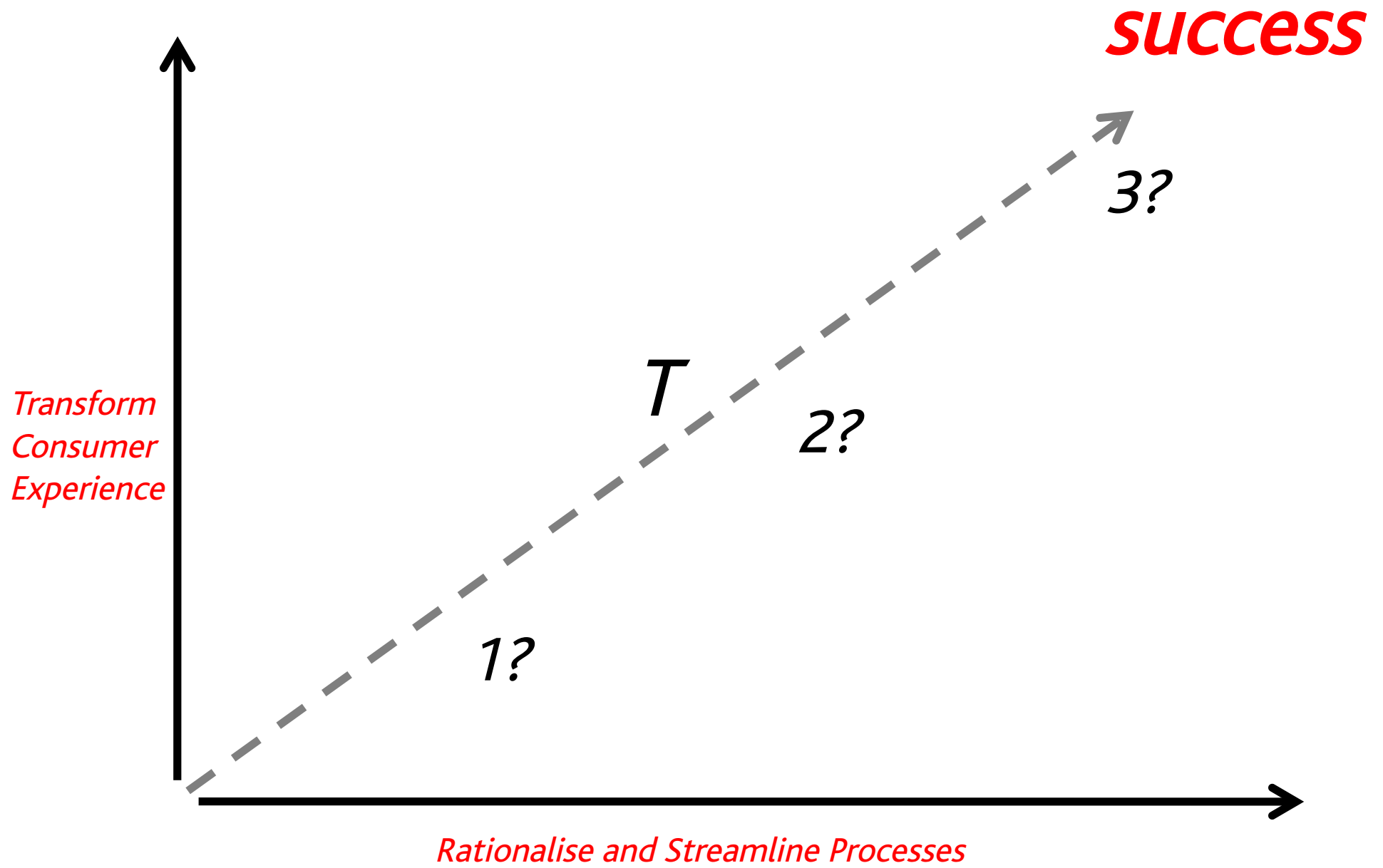


Believe it or not ... Converting the development of your business into value, revolves around **moving it forwards between axes  $x$  and  $y$ , along the timeline  $T$ .**

Once you've had your Big Idea and decided that yes, you can build it, everything from that point on – **everything** – depends on this terribly simple challenge.

For a giant telco client of mine, their B2B positioning in broadband revolved around, over time, **Transforming The Brand Experiences of Their Clients' Consumers** (the  $x$  axis), while **Helping Their Clients Rationalise Their Internal Processes** (the  $y$  axis).

Notice what's missing? Nothing here about Data, Speed, Robustness, Security and so on. These concerns were of course critical to the **How**, nothing to do with the **What**.



## Go To Market Rule #1

Don't confuse the "How" with the "What".  
For all your stakeholders, your business is  
about Impact, not just Activity.

Your positioning?

We begin from here ... to focus on what differentiates the business, **what's special about you?**

This should be logically derived from the "What Business Are You In?" component ...

... from "We're playing football", to "What league we're in".

... from "We have these capabilities", to "**We solve these problems**".

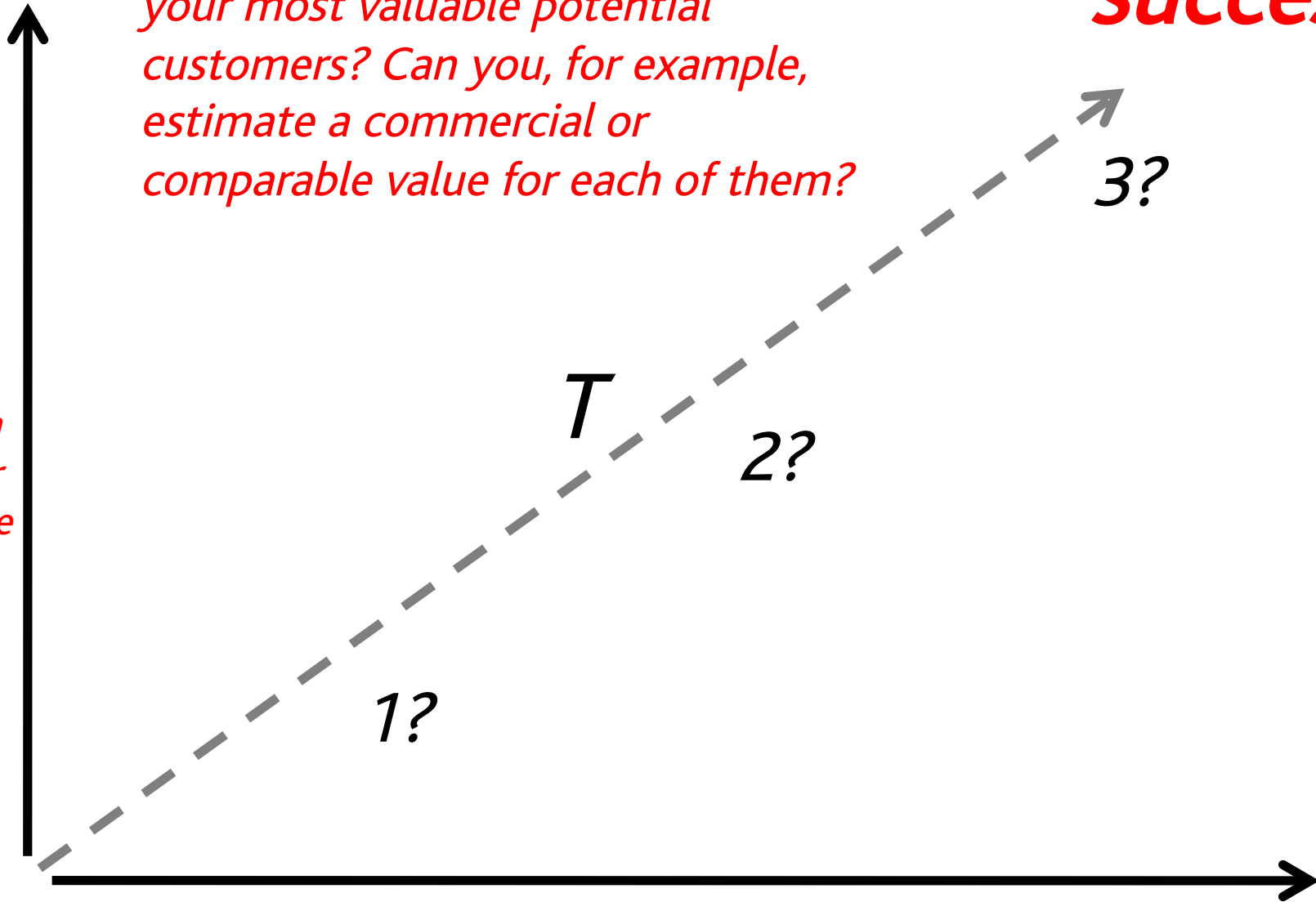
This naturally demands tearing yourselves away from your lovely business ... to focus on: **YOUR CUSTOMERS.**

Nightmare! But it has to be done.

*What do the x and y axes mean for your most valuable potential customers? Can you, for example, estimate a commercial or comparable value for each of them?*

**SUCCESS**

*Transform  
Consumer  
Experience*



*Rationalise and Streamline Processes*

## Go To Market Rule #2

The value of the problem you solve for your customer, determines the value you can place on your solution.

Your competition?

**Now you can see ...** that your competitor profiling and threat assessment are not just built around “People who do what you do” ...

... it’s about the (relatively few) people who more or less solve **the same problems** you set out to solve: can they do it **better, faster, cheaper** ... or all of the above?

Your positioning comes home to roost in a big way here ... Think about, say, 37 Signals (Basecamp, Highrise etc) vs. Microsoft Project vs. AN Other 2.0 Brand.

Many of the functional and operational essentials might be similar ... but **how are these developed into differentiated, ownable, market positions?**

## Go To Market Rule #3

Your competitors are simply the people who occupy the same space in your customers' minds as you do. Once you get beyond the basics, it's all about Brand.

Your core positioning?

**Showing your hand ...** With the gritty and demanding work you've done so far , you've set the scene for building a **basic vocabulary** around the positioning of the business.

A former client of mine's business was exploiting patents in the field of mobile information services. (We found within a week of starting work that their name was already owned and in active use globally by A Huge Bank.)

Having gone through the process, they agreed that the line **"Leadership In Intelligent Mobile"** summarised and communicated their competitive positioning as they wished it.

Another client – one of the many online music platforms – went for the crushingly simple **"Music To Market"**.

## Go To Market Rule #4

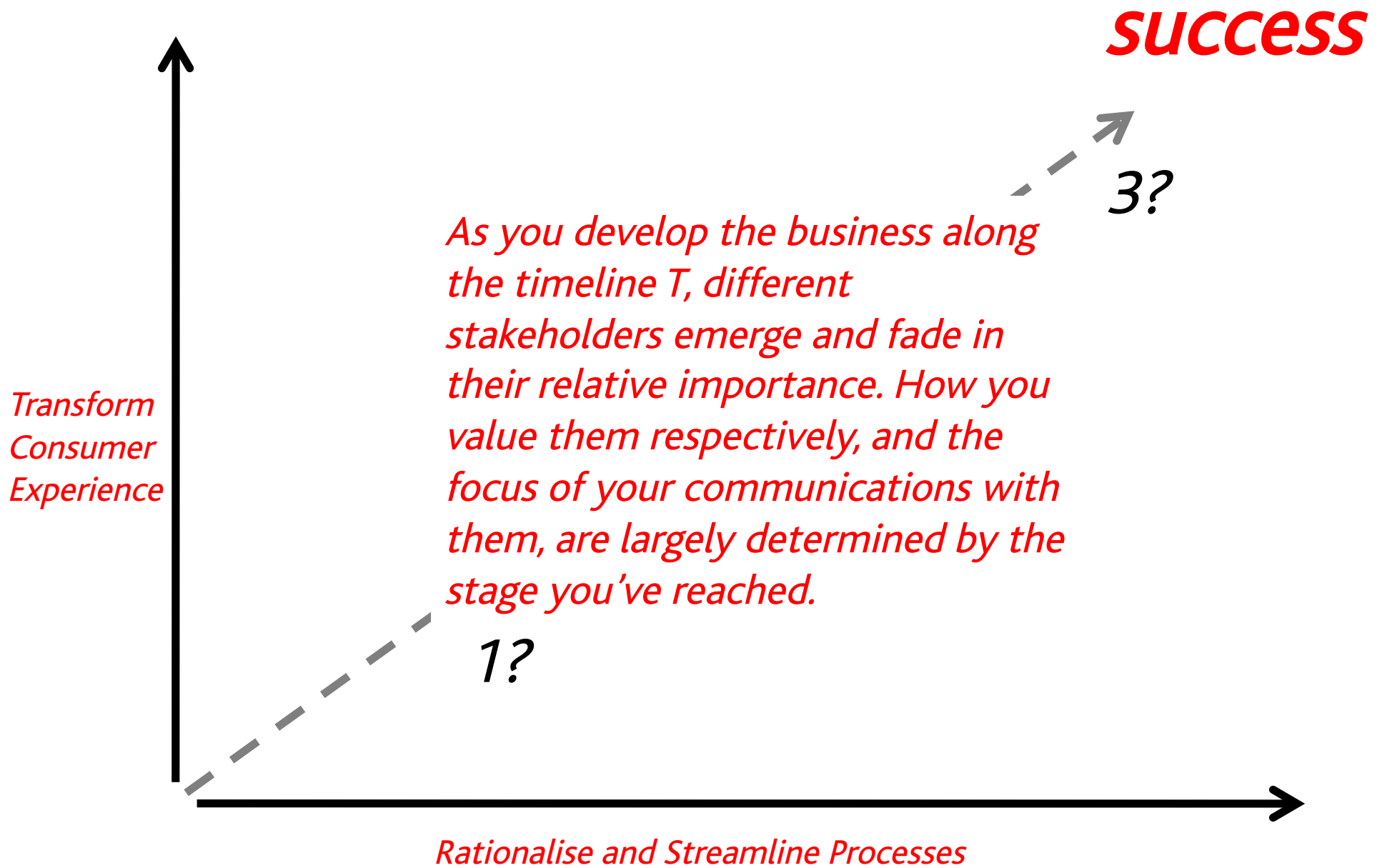
You cannot think usefully about naming, or even touch your marketing materials, until you know exactly what business you're in, and why.

**Your stakeholders?**

Everyone has a piece of you ... A bit of an exaggeration, true. But there were you thinking it's just our little gang ...  
... and suddenly you're worried about **Investors, Affiliates, Sponsors, Partners, Staff, Management, Industry Press, National and International Press, Bloggers** both serious and idiotic, **Competitors** (yes them too) and of course, the full range of potential **customers**.

What's more, some customers may be consumers, some may be business.

The thing to remember is: **every genuine stakeholder has a right to expect something from you**. For the press, it's news, for example. You need to be smart and proactive about how you manage and prioritise this critical concern.



## Go To Market Rule #5

Your stakeholders are all “customers” of the business: they just expect different things from you at different times.

Your propositions?

A proposition is ... (in this context at least) an expression of a product or service offering, **in terms of its distinctive value to the typical customer**. It's essentially a promise.

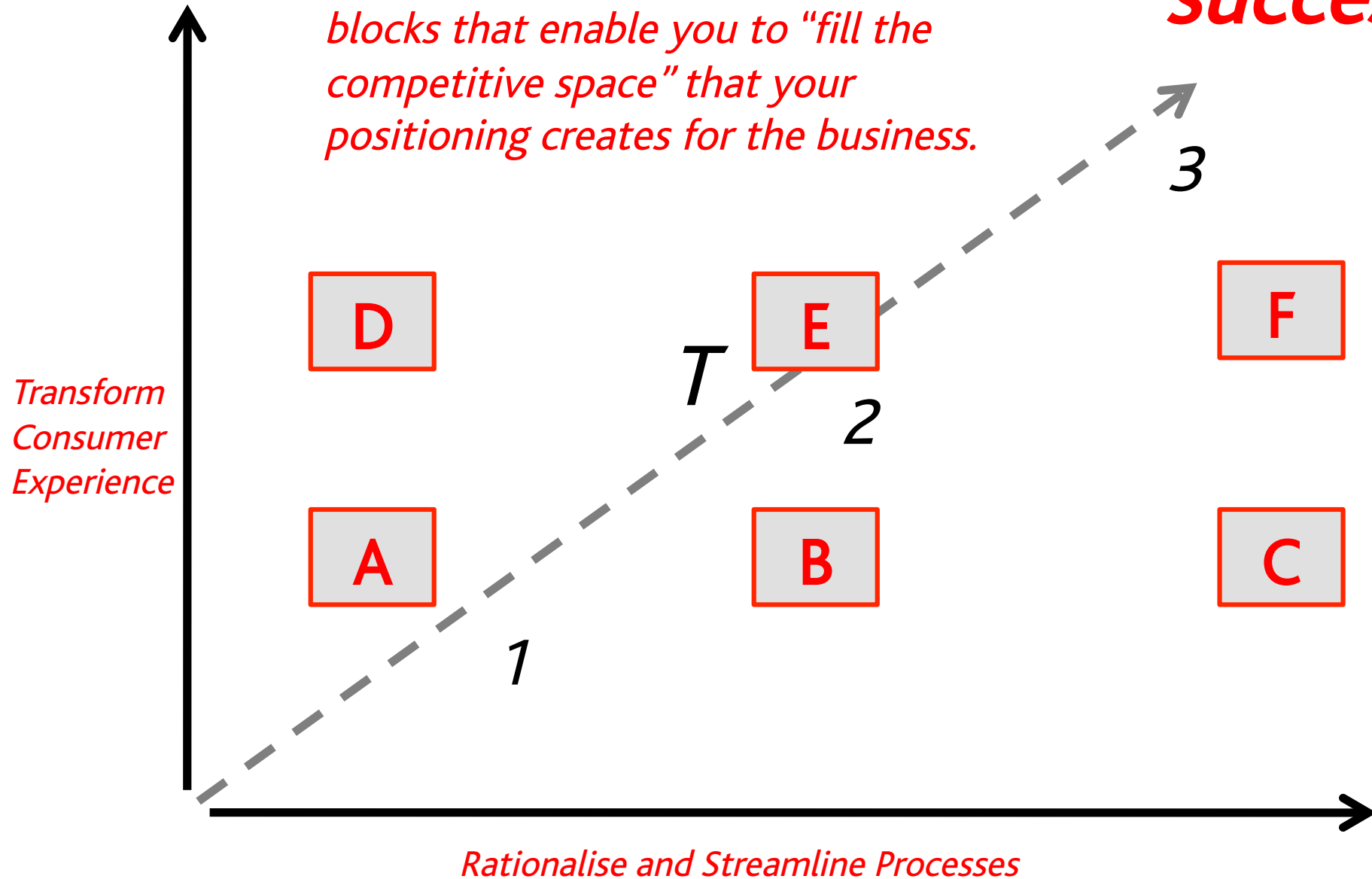
A product or service is not a proposition: it's actually what delivers on the promise of the proposition. You may sell products or services ... **your customers buy propositions**.

Microsoft manages to produce scores of products apparently without breaking a sweat. But ask them, for example, to **explain their proposition set in, for example, media and advertising**. Nightmare! (Don't even think of asking them about their positioning.)

A good rule of thumb way to articulate a proposition is:  
**"You know THIS? Well ... THAT!"**

*Your propositions are the building blocks that enable you to “fill the competitive space” that your positioning creates for the business.*

***SUCCESS***



## **Go To Market Rule #6**

The rational development and consistent communication of your propositions, along the timeline, define the growth of your business and guide the evolution of the brand.

Now you've got something to talk about!

**And your brand is coming to life ...** Talking of which, when I was working for a funny little start-up called BT Rich Media, I developed a brand for them.

The business – which sadly folded after a while – was intended to offer media producers and rights owners, and consumers too – the opportunity to **use broadband to get their content to an audience.**

For the professionals, it was about rights **monetisation**; for the consumer, mainly about **sharing** content.

The starting point for all marketing materials, which evolved out of exactly the process we've just walked through, was **simple, rich, accessible** to all stakeholders, **differentiated** and **ownable**: “Bring It To Life, with BT Rich Media”. (Now Guinness is using it worldwide!)

## Go To Market Rule #7

Until you can describe and sell your business, in 3 sentences, in less than 30 seconds – your elevator pitch – you don't have a brand.

**That's all folks!**