

STRONG SIGNAL CANVAS — A FIELD GUIDE

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Building on our Signal Spotting Field Guide (Download here: <https://be-radical.co/signal>), differentiating between weak and strong signals becomes a crucial effort in ones desire to gain a better understanding of the future. Many weak signals either fail to materialize into lasting change or do so at a much later point in time than commonly anticipated. To answer these questions, we developed a robust, simple to use framework to assess weak signals in those two critical dimensions: The Strong Signal Canvas.

After you have identified a weak signal (see our Signal Spotting Field Guide), evaluate the signal along the following five dimensions:

🕒 Timing

Is the prospective solution readily available and potentially scalable? If the tools and/or technology required are still developing, where are they on the learning curve of innovation? Identify the technological requirements to meet the “good enough” threshold for each requirement, and project backward the necessary developments and possible breakthroughs needed to get to the threshold.

Example: Virtual Reality headsets need displays where the individual pixel is small enough, so that the human eye can't perceive any boundaries between each pixel anymore. The threshold lies at around 60 pixels/degree at the fovea. Currently no commercially available headset clears this barrier.

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↔ Insight

What are the enabling contextual conditions that would need to change for a solution to become the right fit for the targeted problem? What else needs to be true for this signal to reach full strength? Try to identify the “Gestalt” of the tipping point, when something that has been a curiosity becomes undeniable. The Gestalt describes all the factors which are typically outside of your direct sphere of influence, but need to be either met or removed for the core innovation to hold in the market. Explore the Gestalt through STEEPS dimensions (Science/Technology/Environment/Economy/Politics/Social): What are the Scientific and Technological breakthroughs still required? What needs to be true about the Environmental and Economic context or future impacts for this possibility to be realized? What Political and Social conditions need to change? If you’re watching weak signals in heavily regulated environments (healthcare, biotech, financial services), these questions are particularly critical.

Example: Autonomous vehicles face scrutiny and numerous open questions in areas such as rules & regulation, liability and insurance, as well as social acceptance. All factors which a car maker has to take into account but can’t directly influence.

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The next three factors all describe the problem space the weak signal plays in.

↔ Frequency

How often do we encounter the problem?

↔ Density

How long/deep is our engagement with the problem?

↔ Friction

How much pain do we experience with the problem?

Validating the problem space through these three lenses (which were conceived by our friend Chris Yeh, author of the bestselling book “Blitzscaling”) allows us to verify the need and level thereof for a given solution. Should either factor be not high enough, a weak signal might be technologically viable and might even fit into the Gestalt, alas it won’t be successful in the market as it didn’t clear the problem space hurdle.



TIMING

Is the solution available/scalable?



GESTALT

What else needs to be true [STEEPS]?



FREQUENCY

How often do we encounter the problem?



DENSITY

How long/deep is our engagement with the problem?



FRICION

How much pain do we experience with the problem?