

Growth Principle #1: Clarity of Vision

Discovering your Catalyst for Growth and Excellence

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Einstein once said “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”. Think about that statement for a moment and ask yourself, ‘Does this quote apply to the way I run my company?’

Most businesses that continually beat their head against a wall suffer from a profound lack of vision. Everyone engages in frenzied efforts to succeed (always working longer and trying harder), but because people don't see the big picture or understand the true value they bring to customers, their quarterly profit and loss statements don't reflect the intensity of their effort.

Here's the reality... trying harder isn't usually the solution to achieving more. In fact, it might be a big part of the problem. Let's examine together the path to clarity of vision.

First and foremost, what is this Holy Grail we call **vision**? It's pretty simple really, and boils down to a few primary considerations: Why are you in business? What is so great about what you do or make? What impact do you want your business to leave on the world?

Now you might be able to pop out some pat answers to those questions without really thinking about them, but vision is a critical component of your professional success and deserves more attention. In order to create truly *visionary* responses to those basic questions, you have to get outside of your comfort zone and slow down. Before you even begin to draft a vision statement, I suggest that you back off of your to-do list, quit trying harder, and pull some wise people around you to help bring an outside perspective into the conversation. Think beyond goals and money and tasks.

It's very important when stepping into the role of the visionary to suspend disbelief and allow yourself to brainstorm outside the bounds of common sense. Vision isn't mission! Let me repeat... Your vision isn't an expanded version of your mission statement. Your mission statement should rightly be grounded in the present and directly related to the values and standards that will help you take action in the upcoming months and years, but your vision must be so much more.

Your vision is your enduring purpose; the fundamental reason for an organization's existence beyond just making money. It is a perpetual guiding star on the horizon and does not change over time. For example, NASA's vision is “*advancing man's capability to explore the heavens.*” In essence, our vision is a mental picture of the future we wish to create through endless pursuit of an ideal. It is love, and passion, and the impetus to pursue that which we truly want most out of life through work.

On the other hand, **a mission is a specific destination that is concrete and achievable**. A good mission engages people – it reaches out and grabs them and makes them want to do something in the present moment. It should be tangible, energizing, highly focused and support the vision. To stick with our NASA example, a mission statement might establish a firm goal of “*putting a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s*”.

So, once you have stepped back from the insanity and examined the beliefs and dreams behind your corporate vision, how does the simple vision statement you write help your business grow? Clarity = Power. If you don't have a vision and a sense of destiny about your company, you won't grow.

Many of the other elements of growth that we'll explore are concrete and rooted in action. There is a reason that I've started this series with something as abstract and emotional as clarity of vision. Here's why. Concrete steps are all well and good, but every company is different. I can offer you tools and tips to take your business to the next level, but timing, recognizing unique opportunities, and the power to execute – these lie within you, not in the situation.

Your vision represents your desires, your passions, your dreams that burn hot in your mind... and thus your vision gives you all the intuitive information you need to find direction and make breakthroughs in performance. Your vision is your own internal 'magnetic north' that will enable you to make quantum leaps in your results.

Don't wait! Define and live your vision today and you'll begin to see power of purpose in action.