

Growth Principle #2: Think BIGGER Than You Are

Map your Future Mentally Long Before you Arrive

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One of the things that most small business owners struggle with is thinking big enough. We all have to consciously work to expand our horizons and mentally move beyond what we know. But growing a business is not an accidental endeavor, so planning ahead and preparing your company to increase in size is a huge step in seeing your dreams become a reality.

This article is prefaced by 'Clarity of Vision', which provides the foundation upon which your company is built. That vision will be the driving force behind step number two – thinking bigger than you are. You should have an idealized image in your mind of what you are working toward... what your company can look like five or ten or twenty years into the future. Although you naturally have to deal with lots of little day-to-day issues surrounding the organization you currently have, you should never lose sight of what you ultimately want to become.

Are you willing to make some changes today to transform into something magical tomorrow? Can you sacrifice what you are for what you can be?

If so, then begin to practice the following five principles that will help you think bigger:

1. **Stop seeking external validation.** While historical data, statistics and industry standards can be helpful, they shouldn't be the bar by which you measure your present or your future. Ultimately the most successful companies break through barriers and forge pathways into uncharted territories, so if you need to see logical external validation for every move you make, you simply won't be on the cutting edge of achieving rapid growth.
2. **Always act on your intuition.** Michael Burke said that, "Good instincts usually tell you what to do long before your head has figured it out." I completely agree. How many times do we all look back and say, "Ach, I had a gut feeling about that and I didn't act on it!" Don't let yourself fall into the trap of safety in your business. If you play it too safe and can't make a decision without a perfect case for WHY, then your company won't be adaptable and competitive in today's ever-shifting marketplace.
3. **Plan ahead for MORE.** I can't stress this point enough when it comes to driving growth. In every decision, every task, every purchase you must think beyond the current size of your business and ask yourself, "Will this be big enough later on?" Companies waste billions of dollars annually scaling up systems that they just put in place to accommodate growth. Your goal should be to plan ahead and design systems that are capable of expanding, serving more customers, integrating more staff and lasting through the next phase of your organization's life cycle.
4. **Make big, bold promises.** Promises are different from targets or goals or ideals. If you are an individual of integrity, promises are things that you are willing to commit to in stone. I see many business owners shirk from making lofty promises. They are willing to try, to work towards objectives and to dream - but they are not willing to simply commit to making something happen 'come hell or high water'. Some of the greatest triumphs in the history of business have come because leaders made a rash promise that seemed unattainable and then found a way to

miraculously follow through. As Epictetus sagely advised, "First say what you will be; and then do what you have to do."

5. **Take action now.** Vision and planning and promises are great, but your business won't grow if you don't take action in the present moment. I urge you to translate your big dreams into small action steps that you can begin working on immediately. A walk of a thousand miles begins with a single step... so take the baby step today that will launch your epic journey of growth and success.

In closing, I want to acknowledge how very difficult it can be to hold an imaginary image of your company as a thriving conglomerate in your head, but that is what it takes to design processes and make long view decisions that will take you to the top. By always thinking beyond your present reality you can continually take the small steps required to thrive in the future.