Creating a Compelling Vision

Anyone running their own business needs a vision, a vision which will give them motivation, to keep them going when the going gets tough, for the times when they wonder if they are doing the right thing.

Having a vision which is compelling will remind you why you are in business. It will keep you on track; but to do this it needs to be something that truly inspires you. So don’t be afraid to think big.

And a clear vision will give you direction - you wouldn’t set out on a journey without knowing your destination, the destination allows you to plan the best form or transport, and the best route. A vision for your business performs the same critical function; it will help you plan your journey from where you are today to where you want to be.

Your vision and strategy are long term and focus on what you want over time. Your business plan comes later and gives the structure and detail. Once completed it would then be useful to put some detail behind this in the form of a long term strategic plan, followed by a shorter term business plan ~ but that comes later; do not be tempted to start the planning process until you are completely happy with the Vision.

The best time to do this exercise is when you are away from the day-to-day distractions of the office with your mobile phone off and your laptop or Blackberry out of sight. Set aside a minimum of an hour initially, but be prepared to revisit it. It may be useful to start with completing the Personal Values Review, which you can download from my website. If you have partners in the business it is important that you are all involved with the process (although you may prefer to work through these questions individually and then compare notes).
Step 1 ~ Dream

Close your eyes and fast-forward 10, 20 or even 30 years, - maybe to a point near retirement. Imagine you could achieve anything you want for your business - what would it be? Forget about all the limitations other people want to put on you - your vision is something that should inspire YOU.

Put your self there and answer each of these questions in the present tense as if it is happening now.

What is your business achieving?
- What are you doing?
- What is your business doing?
- How much is it making? - turnover, gross income, profit margin?
- How is your business contributing to your overall happiness and well being?
- What part does it play in your life as a whole?

Organisation
- Who is at the helm?
- Who do you have working for you / with you?
- How many days per month / hours per day are you devoting to your business?
- Who are your associates / partners?
- What are the types of conversations you hear yourself having with them?
- What systems do you have in place to ensure it runs smoothly?
- What activities do you still get involved with?
- Describe in detail your perfect working day?

What kind of business
- Who are your clients or customers?
- Describe your ideal customer.
- What need are you satisfying?
- What are the criteria they use in deciding to work with you rather than your competitors?
- How many clients are you working with at any one time?
- Who are your suppliers?
- Where are you operating?
Image

- What are people saying about you?
- What are people saying about your business/your work?
- What are your customers/clients saying?
- What are suppliers saying?
- What are your competitors saying?
- What image do you have in your industry / profession?

Fulfilment

- What do you see as you come into your place of work?
- What do you hear around you whilst you are working?
- How do you feel as you walk into your office, sit at your drawing board or go out on site?
- How do you feel when you get home at night?
- If this is your last working day, what would be your best memory?
- How is your business contributing to the things you value most in life? (see Personal Values Review)
- If what you see hear or feel as you answer this last section does not motivate you, acknowledge this and review this vision until it inspires you.

Step 2 ~ Set goals

Now write this up into a SMART goal ~ see my goal setting checklist for guidance.
Step 3 ~ Plan

Then (and only then) start to plan how you will achieve this vision. The following format will help to get you started in setting some milestones to achieving your goal / vision. Start with the last column (your end result) and then work back in the order indicated on the template. The time frames are as an example only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today’s date</th>
<th>2½ years from now</th>
<th>Mid point (5 years from now)</th>
<th>7½ years from now</th>
<th>End date (e.g. 10 year’s time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now identify what is happening now</td>
<td>Where do you need to be at ¼ point</td>
<td>Next set your milestones for mid point</td>
<td>Where do you need to be at ¾ point to achieve your goal on time</td>
<td>Complete this column first describing your end goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now put this somewhere safe - not filed away never to be seen again - but somewhere you will refer to it frequently to remind you and keep you on track. Then use this as starting point for your more detailed short-term plans.