



A best practice report For Managers, Principals, Team Leaders
and Internal Consultants
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Issue No 5: What do you want this year? Are you ready to commit?

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What do you want this year? Are you ready to commit?

The Vision thing

What do you want and why do you want it are amongst the most common questions I ask in my work. Let me explain.

I have at times found myself working with a client and discussing questions like 'How many people should we have in the company?', or 'Is that person right for this job?'

I am sometimes drawn into the detail of these conversations with my clients as I sense their anxiety about their business and want to help them relieve it. At times to be an effective coach,

I have to make myself step back and ask 'What are we really trying to achieve here?', 'What are the important questions to answer first?'. Now if I sense we are looking at the wrong questions

I stop the conversation and make the client aware of what is happening. The first question I ask is,

'So what is it that you actually want here, and why do you want it?'. Other powerful and telling questions are, 'What are your compelling reasons for being in business or taking up your role in this organization?'

I challenge people to set boundaries around their thinking, after all, what's a game of football look like without a boundary line!

We do live in a complex world with messages ideas and competition hitting us from everywhere.

How do you go about making decisions without feeling like you are being pulled from pillar to post?

How do you make decisions that are made from a position of certainty rather than a position of anxiety?

When you have answered the first questions you will find it easier. You no longer have to be everything or try everything. You have a direction so decision-making is simpler and more focused.

A case study

I was recently coaching Julie and Michael two principals of a professional services firm.

Julie understands that the structure of their business is not right for the firm to grow and for her people to develop. She is very keen to rearrange the boxes on the paper and fill them in with people's names. While this is important, I wanted to ask her some deeper questions but sensed her anxiety to get the answer and get on with it. I asked Julie her vision for the business. What she said surprised me but is not uncommon: "Vision is not important. We all

have the same vision, which is to serve clients and provide a quality workplace. Now, let's talk about filling these boxes". I spoke to her about having a context for making changes and understanding what she wanted and why, and then using the individuality of her business

to get a compelling vision. At this point Julie was starting to listen and Michael stepped in. He articulated in the clearest possible way the direction he saw for the business.

He did not say anything clichéd, he simply talked about building on the strengths of the people and the relationships his organization already had. His passion shone through and was infectious, both for Julie and for me. He outlined a specific strategy for how the firm would be structured to provide value added services using the strengths that already exist in the organization. At this point Julie was nodding and was engaged in his vision. Julie and Michael have started to vision their business. It has signs of passion and evolves from their strengths. They have agreed to go away and discuss it further in the near future. Julie is reflecting on her own thoughts and vision for the business and now believes that filling in the boxes will be much easier once they have agreed on a common vision.

The Commitment thing

Once you have articulated a vision and agreed on strategies the question becomes 'How committed are you to developing yourself to the fullest extent possible?' Imagine yourself in the full depths of commitment to your vision or goals. How satisfying would it be to reach your vision? If you are not getting a "satisfied" internal reading then revisit your vision. Your vision must be worthwhile and have passion or else life's many distractions will inevitably take you from your path.

Some people can hold their commitment in their head and it's enough. Others need to write it down or tell other people. Scientific research has established the fact that the RAS (Reticulating Activating System), cells at the base of your brain stem, serve as a little control

centre sorting and evaluating incoming data. Writing triggers the RAS, which in turn sends a signal to the cerebral cortex: 'Wake up! Pay attention! Don't miss this detail!' Once you write down a goal and re-read it frequently, your brain will be working overtime to see you get it.

As a coach, I can't 'give' people commitment but I can coach them to see what is possible and that most people have greater potential than they think. What I can say is your technical

skills, while useful, will only count for a fraction of what it takes to help you achieve the intentions you set in your mind. Commitment has an enormous amount of power in helping you get your vision or goal. Let me offer you this quote from W .H. Murray who was a member of a Scottish Himalayan Expedition.

"Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elemental truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way"

If W.H. Murray is right then commitment may be all that you need to reach a new level of achievement for 2006 and beyond. My most successful clients are those who have committed both feet and more to their vision. They are not over night successes in one case it has taken 27 years and in another over 20 years to be top of their market. It is never ever too late to make a change.

"Greatness it turns out is not a function of circumstance but largely a matter of conscious choice".

Jim Collins (author of Good to Great)