

Business Planning.

Success in business as in all walks of life relies on good planning and choice making. We cannot avoid making choices in life, but how we make those choices is fundamental to success and happiness. It is also the foundation of good leadership.

There are three types of people in the world, polarised between those who hate structure and those that cannot live without it. Most of us lie somewhere between and vacillate between them.

Planning to achieve our goals and dreams can be a joyful, creative and inspiring process. Too often it can become a drudge, made difficult with thousands of apps and planning methods. So, lets try and keep the process simple. It doesn't matter if the object is starting a new business or simply conducting a meeting.

The stages of good planning.

There are six stages of good planning. They are like links in a chain and a chain is only as strong as the weakest link. We often have difficulty carrying out one or more stages and often get stuck at a specific point but understanding the stages and uncovering the weak points is very important and often leads to inspiration.

The stages do not have to be chronological or rigid, but it is sometimes good to take them in sequence.

The Stages.

1. Our purpose aim or goal.
2. Deliberation
3. Decision
4. Affirmation
5. Creating a programme.
6. Getting it done

1 - Purpose

What is our Goal or Purpose? Are we clear about it?

Our purpose, aim or goal is based on **Evaluation-Motivation-Intention**

Our aim must be evaluated. Does it conform to our set of values? If our goal does not fit in with what we value in life, there will be little motivation.

Does our goal arouse motives that generate the urge to achieve it? Motive indicates dynamism, a dynamic transfer of energy. Motives are aroused by values that we attach to the goal.

We need to be clear if we have *dynamic intention* to complete our Goal or Purpose. If intention and motivation is not there it indicates confusion about whether our Goal or Purpose is valid.

This can be stressful and often happens when Goals are thrust upon us. Without a Goal to aim for there is little point in creating a strategy. We also need clarity to be able to communicate our purpose or vision. Without clarity there can be no focus.

Goals often need to change or evolve particularly as we deliberate about them.

2 - Deliberation

There can be many possible goals or textures of the same goal, therefore a choice must be made. Deliberation may not necessarily be thinking hard about something. We need to engage our feelings and all our senses.

If I choose this goal or purpose, what do I want to Hear, Feel or See? What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT analysis) associated with my choice of Goals? What assumptions am I making on which I base my goal. For example, if I intend to buy a new bit of gear or plugin, is it something that I WANT or NEED. There is a great difference and we can often get misdirected by these. Is my client confused about what they WANT or NEED?

3 - Decision

Deliberation must be followed by choice and a decision. This often means setting aside other possible goals. We cannot avoid making choices even if the choice is not to make a choice (for now). Our decision making always includes all the six stages, but they rarely do so in a linear fashion. For instance, whilst planning we may need to go back and deliberate further when we discover that we have not quite got the choice right. This is also when it is important to listen to not just our minds, but also our bodies, our feelings and our intuition. It is sometimes said that intuition is our Inner Tuition our Inner Tutor. When we have decided upon the one action that is most important to us at the present time, we need to clearly formulate and state this decision by affirmation.

4 - Affirmation

Clearly affirming our decision either in writing or spoken out loud is essential as this gives us the energy or momentum to strive for our goal or purpose. It is important to acknowledge that we have made a *conscious* choice.

Often, we need to keep going back to our choice to affirm it over and over. Constantly returning to the affirmation stage to focus on and strengthen our choices is usually a good technique as it reinforces the planning and execution of our desire.

5 - Planning and creating a programme.

A plan is needed involving the means and phases of the execution. What will I need to do to carry out this plan. Are there "little goals" I need to identify on the way to my main purpose. What are the steps that I need to take, are they practical chronologically? What resources will I need to gather to execute my plan? Have I plotted out the timescales?

Budgetary considerations are vital, which is why knowledge of basic business skills is essential. Do I have a cashflow projection for this goal; have I over or underestimated costs and returns. Am I aware of the difference between cashflow and profit and loss projections.

Of course, in the plan, we must take into account that circumstances may alter, so we must allow for possible change. Can I envisage or even predict what external changes might affect my plan.

Using our creative imagination can be useful here. Is there someone or something that might sabotage my efforts. Can I plan to circumvent them or include them. Using a SWOT analysis can I spot how I might sabotage my plan all by myself.

Who can I engage with to help me realise my goals? Do they share my values? Have I been explicit about my goals or have I just *assumed* that they are in step and harmony with them. A wise person once said that word *assume* is made up of ass-you-me.

6 - Getting it done.

Carrying out our plan needs constant supervision. As a team leader, our task is not always to carry out the action but to coordinate actions of others in the carrying out of the plan.

This means attention to timelines and where our purpose or end result fits into these. Constantly keeping our goals in mind and not letting the road to them become so diffuse that nothing happens, while at the same time allowing our goals to evolve as circumstances change whilst keeping in mind the context within which our goals sit.

We are like the director of the production and not necessarily one of the actors. We can call up the participants when they are needed and give them clear instructions. Of course, we need to bear in mind costs and the ability of people to carry out the jobs.

If we are working alone on our goal, we need to be aware of our own toolbox of talents and use them when appropriate. We can bring into use the energy of our reason, our feelings, our intuition and our imagination. We can even question what effect a decision is going to have on our physical bodies. We can develop these functions and remember that as the conductor or director these are tool that are available to us.

The Joy of Success.

Clarity, transparency and vital planning are the constituents that lead to the stress-free attaining of our goals. It is like composing and performing a jazz piece. Once we have a structure, we can let go of it and improvise knowing that the structure is always there to come back to.

Go forth and plan with Joy.

This article is part of the content for “Leadership and Realising our Dream: Dipping into the Wishing Well”, a course devised by David Ward and available through Gateway Professional Development Training.

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