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Five Steps to Crafting Your Business Future

“Ok Skipper!”

Who...me?

“Yep, you! Where are we going? Where are we off to this year? In fact, where is the first stop?”

Simple question. How would you answer?

Would you jump on a boat, knowing that it is safe, and the skipper is capable, head out through the river into the ocean - yet not knowing your destination or that the skipper had a structured plan to get there? Maybe? Maybe not.

It has been said if you're not clear with the direction you'd like to take your business and life, you will have to accept anything that shows up. Now this is not necessarily bad, it's whether it works for you or it doesn't. Here are five points to help you clarify and create the next financial year in your business.

One: Take some time to become clear

Clarity precedes mastery. Having a clear picture of your outcome (direction) is the first step to accomplishing the results that you'd like in your business and life. The more specific and clearer you are, the more likely that it will take place. So, take out a paper and pen. Write down five specific things that you are celebrating in 12 months' time. Now write down another five. Keep going until you 'feel' completely happy and excited about everything you have written.

Again, be specific. For example: More profit versus a \$100,000 in net profit, after paying ourselves our salary.

Refine your list until it becomes crystal clear, in fact, you may wish to use the following SMART acronym.

S – Specific. The more detail (vs. general) the better.

M – Meaningful (has purpose) and is aligned with your vision.

A – Ambitious (be unreasonable). Stretch yourself.

R – Really? Do you really believe it is possible?

T – Timeframe. When is it to be achieved by?

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Two: Create your next steps

Once you have clarity on the outcomes, break your journey onto quarters (like a football game).

- ✓ Work backwards from your outcome.
- ✓ Create a list of ingredients/priorities required to produce your outcome.
- ✓ Ask yourself, “If I only have one project to work on, what would I choose?” Then choose the next most important, and then the next.
- ✓ Add a timeframe along each side of them.
- ✓ List out the people you require the support of.
- ✓ Grab your schedule and allocate 1-2 hours every week to work on the above.

Timeframes and objectives can be flexible versus rigid, as your life can change on a daily/weekly basis, however, the knowing that you have some objectives and timeframes is a great starting point.

Three: Monitor your progress

A question for you. Is your life/business on track, or off track? Right now, reading this report – is it helping you stay on track? Now, ideally, a skipper would, once they leave shore, review their sail plan and course regularly to ensure that the boat is on track for its destination. If off track, they would make the required adjustments to ensure their craft is back on track. The more often they ‘check in’, the more like they are to keep heading in the right direction. As a suggestion, create a Scorecard that you can use to monitor progress – both financial and non-financial.

Your ‘whole’ life is similar. As a suggestion, set time aside weekly to ‘check in’ and adjust your course accordingly. If you wait 12-months (or 12-years) you may not like where you end up!

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Four: Innovate regularly

Are you green and growing or ripe and rotten? What this means is; are you consistently challenging the way you operate your business? The seven 'most dangerous' words in business are: *"That's the way we've always done it."* If things are working, great! However, it doesn't mean they can't be improved. Innovation in small business is not just about technology; it's about continually asking the question, *"How can we serve our customers better than we did last week/ last month/ last year?"*

Be proactive. Be forward and future thinking about your industry. It will arrive sooner than you think.

Five: Be passionate or change

Let's not muck around. Business can be rough and tough. Really tough. Some days can test every fibre of your 'being'. Is the payoff worth it for you?

Everyone is different and handles the pressures of business differently. Some thrive and others are just not suited to playing the game. Nothing is good or bad. It either works for you or it doesn't. Just because you have been in your business and the industry you are in for 1 year, 10 years, 30 years, etc. does not mean that you need to continue. Life is too short to be heading down a path that you are not excited about. You can change. You can alter direction. You get to choose. If you choose to stay, it's worthwhile remembering - attitudes are infectious. Is yours worth catching?

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