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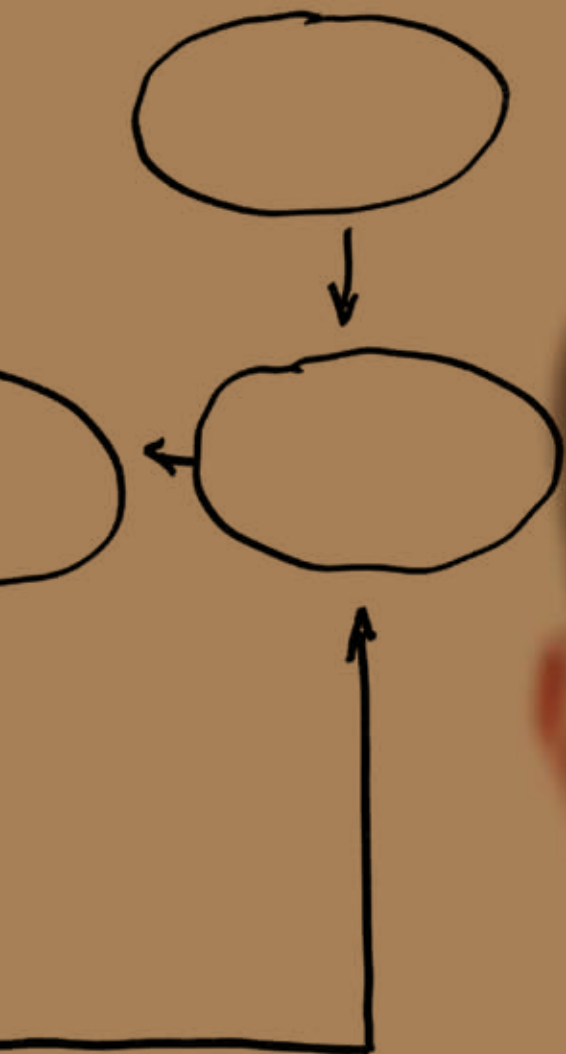
# agency sales<sup>®</sup> magazine

april 2009 • vol.39, no.04

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# VISION QUEST

MAPPING OUT A DYNAMIC BUSINESS GROWTH PLAN  
PAVES THE WAY TO ACCELERATED PERFORMANCE

EDITORIAL | JOE CALHOON



## JOE CALHOON

**Joe Calhoon** is the president of PriorityAdvantage — the smartest way to run a business. He has 25 years of experience working with business owners and business leaders who want to develop higher performing organizations. In addition to helping start more than 20 new business ventures, he has served 500 different organizations on four continents including 3M, Best Buy and Ritz Carlton Hotels. He is co-author of both **On the Same Page**, and **Prioritize!** For more information, visit [joecalhoon.com](http://joecalhoon.com) or call 816-285-8144.

Our world will never be the same. Recent economic and political events have created a new playing field for business success. In order to make the most of the current realities, leaders must adapt to the changing marketplace and engage the capacity of their people to achieve business results.

It all starts with a plan; better yet, a **Dynamic Business Growth Plan**.

Developing a clear and simple plan will strengthen employee morale, increase productivity and improve profitability. This planning process won't take long. The plan will fit on a single page. It will be easy to communicate. It will keep your team on track and, most important, it will be easy to adjust as the economy improves. An effective planning system is the most reliable predictor of business growth — it keeps everyone on the same page and ultimately leads to higher performance.

To develop your plan and get your team on the same page, start by answering the following questions:

**What are you trying to build? (Vision)** **Vision** is your desired future state. You must look beyond the current realities to your more promising future. A vision ignites people's passion and harnesses their unique strengths to grow the business.

Here are the basic elements of a useful vision statement:

- What business you're in.
- What products and services you offer.
- Whom you're trying to serve.
- The scope of operations (local to global).

If you don't agree on these elements, it will be difficult for your team to make meaningful progress.

Here is the vision of Apple Computer: "Apple is committed to bring the best personal computing products and support to students, educators, designers, scientists, engineers, business persons and consumers in over 140 countries around the world."

**What is your purpose? Why do you exist? (Mission)** **Mission** is purpose. Mission motivates. The root word of motivation is "motive." Motive is why you do what you do.

Unfortunately, many mission statements are too long; they make a good cure for insomnia. A mission statement works best when it's short and clear. It should fit on a t-shirt; it should be ten words or less.

The mission of Federal Express is: "The world on time."

Here is an effective way to define your mission. Simply ask the question, "Why not just shut this organization down, close the doors and sell off the assets?" This gets to the core of why you're in business — your mission.

### How will you treat each other moving forward? (Values)

**Values** define code of conduct. An appropriate set of values defines what's acceptable and what's not acceptable in the way you treat one another. Values build strong relationships and create high-trust organizations. With a strong set of values, employees will often receive greater acceptance, appreciation and respect at work than in many other areas of their life.

Lou Holtz is recognized as one of the world's most successful college football coaches. He understands adversity. He has never taken over a winning team, yet within two years, every one of his teams played in a Bowl game. Many attribute his success and the character of his players to these three values — do what's right, do your best and treat others as you want to be treated.

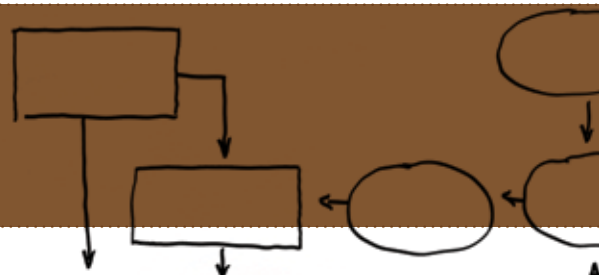
Vision, mission and values are long term; they don't change much over time.

### How will you measure progress? (Objectives)

**Objectives** are the numbers that measure progress. Think of the dashboard in your car. Your business needs a dashboard, a set of indicators that tell you how your business is doing.

GE's Jack Welch is widely recognized as the most effective executive of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He said, "Too often we

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measure everything and understand nothing. The three most important things you need to measure in a business are customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and cash flow.” Those are your three core measures.

In fact, businesses that obsessively focus on meeting the needs of those three stakeholders — customers, employees and owners (CEO) —while developing their leaders are 756 times more profitable than comparison companies (according to a study reported in *Corporate Culture and Performance*).

**What are the categories of work to be done? (Strategies) Strategies** are the high-level choices you make that determine the course you’re going to follow. Usually you will have between three to seven categories of work to be done in the next year or so.

There are many ways to write strategies, but here’s a method that is simple and effective.

- Define your strategic categories. They might be called marketing, human resources, innovation, productivity, etc.
- Start with a verb and clearly define the end in mind.
- Use the words “by” or “through.”
- Identify your strategic choices.

This marketing strategy helped Wilson Auctioneering double their revenues in one year — “Reposition Wilson Auctioneering through television advertising and focus on bigger deals.”

Larry Grill, vice president of Corporate Services for Alabama Power, recently explained his leadership philosophy. “The further you go up the corporate chart, the greater your responsibility to serve others. Unfortunately, many leaders lose the ego battle and undermine their own effectiveness. Leadership is best described as servant leadership.”

Leaders serve the employees who serve the customers, which improves the bottom line. This is a winning strategy for any business.

**Who will do what by when? (Priorities) Priorities** translate strategies into results. Priorities define who needs to do what by when.

Unfortunately, many business plans are lengthy documents that sit on a shelf collecting dust. Almost every plan is missing the most important element: priorities.

Priorities start with a verb, end with a date and have something measurable in between. Priorities include problems to solve, goals to achieve or capacities to develop. For example: “Finish vehicle maintenance by 12/19/08.” “Sell \$200K in new business by 11/28/08.” “Complete marketing plan by 12/5/08.”

In closing, here are three principles that help leaders engage employees, accelerate growth and increase profits:

**No Involvement, No Commitment.** Involve your team to a greater extent as you move through the six elements. In other words, you want your team less involved in creating vision, more involved in creating strategies and priorities.

**Progress, Not Perfection.** Your plan does not have to be perfect for your team to make significant progress. You will reach a point when it is best to quit planning and start achieving.

**80/20 Principle.** Focus your team on the 20% of your activities that produce 80% of your results. Keep asking, “What is most important?” Then, do that.

Only 12% of businesses have a business growth planning process in place. By answering these six questions and getting your team on the same page, you develop a significant competitive advantage. The key to higher performance is developing your Dynamic Business Growth Plan and consistently achieving your most important priorities. You will be building a more effective team and a stronger capacity to prosper in the years ahead. Now, go for it! 🚀