

## **GET YOUR IDEAS AND VISIONS RIGHT**

All businesses are started by somebody who had an idea or a vision. In fact it is not uncommon that the push to start a business comes "by accident". Maybe you started your business by accident. You may have lost your job or you "stumbled over" an idea or somebody told you about an idea. Also you might have had a dream for years and while saving money your dream became increasingly clear and now you are in business.

Perhaps you took over the business from your family or friends.

Whatever the reason, you are now responsible for the future of the business and for yourself, so you have to get your visions right. Where do you see the business five years from now? Why do you see it there? What will it take to bring it there? What can go wrong? All are relevant questions to ask and to answer.

You are in a rapidly developing economy, nothing endures but change. You must constantly update your visions and plan the future of your business carefully. No matter how many alligators you are fighting at the moment you must still keep your goals in sight.

Maybe you are quite happy with the way your business is moving or perhaps it is like routine, for you tomorrow will probably be like yesterday, so no need to change? Be careful, things will change and if you are not set to cope with change, you will be out of business sooner than you think.

New methods, new technology or new markets found by your competitors before you find them, is a constant threat to you if you fear it. However, if you see change as an opportunity you might be heading in the right direction.

All major inventions are made by unhappy people! If Edison had been happy with the paraffin lamp, he would probably not have invented electrical light! Still, most new ventures are merely copies of something already existing. If you run a provision store or a neighbourhood restaurant your ideas are likely to be market driven. You assume there is a market for your idea.

If you have invented something new, or found a way to improve on something existing, your business might be technology driven. You find that you have a better product than others.

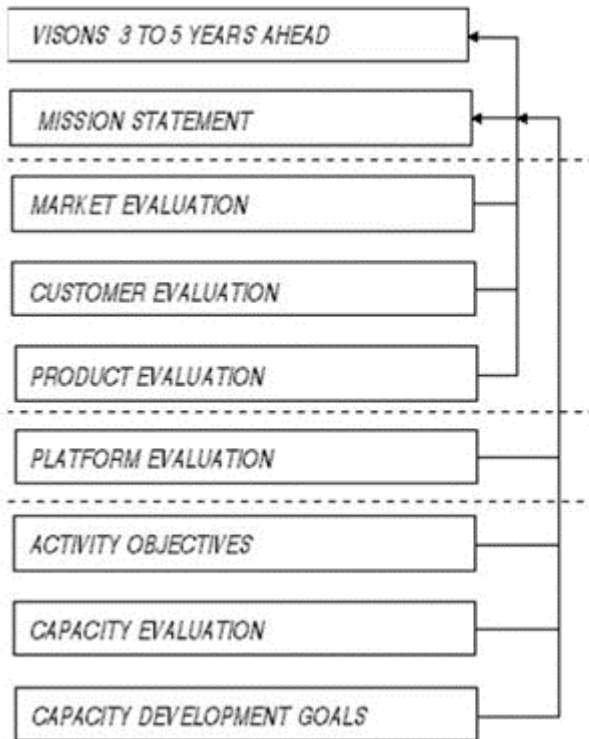
### **In short there are only two types of business that will survive:**

- There is a market - I must find what the market needs
- I have a "product" - I must find a market

Unfortunately there are a large number of small as well as big businesses who have not yet discovered that their market is declining or that their product is no longer attractive - unless they change, they will disappear.

If you are certain that you either have identified a market (or is already serving it) or that you have a product which is attractive to the market go ahead!

## Model for strategic visioning



How to develop visions?

Information and ingenuity are a must. No product or service in this world will survive if it does not meet somebody's need or wish. Therefore, before you waste time on reinventing the wheel look at the above model for strategic visioning.

***Where is your business today? (Platform)***

***Are your product(s) attractive?***

***Do you already have customers and are they willing to buy more?***

***Do you have competitors and how fierce or powerful are they?***

***Are there customers who do not know about you, can you reach them?***

***What capacity do you have? (Money, Facilities, Staff, Information, etc.)***

***What do you need to do to survive and grow?***

Discuss your ideas with as many people as possible. Seek professional advice. Listen to your customers, ask them what they want. Visit trade fairs and exhibitions. Read trade magazines. Keep a list of ideas, no matter how crazy they might seem at present, one day they might prove feasible. Do not be afraid of creative people; Anyone who gets lots of ideas will eventually get a good one. Do not fear mistakes; Somebody who never made a mistake probably never made anything!

Think of: "What, which is not possible today, would - if it became possible - radically change your business?"

Creativity is not quality - it is quantity! The more ideas you get, the more likely it is that one of them will be a success.

Make long lists of ideas, get your staff, family, friends or anybody else to help you make the

list long (this is brainstorming). Do not discuss anything on the list until you cannot add anymore. The trick is to have as many ideas as possible before you start analysing them! Ignore anyone who says: "Yes, but...." or: "I don't think that is possible, because...." They are idea-killers and destructive for creativity.

If you are already successful in your business, look for what you can do even better, cheaper, faster or nicer. Involve your customers and staff in innovation. Look at your competitors and see what you can do better than them.

Remember that it is easy to copy products and prices but much more difficult to copy good customer service.

### **About Quality**

- There is hardly anything in this world, which somebody cannot make a little more poor or sell a little cheaper
- People who look at price only are the legal victims of such persons

### **About Price**

- It is unwise to pay too much, but it is worse to pay too little
- When you pay too much - all you can lose is money - that's all
- When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because what you bought was not what you needed and could not serve your purpose
- In ordinary business it is impossible to pay little and get more - no way around it.
- If you accept the lowest bid, you'd better put some money aside to insure against the risk you are taking, and if you can do that, then you could afford the better product anyway.

### **Summary**

- Constantly think ahead and ask: "What can we improve?"
- List all your ideas, no matter how crazy they are
- Gather as much information about you market, customers and competitors as possible
- Involve your staff in the creative process
- Put your visions in writing

*(Source: Take the Lead)*