

## Published TMG Articles

As seen in the Asheville Citizen Times WNC Business section.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING IS CRITICAL TO FUTURE SUCCESS**

Strategic Planning is an attractive “buzz word” for business leaders these days. Successful companies make strategic planning a priority every few years-sometimes even more frequently. Should your small business have a strategic plan? OF COURSE. Business activity without a clear plan is destined for problems, perhaps even failure. Smart business leaders plan strategically for the future.

There are, naturally, many different approaches to this process. Stripped to the basic outline, most options will look something like this:

- A. Vision
- B. Mission
- C. Internal and External Assessments
- D. Long Term Goals and Objectives
- E. Action Plan (Business Plan)

For today's purpose, I only want to focus on the first item on the list: Vision. Having a clear, powerful vision of the future is the first step to success. How can you get anywhere, if you don't know where you are going?

I was talking with Chris Young the owner of Office Environments in Asheville about how his business had become so successful. He was selected as “Outstanding Small Business Leader” for his category in 2003. He told me that the secret was that he had a “big vision, not just a narrow vision”. He knew exactly what he wanted his business to become when he started with it in 1991. He believed that the company vision began with, “Building Trust and Relationships”. This leadership brought his company ten-fold growth since its beginning. Good planning begins with a strong vision.

One of the great business books over the past 5 years has been, Good to Great by Jim Collins. In it, he quotes George Rathmann, co-founder of the biotechnology company, Amgen. Rathmann says, “...when you set your objectives for the year, you record them in concrete. You can change your plans through the year, but you never change what you measure yourself against. You never just focus on what you've accomplished for the year; you focus on what you've accomplished relative to exactly what you said you were going to accomplish-no matter how tough the measure.”

Your organization must decide where it will go, then focus on that result. Keeping a focus on the end result will help motivate you, inspire you, and help you know what you should be doing when the next steps seem to be unclear. Mr. Collins says, “You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties...”

Your company needs a vision. A statement of who you are, who you want to become. In fact, it is a statement of who you WILL BE. So, aim high. Dream. Make your vision attainable, of course. But, create this vision so that it will move you, encourage you when you need it and be truly worthwhile when it becomes reality.

Can your place of business actually be inspiring? Motivating? Moving? Do you dare to dream big? Yes you can. But it begins with your vision.