

To Maximize Business Success, You Need a Guiding Star

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Most, if not all, executives will agree that there are too few hours and too many decisions to tackle in a day. The majority of an organization's decisions often feed into one goal: to drive revenue. But simply targeting revenue is neither growth-oriented nor future-forward. That's why it is absolutely critical for companies to establish a Guiding Star to guide their way forward. In fact, establishing a clear roadmap has motivated many of the businesses I assist to identify and prioritize goals, distill high-level initiatives into actionable takeaways, and boost focus, collaboration, and engagement.

Why every company needs a Guiding Star

I have seen countless examples of organizations working at lightning speed with lean resources — with no strategic blueprint for how to tackle the coming year or even the coming quarter. Operating without a Guiding Star creates several roadblocks to developing a cohesive growth plan, which only exacerbates existing challenges, including:

1. Prioritizing short-term tactics

Many companies continue to craft their marketing strategies by iterating the previous month's tactics. While that approach may yield short-term gains, it leaves little room to pivot, track goals, and effectively measure success.

2. Overlooking the big picture

Getting entrenched in the day-to-day often derails companies from establishing and aligning to big-picture goals. By defining key milestones, a Guiding Star fuels opportunities for success at every level.

3. Leading without focus

While innovation and agile planning are critical to a company's growth, an influx of ideas and initiatives — particularly in a fast-paced culture — can cloud an organization's vision and quickly hinder progress.

4. Accepting friction

I've partnered with teams that work well together and teams that do not. A solid game plan helps minimize friction by clarifying responsibilities and encouraging individuals, as well as teams, to set clear, manageable goals.

How to establish your Guiding Star

Over the years, I've recommended several strategies for creating a Guiding Star that have optimized my clients' businesses. It takes time and effort to create a strategic focus, but once you do, you will want to make sure that your key projects are designed

to achieve it. Let's take a closer look at a roadmap to help you establish your Guiding Star.

1. Step away from the day-to-day to focus on what will drive success

First, ask yourself: What does success look like and how will you get there? If you are launching a new product, retaining your customers or building a new partnership – to name a few, break down the overarching goals into bite-sized chunks that will deliver results. My clients do so by identifying their Guiding Star and the components that will lead them to success – and by revisiting progress monthly. This allows them to be proactive instead of reactive, and to course correct early and efficiently when necessary.

2. Assess what you should not be doing

I know it sounds simple to focus on an important strategy, but it's very easy for a business to veer off course and scramble to get back on track. I ask clients to rate the importance of an initiative that could drive success on a ten-point scale. This forces them to identify their pain points and decide whether a goal is still relevant. When new initiatives and ideas come in, we can assess how important they are on that ten-point scale and stay focused.

3. With a clear plan, carve out time to talk with your team regularly

We all know that setting goals and communicating with your team is key, but actual implementation can always be a challenge. That's why it's important to have a simple plan with clear metrics and targets. I've found that creating a simple 1-3 page document can keep everyone focused and on track, build collaboration, encourage thought-sharing across departments, and increase your organization's ability to create value.

4. Integrate the Guiding Star into every facet of the business

When you're focused on success – and the steps to achieving that success, your plan of action may feel easier. Once the components are divided across the team, you will be able to see the Guiding Star in every facet of the business. With one of my clients, a Guiding Star helped eliminate friction, clarify roles, and solidify a plan focused on client delivery.

5. Celebrate at clear junctures to remind yourself and your team that you're on your way

Make it a point to acknowledge important milestones – and to celebrate your team for meeting each one. From a neuroscience perspective, recognition makes people feel valued and motivated to perform at their peak and to work towards shared goals, which drives success in your organization.

A Guiding Star is an important and effective means to sharpen your team's focus, increase retention, amplify productivity and profitability, and position your business for sustained growth. While some organizations may view it as a low priority, creating

a game plan now is a wise investment in your business's future – one that could save you valuable time and resources down the road.