Having a Great Plan Isn’t Enough to Grow Your Business. Here’s What You Need to Focus on Instead.

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If you’re familiar with the Antoine de Saint-Exupéry saying: “A goal without a plan is just a wish,” you’ve probably only heard the TL;DR version. Here is the full version:

> *A dream written down with a date becomes **a goal**. A goal broken down into steps becomes **a plan**. A plan backed by **action** makes your dreams come true.*

This is why your plan isn’t going to be enough. A plan in itself is just a piece of paper or a bunch of 0s and 1s that make up words. Luckily, I have had experience with failing and succeeding in business (more of the latter), and these are the five things I focus on to turn my plans into realities.

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1. Focus

Focusing on one primary goal per quarter is crucial. As much as we like to brag that we can multitask, we can’t. When was the last time you saw a population that throws 10 balls in the air and catch them before they hit the ground? Exactly. A much better skill is learning how to take all the tasks at hand and

realizing which one will have the most impact.

2. Transparency

More specifically, internal company transparency. Does your team understand the finances of the company? Do they understand what a burn rate is and that revenue doesn't mean you are profitable? Internal company transparency means educating your team on how a business works and bringing them into the inner circle that used to be reserved for leadership only. If you add stock options on top of that, you can trigger an ownership mindset that makes your team your partner.

3. Accountability

Now that your team has become your partner in success (and failure), they need to be held to a different standard, and being accountable is key. There may be 3-10 people responsible for a priority (remember, only one per quarter) but there is one person at the helm, or what I call the champions, that makes sure everyone does what they need to do. This person needs to understand something, though. They aren't "the boss." A lot of times when someone is given this type of responsibility, they believe that they can just shout orders and they only take credit when they succeed and blame others for "not listening" when they fail. That isn't the case. Accountability goes both ways.

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4. Hiring

This is probably the hardest part of the process. Your company is only as good as your weakest employee. When you are small (under 50 employees), you don't have the luxury of hand-holding – you either find a team that learns quickly or one that is already experienced. Once again, I suggest the latter.

You will thank me later. Understand that salary will be your biggest investment and you should treat it just like that – an investment.

Hire *fast* and fire quick, especially if you are smaller. Yes, I know this is not the usual battle cry ("Hire slow…"), but you have to realize a day in the life of a small, growing business is like a month for an established one. You need to trust your gut or trust someone else's when hiring. I also strongly suggest you set expectations with new hires to understand they are in a trial period and that they need to step up. This may seem harsh, but as you grow, you can be a little more lenient and mentor with a softer touch.

5. Stay healthy

It's important to stay healthy financially, physically and mentally. Create an environment that endorses the importance of all three. Physical and financial are usually easier concepts to grasp and fix (I said easier, not easy), but mental is a tough nut to crack. Just saying there is an open-door policy is great and must be said, but sometimes that isn't enough. Keep in mind that the time you spend doing one thing – for example, focusing on revenue – usually prevents you from focusing on your employees' well-being. Finding the balance is sometimes not worth the effort when you are smaller but should definitely be on the table as you grow and can afford to implement a mental health check system.

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Did you notice a trend here about plans? There was only one point that spoke directly to taking action, and the rest was to help others be effective at their duties – which has always made me think about Antoine's quote. I always wanted to add the following to it …

> *But remember, a dream is nothing without someone to*

appreciate it with you

Without your team running smoothly, a plan can’t take action. And if you really want to make it big, you aren’t going to do it yourself. Don’t you agree?

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