

# SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL

\$2.00

July 19, 2004

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## Vision Creation Helps Propel Businesses

**J**ACK Welch, former CEO of General Electric, has stated, "Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion." Clear visions have helped shape and propel impressive companies. For example, Fred Smith, founder of Federal Express, had a vision that packages could be delivered around the United States by the next morning. Disney wanted to make families smile. Microsoft wanted to create beneficial software that would compel people to have a computer on every desk at work, home and school. Coke wanted to have its refreshing beverages within the reach of every person in the world. Dominos wanted you to have hot, delicious pizza delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less or it was free.

Jonathan Swift said, "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible." Don't sell vision creation short. You must learn to understand, value, and appreciate the essential role of an exciting vision for a healthy and growing business. Start thinking and planning more. Escape the tyranny of the urgent and focus on one of the most important tasks you can do – create an exciting future destiny and direction for your business.

Effective visions also help lead you, the leader – keeping you motivated and challenged.

"Creating and living an empowering mission statement has a significant impact on the way we spend our time," said Stephen Covey in his book, "First Things First."

"When we talk about time-management, it seems ridiculous to worry about speed before direction, about saving minutes when we may be wasting years. Vision is the fundamental force that drives everything else in our lives."

Let me state a warning. Fully realize that your employees must buy into you as a leader before they buy into your vision. They must believe and trust in you to believe and trust in your vision. You may need to do some repair work to establish yourself as a caring and com-



GUEST  
COLUMNIST

**JONATHAN  
GOLDHILL**

For buy-in later, seek the input of others now. Include your employees, customers, suppliers, distributors and business advisers in the process. Spend a week or two gathering input from these stakeholders about your company's direction, strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. If they do not participate in this creation phase, they will not want to participate in the vision implementation phase. Also, study your industry trends and your current and emerging competitors. On all fronts, do your homework.

After listening to and studying others, be certain to listen to your inner voice and gut. While other's input is critical, know that the buck stops with you. You are ultimately responsible for the vision of your business. Your vision ultimately becomes your company's direction, objectives, priorities, strategies, and tactics. It is that magical and that important.

Therefore, get away from the daily interruptions and go into your CEO cave. This could be your home office, at a coffee shop, at a park, library or beach. Spend two to three days forming or crystallizing a picture of what you want

petent leader before you start creating and selling your vision. You will need to connect with their hearts before connecting with their heads.

### Seeking input

To create a new vision or sharpen and update an existing one, allow yourself a month. See yourself as the Chief Listening Officer during this early phase. You cannot build a vision or business on your own.

the business to look like in one year, three years, and five years. See things the way they can be. Dream the big dream; unleash your spirit. See the business in your heart that you truly want to create. A bold, daring, super-sized vision, even if only partially achieved, yields greater rewards than a small, wimpy vision fully achieved.

You must see things the way they are now in order to visualize the way they can be. You must build from a foundation of realism, acknowledging your company's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. However, once you gather the facts, let go and let her rip.

Having trouble thinking big? Ask yourself bigger questions!

- Why does our enterprise exist?
- If our business were shut down, what would be missing in this world?
- What is our crusade? What could be our crusade?
- How do we engage the hearts, minds and souls of our employees?
- How can we make our company great, meaningful and different?
- How can we change our industry, community, and even the world?
- How can we measurably improve the lives of customers?
- How can we make our employees and their families' lives better and more fulfilling?

After listening to others for two weeks and thinking deeply yourself for two weeks, a vision for your company should be coming into focus. Bottom line, this vision should help your employees and yourself reacquire the fire and passion for your company's direction and purpose.

*Jonathan Goldhill is CEO of The Growth Coach, a business coaching and consulting firm dedicated to helping entrepreneurs, and managers grow their organizations. He can be reached at (818) 716-8826 or emailed at Jon@TheGrowthCoachLA.com.*