

Who's got the Map?

The people you employ are odd- they are not like you! You started your own business to be your own boss. They decided to work for you because they choose to be employed and they quite like knowing that someone has "got the map". Will you disappoint them? Answer these questions and find out.

Your Plan

- If you are a start-up or a walk-out, don't just rely on the funding document that your accountant wrote. It will be out of date before you have made your next hire and won't deal properly with the key internal issues and systems that will need to be put in place.
- If you are past the start-up phase, the initial plan will have changed out of all recognition and probably needs a complete rewrite.

The best plans have four key elements to them:

1. Financial

- Your Budget will be the cornerstone to the plan, so is it robust, comprehensive and does it look far enough ahead?
- Does it map out and quantify what the business will look like in say three years time, (size, market positioning, sales mix, direction and so forth)?
- Is it a route map, which you can communicate to your managers and of which they can take ownership. Go "ground-up not just "top down".

2. Brand Positioning/Marketing

- Can you describe what your company is like in 5 seconds and then in 40 seconds
- a sense of belonging and be pride in the business they work for when no-one seems to know what it stands for?
- Position you company externally and then you will be able to make sense of the internals.

3. Organisational

- Employees are surprisingly conservative; they like hierarchy, rules, staff handbooks, career paths. They don't like inconsistency, confusion and chaos. So what's the answer?
- Organisation charts, role descriptions, appraisal systems, rules on overtime payments- all that stuff, but administered compassionately, clearly, consistently and with humour.

4. Corporate Culture

- A strong corporate culture can be one of your most effective weapons in an unforgiving marketplace.
- It will enable you to harness the aspirations of those who want to be involved, alongside you, in the management of the business.

Communicate the plan. It has to be in everyone's head not just yours and let them contribute to it. Tell your people what to do with authority and then you will breed a culture of brave, thoughtful decision making. Do nothing, hoping things will work out fine and then your staff will leave you for a competitor where they can find the leadership that they are looking for.

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