When Do You Need a Vision Tune-up?

By Bob Norton

Helping You Break Through Barriers You Can't See

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When Do You Need A Vision Tune-up?

Every business needs a vision, some more complete and complex than others! Certainly a local dry-cleaner does not need to spend a lot of time on this, but most businesses that are large, or want to be, do need a complete corporate vision. If you have not read "The 11 Elements of A Successful Vision" please do this now before continuing, as this is the definition of a vision I will be using here and it is far more complex than most people might think. In my view, a vision is really everything about the business, not just the product idea and its market, as many might define it. A vision must include the strategy and tactical levels of the five major disciplines (sales, finance, operations, product development and marketing).

Businesses go through many levels, or plateaus, as they grow and evolve. During different periods they may sprint or go sideways depending on many internal and external factors. Either way, you need to have a vision to use as the basis for most major decisions, but if you are going sideways, your vision is either wrong or incomplete. The diagram below shows the 'S' curve that can be viewed as a company's growth cycle, with each inflection the result of many factors including management's vision, personal limits and many external economic and industry factors become apparent. You will need to revisit and tune-up your vision at least annually, but at each of the 'X"s in the diagram below, this process needs to be repeated to address both internal and external changes. The changes may be at the macro level or even at the micro level that can be amplified over time to cause major problems.
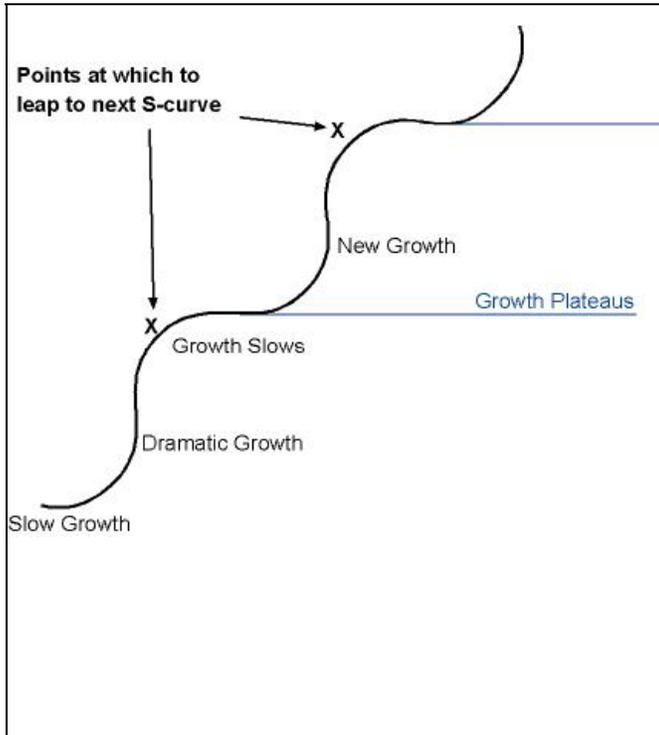
Defining A "Vision"

A vision is the <u>design of everything</u> needed for the business to work, <u>combined</u> with the <u>experience</u> to know it can really work that way in the real world.

So a vision is actually a very complex model that can be run in someone's head, which takes into account all the major business disciplines, and thousands of real world practical factors that are only available through experience. I think this is a pretty good working and practical definition of a vision, and there is no doubt that having one can greatly increase your chances of success.

The graph above can represent revenue, rate of growth or many other measures of success that are monitored by your company. Evolution and updates to the vision should happen at least annually, more frequent than that, would mean that the vision is not well-formed and may need a total reset with additional work and experience involved. New information comes in every day and a vision is a "living and breathing thing" which will undergo many small changes as this happens, but if you find yourself changing course in a big way daily, weekly or monthly your vision is not complete or needs more work upfront. You may want to bring in an expert to help who is objective, experienced and can help stabilize the vision.

Additionally, when you are not achieving key goals and metrics for the business, some analysis must be done on why not. A quick SWOT analysis may help identify problems or opportunities, as will a look at competitors and their market-share direction. If these

do no reveal why you cannot achieve reasonable goals of growth then a complete assessment of the vision is in order. More often than not some part of that vision is not clicking and it is probably obvious in what area, sales being the most common and visible, of course, but this may not be the root cause. Product development, market positioning and other strategic-level factors are probably involved too. The good news is that when you look at this level there are many adjustments you can make to improve the business. The tricky part is making sure any change in one area of the business is followed up by a close look at how it will impact all the other departments. In larger businesses this is done through good communications and trusting in senior people to know what to do. Sometimes a formula for disaster, unfortunately! In medium to smaller businesses it is usually the responsibility of the CEO and the senior-management team to understand all the implications of the change and see that appropriate changes are made.

An annual process to review your vision is a must. It is also a must when major changes happen in the market, or when key competitors shift direction, especially if they are larger players with significant market-share. However, if your vision and strategy are right, you should be a leader, not a follower and these outside factors will have much less impact. This is because a vision should be looking out several years and understanding the direction the market is taking. As Wayne Gretsy once said, when asked why he was so much better than other hockey players, "Because I skate to where the puck will be, not where it is". Anticipation can help in any endeavor. I am not saying major changes

should happen each year; adjustments should be minor and always done in 'real-time' during the year when significant factors change. It is crucial to run this vision model in your head regularly and be able to recognize when factors should have an impact. This is more art and experience, than science and is also something you can only learn by doing.

Appendix - Other Products For CEOs, Entrepreneurs and C-Level Executives To Help Grow Your Business More Rapidly

C-Level Enterprises, Inc. offers a series of unique books as part of titled "The Secrets of a Serial Entrepreneur^{TM}. These books are all written by Bob Norton and are designed to be used at key points in a company's development life cycle, and throughout the development of the company. They are <u>a great alternative to high-price consulting services</u> from business launch experts and will greatly increase any entrepreneur's chances of success. They provide proven frameworks for success, developed by Bob Norton over 15 years as a CEO and 25 years as a serial entrepreneur, to help break through some of the most common and practical traps that growing businesses fall in to virtually all the time; if they have not grown a business before to this size.

   The entire series can be seen at **http://www.CLevelEnterprises.com/products.htm** if you are online go there for the most up-to-date information now. Otherwise you can read below. The Books cover the business development steps: Design, Launch, Hire and Manage. And ideally should all be read in that order.

Books and Tapes For CEOs, Entrepreneurs and C-Level Executives To Help Grow Your Businesses More Rapidly and Develop Long-term Competitive Advantage

These books are all written by Bob Norton, a serial entrepreneur for over 25 years and a CEO for more than 15 years. Mr. Norton is one of the leading authorities in the world on entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and growing businesses rapidly. He has participated in eight startup companies, grown two to over $100 million in sales and several have dominated their respective markets. He has also worked for two multi-billion dollar corporations running product development efforts. His experience goes across all size companies, and many types of businesses in various industries. During his career Mr. Norton has helped created over $1 billion in new shareholder value just while at those companies. Mr. Norton provides expertise on growing small and medium size companies more rapidly using eleven different proprietary tools and methodologies for business design, development and optimization, which he has developed over the last fifteen years. Many ideas are also contributed from over 1,000 business books in his personal library. He also runs the premier CEO and Entrepreneur Boot Camp in the U.S. today, which is design to cut years off the learning curve of CEOs and entrepreneurs and turn them into world-class CEOs. This exclusive event teaches practical business design and optimization systems in an intensive 3-day training program for any CEO or entrepreneur.

Mr. Norton has appeared on CNBC, Good Morning America and many other regional and national media like Inc. magazine. He provides advice to entrepreneurs and CEOs through consulting, speaking, writing and seminars. He frequently speaks at corporations, associations, and universities on business topics.

These books are targeted at particular problems and stages of development where early-stage ventures commonly encounter critical issues while moving from raw startup with an idea to becoming an established company. They are guaranteed to improve any

business's chances of success dramatically. They can be downloaded immediately and the ideas and systems put into action the same day. Unlike hardcover books, that need to be a certain size to justify the printing, distribution and retail markups, these books will not have lots of redundant information, essentially showcasing the same basic ideas five different ways. They are packed with totally unique content that comes from the experience of a real serial entrepreneur, not just an author who did some academic research, but practical advice and systems for CEOs and entrepreneurs proven to work over two decades. The philosophies and systems used in each are compatible so that, as a set, they will create a framework for successful and rapid business growth.

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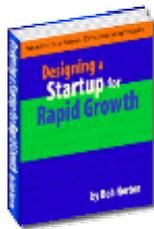
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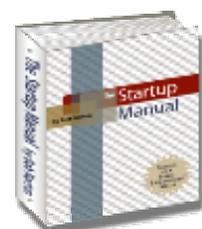
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