

## INTRODUCTION

I have owned my own business for more than 25 years. I could not have asked for a better formal education. I began a tree service while still in high school and absolutely loved being the boss. Unfortunately, I was not a “born” entrepreneur, nor even a good one. Fortunately, I wanted to be. After school, I would go door to door selling, and I eventually became a good salesperson. Long before I could afford it, I hired a consulting firm for \$12,000 to teach me the financial workings of a company. I became fascinated with how the profit and loss statement reflected each activity, and how the balance sheet told the history of the business. Since nothing came to me naturally, I sought out every opportunity to learn, and much to the chagrin of my employees, experimented with my business like a mad scientist in a lab.

When enthusiasm alone no longer carried the business, I studied every book and tape on marketing the library stocked. I worked from sun-up to sundown to make sure the business ran smoothly for my employees.

Once my business became successful, I shifted my focus to making an even bigger difference in the lives of others. I became a student of the teachings of Napoleon Hill, Stephen Covey, Tony Robbins, Brian Tracy, Jim Rohn, Peter Drucker and many others. I read the biographies of the great men and women of history to capture the essence of their successes.

This book presents the best of what I know, and the best of what I gleaned from these great business masters, which is that those who make the greatest difference in this world are inspired by a significant vision. The importance of the vision is captured in this ancient verse: “Without a vision, the people perish.” And, while there might be many interpretations of the word “perish,” I think Jack Nicholson’s aging character in the movie

*“A vision without a task is a dream,  
a task without a vision is drudgery,  
a vision and a task are the hope of the world.”*

— ANONYMOUS SAYING FOUND ON A CHURCH

BUILT IN 1730, SUFFIX, ENGLAND

“About Schmidt,” summed it up well when he said, “When I die, and all who know me are gone, it will be like I never existed.”

The first purpose of this book is to clarify what a vision is, and help you write your own. Creating the vision is the most important activity a leader brings to a company. This is a leader’s first and highest contribution. If all we had to look forward to were lists of goals, plans and to-do’s, our passion for life and business would quickly fade. The vision is the beginning and the end of every business, career and life. It is the first and most conspicuous thread that runs through the lives of those who are remembered.

Another interesting point about your vision is that no one will hold you accountable for it. Usually, we are only held accountable for our obligations. In fact, there are those who will be more comfortable if you don’t have one. Therefore, only share your vision with those who you know will support you as you bring your vision to light. Just as it is difficult to maintain a vision that is attacked, there is nothing more energizing than finding enthusiastic support for it.

The second purpose of this book is to clarify what a mission is, and help you to write your own. A well-crafted and implemented mission is what prevents a man or woman of vision from going to his or her grave without having accomplished their purpose. The mission drives them and directs them, much like a Marine whose accomplishment and ultimate success can only be measured against his mission.

My mission and my hope are that by sharing these ideas, you will discover the best possible expression of your own vision and mission, ultimately revealing the reason you are here.

Steve Meisenheimer