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## **Lack of Strategic Direction**

### **So what is “Strategic Direction”?**

In simple terms it is the business plan; where you want the business to evolve to in a specific period of time, what specific goals you have set for the company and at a high level, how you intend to get there. That is, the initiatives (or steps) that you believe are going to need to be undertaken to support you achieving your goals. It can also be called a Vision Statement or you may have heard about putting a “stake in the ground” all of which say the same thing; Have a plan, follow it, be prepared to adjust it and execute it as well as you can.

As simple as this statement sounds, many businesses do not have or maybe have forgotten exactly what it is they wished to achieve when they first set out. Back then when you had all the ideas and knew what you wanted to achieve, things were easy because the sky was the limit. Now, you are in a different place. One where the reality of managing a business has replaced the unbridled exuberance that most people started out with. You now have many operational issues, a variety of people issues and generally technological issues, all of which can become a distraction from the bigger picture issues.

Most people attend work each day and do what they do because it becomes routine and more habit than anything else. When this happens, and it does everywhere, the real challenge is to recognise it and re-acquaint your people with your company's major objectives. Otherwise, your people will continue to concentrate on issues that they think are important, even though their actual value to the company is less than minimal. So the extra effort you need to put into ensuring your people are focussed on the key goals of the company is not really extra effort at all. In fact, it is very smart management. Once your people slip into “small issue resolution mode”, you will find there are many more fires to put out simply because there are more issues. People often concentrate on issues they know they can solve, rather than looking to stretch their abilities because it is easier. That is why it is vitally important that you keep your people focused on the key issues and why you need a plan, or strategic direction. You then allow your people the latitude to manage issues within their sphere of influence, and as a result the many fires that you have been concentrating on extinguishing can be handled by others. This then frees you up to re-focus on where the company needs to be in 1 - 3 and 5 years.

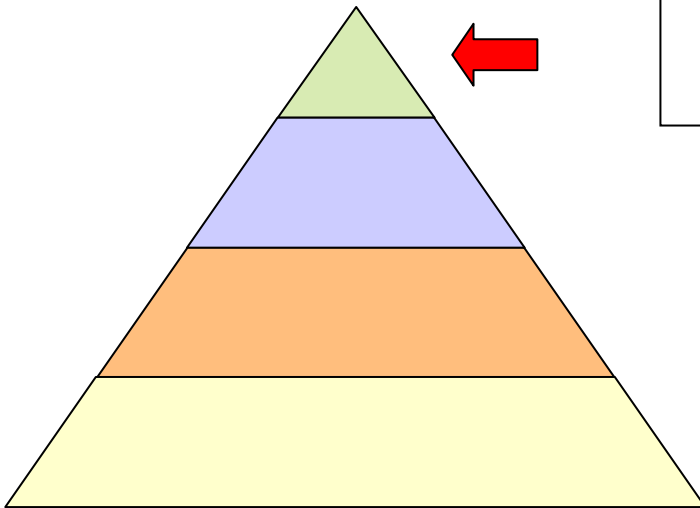
Whilst this is a very common issue, it is one that you need not fear, but rather use to your advantage. Treat it as a litmus test, whereby every 6 months or so you re-evaluate your priorities, to ensure you are still moving your business in the direction you believe is appropriate. Sometimes, the best thinking is done when you take a step back and take the emotion out of what you are doing. You cannot do this if your thinking is clouded by mundane issues.

### So what should you do?

Basically you need to go back to the reasons why you started the business in the first place. It may pay for you to consider the following areas when reminiscing.

- 1/ Your hopes for the business.
- 2/ Your dreams and what sort of lifestyle you wanted.
- 3/ What you saw success looking like.
- 4/ What you believed needed to be done to achieve it.

### “The 4 Layers To Success”



#### Level 1 - Setting Strategic Direction

- Setting Goals
- Identifying successful outcomes
- What are the key steps that need to occur?
- What will we need to get there?