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*Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.*



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## Prison Escapees Have a Plan, Do You?

*By Tina Ferguson*

Not too long ago, I started working with a wonderful client. This particular client wanted me to help them find new business, as in they wanted me to get new business for them. The client was comprised of extremely intelligent people, and I immediately liked them as professionals. After deciding to work together, we set expectations, and started to market their company and look for new business.

**Except there was one thing missing. A plan.**

I, as a seasoned marketer, know that a plan is worth its weight in gold. Even if it sits on the shelf and the company never looks at it again, it is valuable because it brings a company's executives and professionals together on one page so that all involved can get in the same book, writing the same chapter of history for the company. Akin to an orchestra trying to play a symphony with different sheet music, a well-developed plan can make beautiful music for a company, indeed!

And, we went forward. Against my wishes, I might add. I protested. I begged and pleaded to put the plan first. But, we were focused on "getting business" and there was no time for "writing a plan." We decided together that we would work in-tandem to write the plan and develop business. Both would take priority.

After five months, working part-time, the plan was complete and, an amazing thing began to happen. The focus of the plan drew the people together. With this focus, the people began to gain momentum, and with this, business started attracting to the company. It was amazing to watch it. Three days after finalizing the plan, a big invitation to present hit. Then another invitation came, and then another.

But I've seen this all before. It's nothing new. It's what follows focus. You attract what you focus on. Most companies focus on nothing, and thus they attract nothing. Or they focus on so many things that they attract little of what they want. But, when a company has a narrow, defined focus, the results are often quickly revealed.

In the years that I've been working with companies, I've discovered there are several reasons why companies are resistant to planning. They include:

- **Indecision** – This leader simply isn't sure what to do next. Fear grips this person and rather than make a mistake, they make no decision at all. Fear of the known is much better than the fear of the unknown. This leader says, "Hey, what if I mess things up?"
- **Control** – This leader can't give up control. He or she wants to make every decision from what kind of pencil to order to what kind of marketing campaign to roll out. The problem is that leaders can't do everything. This leader bottle necks the planning process until the year runs out and there's no time to plan. This leader says, "I'll get to it next year."
- **Hold Up** – This leader is the academic who excels in his field, but who probably doesn't know anything about marketing. He or she is worried that he or she is making the wrong decision and wants to "read up" on the subject before approving anything. Again, this leader bottle necks the planning process from a fear perspective. This leader says, "I need to get back to you on that."
- **Ruling by Committee** – This leader is the person who wants to do everything by committee. No one is in charge, but he or she is supportive of the group's decisions. The problem with this is that no one is in charge and no one is championing the planning effort. This leader says, "I support the committee's decisions."
- **Do It My Way** – This leader is the person who has been out in the trenches making it happen. He or she has a pretty good idea of how to make marketing happen and knows it won't happen in a vacuum. He or she establishes accountability in a marketing person and supports that person within the company. But, he or she thinks things need to happen his or her way. There's no room for individual change. This leader says, "I'm in this with you and I support you as long as you do it my way."
- **Complacency** – This is the enemy called average. Things are going well. Maybe things are going a little too well. This leader doesn't think he or she needs a plan because everything is going fine. After all, what could a plan do? Attract more of what we already have, perhaps? This leader says, "We've never had a plan before and things are great, why do we need one now?"
- **Scarcity** – When scarcity is at the helm, fear is in the driver's seat in a big way. All focus is on lack and how to just get business in the door. With this leader, there's no time for planning or anything outside of actual sales. This leader says, "Plans are nice, but we need business right now. We can plan later."

Knowing what type of leader you are can help you move toward embracing a better mindset so you can reap the rewards of focus. If fear or some of these other issues hold you back, acknowledge them and move forward toward what you really want for your company. By focusing on your goals, you can attract exactly what you want in fastest way possible! Give us a call so we can help you put this into motion for the rest of 2005. ■