

Staying Focused: Here's a Great Tool for Getting What You Want

written by Lori Jo Vest

If you want to reach your goals, it's time to put your vision in writing. If you write it down, you're more likely to hold yourself and your team accountable for reaching it. I use a technique called Mind Mapping that is a very simple, fabulous way to keep your ATTENTION on your INTENTIONS. After all, don't we all have things we want to do, positive changes we'd like to make? Then a few months go by – or maybe only a few weeks – and whoosh! Life takes over. Unless you keep your attention on them, even your best intentions won't produce any results.

As part of my management duties at the television studio, I do my best to keep the company running smoothly – monitor and enhance happiness of the customers and staff members, maintain our sales numbers where they need to be and help ensure that the programs we're producing for our customers are the best they can be.

There are times when it's incredibly challenging. I highly recommend the use of Mind Mapping as a tool for managing day-to-day issues and creating growth in business. (There's great info about it on Wikipedia under [Mind Mapping](#))

Here's my personal testimonial for the mind-mapping process.

There was a time when the company was faced with a particularly challenging quarter, during some of the most difficult that our business community had faced in several decades. As our management team began drilling down to see what we could do to improve things quickly, we ended up gathering around a big piece of poster board, brainstorming what we'd need to do to get what we wanted for the rest of the year.

The middle of the board was used to spell out our major goal: We wanted a stronger financial position. I wrote it in big letters with a circle around it – STRONGER FINANCIAL POSITION THIS YEAR. Then, we began talking through what would contribute to creating that vision.

SIDENOTE: Notice that we didn't simply say STRONGER FINANCIAL POSITION. Why? It would be too ambiguous. We needed this upturn to happen quickly and putting a time limit on it gave it more urgency.

Cash Flow was obviously something we were focused on – billing promptly, staying on top of collections and maximizing cost-efficiency were things that would contribute to cash flow. I picked a spot on the board and wrote those words with an arrow pointing back to the center goal of a STRONGER FINANCIAL POSITION THIS YEAR.

Sales and Marketing was another conspicuous area where we knew focus would create results. We talked about the strategies we could implement and wrote them in another area of the

poster, again with an arrow pointing back to that central goal of a STRONGER FINANCIAL POSITION THIS YEAR.

Other topics evolved as we talked through our vision for the year. Quality control, efficient operations, technology development and staff management all came up and found their spot on the poster. Once we felt we had talked through everything that would help us reach our vision for the year, we put the board away until our next weekly management meeting.

SIDENOTE: If you don't have weekly meetings with your senior managers, you should. They can be extremely productive. I got the idea from Alan Mulally, Ford Motor Company's fabulous CEO. Here's the article I read: [Alan Mulally Wins Business Person of the Year in U.K.](#)

As the year went on, we reviewed the items on the poster board at every meeting. What areas were we managing well? What areas had been lacking in attention? Sometimes we'd add something to the board that we hadn't realized we'd need to address.

Every week, we'd talk about the progress we had made AND recommit to moving on items that had been neglected. (Don't forget that second part. Can't spend all your time patting yourself on the back.)

The best part of this process is its simplicity. Spend an hour or an hour and a half with some markers and piece of poster board, then bring it to your weekly meetings to review. Easy peasy.

This simple tool was a great way to stay focused on what we really wanted. I hope you're not surprised when I tell you that we were in a STRONGER FINANCIAL POSITION by the end of that year.

What do you think? What might happen if you and your team committed to a mind-mapping vision planning session?

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