

# Leading the Organization That Survives: Prioritizing Business Needs

Every business has needs that must be met in order for the organization to survive. However, identifying those needs is not enough; we, as business leaders, need to understand the business's priorities. The items that tend to be urgent are not always the ones that are important, and many important tasks are not perceived as urgent, and get overlooked. Prioritizing the needs of the business will help you, the business leader, address the right need at the right time.

The first thing we must understand is where the business is in its lifecycle. Understanding where your business is in its lifecycle is critical to defining the needs of the business as any time, just like people have different needs at different times of their lives. For example, while my four year old would probably consider jumping off of anything at any height, and needs me there to keep him safe, my 16 year old needs to be reminded that he needs to cut the grass, and management to ensure that he does a good job.

As we discussed in the last article – “The Business as a System.” once we begin looking at the business like a system, it becomes relatively easy to identify what needs to be done next, whether that means reviewing some lower-level priorities for the business, or stepping up to the next level of existence for the organization. We call the hierarchy the 6S



Model.

The first level is the Existence stage. The business is a baby, just starting to crawl or walk, and completely dependent on you for its survival and safety.

- Survival level needs will include defining a belief system for the business, and an identity- mission, vision and values, leadership, understanding of the markets the business will serve, and the products or services the business will offer. If we were thinking about this like taking a vacation, just saying that you want to take a vacation isn't enough. You have to decide where you are going to go, how you are going to get there, who you are going to go with, and who is responsible for making sure that everyone gets where they need to be. Intuitively, this is built into your personal belief system. If you are a Christian, for example, your belief system will dictate that there are certain kinds of activities you want to participate in, and others that don't fit into that system. Survival-level needs for the business are just as foundational.
- Safety level needs are those that serve to protect the business from internal and external problems. Examples of this might include awareness of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, competitor standards, financial position, compliances, having the

right advisors and understanding what the businesses capacities and capabilities. There is nothing like getting up and running, delivering your product to shops throughout the area, and finding out that there was some type of compliance issue that you overlooked, or, as what happens with a lot of businesses, you took on high risk that could have been avoided with better understanding of the business's position.

The second stage in the business lifecycle is the evolutionary stage. This is that period between childhood, where the business needs someone to wipe its mouth and hold its hand, and adulthood, when the business is walking around, proclaiming its existence to the world. These might be the teen years, and like teens, this period is not always predictable, and is where the business will learn a lot.

- Sustainability is the appropriate name for this level of Existence. This is the level where the business leader will put measures in place to ensure that the business can be in business tomorrow. You can start to see what the business is going to look like and what it is going to do when it grows up, but it needs further guidance and growth. Sustainability-level needs include management, Process, systems, required resources, understanding of the sales medium, product or service standards, vendors and a cohesive team. If we return to the trip, we've come over the hurdles of planning the trip and making sure that the trip will be safe, this is the part where we have understanding of the vehicle that is going to get us to the destination. Have we ensure that the engine is tuned up? Have we filled it up with gas? Do we have windshield wiper fluid? Who is going to monitor all of these things? While we can plan the trip and get on the road, without some understanding of how to sustain, we won't get very far.
- Stakeholder relationships are not just friends and

family. It takes a village to raise a child. Relationships with customer, vendors, creditors, investors, etc., is critical to the continued growth of your business. They can help mold and strengthen the business by making you aware of any opportunities or threats that could impact your business. If you keep them informed about what is going on in your business, they will be more likely to share this type of information with you.

The third stage we'll look at is the Emergence stage. This is not when your business is all grown up, settle in its ways and stubborn. This is when your business is seeking to make its way in the world. There will be lots of choices and lots of opportunity. What the business needs at this point, you might liken to a career path and a continuous growth plan.

- Solid Branding is likened to your career path. It is what envelops your company when you walk into the room and announce your presence. It is what speaks for your company when you are not around. It can influence where or not someone will do business with you. When we talk about branding, we look at everything that could impact the way a company or client looks at you, from the atmosphere of your office, to your commitment, involvement, communication style, customer service, expertise, etc. What do you want your company to be known for?
- Sustained Innovation & Growth is the capstone of the 6S model. This, again, is not where we kick up our feet and say "we've arrived! We are at the top of the heap!" How many companies have we seen topple to the bottom that once made those claims? How many companies that currently lead the market continue to develop new products and technologies? How many of these companies have created needs that we didn't even know we had? How can your company tap into that mindset? Needs at this

level include vision, an innovation process, an idea platform, strategic planning and strategic forecasting. When built into the company culture, these are drivers to push the company toward emergence from the industry and to stand out in the marketplace.

As a business leader, you are responsible for understanding where your business is in its lifecycle, and what needs you will be addressing at each level. Understand, however, that lower level needs always need to be addressed before upper level needs. What I mean by that is that if you are in the emergence level, and accounting standards change, which would be an existence level need, you must still address it before implementing the next generation product your company is working to bring to market.

Be passionate about understanding and addressing the business's needs through the use of 6S. You'll go further, longer.

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Technorati Tags: Business Decisions, Business Development Strategies, Business Growth Strategies, Business Strategy, Extraordinary, Management and Leadership, Business

# Keepin' it Movin'!: Motivation to Continue to Strive

I believe in always looking forward.

I believe in sharing goodwill.

I believe that community starts with me.

I believe that my company is here to serve.

I believe.

What do you believe? What are you doing about it?

Where ever we start out, we start out with an idea or a dream. We want to do something to serve some purpose. be it open a company or companies to make as much money as possible, or to reach the top of the jungle gym. It all starts with a dream.

Here's a video from a dreamer – a dreamer that failed again and again and again. until he became the best:

Technorati Tags: motivation, focus, vision, goals

Now. keep it movin'!

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# Great Strategy Video from Tony Galliano

Tony Galliano, the Sixty Second Strategist, posts this video on his website titled Strategic Planning Through Analysis & Forecasting. In it, he discusses the idea that strategic planning doesn't just happen, and just because you've come up with some things you would like to do, there is a process for your strategic planning that has to make sense.

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For more info on Tony and his work, check him and his book out at [www.60secondstrategist.com](http://www.60secondstrategist.com). Take the quiz to see what your Strategic Quotient is.

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## **Had an Aepiphanni, Lately? June 2009**

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### **It Was Just a...Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing**

I have two very sharp teenagers at home who tend to, shall we say, do the things that teenagers do. Of course, since they are boys, I get stuck having to “manage their behaviors,” which must be done. As a consultant, my goal is a) to get to the root of the problem, b) figure out what we could do differently and c) correct the problem while keeping the relationship in tact.

My teenagers, of course, have an agenda of their own, which pretty much goes a) No matter what, take no responsibility, b) find some way to blame dad for whatever the infraction is and, if all else fails, diverge, meaning, find a way to shift the topic away from the main point to something off topic that

really keeps any sort of progress from being made.

I think that, sometimes, in business, we do the same thing: there are those important things that we need to do for our business that we tend to avoid, like business development, marketing, advertising, updating the accounting and the like, and focusing on the things that are right in front of us. I always refer to those things as, “the new shiny” – referring to the way a little child will instantly be in love with the shiny thing you will give them – until someone else gives them something else that is new and shiny.

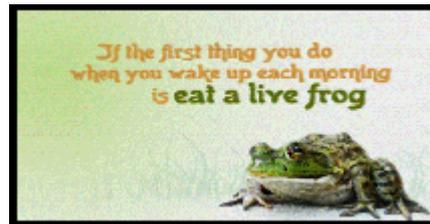


What happens, though, when you avoid those things that you know are important to your business? Well, the same thing that would happen if you didn't keep up with the maintenance on your vehicle or bicycle or even yourself: it would break down.

What does this have to do with keeping the main thing the main thing? Well, like my boys, when running a business, we can get off track performing activities that are outside of our core responsibilities (or what needs to be our core responsibilities!), which, for most business owners, is keeping the business moving toward the company vision, or where the business is headed.

Aepiphanni, for instance, has a vision of providing a suite of products and services for small businesses that will help to create strong, stable, lasting organizations. Therefore, I put all of my energy into keeping the organization moving in that direction. Anything that gets in the way of that, or slows the progress, has to be removed.

Do I get off track? Yes! absolutely! but I know what the main thing is, so that I KNOW WHEN I AM OFF TRACK, and can get



myself back on target.

Is it easy to stay on track? No! There are lots of “new shinies” that come across my desk and email every day. Can you say Twitter? Facebook? LinkedIn? Skype? You can’t get much newer or shinier than those.

How do I avoid this and try to stay on track? EAT THAT FROG!!

Take a look at the 1:28 video from Simpletruths.com.

Remember: keep the main thing the main thing. It is vital to the success of your business.

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# Knuckle Up! Anti Me-ism

One of my favorite movies is “The Matrix,” the sci-fi film where robot battle with mankind and eventually take over the planet, leaving mankind in a vegetable state, plugged into a computer mainframe known as The Matrix. In the movie, people begin to escape from the Matrix, and form a literally underground colony known as Zion. These people eventually form a large enough, equipped army to form a resistance to stand against “the machines,” creators of the Matrix.

In the final movie in the trilogy, the machines have discovered where Zion is, and have located the tunnel and tunneled down to the city, where they plan to have an onslaught of killer machines wipe out all of the inhabitants of Zion. Zion’s forces, however, are determined to stand against the machines, and thus, are using their own war machines- essentially one man fighting tanks equipped with armor piercing bullets, designed to mimic the actions of the



operator, to fight against enemy.

At the point of the movie where enemy breached the dock, as they call it, the commander of Zion’s forces ordered “KNUCKLE UP!!” At that point, each soldier locked and loaded their weapons, and focused on a single target – the entry point where the dock had been breached. There was one clear focus – to stop the invading forces. There was one clear vision: to exist without the threat of the machines coming to destroy

them.

Each soldier had to put “me-ism” as in “it’s all about me” in order to be a strong, fighting, contributing member of their unit. All of the soldiers talked to each other, looked out for each other and defended each other. Each soldier put themselves last in defense of the unit.

You and your team are a unit or a fighting force. Each member of the team must perform to the best of their ability – and you must learn about and leverage their abilities in order to get the most from them and from your organization. Having a shared mission and vision for the organization can make the difference between achievement and high achievement. Leading the way and providing clear direction will be the difference between success and failure. Embracing anti Me-ism can make the difference between a “flash in the pan” – a business that does well for a little while – and a business that is a cornerstone in the community.

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