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## Vision

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LEADING GROWTH AND increasing your revenue begins with a vision of your future results. The reason to find your vision first is that it's the foundation of everything that follows. You may not have a map to the future you see in your mind's eye, and you might not fully understand how you'll build it, but all of that will come into focus as you build your vision. Without a vision, you're simply unlikely to achieve your targeted revenue growth. That's because a vision isn't just an idea: it's a destination, a reason to transform, and a new standard for your sales force. If you cannot see the future you're moving toward, it will be invisible to your team.

A revenue goal should be part of your vision, but not the whole thing. When your vision is compelling enough, you create an opportunity for your team to enroll in an adventure where they can make a difference, grow and develop, and be a part of something important. Enrollment is more powerful than compliance precisely because it requires commitment. Compliance is doing something because you must, not because you want to. When you win your team's hearts and minds, they do more than just clock in and go through the motions. They are working alongside you to make your vision a reality.

Much of this book reveals the mechanics of revenue growth, providing a how-to approach for growing your sales. This chapter will help you develop your vision, a vision that belongs to you alone at first, but one you'll later share with your team.

## **What Do You Want?**

You must choose what you want from a seemingly infinite number of possibilities, a process that most people find either very easy or nearly impossible. If you need to, you can always refer to an earlier vision and adjust it, so it is right for you and your team and your goals. In a later chapter, we'll look at how to align your sales vision with your company's broader goals. Some leaders know what they want with no prompting, making it very natural

for them to see their vision. Others struggle to decide even the broad strokes. Let me share my vision as a sales leader, which I've developed over years, as an example.

- We secure revenue growth from large clients that consider our products and services to be strategically important.
- We create greater value than any competitor, never needing to answer “why us” because our sales conversations have proven we are the right choice.
- We are insight-based and consultative, helping clients with a paradigm shift that causes them to recognize the need to change.
- We spend time each day prospecting, scheduling meetings, and creating new opportunities.
- We have a positive culture of accountability where every member of the team does their part.
- We control the process, facilitating the client's buyer's journey, and we ensure they succeed by helping them make the best decision for their company.
- We command a price higher than our competition because we provide outcomes worth investing more to obtain.
- We continually develop, grow, and help our clients, building our individual client portfolios and making a difference.
- We are the most effective sales force in our industry.

For your own list, it's best to start with your revenue growth goal. In fact, every bullet point on my list targets revenue growth in some way! Oh, and don't worry about getting your vision exactly right on the first attempt. It will change as you pursue it, and it will also become clearer as you move forward.

## Why Do You Want It?

Ecological philosopher Edward Abbey once declared, “Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

Identifying your vision is easier when you understand the reason you want it. My best advice is not to make money the primary motivation for your vision, because that will leave too many people behind. Likewise, avoid something lame like “creating value for our shareholders,” as only the board of directors believes that making rich people richer is anyone’s primary motivator. It’s doubtful that your sales force can tell you the names of three board members or any of your company’s institutional investors. A better reason for your vision is something like “reaching our full potential,” or “making a greater contribution to our clients’ results,” or “being the most effective sales force in our company or industry.”

Again, here’s some more of my vision as an example.

- We pursue large clients because we can make the greatest difference for them by improving their overall results. We also help smaller clients when it makes sense to do so.
- We create more value in the sales conversation because our approach and our experience improve our clients’ ability to make decisions that improve their results.
- Because we have greater experience, our insights help our clients avoid mistakes that might harm their business. By providing them with a better view of their business, we lead them toward the better results they need.
- We prospect each day because there are still clients who need our help that we have not yet acquired.
- We facilitate the buyer’s journey to prevent each buyer from failing to complete that journey. Our advice and recommendations help them with the conversations they need and allow us to resolve their concerns.
- Because we prioritize sales effectiveness, we are always training and developing the skills and traits central to our craft.
- The evidence of our effectiveness is found in the results we provide our clients and in our revenue growth.
- We enjoy the work we do, and we know that our work makes a difference.

## Identifying Your Full Potential

This may be the first time you have seen what a vision for your team might look like. Take heart: there is little chance your sales team has ever been confronted with a vision like the one you will create and share with them.

A good way to start building your vision is to identify what you believe is your team's full potential. Imagine if every person on your team reached their full potential. Without knowing you or your sales force, I am certain that even your best performers still have untapped potential. Some of your lagging sales reps can certainly improve with the right guidance. In fact, I have seen benchwarmers leave a company and become all-stars under a different manager in a new company.

At first, not everyone on your team will see your vision. A few will recognize that you are pursuing change but insist that your vision is another flavor-of-the-month initiative, one you'll forget about within a few weeks. These people will patiently wait for you to give up. Others will have trouble committing because they aren't certain they will be able to do what will be required of them. And of course, there will be some who see your vision and get excited by the prospect of doing something bigger and more interesting than "going to work."

Don't worry about any of them, because the first section of this book is going to equip you with everything you need to succeed in bringing your vision to life. But first we need to set you up for success.

## Identify the Changes Needed to Create Your Vision

To get your vision built, you need to identify the changes you need to make and the changes you need from your team. Here is a thought experiment to get you started: imagine you are starting with a brand-new team, one scheduled to start work in a

week or two. They don't know what to expect, never having worked for you. What would you expect of this new group that you don't expect from your current team? What would you insist they do that would bring your vision to life and ensure you grow your revenue?

A senior sales leader once shared with me that he intended to replace his entire sales force and start over. Beyond the obvious challenge of releasing the entire sales force and hiring all new salespeople, my experience told me his results wouldn't improve. Still, before I could bite my tongue, the words flew out of my mouth: "What are you going to do with the third group?" The senior leader responded, "What do you mean? Say it so I can understand what you're saying!" I explained, "When you hire the second group and have the same set of problems you have now, what are you going to do when you fire them and have to hire a third sales force?" He was not amused, but he understood I was indicting him and his sales managers, who were not engaged with their teams.

The prospect of a fresh start is attractive, but this story shows why you must start where you are with what (and who) you have. It doesn't mean that everyone on your team will want to help you build your vision. Nor does it mean keeping people who aren't interested in growth, development, or even revenue growth. Some may resent having to change, especially if they've only ever known the low standard they've been allowed to maintain. Over time, it may become important for you to add people willing to help you bring your vision to life.

No matter where you start, I can tell you the two greatest threats to your vision and revenue growth: (1) too few opportunities (an activity *and* effectiveness problem) and (2) too few won deals (an effectiveness problem). Fortunately, you will find answers to both problems throughout this book, along with many more strategies to help you reach your growth goals.

### *Creating Constructive Tension and Positive Friction*

Your vision requires change, a function of constructive tension and positive friction. Without some tension between your current state and your future state, you cannot achieve your vision. Much of that tension arises from the behavioral changes you're asking your team to make. In fact, if there is no tension, it likely means your team isn't taking new actions, a decision that presents a threat to your vision and revenue growth. You can think of tension like a trampoline. When someone pushes against the trampoline, the metal coils securing the fabric push back, launching them skyward. For example, you are certain to have friction around prospecting when you are forced to confront the salespeople on your team who try to avoid cold outreach. You will have others who are not interested in changing the way they sell, or the new standards you require.

Friction shows up in conversations when people reject or oppose your vision. They often argue they shouldn't have to change, but you refuse to relent on the changes that result in revenue growth. In any change initiative, you can count on resistance. This is a positive form of friction, as it prompts a conversation about your future results. Even if a salesperson or two push for an exemption, you must defend your changes, no matter what they are and no matter who is causing the friction. Much of the time, you will create the friction yourself when you require someone to honor your now-higher standards. In fact, I would bet against any initiative succeeding if everyone went along without a word.

It's difficult to ask someone to believe that what they've always done is no longer sufficient, especially when they believe it was the source of their success. Much like a client who's missed an inflection point in their industry, it can be difficult for your sales team to believe that what has always been "good enough" is no longer sufficient. But if what you did

in the past really worked to grow your revenue, you wouldn't need a new vision now. You cannot protect your team from the constructive tension and friction that comes from raising your standards, expecting more from every individual, and pursuing your full potential. Without this tension between your new expectations and what was your status quo, you risk losing your vision.

The friction you need to create acknowledges that “what got you here will not get you there.” Think of it this way: what you have done until this point was critical to starting this journey to your better future state and the better results that make up your vision. You and your team are well prepared to tackle the changes your vision demands, and if for some reason you are not, keep reading and you'll find what you need here.

Constructive tension and positive friction allow you to move forward. The conversations, the conflict, the questions, and the resistance propel you toward your vision if you continue to communicate and lead your team to collectively pursue your vision.

### *Explain Who Your Team Will Become*

Both identity and belonging are hardwired in our psychology: we want to know who we are and where we fit. Explaining who your team will become can help people recognize that once they enroll, they will acquire a new identity and belong to something greater than what they were before.

The forces of identity and belonging pull people toward enrollment. That pull doesn't exist if all you want is to make more money or hit a certain sales target. Being part of your team must be something special. Your vision should set your team apart, not just because they're pursuing different goals but because other teams do little more than run out the clock. There are too many people in jobs where there is no vision to guide them or cause them to do their best work. You've probably worked for those

companies and in those departments! Your vision needs to protect your team from that fate.

As a leader, how much more engagement would you get if your vision inspired people to give you their best performance, after you've given them your best? How much would your engagement grow? Would you enroll in a vision that makes you part of an elite team working on increasing their effectiveness, making a greater impact on their client's results, and securing results and revenue that exceed anything they've done before?

Identity cuts off the possibility of being something else, while also prescribing new beliefs and new actions. Your vision does not simply apply your team's identity to a new project, but promises to transform them.

## **Addressing Threats to Your Vision**

The first and largest threat to your vision is the tendency to start with a bang but settle for a fizzle. Specifically, as you move closer to your vision and revenue growth, you may want to lessen the tension and remove the friction. Even when you produce better results, the tension is still necessary. When you let up, you make it easy for your teams to regress and postpone your vision far into the future.

We often overestimate what we can do in a day, a week, a month, or a quarter. But we underestimate what we can accomplish in a year, and we wildly underestimate what we can do in three years. You want to make changes you can sustain for years, knowing that your new disciplines will allow you and your team to realize your vision and maintain revenue growth for as long as you lead them.

There are always obstacles and challenges that threaten your vision, and you must be vigilant in tracking and removing anything that might endanger it. This includes the beliefs and behaviors that work against revenue growth. If your results don't

change, your team is not maintaining the appropriate constructive tension—instead, they (and you) are tacitly agreeing to a standard too low to deliver your vision.

To start this transformation and build a team that can reach your revenue growth goals, let's look at a set of positive strategies to gain their enrollment.

### *Thirteen Enrollment Strategies*

Several years back, I contacted Seth Godin to ask him about enrollment and how it differs from compliance. Seth was kind enough write a blog post to address this powerful idea, which in turn inspired me to draft a list of ten enrollment strategies. Seth suggested three additional strategies, forming the list you see here.

- **Understand and speak to the seeker's dream.** Everyone wants something. To enroll the members in your team, you need to know what they want. A good leader knows their people well enough to recognize what they want and to speak to their dreams. When you speak to a seeker's dream, you make it easier to enroll them in your vision, as it provides them a way to pursue that dream.
- **Help provide directions to a better future.** When you offer someone a chance to build a better future, enrolling them means providing them with a roadmap to that future. But your vision must also lead to a better future for them, not just for your company. By tying your vision to the better future each individual needs, you gain commitment where others would require compliance. As a leader, you are responsible for helping each person find their way to their vision.
- **Recognize status roles.** Certain status roles move individuals toward or away from enrollment. When someone sees enrollment as affirming or providing them with a higher status role,

they will be more inclined or motivated to enroll. Those who believe enrollment threatens their status role may avoid enrollment to maintain that status. You must inspire those who see themselves leveling up by enrolling, while also ensuring that enrolling enables doubters to maintain or improve their status.

- **See and acknowledge fears.** People always worry about change, even positive change. Their worries may include not being ready, not being good enough, or simply letting people down. Your role as the leader is to assuage their fears. Just like a prospective client can't move forward until you help them resolve their concerns, those with unaddressed fears may struggle to enroll. Let them know you'll be there for them when they need you.
- **Invite them to an adventure.** We sometimes get change initiatives wrong, especially when we treat change only as fixing a problem. While that might be true, highlighting a problem is not the best strategy for winning hearts and minds. Your invitation is to an adventure, one that will provide new experiences and a chance to blaze a new trail. An adventure is better than the status quo, and it can increase engagement. After all, good leaders are unfaithful to the status quo.
- **Create compelling experiences to begin the journey.** To make your vision attractive, you need to start with experiences that encourage team members to take the first step: a planning meeting, a special training, or something else to get your team interested and excited. Whether you start by sharing your vision or invite your team to a Future Now Workshop to build a plan to create a new future state, a concrete experience is much more interactive (and effective) than a long email calling for compliance.
- **Initiate them into the tribe.** There is a common factor in those who choose to enroll: the desire to belong to something bigger than themselves. Every tribe has an initiation. These ceremonies help new members break from the past as

they begin a new journey and build a new identity. One way to approach that task is to require a test that team members must complete to enjoy initiation into the tribe.

- **Instill the mission with meaning and contribution.** Enrollment requires meaning and the chance to contribute to something bigger than oneself. Revenue growth may inspire you, and you and your team may have incentives should you succeed. But you will find fewer people motivated by money than by the chance to do good work. You must provide the individuals you invite to enroll with a vision that provides meaning and purpose so you can speak to values higher than money alone. Your appeal should stress the value you create for others and how you contribute to your team's success by helping your clients succeed.
- **Share how enrollees will grow and what it will mean.** In any great story, the protagonist is unprepared to accept their call, but they always find their Yoda, someone to teach them what they need to succeed in their mission. Whenever you transform your team and the individuals who comprise it, you prepare them to tackle even more difficult outcomes. No person should be the same as when you started the transformation. They should all grow.
- **Focus on creating commitment.** There is a major shift in your leadership when you ask your enrollees to commit to change. Mostly, your enrollees have been asked to comply, a lesser commitment that leaves room for the status quo. A commitment to change is much more powerful than doing something just because it is expected of you. Get this right and you improve accountability.
- **Feed the soul of those who enroll.** Each person who enrolls in your change needs you to feed their soul. In other words, you must communicate your vision in a way that provides them what they need, including the affirmation and encouragement

that what they do makes things better for other people, something most leaders leave unaddressed.

- **Make it bigger on the inside.** Enrollment changes you from an outsider to an insider, so you have to make life bigger on the inside. Joining a group of people working to improve their results and make a difference is better than simply going through the motions, making their calls, updating their CRM, and so on.
- **Create leaders that inspire others to enroll and transform.** Leaders have followers, but they make leaders. When you enroll people in your vision, you create and build future leaders, ones who can inspire others to enroll. Your legacy will not be revenue growth, even though you might shatter the record for greatest increase in a calendar year. It will be the leaders who grew under your leadership and are now prepared to do the same for others.

## Your Revenue Growth Goal

We can't leave this chapter without doing the work to establish your revenue growth goal. Here's the revenue growth formula you need:

$$\text{Existing Revenue} - \text{Churn} + \text{Net New Revenue} = \text{Growth}$$

Let's assume your goal is 12 percent growth year over year. Let's say your last year's revenue was \$12,000,000, but you know that you will lose \$2,000,000 in churn. For now, don't worry about why that revenue is gone; that's something you can work on later. That leaves you with \$10,000,000 of existing revenue. Twelve percent growth means you will need \$1,200,000 in net new revenue.

But let me tell you why you shouldn't target 12 percent growth: that goal is not big enough to cause you or your team to change in any significant way. If your goal doesn't cause you to ask yourself, "How on earth am I going to do that?" then it's not big enough. Missing a 25 percent growth goal and coming

in at 19 percent instead is better than the 12 percent you might have settled for, had you not raised your goal. One sales organization I know wanted to add 10 percent growth on top of their existing \$10,000,000 existing revenue. I suggested they shoot for \$20,000,000. They missed the goal but came in at \$17,000,000.

Eventually, your vision will include a list of outcomes that ensure you reach your goal, along with the changed beliefs and behaviors that will create the opportunities you need to meet new, aggressive, and somewhat scary goals. Let's go!

