

# Developing a Personal Business Plan

## WHAT FLOOR ARE YOU ON?

If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.

How many times have you stepped off an elevator only to find yourself on the wrong floor? You have the best of intentions. You have a vision about where you want to be. You have a positive mental outlook. You suffer from no lack of energy to accomplish your objectives. Yet no amount of vision, determination or hard work will help you arrive any sooner because you lack the proper roadmap to guide you to your ultimate destination.

Unfortunately, too many of us find ourselves stuck on the wrong floor when the elevator doors open. Too often we overlook the important step of developing a personal business plan that will enable us to pursue and, more importantly, realize our dreams and implement our vision. Like a roadmap, a personal business plan helps us define our objectives, plot the best course to reach our destination, and make appropriate choices along the way.

It matters not your station in life. You have the ability to grow and enhance your personal and professional life by taking the time to develop this plan. The process is not overly complex, yet few have mastered the discipline. Following are the 12 "Be's" of effective planning.

- **Be intentional.** Begin with a personal mission statement, a statement of purpose that spells out who you are, why you are here and where you are going. A good mission statement is what you might want to appear on your tombstone. It constitutes the ultimate control system, the standard against which all initiatives, challenges and issues will be judged. A good mission statement acts as a foundation for the development of the goals you want to achieve.
- **Be grounded.** A good personal business plan will be rooted in the roles and responsibilities you have established in your life: parent, spouse, friend, employee, entrepreneur. By listing them and making them an integral part of your plan, you will assure each gets the priority it deserves or that you assign to it.
- **Be balanced.** Make sure that your plan encompasses all areas of your life that are important to you: family, professional, spiritual, physical, social, and personal development.
- **Be written.** When football coach Lou Holtz found himself unemployed early in his career, he wrote down the 100 things he wanted to accomplish. Included on the list was to coach a national champion team. Years later, while at Notre Dame, he fulfilled that objective. In fact, on a recent count, he had succeeded in accomplishing 97 of the goals. Committed to paper, a personal business plan gives you the focus you need to make a commitment to achieving it.
- **Be consistent.** The planning process should ensure the goals you establish are something you really want—a must-have, not a nice-to-have. Furthermore, your personal business plan should be grounded firmly with your values and should be achievable.
- **Be in the present.** Your plan, and the goals it contains, should not be stated as something that will occur in the future. This makes it too easy to put off action. When you say, "I will lose 10 pounds," you are always meeting your goal even though you never arrive at your objective. A better way to state your goal would be to envision yourself weighing your ideal weight. (I weigh 195 pounds). In this way you always know whether you are on track or not.
- **Be positive.** Goals should be positive. They should be motivating you toward improved action or behavior, not moving you away from undesirable behavior. For instance,

instead of saying, "I will stop watching so much television," wouldn't it be far better to say, "I spend one hour a day reading?"

- **Be specific.** Too often goals get bogged down in the grandiose. "I will be happy. I will lose weight. I will spend more time with the family." All lofty goals but next to impossible to measure. Over-arching goals should be broken down into a series of smaller, measurable goals.
- **Be high enough.** Too many people fail to live up to their full potential by not having the courage to dream. Stretch your goals and you will achieve more. A whole lot more.
- **Be flexible.** Do not remain in one place for too long. Continuously evaluate your progress towards your goals to make sure you're on the proper path and that they still make sense in light of the current path you're traveling.
- **Be affirmed.** Read your plan preferably at the start of every day. Carry a copy in your wallet. Post one on your bathroom mirror or your sun visor. Any place that is visible and where it can become embedded in your conscious. Read it. Commit to it. Let it become the rudder by which you steer your boat through the day.
- **Be visual.** Corny as it may sound, picture yourself with the goal (or goals) completed. How would it feel? What would you be doing? Where would you be? How would you be interacting with other people?

Remember, those who fail to plan, plan to fail. Don't assume that everything will magically fall into place. Plan it and make it happen. There are three types of people in the world: those who wonder what happened, those who watch it happen, and those who make it happen. By developing a personal business plan, you can be one of those who make it happen.