



Blueprint for success

Having a strong foundation enables you to build a thriving, profitable life and business. A simple method to create this foundation is with Discovery, Vision, Planning and Benchmarking, the four cornerstones of your life as well as your business.

Discovery is defined as examining where are you now and where are you going.

It helps to look at everything as if you were a beginner. Always know why you are in the business of your choice. If your strategy is not clear, you won't recognize the destination when you get there. This is the time to bring in your outside Vision Team.

Vision is who you are about and what your life is about.

This is where you determine values you need to experience on a continuing basis. Vision is also where you become the expert in your field and decide the purpose of your business. Remember, the smaller the niche, the larger the reward. Abandon any preconceived beliefs you have about this or any other business. They can restrict your thinking. Live out of this new vision, not your past comfort.

Planning creates the strategies that help you arrive at your destination.

A simple system is to - Show Up, Be on Time, Keep Your Word and Tell The Truth. It's like riding on that train, sometimes there are hills to climb; sometimes there are curves and other times you're flying rapidly down the mountain to your destination. In any instance, you must remain focused on what you want and where you are going.

Benchmarking helps you stay on track.

Once focused, you set up a system for accountability, self-management and self-renewal. You can create goals or optimum wants that may be on the outer edge of possibilities or a goal that is far bigger than you think is attainable. Going into new territory can unlock your potential and increase your development. When goals or optimum results are achieved, you can acknowledge success and learn to be satisfied. Again, put it in writing; the goals, the results and the acknowledgement.

Rules require exceptions, so even if you follow the above and create a strong foundation, you must be prepared for chaos. Chaos can aid in your personal and business development if you have eliminated all toxic people or commitments from your life.

Chaos can then become the opportunity to progress rapidly into new territory. You can be the architect of your own life.

Build a strong foundation and you can always remodel. - sideroad.com

Dealing with difficult employees

All managers will have to deal with difficult employees during their careers. First, there will always be difficult employees. Second, it's your job as the manager to deal with them. If you don't deal the problem, it will only get worse.

Why Are Difficult Employees Like That?
Difficult employees are that way simply because it is a behavior that has worked for them in the past. They may not know any other behavior or they may choose this behavior when they think it will be most effective. You will be successful in dealing with difficult employees only to the extent that you can make these undesirable behaviors no longer effective for them. In many ways, it's like dealing with children. If every time a child screams, its parents give it candy, what will the child do when it wants candy? It will scream, of course.

The same is true for the employee who "blows up" whenever anyone disagrees with him. When he does that people stop disagreeing with him and he thinks he has won.

How Can A Manager Deal With Difficult Employees Evaluate

It is important when dealing with difficult employees to act quickly. Often you will need to act almost immediately to neutralize a dangerous situation. However, it is always appropriate to think before you act. Clearly if an employee comes to work with a gun, you will need to act more quickly than when someone complains that another employee is always taking credit for her work. In either case, take the appropriate amount of time to evaluate the situation before you act. You don't want to make it worse.

Recognize that most employees can be "difficult" from time to time. This can be caused by stress on the job or away from it. Some employees are difficult more often than others. It is not always your least-productive employees who are difficult. So take a moment to evaluate each situation for the unique situation it is.

Do your homework

Always act on facts. Don't base your actions on gossip or rumour. The person spreading the gossip is a difficult employee in their own way. If you have not seen the inappropriate behaviour yourself, look into it. Ask the people reportedly involved. Collect all the facts you can before you act.

Don't use the fact that you haven't seen the inappropriate behavior as an excuse to delay doing something. It is important to act promptly.

Make sure you aren't part of the problem. It will be much more difficult to remain calm and impartial in confronting the difficult behaviour if you are partly responsible. If that's the case, be sure you acknowledge your role in it, at least to yourself.

Develop a plan

You're a manager. You know the value of planning. This situation is no different. You need to plan the timing of the confrontation. You need to select a quiet, private



place where you won't be interrupted. You need to decide whether you need to have others, like an HR representative, present in the meeting. Plan the confrontation and then make it happen.

When you have prepared, it is time to act. You do not need to act impulsively, but you must act quickly. The longer an inappropriate behaviour is allowed to continue, the harder it will be to change it or stop it.

Confront the problem

Don't put it off. It may not be pleasant, but it's an important part of your job. It will not "fix itself". It can only get worse. You have planned this confrontation. Now you need to execute.

Deal with the behavior, not the person

Your goal is to develop a solution, not to "win". Focus on the inappropriate behavior; don't attack the person.

Use "I" statements like "I need everybody on the team here on time so we can meet our goals" rather than "you" statements like "you are always late".

Don't assume the inappropriate behavior is caused by negative intent. It may be from fear, confusion, lack of motivation, personal problems, etc.

Give the other person a chance to develop a solution to the problem. They are more likely to "own" the solution if they are at least partially responsible for developing it.

Try to draw out the reasons behind the behavior.

As you talk with the difficult employee, actively listen to what they say. Stay calm and stay positive, but remain impartial and non-judgmental. Ask leading questions that can't be answered in one or two words. Don't interrupt.

When you do respond to the difficult employee, remain calm. Summarize back to them what they just said, "so what I understand you are saying is", so they know you are actually listening to them.

If you can find out from the difficult employee what the real source of the inappropriate behaviour is, you have a much better chance of finding a solution.

Sometimes these confrontations will go smoothly, or at least rapidly, to a conclusion. Other times it will require several sessions

to resolve the problem.

Repeat as necessary

Minor problems, like being late for work, you may be able to resolve with a simple chat in your office with the employee. An office bully, who has used that behavior successfully since elementary school, may need more than one confrontation before a solution can be reached. Be patient. Don't always expect instant results. Aim for continuous improvement rather than trying to achieve instant success.

Know when you are in over your head

Sometimes the underlying issue with a difficult employee will be beyond your capabilities. The employee may have psychological problems that require professional help, for example.

Learn when to keep trying and when to refer the employee to others for more specialized help. Your company may have an EAP or you may need to use resources from the community.

Know when you are at the end

While the goal is always to reach a mutually acceptable solution that resolves the difficult employee inappropriate behaviour and keeps your team at full strength, sometimes that is not possible. When you reach an impasse and the employee is not willing to change his or her behaviour then you need to begin terminations procedures in accordance with your company's policies.

Coming to a Solution

The desired result from confronting a difficult employee's inappropriate behavior is an agreed upon solution. You know that this inappropriate behavior will continue unless you and the employee agree on a solution.

The employee needs to know what is inappropriate about their behaviour and they also need to know what is appropriate behaviour. The need for a manager to communicate clearly is always high. It is especially important in these situations. Make very sure the employee understands the requirements and the consequences.

-management.about.com



The Importance of outplacement services

Trimming a workforce is difficult. Both managers and employees are bound to experience emotional turbulence as they prepare to go their separate ways. To make this painful process easier, your company may want to look into hiring an outplacement service. Providing this thoughtful benefit to terminated employees can help them transition into the next phase of their careers.

What should you look for?

A good outplacement service will visit your company and provide on-site workshops and individual consultations. It should also provide specific functions to participants for an extended length of time, to include:

- Customized assessments
- Job search planning
- Professional help with resumes and cover letters
- Coaching on particular professional topics of interest
- Administrative support
- Help with research materials
- Financial consulting
- Entrepreneurial consulting
- Videotaping and mock interviews
- Information on online services, recruiting firms, and job fairs
- Helping terminated employees get the most from outplacement

The outplacement process does not produce automatic results. Employees will get out of it what they put into it. For some workers, outplacement is a futile exercise that only prolongs their transition from one employer to another. However, many individuals benefit from outplacement as a means to redefine career goals and find other employment.

Encouraging a positive relationship between employees and the outplacement service

Advise employees to trust the process. Outplacement might be a completely new experience for them and it can help them find the work they really want.

Encourage them to participate in the process. Employees shouldn't expect an outplacement consultant to do all the work; it's up to them to find the right job.

Help them articulate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas to their outplacement counselor. Employees need to be assertive so the counselor will understand how best to help them.

Ask them to network with other employees using the outplacement service. Encourage them to form a community.

Remind them to make and keep appointments with their counselor and any job contacts that they find.

Suggest that they map out what they want to accomplish with their counselor, and bring a list of specific questions to each meeting.

Recommend that they set a rigorous schedule for themselves and follow it. It's important for job seekers to keep a full calendar.

Most importantly, remind them to take action. They shouldn't wait for others to take the first step.

Companies can assist the process by working in tandem with the outplacement service. Install a company bulletin board with advertisements for job openings at other companies. Designate some office space for terminated employees, giving them free use of personal computers, Internet connections, telephones, fax machines, and photocopiers.

Start...

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This is a small metal holder for file folders with staggered upright slots on an inclined base. Office Depot has a model #393-138-096 that is perfect for the task. If that is too big, use a three-tier sorter box or even a mini-sorter. Don't use stacking desk trays because it is too easy for things to get buried in them.

Label several file folders with typical jobs that you do on a regular basis. If there is anything in the way of research notes, articles, fact sheets, etc. that will be needed for the list of tomorrow's tasks drop them tonight into the appropriate folder before leaving the work area. When you come to the associated task the next day, the needed material will be ready to use.

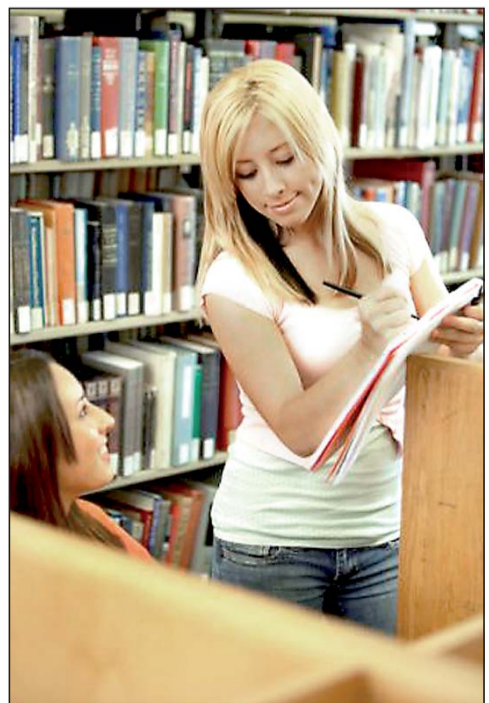
These simple proactive steps to getting organized and improving organizational skills in advance will pay off in time-saving and reduced frustration in the long run. -brighthub.com

No company wants to lose its valuable sensitive information to a competitor, potentially creating negative client situations and compromising future growth. The vigilant protection of company information is an issue that needs to be discussed with employees during their employment and, more especially, as they are leaving your employ. What practical and legal steps can you take to guard your company's secrets?

Start at the beginning

The best time to have an employee agree to confidentiality obligations is right at the time of hire. Managers (or HR professionals) should have employees sign a confidentiality agreement unless they have already signed a document with confidentiality provisions during the interview process.

At times, it may also be desirable for a company to require stronger post-employ-



Confidentiality and your employees

ment restrictions, such as non-compete obligations, on a key hire. In most states, non-compete agreements are fairly routine. For example, in California, the conventional wisdom is that enforceability is limited-which is generally true. There is, however, some belief for enforcing agreements that do not actually prevent that restricted employee from earning a living within his or her field.

What are trade secrets, really?

The core of confidentiality obligations is the protection of trade secrets. While many states have statutes to help protect trade secrets, specific confidentiality provisions in the terms and conditions of employment re-enforce those protections, calls them to the employee's attention, and binds the employee to them using the employee's signature.

A trade secret may consist of any formula, pattern, device, or compilation of information which is used in one's business and which gives the employer an opportunity to obtain an advantage over its competition. Generally, a trade secret is a process, device, or information intended for continuous use in the operations of the business.

Trade secrets can include customer lists, pricing structures, business strategy, marketing plans, financial information, product development strategy, intellectual property, current and anticipated research and development, and inventions. Following are some questions that should clarify if you're not sure if some information, a device, or a formula constitutes a trade secret:

- Is the information known outside of the employer's business?
- Is the information known by employees and others involved in the business?
- What measures does the employer take to guard the secrecy of the information?
- What is the value of the information to the employer and to the competitors?
- What is the amount of effort or money expended by the company in developing the information?
- How easily or readily could the information be obtained by a competitor through an independent source?

Note that trade secrets need not be technical in their nature. Market-related information and documents may be deemed to be trade secrets, and thus confidential.

Is a customer list a trade secret?

Though very important to every company, customer lists may or may not be considered a trade secret protected by confidentiality obligations. If the customer list contains specific customer information such as the key contact person, particular needs or requirements, or other information about customers that would be advantageous in the business but not publicly available, then such lists should be considered a trade secret and receive protection accordingly.

Some practical ways to protect corporate assets

Employers should disseminate to their employees a written trade secret policy that specifically identifies customer information, anticipated R&D projects, pricing, and other similar items as trade secrets. Most trade secrets are documented in some fashion,

whether in paper files or computer disks. Here are some suggestions for keeping trade secrets:

- If it's a trade secret, label it! Mark confidential documents with the words CONFIDENTIAL or TRADE SECRET. But be selective. If all documents or files are labeled secret, even those that are not, the label may lose its effectiveness.
- Do not distribute confidential documents beyond the pool of people who need to see them.
- Securely store your documents and protect them from inappropriate access and disasters such as fire.
- Back up your computer information, and keep the duplicate files secure.
- Shred documents before discarding them.
- Erase boards and destroy flip charts after meetings.
- Collect all excess documentation after meetings.

With the increasing use of e-mail, intranets, and portals, companies also need to set up appropriate policies for technology security, including hardware, software, and data. Using firewalls to protect Internet access, employing reputable encryption programmer on email, restricting access to servers, and developing sophisticated database security protocols are all valuable steps in ensuring that electronic copies of trade secrets are not deliberately or inadvertently released. Proper virus protection is also crucial to assure that critical documents are not damaged or destroyed.

In the era of telecommuting, too, be aware of the substantial risks posed by employees who take work home or work at home regularly.

Employers should address this situation specifically in their confidentiality agreements and employee policies. As recent headlines revealed, even highly secure organizations like the CIA can be embarrassed by employees (even directors) who work on confidential matters on their home computers-with Internet connections offering potential access to hackers around the world.