

Any Road Will Take You Someplace if You Travel Long Enough.

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When I was young, single and working in Minnesota, I'd find myself facing the weekend without any specific plans. Wanting something interesting to do, I'd regularly choose to drive home to Wisconsin to see family or friends. To add a little adventure to my weekend, I'd often wait to select my ultimate destination until I was one hour into my drive, where my road choice would force a destination choice. It didn't matter what road I chose, because it didn't matter to me where I ended up. My main goal was to have something to do, and the drive itself met that goal.

Similarly, the ultimate vacation destination has never been a top priority for me. When I plan our family vacations, I usually look for the best travel value which takes me out of Wisconsin's wintry weather. My goal is to go someplace new, but warm. Beyond that, the final destination doesn't matter to me.

Lewis Carroll, who wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is quoted as saying, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." In the book, Alice asks the Cheshire cat which way she should go. He says it depends on where she wants to go. Alice replies that it doesn't matter to her. So he concludes, "Then it doesn't matter which way you go." Maybe for vacation planning purposes, it works to be without a plan. But there are other circumstances for which knowing where you want to go is critically necessary.

All strong leaders understand the need to know where you want to go. In the corporate world, they call it vision. Once one knows the vision, he or she can also define the mission, strategy, goals, and tools needed for success.

Vision is farsightedness. It is what you imagine to be the fact at the end of the line, or at the ultimate destination. Everyone has imagination to some degree. Everyone can imagine what they think would be a perfect world, the best vacation, a successful career, a successful company, or a quality life. Having vision is requires thinking ahead and defining what you want the future to look like.

What about mission, strategy, goals and tools? Mission is your calling, your story, the realm in which you live and work, the world in which you pursue your vision. Strategy is the plan that you follow, the road map, the path you choose within your mission in order to pursue your vision. Goals are short range targets that you aim for along the way. Skills, abilities, passions, and character traits are the personal tools each person has to enable him or her to reach each goal. Physical tools may include things like equipment, machinery, computers, or financial resources.

Let's look at it in reverse order. In the corporate world, each person has a job to do. He or she brings to the job many personal tools, such as education, skills and desire. They are also given company tools such as equipment, a laptop, or machinery. Each person uses their tools to accomplish set goals. When the goals are met, the company moves a step further along its strategic plan, within its mission. The mission is the market in which the company pursues its vision. Putting it all together, each person is working toward the company's ultimate vision by using tools to meet goals, according to the strategic plan within the mission.

Good leaders identify the vision, set the mission, define a strategy, set specific goals, provide the tools, and place the people according to their skills, abilities, passions and character traits. Losing sight of the vision, working outside of the mission, failing to

identify or follow a strategic plan, or ignoring the goals will adversely impact the results. But, when all these things are all tied together, a company has the greatest chance of succeeding.

Vision, mission, strategy, goals and tools are not only applicable to the business world. They also apply to our personal lives and in our individual work lives. God is the leader. He has a vision for our lives. He tells us in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (NIV)

God has a vision for your life. What is your vision? What is your ultimate destination? Any road will take you someplace if you travel on it long enough. But, if you know your destination, you will also choose the best roads.