

Carpe Diem

*How can your employee team better seize business opportunities — and excel?
This business expert shares strategies.*

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

In the late 1950s, as the space race was unfolding, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made a bold statement: “We will lead the world in space exploration.”

His successor, President John F. Kennedy, made a similar proclamation a few years later, but he expressed it in very different terms: “We will put a man on the moon safely and return him by the end of the decade.”

That analogy offers two very different examples of vision statements, says Colin Dunn, a former official in the U.S. Army who today consults with businesses and organizations in the areas of strategic planning and executive management.

Specifically, Dunn points out that Kennedy’s statement painted a picture with specifics. As a result, the vision was tangible by all, which boosted morale, teamwork and effort — and, ultimately, was achievable.

In a nutshell, that is what Dunn describes as “*carpe diem* strategic planning.”

“Traditional strategic planning is often a 30-page document that sits on a shelf,” he notes. “A *carpe diem* strategic plan paints a picture that everyone can see and work toward achieving.”

Three guidelines

As organizations and businesses look to create a “*carpe diem* strategic

plan,” Dunn advises starting with a vision statement.

He notes the purpose of this statement is to identify where the organization or business is going.

“It should help employees realize what they are going to be a part of,” Dunn says.

That said, Dunn also has a few guidelines:

1. The vision statement should be short — so people can remember it.
2. It should be visual — so people can envision it. “It’s not telling people what to do specifically, but it paints a picture to employees to help them achieve it,” he shares. As



Monitor weekly

Business advisor Colin Dunn suggests weekly meetings for teams to evaluate progress on achieving a business or organization's vision. He suggests employees report on individual commitments, account for results (report the score) and make new commitments. Dunn adds, "You are not telling them what to do. They are setting their own steps to achieve the goal and vision that have been established."

Another tip: start each meeting by having employees share one good news item on a recent achievement. Business consultants say using this tactic often sets a positive tone for the entire meeting.

an example, he points to the vision statement of Southwest Airlines: "We want to be the most loved airline."

3. Finally, the vision statement should be communicated with everyone on the team — perhaps even shared daily, suggests Dunn.

He likens a vision statement to an elevator speech. "It should be something that can be described in about 30 seconds and easily understood by everyone," he says.

Dunn has helped many organizations and businesses identify their vision statements using what he calls "The Miracle Method."

This requires gathering five to seven people affiliated with the business or organization in a room. Ask them to imagine a miracle has happened and everything they ever wanted for the business or the organization has been granted.

They should then write down how the business or organization

now looks after this miracle. What's different or better? The management team can then gather those written comments and begin to use that input as the basis for establishing the vision the business or organization is striving to accomplish.

Dunn suggests couples and families can also use the Miracle Method to improve their relationships.

A few, proud goals

Once the vision has been established, goals to support achieving that vision should be identified. But again, Dunn advises being tactical. Specifically, he suggests keeping goals to a few — no more than three.

"More than three goals can paralyze a team," he says. "Goals should be like the Marines — 'the few, the proud.'"

He continues, "Most people's day jobs are like a whirlwind, with little time for new efforts. So, if you have

more than three additional goals, you'll never get time for them."

Along with that, Dunn advises goals should be assessable. This means they have a target and finish line to measure them.

"You want a scorecard for your goals because people play different when you keep score," says Dunn, giving an example of a couple guys shooting basketball hoops at a park. "There is a difference in the level of play if they are just shooting hoops, or if they are keeping score. When you keep score, people get more involved because they want to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want success."

To that end, Dunn suggests each goal needs an owner — a specific person named to monitor and keep the pulse of the goal. Dunn suggests phrasing goals using this format: "From X to Y by when by who." That is exactly the format President Kennedy used to successfully put a man on the moon. **AJ**

Bank on thanks

What's the top thing employees seek — even more than compensation? It's actually appreciation, according to employee management specialists. When appreciation is expressed for employees' efforts, they feel valued and often work even harder to contribute to the business. To offer sincere appreciation, specialists suggest making it specific. This means in thanking the individual (or group), name them, state what they did, and what the impact was as a result of their actions.

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