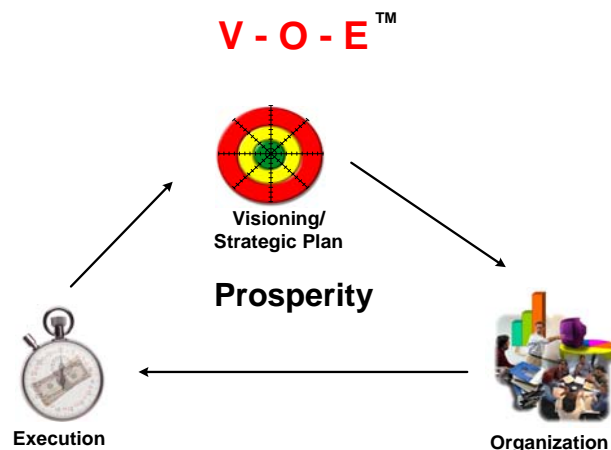


## Strategic Planning: A Vision and Roadmap to Prosperity

### V-O-E™: A Roadmap to Prosperity

In the December, 2004 issue of Business 2.0 CEO Meg Whitman was asked how eBay has been successful at managing its hyper growth through the late 1990s into the 2000s. A major component of her response dealt with three key words: **“focus, focus, focus!”** Numerous corporate success stories reflect the same strategy; they maintain focus on the target, and monitor progress on moving toward hitting that target.

As covered in a previous white paper corporate prosperity is an illusive goal, especially in the age of Virtual Teams. To achieve prosperity a number of factors must coalesce. Above all, three Components are essential to developing and maintaining focus, thereby leading to prosperity. As depicted in Figure 1 they are: **V**isioning/Strategic Planning, **O**rganization and **E**xecution.



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Figure 1: V-O-E™ Success Approach

The remainder of this paper will address the Visioning/Strategic Planning element.

### Vision/Strategic Planning

According to Fred Pryor “Visioning (as part of the Strategic Planning process) is a process that allows you to think ahead to where you want to be and what you want to be doing, and to create workable plans to lead you there.” The more vivid the Vision (target), the easier it is to maintain focus on moving a company from where it is to where it wants to be. Strategic Plans provide a context within which corporate priorities, decisions and actions can be undertaken. Visualize a

fruit bowl, filled with various business and the fruit represent all is structured in such a way that the an end; providing an organized the bowl provides a context within the bowl, the fruit become very disorganized, leading to ‘chaos.’



types of fruit. The fruit bowl represents a major components of that company. The bowl ‘fruit’ can ‘interact’ with each other to achieve place for food to feed its employees. As such, which many good things can happen. Absent

Strategic Planning is like the bowl, in that it provides the context within which a business can be organized and run optimally. Establishing a vivid picture of where a company wants to go and development of a detailed game plan to get there will encourage laser-like focus on what needs to be done and will accelerate progress made on that path toward prosperity.

### **Major Components of a Comprehensive Strategic Plan**

From our experience working with numerous emerging companies comprehensive Strategic Plans contains eight (8) components. Those components are: Vision, Mission Statement, Statement of Corporate Values, Corporate Strengths, Corporate Weaknesses, Company Challenges, a set of Long-Term Goals and Short-Term Objectives.

The Company Vision must provide a vivid ‘picture’ of what the Company will look like and how it will operate at a fixed point in time the future). Among its details is a served, major competitors, products, provides a clear ‘target’ for the firm to firms are unable to focus their efforts in a specific direction, thereby resulting in multi-dimensional activity, frequently yielding unacceptable results.



(typically, three (3) or five (5) years in definition of its business, markets to be corporate structure and operations. It ‘shoot’ for. Without this critical piece

The Mission Statement is a concise statement that answers four questions about what business the company is in, markets served, and how the company provides value to the marketplace. It is the Statement used most often in response to the question, “What does your Company do?”

The Statement of Values represents a precise statement of the company’s beliefs, or guiding principles. From our work with numerous firms these beliefs typically focus on issues related to integrity, product quality, customer relations, employee performance and accountability and financial management. Many include a statement about investments from corporate proceeds made back into the community, following a concept implemented by Ben and Jerry’s homemade ice cream.

Similar to a SWOT analysis, the Plan should also contain a statement of corporate Strengths and Weaknesses. Once acknowledged, strategies can then be developed to leverage these Strengths to enhance the firm’s position in the marketplace. In addition to Strengths an honest assessment of Weaknesses must be developed. Strategies can then be developed to overcome those weaknesses.

Typically, there are one or more market dynamics that are not under the firm’s control. These ‘Challenges’, could relate to federal, state or local regulations, for example. Although Challenges are external elements that cannot be influenced by the firm, they must be accounted for in the Plan.

In our experience a Corporate Vision is typically descriptive in nature. As such, it is difficult to know that when the Vision has been achieved. One means to confirm achievement of the Vision

is the development of a set of Long-Term Goals. Following the S.M.A.R.T. approach to goal setting, as provided by the University of Victoria in 2003, Long-Term Goals should be established for each of the major functions of the business.

Finally, development of a Strategic Plan without knowing ‘what to do next’ is like being in an airplane circling and landing at the airport and, when the doors to the plane open, not knowing where to go next. Logic would dictate that movement directly from the firm’s current condition to achievement of its vision is an unrealistic expectation. Many emerging companies have been frustrated with Strategic Planning efforts, in that the Plans do not include a ‘next steps’ component. In our view, progress toward achievement of Long-Term Goals should be done in six-month increments. As such, a critical element of high-value Strategic Planning includes the development of a set of Short-Term Objectives covering the next six (6) months. Numbering 3-5 these very specific tactical objectives provide a foundation for focused short-term action and are explicitly aligned with one or more Long-Term Goals. Once achieved, Short-Term Objectives for the subsequent six (6) month interval are developed.

### **Development of the Strategic Plan**

There a number of approaches that can be used to develop a Strategic Plan. In our experience emerging companies have a particularly significant need to gain immediate focus through the Visioning process and accelerated movement toward achievement of that Vision, all with minimal investment of resources to the effort. A particularly successful approach involves an intensive two-day Retreat with all key management team members in attendance, preceded by the individual completion of a questionnaire focusing on areas to be covered during the Retreat. Outputs from the Retreat are transcribed and reviewed by attendees for accuracy, resulting in the final Plan. Included in the final Plan are the formal document itself and a detailed Tactical Plan including each of the 3-5 Short-Term Objectives and tasks required to achieve those Objectives.

### **Summary**

This paper has focused on the value of the V-O-E™ approach toward corporate prosperity. More specifically, a proven, successful approach toward Strategic Planning was introduced. Using the fruit bowl analogy, Strategic Planning provides the context within which the business operates. That approach included a discussion of eight (8) critical components of a Strategic Plan. The final component, Short-Term Objectives, is essential because it focuses the team on execution of the Plan. As stated in the earlier paper on V-O-E™, Strategic Planning, coupled with development of an Organization to execute the Plan and the introduction of tools and techniques to monitor progress are all required to promote corporate success. Future papers will focus on each of the above components in more detail, as well as to explore Organization and Execution, the other critical elements of the V-O-E™ Roadmap to Prosperity.

For more information on V-O-E™ and how it can help your business contact Wheeler Performance Group at (508) 430-2319 or [prosperity@wheelergroupllc.com](mailto:prosperity@wheelergroupllc.com) or visit [www.wheelergroupllc.com](http://www.wheelergroupllc.com) .