

## Where Do You Want To Be In Five Years?

Written by Steve Marr

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Frequently I encounter people who want to reach a dream or achieve something different in the future. Looking forward is fine, but to reach a goal you need a systematic plan to get there. King Solomon wrote, "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty." (Proverbs 14:23, NIV). My grandfather was fond of saying "If wishes were horses then beggars would ride."

When I help someone in this situation I start by helping them refine their goal. "Mike" wanted his business to run so that he could stop working 55-60 hour weeks and focus 50% of his time on mission trips. "Mary" wanted to write a book to help Christian women balance work, family, and church. "Mark" wanted to grow his pizza restaurant from one to 5 locations. In each instance, the goal could be reached if steps were implemented systematically that laid the foundation.

I asked Mike to outline his activities, and the skills he used in every part of his business. Then I helped him develop an organizational chart that would remove him from many functions of the business. By taking this step, Mike saw how he could step back if he could find people to fill the boxes on the chart. Mike looked at the work that could be developed with his current team and decided how to delegate more work and responsibility over time. As each person grew in their roles, Mike could assign them more responsibility. At the same time, Mike needed to increase the pay for key staff members to insure they would not leave for a better offer.

Additionally, we identified sales as a weak spot. Mike did most of the sales himself because no one from his staff had the gifts or skills to become the key sales person. I suggested that Mike plan to hire a person in year two or three to handle the sales. This would give Mike time to provide the training and mentoring necessary as well as to validate the person as the right hire.

The biggest change for Mike was to stop doing so many specific tasks in the business and become the coach and mentor to key staff. I helped Mike understand that he needed to think long term, as though he was on a 3-month ministry assignment with limited ability to stay in touch. How well would the business run without his every day presence? Also, I explained that he needed to identify the person in charge when he was out.

I suggested Mike start increasing his mission trips in years three through five in his plan. This allowed him to test the staff and validate his coaching to make sure it was effective. If the wheels started coming off after two weeks, he had more work to do. Over time, Mike made his goal, one step at a time.

Mary was a different case. I suggested that she set a time budget, allocating time each week to work on the book project. She needed to complete a book outline, identify research and line up

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assistance to help her, including a good book editor. She took the first step to set up a time budget. Unfortunately, every month some work issue would arise to occupy the time and push the book into the next month. I coached Mary to rearrange work to keep the book writing time open, but she always believed she needed to do the work herself because no one else would be as effective. To the best of my knowledge the book is still a dream in Mary's head.

Mark still has one restaurant, six years later. He had been working 65-70 hours a week in his establishment, making sure everything was done right. I told Mark he needed to focus on two key things to grow the business. The first was to write out the procedures and systems needed to run the business well. He could use these in each restaurant to maintain quality standards. He never got very far in writing the manual; he was always busy cooking pizza.

Additionally, I told Mark he needed to hire a strong lead supervisor at his current place to free him to work on the manual and start the process of getting the second location up and running. He never found a person he liked for the job.

When you dream, ask the Lord if the dream is something He would have you do. If confirmed, count the cost, Jesus said, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?" (Luke 14:28, NIV) The tower required the right engineering, workforce, leadership and materials. It wasn't just about the money. Building a tower took time, focus and other elements coming together. If you want to reach your goal, get past the dreaming and talking phase. Make a plan and start taking to reach it. Success waits!

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