

When own goals are good

How clearly defined are your personal goals? I ask because any major issue brought to me by business owners invariably leads to that question.



Personal goals, also referred to as primary aims, are the bedrock upon which all subsequent business planning is built. When they are clear it allows business owners to put their company in to context with life's bigger picture. Major company decisions, including strategy, succession and governance, should be referenced against these personal goals. Ask the question: "Will the planned outcome of this decision get me closer towards achieving my primary aims?" In this way, personal goals can also provide a compass when the going gets rough – similar to a set of values.

Multiple own goals

When there are multiple business owners, individual goals need to be openly shared and discussed. Is there general alignment between the parties? If an obvious conflict exists then steps to address this need to start as soon as possible. Delay will only exacerbate the problem in future years. A combination of the most relevant personal goals leads to the formation of an agreed set of shareholder goals.

Goalless draw?

Clients I advise tend to fall in to one of three categories:

- No personal goals. Clear business goals.

Sometimes manifests itself as "my business is my life". Can eventually lead to disillusionment or burn out. Personal goals are enduring while business goals should be finite. What happens one day when the business isn't there? Or, when the business is there but other parts of their life are not?

- Clear personal goals. Lack of business goals

Sometimes results in a "love/hate" relationship with the business. The company hinders the achievement of personal goals due to its insatiable thirst for money and the owner's time. A sense of frustration ensues as the owner struggles to break out of groundhog day.

- No personal goals. No business goals.



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A tricky situation, but not as rare as you may think. Owners experience resentment, stress and bouts of demotivation. The business can veer from new idea to new idea or, inversely, stay rooted in the past as the market and competitors gradually pass them by.

Well done if you fit in to the Clear Personal Goals, Clear Business goals category!

Scoring your own goals

I am not a life coach nor profess to be one. All I can suggest is a few tips based on observing a dozen or so clients go through the goal setting exercise:

- Define your personal goals without reference to the business – at least initially
- Seek support from family or confidants who can provide stimulation or a sounding board
- Think about your goals on holiday or at the beach – not at your desk in the office!
- Take time to reflect and refine your initial ideas over a number of weeks

Post match analysis

Once you are clear on your personal goals ask yourself “What is the relationship between my business and these goals?” Is it supporting them? Detracting from them? Neutral?

The result from this reflection and analysis provides a good platform from which to embark on some business goals definition or longer term strategic planning.

If you would like to receive a complimentary Scoring Your Own Goals think sheet, please drop me an email.

