Having right vision is only one step to making dreams reality

How do you make your dreams come true?

By Rhonda Abrams

If you're like me, you probably have many dreams for your future. That's great, because most — if not all — successful small businesses start with a dream. What makes the difference between those who just dream and those who make their entrepreneurial dreams come true?

First, let me tell you that dreaming is vital. As an entrepreneur, I'm quite a dreamer. Almost every day, I spend some time imagining what my future might look like. But while I'm a frequent visitor to the future, I don't take up permanent residence there. Dreams can be the foundation for a new reality or just an escape from your current reality.

The first step in changing — your life or your business — is to be able to imagine a new reality.

It can be a truly unique reality: a place where there's zero-emission sports cars, for example, so you can create a new car down-to-earth reality: starting an auto detailing company of your own that enables you to earn a decent living.

What are the steps to move from imagination to action? Let's define what I'll call a "dream scale" — from the least-achievable stage of dreaming to the most achievable and action oriented:

1. **Fantasy**, concepts that are impossible or highly unrealistic to achieve. Hucksters make fortunes off people who fantasize about getting rich in their spare time.

Whether it's an infomercial, weekend real-estate seminar or multi-level marketing program, what most of these people sell is the fantasy that you can make money without hard work or risk. Don't get me wrong: I understand that it can be useful to have fantasies that make life more bearable, but most of these schemes drain money and time away from achievable goals, such as going back to school or starting a realistic business.
achievable but at a stage where you see only the positive side. Most of us have a dream business we’d like to run — a bed and breakfast, a wine bar, a fantastically successful social-networking site.

Are these fantasies? No. Some people do run delightful B&Bs on Cape Cod and ever hear of Facebook? However, the reality is that it’s very difficult and expensive to succeed at most of these businesses. But at this stage, all you see is the upside.

**3. Vision**, achievable concepts where you also bring the downsides and difficulties of your dream into focus. At this stage, you’re willing to challenge your own assumptions and the claims of those who promise to make your dreams come true.

You’re not afraid to look at the costs, limitations, work required, as well as begin to evaluate realistically your chances of success. For those who are just dreamers, this feels like popping the balloon. For those who are going to be successful, this feels like the beginning.

**4. Goals**, specific, realistic evaluation of what you personally want to achieve and what you’re willing to sacrifice to achieve that.

Even practical visions involve tradeoffs: An auto-detailing business may require you to work long hours, six days a week, and not be home for your kids. If you want a large business, you may need investors who would have some or all the control over your company. Are you OK with those tradeoffs?

**5. Business plan**, a thorough, thoughtful step-by-step business guide. This is where you examine your industry, study the competition, and research your market. You identify the best strategies for success and detail your action items, milestones, marketing, and operations. This is your business roadmap.

Then you go to work.

I believe in dreams. In my company, I start our annual business planning sessions by brainstorming wild ideas and discussing big goals for our future.

But that’s only the first hour. We spend the rest of the time challenging and prioritizing our goals, then devising a detailed plan for achieving them.

If we didn’t, our aspirations would still be dreams. Instead, we’re busy making our dreams come true.

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