

To envision your business potential can be exciting, but putting it to the test can be scary. Robert Craven provides a step-by-step guide to how BHAGs can materialise

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOAL

Are you so busy you haven't even got time to think about next week, let alone next month or next year? It's the plight of many managers and business owners. The trouble is, unless you dare to dream it's never going to get better.

Visionary companies often use bold missions. These can also be called *BHAGs*, Big Hairy Audacious Goals, pronounced *bee-hargs*. A *BHAG* is a powerful mechanism to stimulate progress. Most companies have goals, but there is a difference between merely having a goal and becoming committed to a huge, daunting challenge.

In the 1960s President Kennedy didn't have a goal to "do a bit more in space". Despite there being a less than 50:50 belief in getting a man on the moon, in 1961, he still declared 'that this nation shall commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning safely to earth". At the time this

statement was outrageous. It was a *BHAG*, and what a *BHAG* does is provide a unifying focal point of effort, often creating immense team spirit.

A *BHAG* engages people - it reaches out and engages their emotions. It is tangible, energising and exciting, it has a clear finish line. As the goal becomes the focal point, so the leader becomes less important. *BHAGs* are well-suited to entrepreneurs, small companies, and start-ups in particular.

- Sam Walton's *BHAG* was to make his first dime store the most successful in Arkansas within five years. (This is now Wal-Mart.)
- Tom Watson Snr's goal was to transform his tiny one-building company into the International Business Machines Corporation (This is now IBM.)
- Sony set out to design, develop and sell a pocket radio.

For start-ups, to simply get up and survive is a pretty audacious goal!

Case study

Andy Gilbert runs a company called Go MAD where MAD stands for Make A Difference. The charity part of the business intends to show youngsters how to be more effective in their lives. Andy's *BHAG* is known as his rule of one in ten - he wants to reach one million youngsters in ten years. Not bad, eh?

Case study

KJ Printing Systems was a generalist printers with 75 employees. Margins on standard print jobs were ever-decreasing. In recent years they focused on printing large advertisements for roadside hoardings. They decided that their future lay in investing in a unique technology for large- sized (photographic) printing. It was at this

Core purpose:

To make it hassle-free for advertisers and their agencies to get superb quality print advertisements on their hoardings.

Core values:

- Customer-led
- State-of-the-art technology
- Dedicated

- Professional
- Growing profit

BRAG:

To create a reputation for quality and reliability such that 70 per cent of advertising agencies actually stipulate that they want **KJ** to print the advert. (Within three years.) To be known as the only printer worth working with. To be the leader in our class, proven by awards.

Vivid description:

It is 2010. We are in the car park at KJ - there is a series of company cars ahead of us - convertible Saabs, the new BMW sports. We enter through the glass double-doors. The ground floor is a throng of activity. It is a high ceilinged hallway that has hoardings adorning its walls. It is like a church dedicated to the art of tasteful persuasion. You would never know that behind this room dedicated to style is a printing works.

Young designers with portfolio cases are engaged in passionate conversation with our print managers. On the walls are some of the most memorable advertising hoardings of the last few years. All the famous and/or notorious brands have had their work printed by us: Benetton, Wonderbra, Coca-Cola. It's like a who's who of the classiest advertisers.

At reception a backlit glass cabinet houses some of the most prestigious awards of the industry. There are photos of the MD with Kate Moss (after 'that advert') and with Robbie Williams at the Golden Globe Awards. The factory floor is a hive of activity, with the latest digital printing technology in evidence. Fifty men and women at work in what resembles a dust free environment. In the finishing room we can see the last touches being put on our latest project - the McDonald's hologram advert for the opening event at the forthcoming Olympics. Another coup for KJ.

The design studio comprises thirty designers working at computers - there is bustle, there is excitement, and the phones are ringing - controlled chaos. The sales and administration floor is relaxed, informal yet with an air of success. All areas are clean and tidy. The style is very Scandinavian - large plants, large windows, and wonderful views of the countryside.

The works canteen is very Ikea! Meetings are going on here rather than in a board room. This is a place where people are happy to be working.

Action point

Ask yourself if your vision for your business (that's if you have one in the first place!) is compelling enough. Do you have a Big Hairy Audacious Goal or do you have dull uninspiring goals like: do better than last year'? Where's the passion and excitement in that? Rewrite your vision until it is a *BHAG* - this in turn will inspire you to rewrite your mission and will affect your strategy.

- STEP ONE - What is your core purpose?
- STEP TWO - What are your core values?
- STEP THREE - What is your Big Hairy Audacious Goal (*BRAG*)?
- STEP FOUR - Write a vivid description of your *BRAG*.

BRAG checklist

- Is it clear?
- Is it compelling?
- Does it require little explanation? It shouldn't.
- Is it a goal (rather than a statement)?

- Does it get people's juices going?
- Is it outside the comfort zone? It should be.
- Does it have a life of its own beyond the leader?
- Is it consistent with the company's beliefs and ideologies?

So, have you got a motivating *BHAG*? Or look at it another way: what would it mean if you didn't have clarity and direction for your business?

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