



So What's the Next Step?

When a businessperson asks, "Here's where I am right now; so what's the next step?" they expect me to be able to answer them. But I've never been able to do it. Questions about "the next step" invariably make me ask, "Where are you

trying to go?"

Why do so few people realize that the correct "next step" depends entirely on their choice of direction? Until you've settled the issues of goals and objectives, hopes and dreams, assets and risk orientation, measuring sticks and milestones, there can be no intelligent answer to questions about "the next step."

Sometimes I suspect the person asking for "the next step" is secretly hoping that I can tell them what to do with their lives. Sorry, friend. No can do. But if you're serious about deciding what your "next step" should be, I do have some help to offer. All you need to do is answer a few simple questions:

1. What are your non-negotiables? Do you have any unspoken principles that tell you the way to take when you come to a fork in the road? Are there any unwavering constants in the way you do things?
2. How do you want this journey to end and how will you measure progress?
3. Can you name the things that you're definitely NOT willing to do to be successful?

Though you may never have formally identified them, you likely have a set of unifying principles and the smoothest running, most enthusiastic organizations are the ones whose people can articulate the principles upon which their company is built.

No, I'm not talking about having a mission statement. (Haven't you ever noticed how all mission statements sound alike?) Unifying Principles differ from mission statements in that they actually *tell you* the way to take.

The Constitution and The Bill of Rights list the unifying principles of the American people. Likewise, Eastman Kodak was founded on a set of clearly articulated and highly specific unifying principles.

1. Even though Kodak overwhelmingly dominates the camera, film, and photo-equipment business, they have always allowed the "expensive camera" position to be dominated by competitors. Why?
2. In their TV ads promoting Kodak Colorwatch paper, Bill Cosby staggers under the weight of a giant photograph as he reminds us to "always look for the Kodak Colorwatch Seal." Then he turns the giant photo's back slowly toward the camera so we can see the Colorwatch seal for ourselves. Why?
3. The Kodak film factory in Colorado covers several acres and is fully roboticized. The only employees are a handful of robot mechanics. Why?

It all dates back to 1881 when George Eastman founded the Eastman Dry Plate Company on three unifying principles— clearly articulated decisions that would bring his company into unity:

1. Always keep the price of the product low, so the public will find more uses for it.
2. Always sell by demonstration.
3. Be among the first to take advantage of newly developed technologies.

Eastman Kodak has been faithfully following the unifying principles of George Eastman for more than a hundred and twenty years. Is it any wonder they've remained focused, enthusiastic and successful?

Discover your own unifying principles by listing all the ways you might complete these sentences: "We always..." "We never..." and "We deeply believe..." Uncovering the exciting truth about your company will not only help to create the powerful *esprit de corps* that is the heartbeat of a thriving business, but your newly defined unifying principles will be there to guide you when next you come to a fork in the road. And best of all, "the next step" will have already been decided.

Roy H. Williams

PS. Have you visited www.WizardAcademy.com lately?