

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

How One Man Rose Above Bankruptcy and Failure To Building a Multi-Billion Dollar Empire

Try to imagine a world without Walt Disney. A world without his magic, optimism and childlike fantasy. Walt Disney pioneered the fields of animation, and transformed the entertainment world. He did more to touch the hearts, minds, and emotions of millions of Americans than any other person in the past century.

The Walt Disney Company – now a mega-empire whose profits (yes, profits!) are \$1.3 billion – was the creation of a high school drop out who suffered bankruptcy, risked it all 4 times and suffered repeated financial and business disasters. How did one man overcome the greatest of challenges to become a legend ... a folk hero ... a master of enterprise?

Walt Disney's creative and business magic can be summarized in one word: **Imagineering**. The term, trademarked by Disney in 1967, combines the words "imagination" and "engineering."

Today, Walt Disney's Imagineering is the master planning, creative development, design, engineering, production, project management and research and development arm of The Walt Disney Company. A powerful insight into the Imagineering process is provided by one of Walt Disney's co-workers who pointed out "... there were actually three different Walts: the *dreamer*, the *realist* and the *spoiler* (or critic). You never knew which one was coming to a meeting."

Through the modeling technologies of NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP), you too can cultivate the same business genius of Walt Disney. You too can learn Disney's Imagineering process to make your boldest visions into reality.

Applying the Disney Difference in Your Business: The Benefits of the Imagineering Process

Whether you are a soloist business owner or the CEO of a multi-billion dollar corporation, *Imagineering* is a simple yet powerful process that can help you:

- Be successful at the “inner game” of reaching future goals
- Build powerful teams, strategic partnerships and alliances
- Maximize the return and minimize the risk in new “virgin” situations – such as launching a new product, expanding to new markets or acquiring a business
- Lead and manage change throughout your organization
- Develop clear compelling plans that inspire you/your team to action
- Communicate and work more effectively with diverse groups of people
- Ignite your creativity and problem solving capabilities

The Imagineering Process: An Overview

Whether you are an individual or a team, *Imagineering* involves the coordination of three “hats” or roles. All three roles are critical to effective problem solving and transforming visions into reality.

- The Dreamer
The dreamer’s role is to provide the visionary big picture ... with no

boundaries, limitations or restraints.

- The Realist

The realist's role is to evaluate what is realistic, think constructively and organize action plans.

- The Critic

The critic's role is to test the plan, look for potential problems, difficulties and consequences. That is, what could go wrong, what is missing.

Very few individuals, teams or organizations are strong in all three roles or capabilities. What happens when one or two of these roles are missing? Do any of these sound like you or your organization?

- A Dreamer without a Realist gets stuck in fantasy, a "some day" mentality.
- A Realist without a Dreamer or Critic is like a robot. They are task masters. They are driven by "to do" lists.
- A Critic and a Dreamer without a Realist get caught up in perpetual conflict.
- A Dreamer and Realist without a Critic are an R&D department – lots of prototypes but lack quality standards for success.
- A Critic without a Dreamer or Realist is a Spoiler. They stop themselves even before they get started.
- A Realist and Critic without a Dreamer are a Bureaucracy.

To make your dreams come true ... with ease, precision and passion, it is critical to master and synthesize all three Imagineering roles. Below is a peek how I work with individuals, teams and organizations in modeling Disney's Imagineering to create extraordinary business results.

Imagineering Your Business Success: The Process for Transforming Your Dreams into Reality

Your ability to transform your business goals into reality requires mastery of the following phases of the Imagineering process.

The Dreamer: Envisioning Your Future

Walt Disney's genius always started with a dream. He would see clearly in his own mind the vision of what he wanted – whether it was a theme park, a cartoon character, a movie or any of his other creative endeavors.

As the Dreamer, you want to think about your long term future, address the big picture and generate many alternatives for reaching your goal. The primary focus is on the “*what*” of your idea or vision.

To model the Dreamer in Walt Disney, you must ask yourself such questions as:

- *What* do I want in an ideal world?
- *What* is the purpose of this project or goal?
- *What* are the benefits?
- *What* will be the impact once my goal is achieved?
- *What* alternative strategies will help me get there?

Key Points: Always state the goal in positive terms and establish the purpose and payoffs of reaching your goal. Think big ... very big.

The Realist: Defining the Plan

The purpose of the Realist is to turn the dream into a workable plan. While wearing the Realist hat, you want to “act as if” the dream is possible and identify steps, timeframes and milestones for getting there.

Your focus needs to be more action-oriented, on the **“how”** -- ie., procedures and operations -- for implementing your plan or idea.

To model the Realist in Walt Disney, you must ask yourself such questions as:

- *How* specifically will the idea be implemented? What will be the first step? second step? third step? By when?
- *How* will I know when the goal has been achieved?
- *How* will I get the resources (people, money, skills, etc.) I need to reach my goal?

Key Points: Create a “storyboard” of your plan by finding simple images to represent the steps required for reaching your goal or dream. Disney developed the very powerful process of “storyboarding” in 1928 and is now used by many successful businesses, such as GE.

The Critic:: Identifying Potential Problems

The purpose of the Critic is to evaluate the proposed plan and look for potential problems and ‘missing links.’ The Critic role must follow the Dreamer and the Realist in this process.

The Critic identifies external factors or individuals that may influence the outcome of the plan (either positively or negatively). The primary purpose of the Critic is to focus on **“what if”** concerns, along with solutions to avoid them.

To model the Critic in Walt Disney, you must ask yourself such questions as:

- *What if* I can’t find the necessary resources or funds to implement my plan?
- *What if* my competitors _____ ?

- *What if* I don't meet the plan's milestones? How will that effect costs? Time and resource requirements?
- *What if* certain people object to my plan or can negatively impact its success? How will I handle that?

Key Points: While most people and organizations look at critics as negative people, their role is essential to your future success. You want them on your team. For the Critic role to be most effective, allow the critic to present their concerns only in the last step, after the dream and plans have been formulated.

Summary:

One man – Walt Disney – not only built one of the most successful US businesses of all time. This one man also left a magical legacy spanning almost a century and will continue for many generations to come.

How has **one** man accomplished so much? The answer is his **Imagineering** process – his secret for transforming ambitious, creative visions into extraordinary realities. By following Walt Disney's cycle of Dreamer, Realist and Critic, you too will realize a compelling business future and a clear path that will take you there.

Denise Corcoran – CEO, The Empowered Business (tm) – specializes in transforming emerging and growth-driven companies into game-changing leadership teams, organizations and cultures. Her unique, whole brain, strategic solutions unleash a level of leadership and organizational potential that today's conventional methods can't achieve. She is the author of *The Mindset of Greatness* and *Dancing on the Edge: Women Who Run With Their Businesses*. You can connect with Denise at www.empoweredbusiness.com.