



a street he liked. He visualised the new premises right down to the shower room he would fit downstairs.

I use a detailed checklist to facilitate this vision planning. Just a few things I get business owners to envision include:

- What the core business will be.
- The mix of products they will be supplying and how that will differ from today.
- Target markets and how they differ from today.
- What will happen to existing clients?
- Revenue for each of the target markets.
- Size of the business.
- Future organisational chart.
- What will you, the owner, be doing?
- How will your product or service be distributed?
- What will be the brand values associated with the business?
- Who will the business be known and respected by?
- What are some of the milestones along the way?

The beauty of this approach is you can create a vision in a day or half a day. You are not constrained by the issues currently affecting you

and you can be as 'out there' as you like.

Of course once you have a vision you have to test it, and the next part of the process is to develop a gap analysis detailing what will have to change to make your vision a reality. This is where the fun really begins as business owners start to see that those dreams may be possible after all. The gap analysis looks

at over 20 aspects of the business including systems, marketing, product development, pricing, positioning and even personal development.

Sometimes the vision has to be modified because it is unrealistic or unachievable. But more often the business owner needs to adjust the time frame for achieving the vision because they have been either over ambitious or too cautious.

The gap analysis also identifies resources and skills that will be needed to achieve the vision and generates a clear direction for ongoing research. The final step in vision planning is to develop a basic action plan to make it all happen. Everything in the gap analysis can be broken down into tasks and prioritised to form a step-by-step action plan for success. It's now been two years since I worked with my first client on a vision plan and it's been amazing to see these clients grow faster than any of those with a traditional business plan. They update their vision more often and refer to it constantly. It is a living, dynamic document that doesn't end up in a filing cabinet drawer! It's also a fraction of the cost of traditional plans and can be completed in weeks not months. So if you have been putting off writing a business plan try making the difference in 2007 with a vision plan. ■

Have you found vision planning a successful tool in developing your business? Share your story with *CountryBIZ* in no more than 100 words to be in the running to win one of 10 copies of *Your Business, Your Future* by Linda Hailey. Email your entry to: georgina@edgepubs.com.au

GAP ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

- Target markets
- Product development
- Pricing
- Product mix
- Packaging
- Manufacturing or production systems
- Suppliers
- Order fulfillment systems
- Delivery of product or service
- Billing systems
- Sales focus/systems
- Customer service systems
- Sales focus/approach
- Marketing to target markets
- Market positioning
- Awareness
- Staffing and Structure
- Communications internal
- Communications external
- Management

Linda Hailey is a business consultant, keynote speaker and author of *Your Business, Your Future: How to Predict and Harness Growth*.