



12 Defining the gaps between present and desired

What is a defined gap?

So far in this book you have had a chance to think about where you are now with your business and where you want to be in the future. Unless you are living your vision right now there will be a gap between these two points – present and desired. You need to be clear about exactly what is missing. Creating a defined gap is about getting very specific about the elements of your business that you need to focus on in order to close the gap and achieve your ultimate goals. The gap between present and desired position will differ from business to business.

Here are some examples of the general gaps you might find yourself defining.

- Personal activities (time and focus).
- Quality of products and services.
- Location.
- Number of outlets.
- Market area.
- Target customers.
- Numbers of customers.
- Systems and procedures.
- Marketing activities.
- Staff team.
- Knowledge.
- Skills.

Why is it important to define the gaps?

Defining the gaps specifically is important because it will focus your attention on what needs work. Once you have clearly defined the gaps then they can be used to set appropriate goals and objectives with a plan to achieve them. Without defining the gaps it could be very easy to slip into the grass-hopper approach to business and marketing planning, jumping from one thing to the next or allowing yourself to get distracted.

Your challenge

Your challenge is to take the time to do this. To focus on what needs your attention. Be honest with yourself. This will pay dividends in the longer term.

At this stage you do not have to have the solution. That comes later. All you need to do is be very clear about what needs your attention. It may be that you don't know what needs work or needs to be implemented to get you from where you are to where you want to be. If that is the case you could come back to this chapter once you have got to the end of this book. It would be useful to keep a notebook to hand and write down gaps as you come across them.

GETTING TO THE GAP – SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ In front of you have your notes from 'where you are now' along with your ultimate business vision.
- ▶ Make a note of some of the problems you perceive you have now that may prevent you from reaching your vision. These problem areas will indicate gaps.
- ▶ Make a note of all the areas of your business where you see a clear gap.
- ▶ For each of those areas write down what the gap is.

How to use this information

This information can be used in a number of ways. Firstly the gaps you establish will highlight the information you need to gather, the processes you need to implement, the changes you need to make and the goals you need to set. Secondly it will give your thinking some structure, and focus your attention on the important issues to consider when business planning. Thirdly they will remind you of what is vital if you are to achieve your vision. Talking about it is not enough to make it happen – it needs action focused in the most important areas.

Think gap and make the right things happen