Compelling and Audacious Goals

By Mark Abbott and Mike Frascolla

Introduction

Almost every great company on the planet shares a common thread: They all set out to pursue a goal so challenging, so outrageous, so seemingly unattainable that it could only be characterized as audacious.

Here are a few famous examples of goals that galvanized entire organizations:

Starbucks — Become the most recognized and respected consumer brand in the world.

Amazon — Every book ever printed in any language, all available in less than 60 seconds.

Microsoft — A computer on every desk in every home.

Stanford University — Become the Harvard of the West.

These once-small organizations are now giants that nearly everyone in the world recognizes. That's the power of a **Compelling and Audacious Goal (CAG)**, a dream so big that it requires the commitment of everyone in the organization to achieve.

> **"If you limit your choices only to what seems possible or reasonable, you disconnect yourself from what you truly want, and all that is left is a compromise." — Robert Fritz**

Context

Leaders of great organizations inspire their teams and customers to be challenged and excited by their Compelling and Audacious Goals. True to its definition, a CAG must be the kind of bold risk that gets our attention because it is attainable, even if we're not 100% certain how to reach it yet.

To qualify as a CAG, a goal must:

- Be focused and simple to understand.

- Have a tangible and measurable endpoint.

- Be consistent with and complementary to all your other Core Commitments.

- Be bold enough that it requires sustained focus from everyone in the company.

- Be SMART — specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

- Border on delusional to an outsider but be compelling and worth pursuing to your Ideal Team Members.

Compelling and Audacious Goals can be a bit uncomfortable, but they shouldn't be scary. It's natural to wonder, "Can we really do this?" In a way, that's kind of the point. Day-to-day business is driven by longer-term goals that keep the company aligned with your Compelling Why — the reason your organization exists.

Most companies select a period of time when defining their CAGs — on average, 10 years into the future — based on what instinctively feels best for them.

Core Disciplines of Great CAGs

You'll know you have a great CAG if you can answer "Yes" to every one of the following questions:

1. Do you find this CAG exciting?

2. Is the CAG clear, compelling, and easy to grasp?

3. Is it SMART?

4. Does this CAG connect to the company's Compelling Why?

5. Will this CAG be exciting to everyone in the organization, not just the Senior Leadership Team?

6. Is it undeniably a Compelling and Audacious Goal(s), not a verbose, hard-to-understand, convoluted mission or vision statement?

7. Do you believe the organization has at least a 50–70% chance of achieving the CAG but can commit to it 100% all the same?

Hopefully Helpful Hints

Remember, a company's dreams need to be big enough to fulfill all its team members' dreams, too. When team members are committed to and inspired by an organization's CAGs, they're fully invested and ready to move mountains to achieve the goal.

The first pass at developing your CAG(s) doesn't need to be perfect. Most of our clients take 60 to 90 days to get the Senior Leadership Team 100% committed to their CAG(s).

A well-crafted set of 3-year goals helps advance the CAG and turn it into reality. Give your CAG the attention it needs consistently from the moment it's cemented by advancing it through actionable 3-year and 1-year goals (plus 90-day Rocks) along the way.

Takeaway

CAGs are an extension of those ideals. Make them SMART, and they serve as a Northern Constellation for the future of the thriving, enduring organization you aim to build. Give Ideal Team Members a challenging, bold goal to aspire to, and you'll have a fully committed, energized organization where everyone can imagine reaching their dreams while contributing to a greater good.

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