

# FROM FIREFIGHTING — TO — FIREPOWER

A 30-MINUTE GUIDE FOR BUSY CEOs  
WHO WANT GROWTH THAT LASTS



## XAVIER LEDERER

**FROM  
FIREFIGHTING  
TO  
FIREPOWER**

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**XAVIER LEDERER**

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## FROM ONE BUSINESS LEADER TO ANOTHER

When I was running an 80-person business in New York City, I was working 15-hour days - yet I felt I was getting nothing meaningful done. I was constantly frustrated - by the lack of accountability and ownership, the feeling of loneliness, the resistance to change – and ultimately by the lack of results.

It took me far too long to realize these issues weren't my team's fault - they reflected my own management style. And it took even longer, and quite a bit of pain, to figure out how to change it.

But once I started changing, everything began to shift. The company went from declining sales when I joined to sustained double-digit growth.

Upgrading my management approach was a long and lonely trial-and-error process. I knew something was broken, but I didn't know what the real solution looked like. I was reinventing the wheel. But boy! did I love that process.

Later I transitioned from running a business to coaching business leaders – helping them upgrade their management approach. I learned and developed practical methodologies that worked far better - and far faster - than my DIY approach ever did.

This 30-minute guide distills some of those lessons. It's for busy CEOs who want to achieve growth that lasts - without burning out or repeating the same frustrating patterns.

## *Introduction*

# **DOES URGENCY KEEP WINNING? THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU**

You are busy. Always fighting fires. A key client to call back. An unaccountable manager who needs feedback. Tight cash flow to manage.

*« Most CEOs' priorities are dictated  
by the crisis of the moment »*

Most CEOs' priorities are dictated by the crisis of the moment. You like solving problems, helping your team, or feeling indispensable – but you also know that your real role is not to be chief firefighter. Some quietly find comfort in the daily fires: being busy helps you avoid facing painful situations and decisions.

Whatever the cause, your daily calendar silts up with the sand of daily activities, leaving too little room for the impactful boulders that drive long-term impact. You know you can do better, but the short-term keeps swallowing the long-term.

I know the feeling. Looking back - and even now - I see how easy it is for any business leader, myself included, to get pulled in too many directions.

What if you could handle the day-to-day whirlwind – and still turn ambitious long-term goals into reality? Let's talk falcons.



## DISCIPLINED OPPORTUNISM

Peregrine falcons migrate twice a year, some from Northwestern Canada all the way to South America.

Throughout their journey, they remain focused on their end goal. It works: many return to the exact same nesting spot each year, thousands of miles away from their starting point.

*« Disciplined doesn't mean rigid »*

But disciplined doesn't mean rigid. They opportunistically ride wind currents and coastal updrafts to conserve energy – or follow their migrating prey for hundreds of miles to secure food along the way.

Sometimes they make mistakes and wander off their flight plan. When that happens, they use their end goal to decide when it is time to course-correct.

## LONG-TERM GOALS ARE NOT THE ENEMY OF SHORT-TERM GOALS

Yet the falcon's long-distance pursuit takes only about 25% of their day – and they don't even fly every day. They spend most of their time hunting, resting, and handling daily priorities.

Not every short-term action directly builds towards their long-term goal, but the ones that do – when and where to fly, when to hunt – are shaped by it.

## BACK TO YOU

Like that falcon, long-term goals sharpen your short-term focus.

They make it easier to define and discard distractions, carry you through the tough times, and inspire you when fatigue and frustration reign. Most importantly, they give purpose and coherence to your short-term

priorities - aligning initiatives, changes, and experiments so they all pull in the same direction toward a long-term goal that matters.

*« Long-term goals sharpen your short-term focus »*

The question is: practically, how do you set long-term goals that guide your decisions, without locking you out of short-term opportunities?

## FOCUS LIKE A FALCON

This is what you will get in this 30-minute guide: practical insights to help achieve ambitious long-term goals and multiply your impact - without sacrificing your day-to-day flexibility.

## Chapter 1

# START WITH THE END IN MIND

Would you bet on a company whose first car is a dismal failure - but claims it wants to become the world's largest automaker?

Probably not.

Warren Buffet did. And he won: BYD, an obscure Chinese phone battery manufacturer that sold a grand total of only 48 cars in 2008, the year Buffett invested, sold 4.3M cars in 2024 - surpassing Tesla and firmly anchoring itself among the top 10 largest car manufacturers in the world.

*« A truly ambitious long-term goal should sound almost ridiculous to reasonable people »*

A truly ambitious long-term goal should sound almost ridiculous to reasonable people at first. That is the point: if it inspires your team, it channels their energy, clarifies trade-offs when setting annual and quarterly priorities, and attracts the talent needed to get there.

The real challenge is this: how do you craft a long-term goal that is both bold and actionable?

## THE COST OF NOT FORMALIZING YOUR VISION

Remember when you started your business? You had an initial idea, and your ability to creatively pivot contributed greatly to your early success. You didn't need a formal vision - you breathed it.

But as your team grew, the scattered creativity that once fueled success became a liability - and slowed your growth. The larger your team, the more painful the lack of a clear long-term goal becomes:

- Your team can't make confident strategic decisions on their own - employees have to guess your intent, turning you into a bottleneck.
- You chase shiny objects, scattering focus and gradually eroding your team's commitment.
- Your best people eventually leave to put their energy into something they perceive as more meaningful.

### Case study: BYD

Founded in 1995 in China with a \$30,000 loan from the founder's cousin, BYD began as a mobile phone battery manufacturer. Its 29-year-old founder and chemist, Wang Chuanfu, spotted a technology shift from nickel-cadmium to lithium-ion batteries and seized the opportunity.

By the early 2000s, Wang anticipated the rise of electric vehicles and set a bold vision for BYD: become the #1 car manufacturer in China by 2015 and the #1 in the world by 2025. Electric vehicles would serve as BYD's "stepping stone," allowing the company to bypass traditional internal combustion engine development.

Early on, reality clashed with ambition: the first car it developed was rejected by dealers for its aesthetics and scrapped. Its first plug-in hybrid car sold just 48 units in 2008. Its first electric vehicle did not fare much better: 401 units sold in 2011.

Yet someone believed in the team and the vision: in 2008, Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway invested \$230 million for a 10% stake in BYD. Charlie Munger, Buffett's longtime partner, famously described founder Wang Chuanfu as "a combination of Thomas Edison - for his talent in solving technical and engineering problems - and Jack Welch - for his ability to execute and get results."

BYD stuck to its ambitious goals. Over the next decade, it focused relentlessly on improving quality and design, reducing costs, and advancing technology – aligning day-to-day decisions with its long-term vision.

These efforts paid off: vehicle sales grew tenfold from 2020 to 2024, reaching 4.3M cars.

Ultimately, BYD failed to achieve both long-term goals: in 2024 it was "only" #2 in China and #10 in the world. But without that initial bold vision guiding its choices along the way, where would the company be today?

### A TANGIBLE, AMBITIOUS LONG-TERM GOAL SHARPENS YOUR FOCUS

A clear long-term goal sheds light on what is - and is not - strategic, helps streamline your team's efforts, and attracts the talent you need to grow faster and with less pain.

An effective tangible, ambitious long-term goal:

- *Acts like a guardrail*: it prevents you from chasing every distraction and makes it easier to say no to non-strategic opportunities. It ensures that everyone works toward the same audacious vision - just as BYD stayed committed to becoming a global automotive leader despite early setbacks.
- *Clarifies strategic priorities year after year* and makes these conversations objective. Henry Ford's long-term goal - "I will build a motor car for the great multitude" - gave clear direction toward cost-efficient mass production.

- *Narrows your focus*. There are many ways to reach small goals, but fewer options to reach big goals. Audacious goals help you eliminate the "noise" of non-essential priorities.
- *Acts as a magnetic force*, pulling you and your team toward a higher calling. Its inspiration fuels your energy and resolve when fatigue and frustration set in. It reconnects you with the "Why" behind your business – the fundamental problem you want to solve. This is why long-term financial goals alone often fall short: except for you, very few people in your business are excited by making the business owner rich.
- *Propels you forward* and forces you to further develop capabilities that strengthen your value and uniqueness in the eyes of your Core Customer.

In *10x is Easier than 2x*, Dan Sullivan and Benjamin Hardy share the story of a young tennis player. If her goal is to become a great amateur, she has endless options - many coaches, many pathways -making the choice complex. But if her goal is to go pro, only a handful of coaches and training systems can get her there.

*« The bigger the goal, the fewer the options »*

The bigger the goal, the fewer the options. Stretching goals automatically reduces the number of options and eliminates the noise of non-essential priorities.

### SHOOT FOR THE STARS. IF YOU MISS, YOU MAY STILL LAND ON THE MOON.

If you are a hyper-achiever like many CEOs, you might hesitate to set truly ambitious long-term goals – fearing that missing them could hurt your sense of self-worth. That is completely understandable.

Spoiler alert: you will still be a great leader even if you miss your



ambitious goals. Take BYD, for example: it wasn't #1 by 2025, not even in its home market. Yet its bold, vivid vision guided its short-term priorities and propelled it to become a global powerhouse.

### MAKING IT HAPPEN: HOW DO YOU SET YOUR ACTIONABLE LONG-TERM GOAL?

There is a major difference between compelling goals that garner everybody's energy and ridiculously ambitious goals that demotivate your team. An actionable long-term goal inspires, focuses, and drives results. To be effective, it should sit at the intersection of three key questions, as described by Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great*.

1. **What are you (or can you be) the best in the world at - in the eyes of your Core Customer?** What is unique about you - something your best clients cannot find anywhere else - that keeps them choosing you, or refer you, again and again? Many leaders think they know the answer - they don't. Ask your top clients directly; their insights are often revealing.
2. **What are you and your leadership team deeply passionate about?** Why do you dedicate your creative energy to this specific business? What gets you out of bed in the morning, even when times are tough? Why does what you do matter? Answering these questions will help you uncover your company's Core Purpose - the energy that drives you to pursue your ambitious long-term goal.
3. **What drives your economic engine?** What is your #1 profit driver? Your long-term goal must align with your business model, so pursuing it moves your company toward sustainable, profitable growth.

Answering these three questions thoughtfully will give you the foundation for an ambitious, actionable long-term goal.

But don't stop there. To make your vision truly compelling, you also need to imagine it in vivid detail.

Fast forward 5 or 10 years. It is late evening. You are sitting on your couch, reflecting on how far you have come - when your phone rings. It is your favorite movie producer.

With excitement in their voice, they say: *"I have been following your company's journey - the challenges, the breakthroughs, the impact you have made. What an incredible story! I'd love to make a movie about it."*

Then they ask you three questions:

- **The title:** What is the name of the movie - the one that captures your greatest achievements?
- **The ending:** Picture the final scene. How big is your business? What kind of impact are you making? What are your clients saying about you? Who are you working with? And what is the next challenge you are taking on? Be very specific.
- **The lead actor:** Who would you want to play you - the person who captures your energy, determination, and leadership?

*« Your ambitious long-term goal should be  
a clear finish line »*

Keep in mind: your ambitious long-term goal should be a clear finish line. In their book *Switch*, Chip and Dan Heath suggest the "Champagne Test": Is your goal tangible enough that your team will know exactly when they have crossed it - and can celebrate?

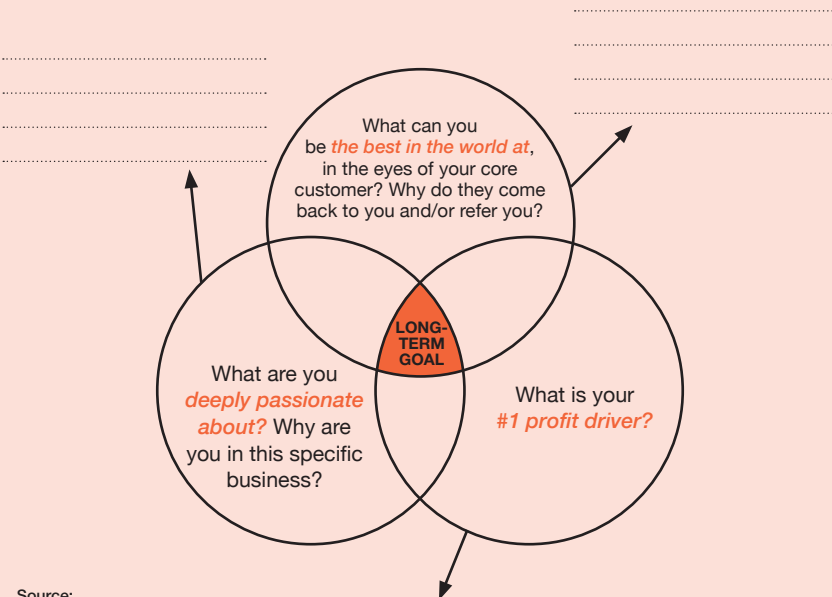
Used together, these two approaches will give you a tangible long-term goal that is bold, inspiring, and actionable - a compass for strategic decisions, priorities, and team alignment.

### MAKING IT HAPPEN: WHAT CAN YOU DO RIGHT NOW?

Use the Action Tool on the next pages to draft your ambitious, actionable long-term goal.

*Action tool:***DEFINE YOUR AMBITIOUS,  
ACTIONABLE LONG-TERM GOAL.**

**STEP 1:** Answer these three questions to set the stage for a compelling and ambitious long-term goal:



Source:  
Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make  
the Leap...And Others Don't, Jim Collins

**STEP 2:** Take a blank sheet of paper and fast forward 5 or 10 years to make your long-term goal tangible and actionable. Answer the questions below:

It is late evening. You are sitting on your couch, reflecting on how far you have come - when your phone rings. It is your favorite movie producer.

With excitement in their voice, they say: *"I have been following your company's journey - the challenges, the breakthroughs, the impact you have made. What an incredible story! I'd love to make a movie about it."*

Then they ask you three questions:

**The title:** What is the name of the movie – the one that captures your greatest achievements?

**The ending:** Picture the final scene. How big is your business? What kind of impact are you making? What are your clients saying about you? Who are you working with? What is your role? And what is the next challenge you are taking on? Be very specific.

**The lead actor:** Who would you want to play you?

**STEP 3:** Combining steps 1 and 2, draft your tangible, ambitious long-term goal:

**STEP 4: Test your long-term goal:**

Is your long-term goal:

.Compelling enough to energize not just you, but your team as well?	YES   NO
.Tangible enough to pass the Champagne test?	YES   NO
.Clear and easy to grasp?	YES   NO
.Ambitious yet has 50% to 70% chance of success?	YES   NO
.Will it require a quantum leap in the capabilities of the organization?	YES   NO

If you answered No to some of these questions, your long-term goal needs improving.

**STEP 5: Keep iterating.**

Defining your long-term goal is an iterative process – that can take a year, sometimes more. As you move toward it, you’ll learn along the way - and those insights will help you refine and improve your long-term goal.

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Chapter 2

**FIVE STEPS TO TURN AMBITION  
INTO RESULTS**

If you narrowed the exhaust pipe of a rocket, would you expect it to go faster?

Probably not.

Yet that’s exactly what happens: by constricting the flow in a very specific manner, gases accelerate. This is how SpaceX rockets generate the enormous thrust needed to lift off.

The same counterintuitive principle applies to your business. When you focus your team’s energy on fewer priorities - when you “narrow the nozzle” - you accelerate progress towards your long-term goal. Reducing the number of priorities doesn’t slow growth; it speeds it up.

*« Reducing the number of priorities doesn’t slow growth;  
it speeds it up »*

If you are wondering, the “magic number” of quarterly priorities is 3. Leadership teams that try to pursue more, thinking that they will move faster, often fail to achieve them – and eventually slow down. Leadership teams that focus on 3 truly impactful priorities, saying “not now” to other priorities, consistently move faster.

This chapter and the next will help you intelligently prune options. Just keep one rule in mind from the previous chapter: The most tangible your ambitious long-term goal, the easier it becomes to see which options truly matter.

But how do you practically apply this principle to your business?

Think of it like climbing a mountain: the summit is your long-term goal, but the path is dotted with milestones you need to reach along the way. Focusing on fewer priorities - narrowing the nozzle - directs your energy and accelerates your climb.

Along the way, not every step needs to be dictated by the summit. Some short-term choices are just part of moving forward. But the ones that truly matter – often small decisions, but that collectively shape your trajectory toward the top - are guided by your long-term goal. Recognizing which is which is what turns effort into progress.

### NARROWING A FLOW ACCELERATES IT - REALLY?

In the late 1800s, Swedish engineer Gustaf de Laval was trying to make steam turbines more efficient. As steam approached the “sound barrier” inside the pipes, the flow became unstable, wasting much of its energy.

He proposed a solution that baffled his colleagues: narrow the passage first, in a very specific way, to increase pressure and velocity up to the speed of sound at the narrowest point, then widen it again to let the gas expand and accelerate to supersonic speeds.

The result? Steam flow that nearly doubled in speed, dramatically boosting turbine efficiency - and a breakthrough invention that still powers rocket engines and fighter jets today.

The same counterintuitive principle applies to your business. When you focus your team’s energy on fewer, high-impact priorities – when you “narrow the nozzle” – you don’t slow growth. You accelerate it.

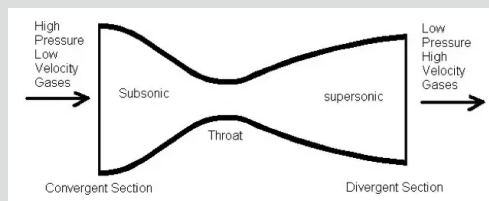


Illustration of a de Laval nozzle.

## IMPLEMENTING YOUR VISION: A 5-STEP JOURNEY

Imagine standing at the base of a mountain you’ve always dreamed of climbing. One peak excites you more than the others. You can already picture yourself standing at the top, looking back at the path you took with your team - proud, grateful, successful.

But right now, you’re at the base, unsure how to start. You do know the location of the first major milestone - your “altitude camp.” Reaching it will clarify the path to the summit.

An ambitious long-term goal without a plan is just bravado. The challenge is: how do you connect your vision to the first concrete steps you need to take tomorrow?

### WHERE IS YOUR ALTITUDE CAMP?

Start with the end in mind: your long-term ambitious goal is the summit. Then follow these steps:

**1. Define your altitude camp:** Where do you need to be in 2 or 3 years, on the path to the summit? Be specific and define:

- Financial goals
- #employees
- #clients
- Product portfolio
- Company culture
- Other strategic goals that you need to reach in 2 or 3 years

**2. Identify the top 5 multi-year strategic initiatives:** Which initiatives will move you toward your altitude camp while strengthening your competitive advantage? When do they need to start? – not necessarily all right now. For each initiative, map quarterly and annual milestones for the next 2 or 3 years.

**3. Set your 12-month milestones:** Where do you need to be in one year to be on track to reach your altitude camp – and ultimately reach the summit?

**4. Define annual priorities:** How far do you need to advance this year within your multi-year initiatives to hit your 12-month milestones?

**5. Select 3 quarterly priorities:** These are the first actionable steps toward your annual priorities. Update them every quarter based on your roadmap.

### QUARTERLY PRIORITIES: THE BEDROCK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Quarterly priorities are only as effective as your accountability system. Ask yourself:

- **Alignment:** Is your leadership team fully aligned on these 3 quarterly priorities? Misalignment is the silent killer of growth: it leads to wasted resources, silos, and politics in the office.
- **Accountability:** Is only one person accountable for each priority? That person does not do all the work themselves, but they ensure the work gets done.
- **Tracking:** Can you monitor the progress of each quarterly priority, every week? This will enable you to spot issues early and take corrective actions when needed. Ask each priority owner to quickly put together a 13-week action plan (since there are 13 weeks in one quarter).
- **Weekly review:** Do you discuss the status of your quarterly priorities in your weekly leadership meeting? Leverage the 13-week action plans to do so. Decide corrective actions promptly when a priority gets off-track.

*« Ultimately you want alignment between your quarterly priorities, your 1- and 3-year goals, and your long-term vision »*

### QUARTERLY PRIORITIES: SUPPORTING YOUR LONG-TERM VISION

Ultimately you want alignment between your quarterly priorities, your 1- and 3-year goals, and your long-term vision. That is when your team's energy and resources are used most effectively – and progress accelerates.

Here is a quick test: describe these elements to an AI assistant like ChatGPT. Ask it to summarize your company's direction in a few sentences. If it captures your vision clearly, great – your priorities are likely well aligned with your medium- and long-term goals. If it struggles or confuses your priorities, chances are your team feels the same.

AI is surprisingly good at mirroring the clarity - or fuzziness - of your thinking.

As Mark Green points out in *Creating a culture of accountability*, “The farther away from senior leadership, the fuzzier it gets. When there is poor clarity and alignment at the top, by the time you reach the front lines, you are usually looking at a train wreck.”

*« A vision only works if your leadership team believes in it as much as you do »*

### IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, PLAN TOGETHER

Keep in mind: a vision only works if your leadership team believes in it as much as you do. That means you can't define it alone - you need to fully involve your leadership team in this strategic planning process.



Yes, it can feel uncomfortable (“I don’t want to lose control of my business,” I sometimes hear from CEOs), and the discussions may get messy at times. But it is worth it: when everyone around the table co-owns the vision and priorities, you won’t have to push it uphill later – especially when roadblocks inevitably appear.

### REFINE YOUR VISION AS YOU CLIMB

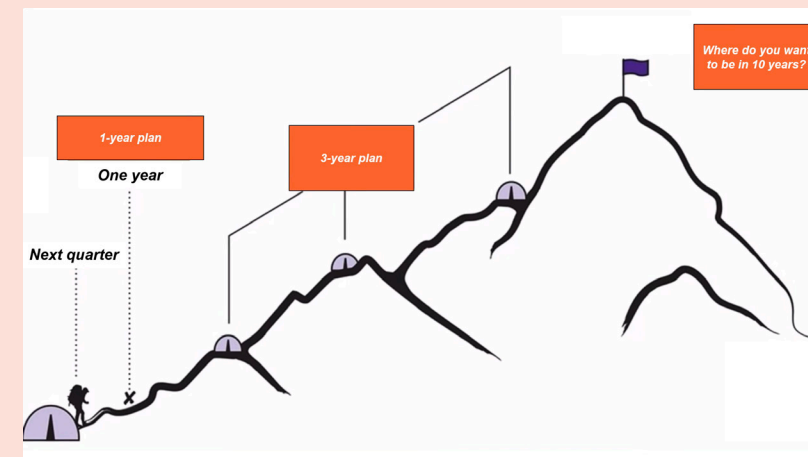
The process we just worked through - from the long-term goal to quarterly priorities – is not one-and-done. The path to the summit is rarely clear, and your vision of the top will evolve. That’s okay. As you act, learn, and revisit your plan regularly, you’ll refine your summit, altitude camp, and the steps to reach them. Iteration, not perfection, drives real progress.

### MAKING IT HAPPEN: WHAT CAN YOU DO RIGHT NOW?

Use the Action Tool on the next pages to map your altitude camp, annual milestones, and quarterly priorities.

#### *Action tool:*

#### MAP YOUR ALTITUDE CAMP, ANNUAL MILESTONES, AND QUARTERLY PRIORITIES.



STEP 1: In 10 years I want to have achieved (from chapter 1):

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**STEP 2: Define your altitude camp** – ie the short- and medium-term goals you need to achieve in 3 years and 12 months in order to be on the right track to the summit:

	IN 3 YEARS	IN 12 MONTHS
Revenue		
EBITDA		
#employees		
#clients/type of clients		
Product portfolio		
Investments		
Company culture		
Other		
Other		

**STEP 3: Identify your top 5 multi-year strategic initiatives** required to reach your altitude camp while strengthening your competitive advantage:

	WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE IN 3 YEARS?	WHICH MILESTONE(S) DO WE NEED TO HIT IN 12 MONTHS?
1.....		
2.....		
3.....		
4.....		
5.....		

**STEP 4: Select 3 quarterly priorities for this quarter**, that you need to work on in order to hit these 12-month strategic milestones and annual goals:

PRIORITIES	WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE BY THE END OF THE QUARTER?	WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?
Priority #1: ..... .....		
Priority #2: ..... .....		
Priority #3: ..... .....		

**STEP 5: Get started.** Identify for each quarterly priority:

- The monthly milestones you need to reach to achieve what you want to accomplish by the end of this quarter.
- The specific actions you/your team need to take this week and the following three weeks to get each quarterly priority moving in the right direction.
- Draw your weekly plan every month, so you can reach your monthly milestone for each quarterly priority.
- Then, hold yourself and your team accountable on a weekly basis, and take corrective actions whenever you are off-track on your weekly plan.

MONTHLY MILESTONES	BY THE END OF THIS MONTH	BY THE END OF NEXT MONTH	BY THE END OF MONTH 3
Priority #1: .....			
Priority #2: .....			
Priority #3: .....			

WEEKLY PLAN (MONTH 1)	THIS WEEK	NEXT WEEK	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Priority #1: .....				
Priority #2: .....				
Priority #3: .....				

Just like the falcon in the introduction, pursuing your long-term goal takes only a small portion of your time – leaving plenty of room for daily tasks. Yet by tackling your quarterly priorities week by week, you steadily progress toward achieving them, staying on track for your annual goals, reaching your altitude camp, and ultimately soaring to the summit.

## Chapter 3

# CUT TO GROW

Years of hard work – gone! James Wood couldn't believe it. On a cold December day in 1963, his dream of flying into space was crushed – through no fault of his own - just seven months before it could come true. So unfair! How could leadership make such a choice?

President Kennedy's 1962 "We choose to go to the moon" set a bold, clear goal – but it also meant saying No to other priorities. That included the US Air Force's X-20 Dyna-Soar ("Dynamic Soarer"), a reusable spaceplane and precursor to the Space Shuttle launched 20 years later. James Wood was slated as its first pilot.

« *Choosing is losing* »

Choosing is losing: achieving a bold goal requires not just ambition but also letting go of other great opportunities. Only then can you focus resources where they matter most – and grow your business faster and with less pain.

### ACHIEVING AMBITIOUS GOALS IS ABOUT SAYING NO

By 1962, the Soviet Union was leading the early space race: Gagarin was the first human in space and Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, had orbited the earth 5 years earlier.

The US was playing catch-up, investing in many different directions: human spaceflights, search for extraterrestrial life, satellites, hypersonic plane,... Each initiative was great – but too many meant slow progress. President Kennedy accelerated the nation’s progress by reducing the number of priorities it was pursuing.

*« Tangible, ambitious long-term goals make it much easier to decide what truly belongs on your priorities list »*

Tangible, ambitious long-term goals make it much easier to decide what truly belongs on your priorities list, and what is just a distraction. For example: once you commit to “going to the moon,” it becomes obvious that a program like the X-20 Dyna-Soar, which won’t get you closer to the moon, should be de-prioritized.

### WHY LETTING GO IS SO HARD

Letting go hurts, as Henry Cloud explains in Necessary Endings. Leaders, like hoarders, cling to initiatives because we love what we built – and because giving up feels like loss. Since we are more motivated by the avoidance of pain than by pleasure, we often prefer the status quo.

As Cloud says, the hoarder mentality “thrives not only in garages, but in businesses as well.”

*« Hoarders focus on the great aspects of a project, not the downsides »*

Hoarders focus on the great aspects of a project, not the downsides. We call it strategic or iconic to rationalize holding on. We bargain with ourselves to make it work, rather than face the cost of keeping it.

To decide whether to let go of an initiative, “keep the negatives of that initiative front and center,” concludes Cloud.

### CLEAN YOUR GARAGE, TODAY!

Cutting distractions that masquerade as strategic initiatives is hard – especially when you’ve invested time, energy, and emotion into them. That is where AI can help: because it has no emotional attachment to your ideas, it can counter your natural hoarding instincts:

- **Assess the (hidden) cost of keeping each initiative.** Not just the financial cost, but also the missed opportunities and wasted resources. To uncover hidden costs, ask an AI assistant (like ChatGPT):

*«Here is a list of our current initiatives and our long-term goal: [insert goal from Chapter 1]. For each initiative, ask questions to help me uncover potential downsides, opportunity costs, and risks, specifically in relation to achieving this goal. Help me think through what we might lose by keeping each initiative and what we could gain by deprioritizing it.»*

AI won’t give exact numbers, but its lack of emotional bias helps you challenge assumptions and spot initiatives that drain energy or resources unnecessarily.

- **Remove your own emotional attachment.** Consider this thought experiment: If you fired yourself and hired a CEO with no emotional attachment to your initiatives, which ones would they cut? AI can help simulate this perspective: «Imagine you are a newly hired CEO with no emotional attachment to our current initiatives. Based on our long-term goal, review each initiative and tell me which ones you would pause or stop, and why. Focus only on eliminating distractions and initiatives that do not directly move us toward our long-term goal.»

- **Get a truth-teller.** Even with AI, human judgment matters. A coach, advisor, or radically candid colleague can offer an outside perspective and challenge what you are holding onto unnecessarily.

By combining your judgment, your coach’s input, and AI’s lack of emotional attachment, you can finally clean your garage, focus on what matters, and accelerate toward your long-term vision.

## CONCLUSION

There is a price to be paid for pursuing an ambitious goal: letting go of great opportunities. If you are not willing to pay this price, you won't achieve your goal. Which existing strategic initiative will you put on the back burner today? Where will you reallocate that energy for bigger impact?

These three tips above can help you decide which initiatives are truly strategic and which are distractions.

## Conclusions

# YOUR BLUEPRINT TO LASTING GROWTH

1. *Focus like a falcon:* An effective tangible, ambitious long-term goal helps focus your short-term priorities:
  - **Acts like a guardrail:** it prevents you from chasing every distraction and makes it easier to say no to non-strategic opportunities. It ensures that everyone works toward the same audacious vision.
  - **Clarifies strategic priorities year after year** and makes these conversations objective.
  - **Narrows your focus.** There are many ways to reach small goals, but fewer options to reach big goals. Audacious goals help you eliminate the “noise” of non-essential priorities.
  - **Acts as a magnetic force,** pulling you and your team toward a higher calling. Its inspiration fuels your energy and resolve when fatigue and frustration set in.
  - **Propels you forward** and forces you to further develop capabilities that strengthen your value and uniqueness in the eyes of your Core Customer.



2. *Narrow the nozzle.* Follow these 5 steps to bridge the gap from ambition to actual results:

- **Define your altitude camp:** Where do you need to be in 2 or 3 years, on the path to the summit?
- **Identify the top 5 multi-year strategic initiatives** that will move you toward your altitude camp.
- **Set your 12-month milestones:** Where do you need to be in one year to be on track to reach your altitude camp – and ultimately reach the summit?
- **Define annual priorities:** How far do you need to advance this year within your multi-year initiatives to hit your 12-month milestones?
- **Select 3 quarterly priorities:** These are the first actionable steps toward your annual priorities. Update them every quarter based on your roadmap.

3. *Cut non-essential priorities more easily and more objectively* thanks to your ambitious long-term goal.

## YOUR NEXT STEPS

Use the tools in this guide. Map your summit, altitude camp, annual milestones, and quarterly priorities. Identify priorities you need to cut. And then, start climbing. Growth that lasts isn't about working harder; it's about working smarter, with focus, courage, and clarity.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Xavier Lederer works with growth-minded CEOs of companies between 30 and 300 employees who are frustrated by the way their business is growing. He helps them accelerate their growth by upgrading their management and leadership approach.



These CEOs often spend their days fighting fires, struggle with their team's accountability, or see important goals and priorities missed – signs that their company has outgrown their management approach. In short, they feel stuck.

These challenges are very common. Every time a company triples in size - from 10 to 30 people, 30 to 90, or 100 to 300 – their CEO needs to upgrade how they lead, or painful growth roadblocks appear - and growth slows down.

Xavier knows the feeling: he has run a business himself, turning it around from declining sales to double-digit growth.

As a business growth and leadership coach working across the US and Europe, he helps his clients define their actionable long-term goals and growth strategies, create a culture of accountability, and become more effective leaders – so they can grow faster and with less pain.

Xavier is the founder and CEO of Ambrose Growth and has over 25 years of experience challenging the status quo to grow mid-market companies. He holds master's degrees in business from Stanford University and from Brussels University.

## READY TO BREAK THROUGH?

**Schedule your complimentary growth assessment.** We will discuss your specific challenges and explore your growth potential.

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**To buy additional copies of this 30-minute guide:**  
AmbroseGrowth.com/book.



**Sign up for our weekly Business Growth Newsletter** for regular insights on how to grow your business faster and with less pain.

## SOURCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

### *Vision & Long-Term Strategy*

- *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, Jim Collins (1994) – Insights on how visionary companies sustain success.
- *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't*, Jim Collins (2001) – Lessons on achieving breakthrough performance.
- *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2010) - Practical insights on how to overcome resistance, shift behavior, and make meaningful change stick in organizations and teams.

### *Execution & Accountability*

- *Creating a Culture of Accountability*, Mark Green (2020) – Practical frameworks for ensuring priorities get done.
- *Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It...And Why the Rest Don't*, Verne Harnish (2014) – Tools for scaling business while maintaining focus.

### *Mindset & Personal Growth*

- *10x Is Easier Than 2x: How World-Class Entrepreneurs Achieve More by Doing Less*, Dan Sullivan & Dr. Benjamin Hardy (2023) – How and why to focus on fewer, higher-impact priorities.
- *Necessary Endings: The Employees, Businesses, and Relationships That All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Move Forward*, Henry Cloud (2011) – When and how to let go of distractions to accelerate growth.
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey (1989) - A timeless guide to personal and professional effectiveness through principles like proactive leadership, prioritization, and continuous growth.

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## ABOUT GRAVITAS IMPACT

Xavier Lederer is a member of Gravitas Impact, a worldwide community of premium coaches and experienced CEOs who build award-winning companies.

At Gravitas Impact, we believe in finding a better way to build a thriving business:

- We DEVELOP the leadership skills of the CEO.
- We BUILD accountable leadership teams.
- We SIMPLIFY execution using simple, practical, and actionable tools.

Our coaches use time-tested tools and concepts to guide leadership and executive teams towards dramatically improving their organizational performance, revenue, and culture.

Become a coach: [GravitasImpact.com/Apply](http://GravitasImpact.com/Apply)

