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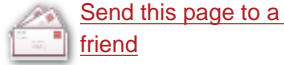
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## Fast Lane Access to fun

How Christopher Lee creates a vision that encourages teamwork at ACCESS Destination Services

By **Meredyth McKenzie**  
Smart Business San Diego | December 2007



Employees at ACCESS Destination Services work hard to plan fun destination events for client companies.

And Christopher Lee, the company's CEO, says it is important that his 60 employees also have the chance to experience fun events, so those who reach their goals are rewarded with getaways, ski trips or spa days.

Lee says these rewards create a sense of trust, loyalty and teamwork among employees and keep them reaching goals, helping grow the company 25 percent a year since 2000 to reach 2006 revenue of \$18 million.

*Smart Business* spoke with Lee about how to create and communicate a vision that reaches the goals of both your company and your employees.

Q: What are the keys to growing a company?

It takes a grand vision. You need to have a sense of purpose for the organization, and I like our team to feel like we're on a mission to grow. It's not something we hope for, it's something we plan for and pursue.

It starts at the top. People need to know that their leaders are committed to the vision and are willing to go the distance to achieve it. It's leading by



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example. Not just talking the talk but walking the walk. It also includes sharing financial success by rewarding everyone as goals are met and exceeded.

Q: How do you create a vision for your company?

It has to be a stretch; it has to be something that's beyond the horizon of where the organization is today. It needs to be realistic and measurable, and there needs to be benchmarks along the way. It has to be something that people can truly picture themselves and their organization achieving.

We ask each employee, 'Where do you see yourself in five years?' and, 'Where do you see our organization in five years?' We listen to them and what their goals are and integrate them into the bigger company vision.

It has to be communicated in clear terms to everybody in the organization. If it's such a high-level vision that employees don't understand it, buy in to it or see any value for themselves, you're not going to get them on board.

Q: How do you communicate the vision?

Communication comes in many forms. There's laying out the vision, then taking it down to the individual level and understanding and communicating what the individual visions for each person's career are and where do they see the company. Then

it's constantly checking with those individuals as you grow and pursue your vision.

The biggest challenge is not that somebody outgrows their position, it's that the position outgrows the individual.

Q: What is the benefit for employees of working together to create the vision and goals?

It's not only creating the vision and goals but living and working in an environment that has a well-defined vision, values and goals. People know where they stand and have a sense of purpose. They know what you're going for, how it's being measured and how they're rewarded in conjunction with that.

It takes a lot of the ambiguity and questioning out of it. People know where they are in regards to their own career opportunities, compensation and incentives.

Q: How do you create a positive working environment?

It starts by understanding the culture of your organization. It is as simple as putting together quarterly team outings, getting people outside of the office, any type of activity where team-building is involved.

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An ear for communication

There are hundreds of ways to bring your team together in an environment that is fun, educational, and fosters bonding and loyalty. Seek out unique opportunities that people wouldn't do on their own and think outside the box.

Q: How do you prepare and develop plans for growth?

Try and stay one step ahead of the growth and anticipate it as best as you can. Make sure you have the right people in key positions who are capable of expanding their roles as the company grows because, otherwise, the job will outgrow certain people, and that begins a downward spiral.

Constantly evaluate your marketplace, know where your competitors, allied companies, vendors and other affinity groups stand, and look at the segments of the economy that affect your business.

Monitor customer service closely. Don't sacrifice service levels for growth and customer satisfaction because that will stop the growth as quickly as it helped it.

One mistake that a lot of companies make is that they'll accept the rapid growth and financial rewards but won't pay attention to the customer service. Oftentimes your customer service level is what contributed to the growth, so focusing on that throughout the growth is important.

HOW TO REACH: ACCESS Destination Services, (619) 299-2200 or [www.accessdmc.com](http://www.accessdmc.com)

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