

April 2007

The Desired Outcome

This Month: Getting YOUR Desired Outcome

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Patty Azzarello
CEO Azzarello Group

Getting Results Easier and Faster

You can spend hours with smart people saying smart things and never get anywhere.(We've all been in this meeting.)

Start with the Desired Outcome!

Although I am hardly the first or only one to use this approach, I am known for using it so unrelentingly that my colleagues refer to it, when they do it, as "pulling a Patty". Whether it's a meeting, a sales call, a discussion with your boss, or a project or ambition you have in front of you, you will find much more focus and power to act if you simply start by asking, "What is the desired outcome?"

To get business results faster, a simple but very powerful tool to focus the discussion is:

Situation + Response = Outcome.

Really challenge yourself and your team to make sure you are not spending too much time discussing "the Situation".

"Situation" discussions take the form of talking about things like the product capabilities and weaknesses, what the competition is doing, the market dynamics, the customer issues, the lack of resources...."

"Situation" discussions are basically, collectively admiring the problem.

You can spend hours with smart people saying smart things and never get anywhere. (we've all been in this meeting.)

To get action, and real results, you need to move the discussion to the "Desired Outcome", and then focus on your "Response" or action plan on filling the gap. One of the best examples I can think of to demonstrate the power of this, is a very typical team discussion, trying to solve a business problem. Lots of worthy ideas are brought up. They are discussed at great length but the discussion goes something like, "although we need to do this, there are not enough resources".

This "Situation" discussion can go on and on, with everyone agreeing how important it is, but no ability to move it forward.

Here is how to achieve a breakthrough:

1. Offer a definition of a Desired Outcome: e.g. "We must improve the product to meet standards defined by X, to eliminate issues impeding our sales growth.
"The first thing you will find is that not everyone agrees that whatever you propose is indeed, the Desired Outcome. If that is the case, don't bother talking about anything else other than getting an agreed Desired Outcome defined - anything else is just a waste of time.
2. Once you get that defined, write it on the white board. You'll find that being explicit in writing will smoke out that some people still don't agree (or weren't really listening, or were betting this wasn't real enough to invest any energy) on what you are all actually trying to achieve.
3. Edit the written Desired Outcome description until you get it agreed.
Once that's done, ask the following questions:
 - ◆ What skills will we see acting once this outcome is achieved?

- ✦ What resources have been added, removed, or changed which resulted in getting this done?
- ✦ What additional challenges have been overcome that enabled us to achieve this Desired Outcome?

These questions will reveal the gaps and point to a clear course of action. (Your "Response")

At this point:

**instead of having a generic "resource issue",
you will have a team completely aligned on a
Desired Outcome (because alignment of resources
is the only true measure of actual alignment)**

and you will have a very clear picture of the specific resources needed to get it done.

"More resources", becomes "Harry for 7 days, and Jill doing these 3 things, etc.", and it doesn't seem so impossible anymore.

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YOUR PEOPLE

How to know what your people really need from you.

Guess what the first thing to do is - understand from each of your people: "What is YOUR desired outcome?"

As a manager it's your job to worry about the things that are important to your people, so that you can motivate them to consistently deliver the results YOU are on the hook for.

It's amazing to me, how many managers never spend the time to figure this out, or they assume all of their people need the same things. Then there are those managers that don't give a damn at all, (but they're probably not reading this.)

Since you care, one of the best questions of all time, to get the real answer, is to just ask your people for the answer: I have used this technique over and over again and it works without fail -- here it is:

"As your manager I am going to worry about you. When I worry about you, what should I worry about?"

I have found that the mere act of asking this question creates a degree of loyalty that did not exist 5 seconds before - because no one has ever asked!

And I guarantee you will get responses you would have never thought of...

I've gotten answers to this question ranging from: "I have a learning disabled child, and I'm worried I might not have the time to get her special schooling needs set up" (give that person some flexibility and they will be loyal to you for life)...

...to "I feel like people think I do such a good job, that I might not get any other opportunities to do something else someday" (give that person some projects for development)...

...to "I'm mostly worried about this other person, because they are critical and seem unhappy lately" (this is a good clue you might have otherwise missed).

I think you get the point. It's not all about raises, bonuses and stock options. Sure, some people will fire financial wants right back at you when you ask this question, but there is information in that too. And when you say, "I'll look into it" - really do so, and get back to them.

Even if you can't do anything quickly, the fact that you checked, it is on your radar, and you have given them honest feedback about what is appropriate and possible goes so much further than never having asked the question in the first place.

It's really worth it. Give it a try

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YOUR PUBLICITY

Do you really know where your stakeholders are?

Missing the boat on this is the number one blockade to your career and your ability to execute.

OK, so this one is tricky start with the desired outcome!

First of all, do you have a clear view of WHO all of your stakeholders are? This is worth some special focus if you have not gone through this exercise. At the end of this article I'll give you a check list.

Secondly, do you know, for each stakeholder, specifically what THEIR desired outcomes are? When they come to work in the morning what do they care most urgently about? what keeps them up at night?, what is their view of what you do?, and how does what you do translate to meeting their desired outcomes?

Believe me, missing the boat on this is the number one blockade to your career and your ability to execute.

As I have mentored people over this years, I have seen that this trips more people up than anything else.

You can be doing a fantastic job, but if some of your key stakeholders either don't know about it, or have an incorrect perspective about your work, it can be a huge block to your success.

Doing a complete job of it can be tricky. Here's the basic approach: YOU have a desired outcome of making sure all of your stakeholders are informed and have a positive view of what you are doing and delivering. Now you need an action plan to make it happen.

There are four basic steps to make sure that you are managing your environment to clear the obstacles to achieving your results, and to

manage what you are known for in a way that is adding value to your career.

1. Create your list of stakeholders
2. Identify their desired outcomes
3. Create a communication plan for each one: what do they need to know, how often, what form?
4. Do it!

It's really hard to get this done when you're so busy doing your real job -- but it's so necessary.

Stakeholder Checklist:

As food for thought, here are some potential stakeholders to consider. In addition to your customers, your boss, your employees, consider:

- ✦ Your peers· Your boss's peers
- ✦ Leaders in external partner organizations
- ✦ Key individuals in other organizations who depend on your output
- ✦ People corporate roles, legal, HR, marketing

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YOUR LIFE

What are you doing with your ONE life?

What is YOUR desired outcome?

First think of a project at work. Do you have your desired outcome clearly defined? Is it to complete it on time and budget? Is it to complete it in way that creates a new opportunity? Is it to enable another purpose in the business? Who else cares about this? Who may be threatened by it? How do you define your desired outcome (and action plan) so that all stakeholders are satisfied? The more clear you are about the desired outcome, the more you can create the kind of focus it takes to execute it faster and more successfully.

Next think about your current job. What is your desired outcome for this job? Do you love it and want to keep doing it? Do you need this to be a stepping stone to your next job? Are you paying dues in this job, so that you will be granted a new different kind opportunity next time? Again, clarity here on your desired outcome is critical. It will provide the focus you need to make sure that your behaviors and relationships are reinforcing your end goal.

Now think about your big desired outcome. If you think of your desired outcome in terms of 1 year, or 3 years, or even 5 years from now, the tendency is to picture it in terms of your current situation. Instead try thinking about it a new way. Make a leap forward - 20 years, 30 years....

Now look back and ask...

"Am I satisfied with how I spent the last 30 years?"

It's very easy to get caught up in goals around career advancement, or financial goals, or things you need to accomplish in the next couple of years, and forget to ask this question for real? I have found that moving the timeline way out allows you to focus on creating a more meaningful desired outcome for your life, and provides real insights for tuning along the way.

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I hope you have found a few useful ideas that you can apply right away to start building core value in your career and business.

**If you were sent this issue of
The Desired Outcome by a friend,
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to get your own copy each month.**

About Patty

Patty Azzarello was the youngest general manager at HP ever at the age of 33. She ran a \$1B software business at the age of 35 and was a CEO for the first time at the age of 38. Patty is known for her personal leadership qualities, her straightforward and practical manner, and her genuine interest in making a real connection with people to help them to advance their career and business, and to find ways to enjoy their life more.

[More about Patty](#)

Patty Azzarello is the CEO of Azzarello Group, www.AzzarelloGroup.com a unique services organization focused on helping business leaders actually get done what they want to do, and get a bigger payoff from their hard work.

Azzarello Group delivers practical, experience-based tools to business leaders, through products and services including articles, e-books, mentoring programs, executive coaching, public speaking, small business retreats, and business execution workshops.

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