

## How to encourage long-term thinking in teams

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We are all easily tempted to think short-term. We get that. Short-term focus can yield short term rewards, which can be very tempting. But we all know that we need to think longer term too.

So what *is* long term thinking for teams? It is simply to:

- **STOP** and reflect on how you are doing
- **ANALYSE**: How you have achieved success so far; what did you do to make you and your team successful?
- **CONSIDER**: Based on your success, what actions and behaviours could you take with you into the future to ensure more success in the longer term?
- **ASSESS**: What could you do better going into the future?
- **CREATE** a culture of learning; What could we learn from our experiences to take into the future?
- **REVIEW** all of the above to get the complete picture; what does this mean for today *and* what does it mean for us in the long term? What do we need to do now *and* what do we need to think about in a longer perspective?

You and your team probably have sales targets to reach for the next week, month and quarter, which require you to focus on the here and now and those shorter term results. But by encouraging and promoting long-term thinking you can achieve so much more.

With long-term thinking you focus on the relationships (internal as well as external) rather than the sale, which can secure sale over time. And with great relationships also come recommendations; sales that come knocking on your door rather than the other way around.



Because ultimately, long-term thinking is about being strategic (which, contrary to common belief, is not just a senior management responsibility!), to think about the effects of actions, to consider what steps to take next. Great sales teams think about how to operate, how to sell – in order to maximise the value given to customers. And the sale will come as a bonus, because wouldn't

you agree that you would rather buy from someone who's genuinely interested in you and what you need rather than just wanting to offload something? Yes, we would probably all agree with that.

*A team we work with have the usual pressure to hit their sales targets. And every month, 12 days from the quarter end, the pressure increases dramatically with the number of fire drills, status calls and updates increasing, piling on the pressure. This team got together to review HOW they were managing and leading this as a team. When the pressure was on, they became short term focussed and saw nothing else. They agreed there was a need to think bigger and create a purpose for them that was 'bigger than just the number'. The team came up with a team purpose that described their passion for what they wanted to create together. It included how they felt about: being successful, feeling pride, being the team others want to work in, being respected and recognised. Now, when the pressure hits, this clear purpose helps them focus on the long-term results as well as the immediate ones.*

Here are some additional, simple 'how to' solutions to make long-term thinking happen

- Set up both short- and long-term goals
- Reward your team members for thinking long-term
- Treat and think of your team members as customers. And notice how it effects the long-term relationships and results.
- Show your team members the links between the short and long term, the cause and effect of actions and behaviours
- Discuss short- and long-term issues as a team: What will be the short- and long-term effects if we do this?
- Get your team to collaborate more: sharing knowledge, experience and their 'tricks of the trade', to continually increase the capability of everyone

Long-term thinking is ultimately about sustainability. It's to think about the impact of actions and behaviours on the financial, human and natural resources a business needs to succeed - hence creating sustainable, long-term success – something all businesses should aim for.

By Mandy Flint and Elisabet Vinberg Hearn, authors of new book, '[Leading Teams – 10 Challenges: 10 Solutions](#),' published by the FT Books, priced £14.99. Long-term Thinking is one of the 10 Challenges they explore in more detail in the book.

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