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Self-determination and ambition

Sustainable success is typically anchored by an individual who has the ambition and determination to lead for the long-term in spite of any perceived obstacles.

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1. SELF-DETERMINATION AND AMBITION

Ideas come and go and it takes an individual to pick up an idea and turn it into reality. Entrepreneurs spot an opportunity and strive to make it work to meet the needs of potential customers and turn the activity into a business. Social entrepreneurs spot a societal need and strive to garner resources to meet it. While over time an ambition may be (and needs to be) shared, the power of the single individual as a force to stick with an idea when at its most vulnerable is fundamental to success.

Not only is ambition important at the start of an enterprise, it continues to be a factor throughout the journey for all long-term organisations. Once up and running the organisation grows and develops not just its offer, but systems, processes and behaviours to enable its ongoing success. It is this founding ambition and the ongoing desire for people within the organisation to continue to chart its own course that is understood and developed by those organisations that intend to last. Every successful organisation flirts with failure as it progresses and it is in these dark days that the driving ambition remains important. However, without that single key individual the organisation might continue to operate for a time directionless and through sheer inertia, but ultimately will lose its way and be acquired or disappear.

So the question is who is that person in your organisation who has the driving ambition?

'What do you think about this business? I know it's a bit tatty and underperforming, but it's been around for over 130 years; it's going to be great!'

'My trustees have just informed me that unless we can raise sufficient funds to continue into next year, they will resolve to wind up the business. I am not going to let that happen'

or

'I know this business has been important to the country for centuries, but my responsibility is to the shareholders and we have extracted a fair price for the business'

We will return to 'ambition' and the, often unreasonable, drive for ongoing self-determination as this is the one element that cannot be imposed by others on an organisation; it has to come from within.