

Nicholas S. Barnett

GPS for your Organisation

How to energise your employees and
build sustainable high performance

With a foreword by

Ken Blanchard

Co-author of *The One Minute Manager*®



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*I dedicate this book to my late father,
John Stanley Barnett, who was a great inspiration
and example to me and to countless others.*

Praise for *GPS for your Organisation*

“This book provides practical, simple to follow advice and ideas about how to align a company’s mission, vision, values and strategy to ensure that everyone from the Chairman to the mailroom clerk are aligned around a single purpose. It is inspiring, practical and provides simple tools to facilitate this process. I highly recommend it.”

Peter Acheson, CEO, Peoplebank Australia

“This book addresses the gap left by most traditional Vision, Mission and Values approaches. It gives practical guidance as to how a GPS can be brought to meaningful life by leaders, and embedded in actions, thinking and culture to deliver higher performance throughout the organisation.”

Graham Barkus, Head, Organisation Development,
Cathay Pacific Airways

“This is a deceptively simple framework for the complexities of organisational leadership — a handbook which will be welcomed by good leaders and embraced by any organisation focused on success, whether from the corporate, government or not-for-profit sector.”

Peter Johnstone OAM, former CEO of local governments
and Victorian government departments

“Not only does GPS for Your Organisation illustrate the importance of having a clear Aspiration and a challenging Golden Goal, it gives practical advice on how to ensure they are achieved. A must read for anyone involved in planning processes – strategic or operational.”

Katie McNamara, Director of Strategy & Business
Development, Treasury Wine Estates

“Nicholas Barnett has assembled the experience he has gained from leading new and successful enterprises into a practical leader’s guide that helps senior executives lay out the foundations of strategy for their business, from aspiration and purpose through to core values and progressive goals. I recommend it to those who want the best for their organisations.”

George Savvides, Managing Director, Medibank Private

“Many organisations get lost in their annual strategic business planning processes, where much valuable staff time is consumed for no real gain. Nicholas Barnett’s book provides a simple but clear framework and some key tools that should help many organisations develop their company’s aspirations, purpose and values and simple ways to measure success during the journey. Putting the finishing touches to strategic plans and operating budgets will then be much more efficient and effective.”

Peter Wilson AM, National President & Chairman,
Australian Human Resources Institute

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Writing this book has been a fascinating journey of over two years involving many new discoveries and learnings. I am grateful to many people who challenged, encouraged, supported and assisted me on that journey.

I am especially grateful and proud of my family for their support and assistance. My eldest daughter, Elizabeth, did all the illustrations in this book and designed the lettering for the front cover. My son, Anthony, designed the cover, the book lay-out and all the diagrams in the book. My youngest daughter, Sara, drafted many of the diagrams in earlier versions of the manuscript.

I am also grateful for the unfailing love, support, encouragement and patience of my wife, Lisa, not only during the writing of this book but throughout our whole married life.

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Thanks also to Lesley Williams of Major Street Publishing for her encouragement and wise counsel along the journey and for publishing this book.

Half the profits to charity

In recognition of my appreciation to Ken Blanchard for associating his name with my book and writing the Foreword I have decided to donate half the profits from my book to charity. The donation will be split between World Vision; a global humanitarian organisation that my wife, Lisa and I have supported for a long time and a leadership development organisation that Ken Blanchard co-founded and is particularly passionate about, Lead Like Jesus.

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Foreword by Ken Blanchard

The more I work in the field of leadership, the more I have become convinced of two things. First of all, leadership is about going somewhere. If your people don't know where you want them to go or how you want them to behave—if your long-term direction, purpose, strategy, and values are not clear—your leadership doesn't matter. I guarantee you won't generate high levels of performance or human satisfaction. Secondly, unless people have something to serve, such as a compelling vision or worthwhile goals, the only thing they have to serve is themselves. We certainly have seen the negative effects of self-serving leadership and behaviours in every sector of our society around the world.

The recognition of these two insights makes me excited about *GPS for your Organisation: How to energise your employees and build sustainable high performance*, and about Nicholas Barnett. The insights you will gain from reading this book will help you develop Gung Ho people who create Raving Fan customers who brag about you and keep coming back. This will guarantee you a profitable, well-run organisation. *GPS for your Organisation* is not a quick fix, but if it becomes a way of life in your workplace, you will move “full steam ahead” and outstrip your competition.

Thanks, Nicholas, for teaching us about the power of Guidance and Positioning Statements. With the clarity of an effective organisational GPS, we can all be more successful as leaders in creating high performing organisations.

Ken Blanchard, co-author of *The One Minute Manager*[®] and *Leading at a Higher Level*

Preface

I wrote this book because I am passionate about helping organisations develop a clear, inspiring and energising long-term direction and articulating such in concise statements of their aspiration, purpose and values – their Guidance and Positioning Statements (GPS). I get even more energised when I witness organisations embedding their GPS into their plans, messaging, thinking, culture and DNA.

As CEO of an IT recruitment company, I have used the principles in this book to help guide its growth in revenue by more than tenfold, to in excess of \$300 million over a five-year period. Whilst one-third of that growth was achieved by acquisition, two-thirds was achieved organically by passionate, committed, competent and highly engaged employees working together to build the leading IT&T recruitment company in Australia.

Since then I have applied these principles to help dozens of organisations think through their answers to vital questions and consider how best to articulate their desired future. Those that have taken this process seriously know the emotional and intellectual effort that it takes, but also the significant return on investment from the process.

It is a privilege to witness how a razor-sharp clarity of future direction that is well embedded into an organisation's plans, messaging and thinking, translates into increasingly engaged

employees and a more productive culture. It creates a win-win for organisations and employees, where both can become more productive, profitable and fulfilled.

Too many leaders adopt the ‘zero sum game’ attitude which assumes that an organisation can only win if their employees lose, or vice versa. If an organisation doesn’t take a constructive approach to engaging and energising its employees, it might achieve a short-term financial gain, but will almost certainly lose out over the medium to long-term.

In my capacity as Chairman of Insync Surveys, I have been involved in and witnessed the measurement of performance culture, employee engagement and organisational climate of hundreds of organisations. I have seen the positive impact of great clarity of direction, inspiring leadership and engaged employees. I have also seen what happens when the opposite is the case and that is not a pretty sight for the organisation or its employees.

My observations are supported by an abundance of research that confirms the positive correlation between organisation alignment and engagement, and increased performance and profitability.

The world is becoming increasingly complex. Employees are bombarded with hundreds of internal and external messages daily. They deserve clarity of their organisation’s long-term aims so they can act with boldness and confidence and work towards a common goal that is in everyone’s interest.

This also creates a space for the brilliance of employees to shine, enabling them to reach their full potential.

A clear set of unchanging values also forms a solid foundation for bold action. Employees will know what's acceptable and what's not. They won't have to anticipate what might be the different views of staff or bosses, as alignment and a common language will have been created around a clear set of Core Values.

I trust that as you read this book, you will be challenged to discover new ways to increasingly energise your employees and build sustainable high performance.

Introduction

“If you know where you are going you can never get lost.”

Herb Cohen

A Global Positioning System (your electronic GPS) is a brilliant piece of technology that is particularly useful for your car. You enter the address of your chosen destination and your electronic GPS will guide you there by giving you clear directions at every fork in the road. If you get off track, it will quickly redirect you to your chosen destination.

If, however, you don't know your chosen destination, no matter how good your electronic GPS, it won't be able to provide you with any guidance. It can't predict your destination or show you the way.

Guidance and Positioning Statements (GPS) for your organisation are even better than an electronic GPS for your

car. Effective and well embedded Guidance and Positioning Statements act as a self-correcting system that will guide your organisation to your chosen destination. It will give leaders and all employees clear directions at all your organisation's main decision points and clear guidance in respect of all their plans, projects, processes, actions and messaging. If employees get off track, it will redirect them to the chosen destination. In addition, it will guide all their behaviours and help shape the culture and DNA of the organisation.

Guidance and Positioning Statements (also referred to as 'GPS for your Organisation' or your 'organisational GPS') build on the ideas and concepts set out in the many excellent research reports, articles and books on similar topics, as well as on the writer's own 30 years of business experience, including experience in dealing with not-for-profit and government organisations. *GPS for your Organisation* has been developed based on the well researched evidence showing that:

- Organisations that have clarity of and buy-in to their long-term direction and purpose make better decisions. They are also far more able to empower, engage and energise their employees and other stakeholders. This helps them build a productive and cohesive culture, organisational resilience and sustainable high performance.
- Conversely, a lack of clarity and buy-in is likely to lead to employee uncertainty, confusion, indecision, inconsistency, lack of empowerment, lack of urgency, doubt, fear and short-termism. This leads to poor strategy and tactics. It also leads to low or negative

employee engagement and, as a consequence, low productivity and performance.

Your GPS will consist of five statements comprising a total of approximately 30 words. Accordingly, they will be easily remembered by all employees. Those five Guidance and Positioning Statements (GPS) are:

- GPS 1 - Aspiration: How would you like your organisation to be regarded by others in five to ten years' time and beyond – the 'where'.
- GPS2 - Core Purpose: At its core, what is your organisation's reason for being and why does it want to achieve its Aspiration – the 'why'.
- GPS 3 - Core Values: The values that are absolutely essential for your Aspiration to be achieved and your Core Purpose to be lived out – the 'how'.
- GPS 4 - Golden Goal: The single most appropriate inspirational goal for your organisation to achieve in three to five years' time if it is to achieve its Aspiration.
- GPS 5 - Tagline: Those few words that describe what is special or unique about your organisation or what it provides.

It is often said that employees need a compass, not a checklist. An organisation's GPS is that compass. Your Aspiration is your directional compass that points to a clearly defined, articulated and engaging destination. Your Core Values are your moral compass that guides the actions and behaviours of your employees.

All your organisation's plans, projects, processes, decisions, actions, behaviours and messaging will align with and can be linked to your organisation's GPS. Your GPS will become your core message, the single anchor or reference point to which all your other messages, plans and actions can be linked. It will provide a focus for organisational commitment in the context of a cohesive and productive culture.

Most organisations spend much more time, effort and money creating and spreading marketing and other external messaging than they do developing and articulating for their employees a clear, inspiring and energising message of their direction towards a compelling future. Worse still, most organisations send many 'important' messages to their employees without a consistent core message or appropriate long-term context. Understandably, employees get confused as to what is really important.

Imagine you and a few others were dropped in the middle of a large lake in a rowing boat and each with only a paddle. You would almost certainly discuss and endeavour to reach agreement on which is the quickest way to get to dry land or which is the best direction to paddle to get to shore. Having decided that, you'd endeavour to paddle as one to the chosen

destination. If, in the unlikely event you couldn't agree on the preferred direction and decided to paddle in different directions, you would soon learn how futile that was. You would re-group to agree on a common destination and focus your combined efforts accordingly.

It is the same with your GPS. All representative groups of your employees should be involved in the process of developing and articulating your GPS if you expect it to engage, focus and energise your people to combine their efforts to progress towards their chosen destination. It takes significant intellectual and emotional effort articulating and gaining buy-in to your GPS, but that investment will be one of the best your organisation will ever make.

Your GPS should then be communicated and embedded into your organisation's culture and DNA and into its induction, performance management and recognition systems and into all its other processes, plans, projects, decisions, actions and important messaging. Your GPS must be kept fresh and alive and must be championed and embodied in your CEO and leadership team's thoughts and actions. You cannot over-communicate such an important and compelling message as your GPS.

Boards of directors and governing bodies are ultimately responsible for the long-term direction, purpose, strategy and values of an organisation. They should have input into and should approve their organisation's GPS. They should also ensure their GPS is well articulated, communicated and embedded into their organisation's culture and DNA.

The extent to which your GPS has been communicated, understood and embedded should be regularly measured by way of a well designed alignment and engagement survey. Systemic organisational issues and specific areas of concern should be identified and dealt with to ensure alignment is regained.

Structure of this book

This book has been designed as a leader's handbook or user guide. As such, it does not need to be read straight from front to back. You can choose to read the chapters or parts that are most relevant to you at the time. Gaining an understanding of all the concepts in this book and their important inter-relationships is, however, crucial.

The main definitions, frameworks and other important material used in this book are repeated for easy reference in the Appendices. Appendix 6 includes a full worked example of an organisation's GPS. This material is also included with other useful information at www.gpso.com.

A caution

If you want to use the framework and principles set out in this book as a quick-fix employee motivational exercise without a genuine desire to buy-in yourself to these principles, it is likely that your efforts will backfire because your employees will see the exercise as a charade and may see you as a fake.

If, however, you do buy-in and adopt the framework and principles in a passionate, genuine and authentic way, then your people will notice. Your words and actions will be in harmony. Your people are likely to follow your lead, buy-in themselves and back you and your organisation to the maximum.



The fable of the three bricklayers

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

Winston Churchill

The fable of the three bricklayers as told here is useful for understanding the framework and principles in this book.

Bricklayer 1

An organisational psychologist named William, went up to a bricklayer at a building site and asked him what he was doing.

Bricklayer 1 wiped the perspiration from his forehead and looked up above his sunglasses and said, *“What’s it to you?”* to which William replied that he was carrying out a research study of bricklayers. Bricklayer 1 placed another brick on his

wall and said, *“Can’t you see what I am doing? I am putting one brick on top of another!”* and continued with his work.

William, taking notes, then asked *“And why are you doing that?”* to which Bricklayer 1 replied, *“It’s to feed my family. I get \$2 per brick,”* as he added mortar and placed another brick on the wall. William finished his note-taking and said, *“Thank you very much. Keep up the good work.”*

Bricklayer 2

William went to the next building site and came across another bricklayer who looked just like Bricklayer 1.

William said to Bricklayer 2, *“Excuse me, sir, please tell me what you are doing?”* The bricklayer stood up and stretched his back and said, *“Why, my workmates and I are great wall-builders. We are building a wall.”*

William said, *“Yes, I can see you are building a very good wall. Why are you doing that?”* The bricklayer, reaching down with his left hand to pick up another brick, said, *“My workmates and I are great wall-builders and we enjoy building walls. We actually earn \$2 per brick, which is pretty good pay around here.”* William, again taking his notes, then said, *“Thank you so very much, have a great day.”*

Bricklayer 3

William walked to the third building site and saw a bricklayer who also looked just like the first two bricklayers. William said to Bricklayer 3, *“Excuse me sir, what are you doing there?”* The bricklayer, not used to visitors, stood up, also stretched his back and said, *“Why, I am part of a team that builds the best cathedrals in the land. My workmates and I build the walls for those cathedrals. The walls are probably the most important part of the cathedral, as they hold up what is a quite complex structure.”*



William was somewhat taken aback and said, *“Well, congratulations, you are certainly well progressed with what will no doubt be a fabulous cathedral. So why are you doing that?”* Bricklayer 3 pushed out his chest and said, *“I am proud to be working for one of the best, if not the single best builder of cathedrals in the country and I enjoy coming to work each day, being with my workmates and working with the other construction workers.”* He went on to say, *“I am treated and paid well. I earn \$2 per brick.”*

William again finished taking his notes, thanked Bricklayer 3 and said, *“Keep up the good work and have a great day.”*

Some questions

Some of the questions that William asked after his questioning of the three bricklayers follow:

Which bricklayer would you prefer to be working for your organisation?

Answer this question and consider why.

Which bricklayer exhibits the most pride in his work?

The unanimous answer to this question is Bricklayer 3, with Bricklayer 2 also exhibiting pride in his work.

Which bricklayer is likely to work better with the other construction workers?

Again, the unanimous answer is Bricklayer 3, as Bricklayer 3

can see the full picture and has bought into the goal of building great cathedrals.

Bricklayer 2 clearly works well with his colleagues at building great walls, but may not work so well with the other tradies on the construction site.

While Bricklayer 1 probably has several construction workmates on the site, he appears to have a narrow view of his role and how it fits into the big picture. He may not even work well with all his other wall-building workmates.

Which bricklayer would be most likely to use faulty bricks versus putting them aside?

Most would suggest that Bricklayer 1 is simply interested in earning his money and putting one brick on top of the other. He is likely to have little concern as to whether a particular brick is faulty and, in fact, putting it aside may slow him down from earning his \$2 per brick.

Bricklayer 3, however, is likely to be so proud in his work that he would go out of his way to identify any faulty bricks and put them aside to ensure he is part of a team that creates such great cathedrals. He understands his role in the greater scheme of things and how important his role is to his organisation's success.

Which bricklayer is likely to add more value to the organisation, and would the quantum of value added be significantly different?

Most would agree that Bricklayer 3 will add significantly more value to the organisation and work far better with his other construction colleagues. He is likely to work with them to plan ahead, including ensuring that the walls fit appropriately with all the other components of the construction.

Most would also agree that the value and contribution of Bricklayer 3 could make a significant difference to the working lives of the other construction workers on the site, as well as to the final result, including the longevity of the cathedral. Lower maintenance costs are also likely to result from cathedrals built by Bricklayer 3s than those built by Bricklayer 1s.

Do you have mainly type 1, 2 or 3 'bricklayers' working for you?

It is important to answer this question and consider why this is the case.

Do you have different proportions of different types of 'bricklayers' in different areas of your organisation and why?

Take time to consider and to answer this question.

Would Bricklayer 3 like to work for you and your organisation?

Again, consider and then answer this important question. If your answer is not a definitive 'yes' consider why this is the case.

Culture, leadership and messaging

Is the difference between the outlook of Bricklayer 1 and Bricklayer 3 due mainly to:

- *a difference in their personalities and their general outlook on life? or*
- *a difference in their organisation's leadership, the messages they receive and the culture of their organisation? or*
- *is there some other reason or reasons for their different approach?*

These questions have been asked of many people. While all agree that part of the difference may be due to the personality and general outlook of the individual bricklayers, all agree that the major difference is almost certainly due to their organisation's culture and environment and the difference in the organisation's leadership and messaging.

If Bricklayer 3's outlook and attitude can be largely attributed to his organisation's culture, leadership and messaging, then the next big questions is:

'How can an organisation develop a culture, leadership and messaging that ensures all its people become Bricklayer 3s and not 1s?'

This book explains how leaders and leadership teams can build a culture, leadership and messaging that will maximise the number of people in their organisations that take Bricklayer 3's

approach to their work. The development of an organisation's GPS plays a critical role in forming a constructive organisation culture. The constructive culture and the greater clarity of direction that results from an effective GPS will attract more type 3 people to your organisation.

It is important for leaders to do all they can to attract, develop and maintain the greatest possible percentage of type 3 people in their organisations for the sake of those people and their fellow workers. Even if there were no extra benefits of having a greater percentage of type 3 people, such people will find more meaning and be far more engaged, energised and fulfilled in their work, which is an important objective in its own right. It is simply good leadership and the right thing to do.

If you use the principles in this book, the majority of your people are likely to buy-in to your GPS and become type 3 people, but a small number may choose, for whatever reason, not to buy-in and simply to remain more like type 1 people.

Leaders need to be strong enough to realise that not everyone is interested in becoming a type 3 person and buying into the organisation's aspirations. If some do not want to take the journey with your team, it may be better for all concerned to say goodbye to them.

Action checklist

- 1. Gain a shared view with your leadership team to the answers to the following questions:
 - a) Does your organisation have mainly type 1, 2 or 3 people?
 - b) Is a major reason for the difference in approach taken by the type 1 and 3 people in your organisation due to your culture, leadership and messaging?
 - c) What are you doing to maximise the number of type 3 people in your organisation?
 - d) Do type 3 people like to work for you and your organisation? Why or why not?
- 2. Don't use the framework and principles in this book as a quick-fix employee motivational exercise.
- 3. Be prepared to say goodbye to the small number of people that don't want to buy-in and support your new GPS.