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Preparing Your Business for ‘Overnight’ Success

MICHAEL PROPER
DirectPointe

How many years of preparation did it take you to become an “overnight success?”

It may sound like a humorous question, but let’s give it some thought. One of my all-time favorite business books, “Blueprint to a Billion” by David Thomson, examines this topic in great detail. In this book, which is based on three years of in-depth research, Thomson creates a specific and quantitative assessment of the success pattern that is common across a field of 387 “Blueprint Companies.” He defines these organizations as the 5 percent of U.S. companies that — since 1980 — have IPOs and growth to more than \$1 billion in revenue. These are America’s highest growth companies, and each of them has uniquely achieved exponential revenue growth and investment returns.

What can Utah’s companies take away from this research? Among other things, Thomson talks about businesses working carefully to identify a niche, to prepare to fulfill it, and then to plan to hit their breakout success during their seventh to eighth years.

True “overnight successes” are rare. For example, it took Wal-Mart 11 years to open its second store — imagine the patience in that process.

In keeping with that example, it’s interesting to note that 2007 was DirectPointe’s seventh year. In line with this

thinking, we’ve been working through these first seven years to prepare for our ultimate mission — to become a \$1 billion company — by building the proper foundation, slowly and steadily, as part of our overall plan. In our case, it took us several years of preparation to prove there was a market and to prove that our services are sticky (for retention) and to prove that we — or any company — could actually make money by providing these services.

We spent the first year building a leadership team, raising capital and creating a technology. In the second year, we took the company to market and hit positive cash flow. In the third year, we hit profitability. We’ve spent the four years since preparing to scale.

In 2007, we finally and deliberately achieved our company’s own “breakout year” in which we experienced a dramatic rise in both top line and recurring revenues. These results, coupled with four successful acquisitions, a doubling of revenue and employee base, and customer expansion to 29 countries and all 50 states, speak resoundingly to the truth of Thomson’s theory and research.

Although it may appear from our current visibility that DirectPointe has succeeded virtually “overnight,” I’m not a bit embarrassed to note that in actuality, our “sudden success” has required a full seven years.

Neither should you. **Q**

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