



# 10 steps

to finding your *big* idea.

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# 1 discovery

I want you to pinpoint some specific elements of your Big Idea: What gets you out of bed in the morning? What compels you? Why do you do what you do? This is the essence of your message. These answers will form your Big Idea.

Identify three specific elements of your Big Idea: 

1

2

3

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*For instance, my Big Idea revolves around:*

*1.Helping individuals, brands, and organizations discover their personal Big Idea*

*2.Teaching how to build bigger online audiences*

*3.Teaching how to inspire online audiences to take action*

? [ What about you? Take a shot at weaving the elements above into a singular sentence.

My Big Idea is to: 

# 2 consequences

Next, it's time to think through the consequences of achieving your Big Idea. What happens if you're successful? What happens if you're unsuccessful? This is where your Big Idea gets handlebars.

*This is where you start seeing how your Big Idea can (or won't) impact the world.*

? [ What are five concrete consequences that will happen if you do not achieve your Big Idea? 

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

? [ Now think of the other side of the spectrum. What are the five consequences (positive) of achieving your Big Idea? 

(and they can't be "the opposite of your other five")

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# 3 values

Think through how you or your organization makes decisions. Those are your values. For instance, one of our organizational values at THINK DIGITAL is *Doing Work That Matters*. We believe everyone has the ability—the right—to do meaningful work. Another is *Critical Thinking*; we believe people make better decisions when they're thought through (it's also why we're called THINK DIGITAL).

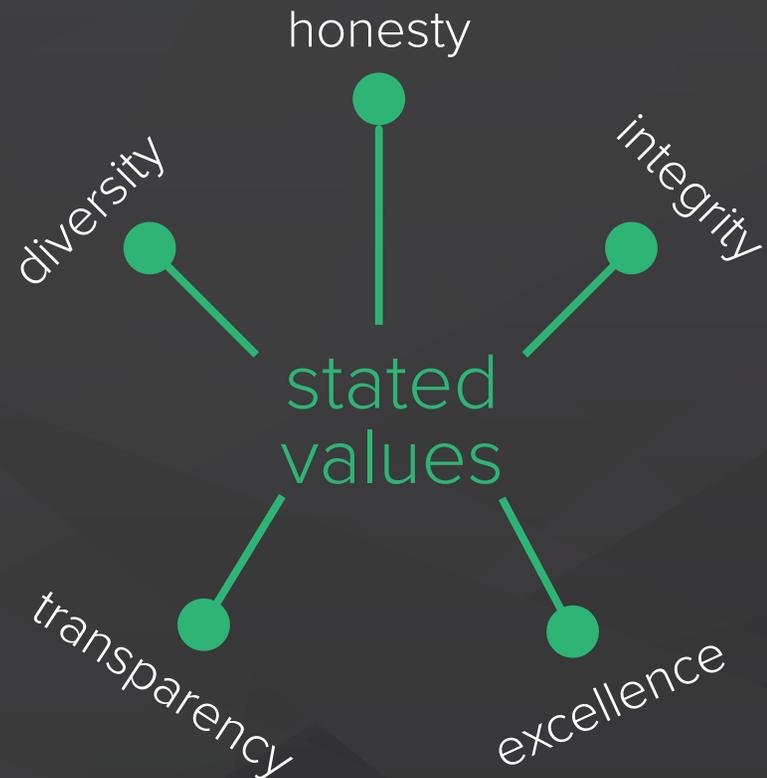
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These values form  
the bedrock for how  
we make decisions  
as an organization.

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# 3 values

In a perfect world, your values are aligned with your Big Idea. Sometimes, our stated values are different than our actual values. Stated values sound familiar. These are words like:



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If these are being used to make decisions in an organization, great! However, sometimes actual values (or unspoken values) are more influential than stated ones.

# 3 values

stated value  
vs.  
actual value

stated value

financial responsibility

actual value

stinginess

stated value

efficiency

actual value

hurriedness

stated value

excellence

actual value

perfectionism

see the difference?

# 3 values

## stated values

Take a crack at writing your **Stated Values**  
(how you want to actively make decisions): 

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## actual values

Now, I want you to think through your **Actual Values**  
(how you're actively making decisions right now): 

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# 4 envision the future

Pick a date. Two years from right now. What do you want to be doing? What's your Big Idea enabling you to do? To see? To meet? Where has your Big Idea taken you or your organization?

Describe what you see in 50 words  
or less: 

# 5 raving fans

As you build your Big Idea, you're going to connect with others who share your passion. They'll be inspired by what you're doing. They'll take action when you ask them to. They are your Raving Fans.

Raving Fans are the ones who, without them, you couldn't accomplish your Big Idea. I want you to describe a Raving Fan below. If it helps, think of one singular person:

*your raving fan:*

1. *What do they look like?*
2. *Why do they connect with your big idea?*
3. *Where do they live?*
4. *What do they do?*

Use much detail as possible (include age, gender, race, interests, fears, ambitions, dreams, etc.). Describe them here: 

# 6 dashboard

You'll need some indicator points along the way to tell you if your Big Idea is on the right track. Just like your car's dashboard tells you when you need more gas or an oil change, your Big Idea Dashboard is going to tell you when you need to pop the hood.

What are going to be your indicators to tell you things are running smoothly?

*(For instance, if you're a business you would put "monthly revenue," churches would put "number of people at weekend services," authors would put, "number of book sales," etc.)*

Name your dashboard indicators: 

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# 7 obstacles

The road to building your Big Idea isn't going to be smooth. You're going to run into obstacles. Everyone does and, instead of trying to avoid them, it's best to be prepared for when they come.



What are some of the obstacles to building your Big Dream?  
They could be financial, personal, relational, or vision-related.  
Think more practical, less ethereal. 

1

2

3



# 8 distinctives

There are skills and abilities that you, (your team, if you have one) and only you, possess. These are called Distinctives and they'll contribute to your Big Idea. You must know them before moving forward.

**Can you speak a different language? Maybe three? That's a Distinctive.**

**Did get an advanced degree? Distinctive.**

**Is your company based in a unique part of the world? Distinctive.**

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What are the unique traits of the people in your organization? Your leaders? How do you see the world differently than your competitors?

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# 8 distinctives

These, as you may have guessed, are all Distinctives. I want you to write down five of your Distinctives, but don't think too much about it. A few examples to get you started:

**A church had a senior pastor who used to be Amish. That's a Distinctive.**

**A local business exclusively sells items made in Iowa. Distinctive.**

**A blogger writes about food allergies after her son is diagnosed with significant food challenges. Distinctive.**

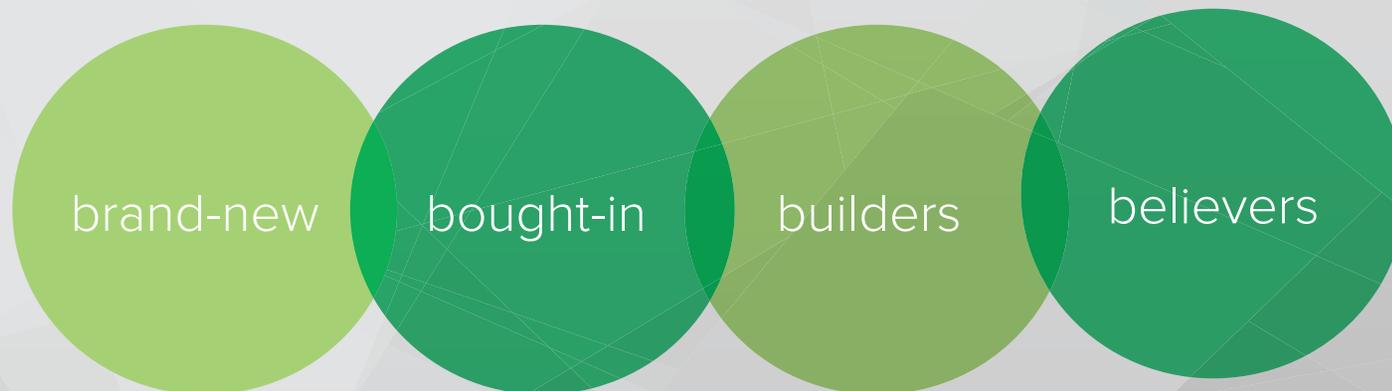


What about you? What are your distinctives? The closer they relate to your Big Idea, the better: 

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# 9 process

This is very important for you to determine. Every individual, brand, or organization has four different types of people. Call them “personas” if you will, but they are always present in some form. They are:



# 9 process



These are people who are just finding out about you. They're just hearing about you for the first time and have very limited knowledge of what you're about. Their exposure is, as the title suggests, brand new.



This group is familiar with you enough to have initiated first contact. They've bought, joined, read, or shared something you've created. They have bought-in to what you're doing, even if it's on a small level. They want more.

# 9 process



Builders are the people who've made first contact and keep coming back for more. They make commitment after commitment; repeat purchases, becoming members, subscribing. They've taken the next step in their relationship with you. Hooray!



This is the smallest and most valuable group to any organization. They are the ones who have embodied your Big Idea and taken it upon themselves to tell the world about you.

# 9 process

Answer the following questions for each persona:

**How does someone get into this group?**

**How do they transition to the next group?**

**Where is the bottleneck?**

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For instance, you may answer the first question for the Brand-News by saying, “they saw one of our billboards,” or “a friend told them about my book.”

The second question for the Brand-News might sound something like, “they bought one of our courses,” or “they volunteered for one of our events.”

Do this exercise for each level of the persona scale.

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# 9 process

Answer the following questions  
for each persona: 

## *brand-new*

1. How does someone get into this group
2. How do they transition to the next group?
3. Where is the bottleneck?

## *bought-in*

1. How does someone get into this group
2. How do they transition to the next group?
3. Where is the bottleneck?

## *builders*

1. How does someone get into this group
2. How do they transition to the next group?
3. Where is the bottleneck?

## *believers*

1. How does someone get into this group
2. How do they transition to the next group?
3. Where is the bottleneck?

# 9 process

The third question (“where is the bottleneck?”) needs to be addressed when you’ve completed the exercise. There should be a healthy flow from one group to the next. Brand-News should become Bought-Ins; Bought-Ins should become Builders; Builders should become Believers. Like this:



*It doesn't have to be perfectly balanced (e.g. 25%/25%/25%/25%), but there shouldn't be any bottlenecks.*

For instance, one organization I worked with had a significant amount of their people stuck in the Bought-In stage. They were fantastic at moving people from Brand-News to the next stage, but couldn't get much movement after that. There was a blockage. As a result, they suffered setback after setback because they couldn't figure how to break-up the bottleneck.

Thankfully we were able to help them identify the problem spots and create a plan for moving forward. But had they not gone through this exercise, as painful as it was, they would still be stuck.

The goal for this exercise is to have a realistic pulse on how people move through your business, brand, or organization.

# 10 goals

Last but not least, you need concrete goals. Your goals are going to be ...

## S.M.A.R.T

**Specific.** Your goals need to be concrete and almost comically definitive. “We’re going to save 100,000 lives by June 16 at 9 AM” is better than “We’re going to help people.”

**Measurable.** How are you going to measure whether you’re successful? Numbers. That’s how. Put numbers to every goal you create.

**Assignable.** This is traditionally classified as “achievable,” but Assignable adds a new dimension to goals. You don’t want to go this road alone. Assigning goals, even if it’s to yourself, takes it off the shelf and attaches it to a real human being. Your goals, quite literally, start to flesh themselves out.

**Relevant.** How closely do these goals align with your Big Idea? Are they relevant to the values you created above? If not, work on different ones. You need laser-like focus on your Big Idea.

**Time-bound.** My favorite. Give yourself or your team a deadline. The Pareto principle says a task will expand to fill the time allotted to it. Give yourself a set deadline and stick to it. Done is better than perfect.

# 10 goals

Goals also work best when you go from where you are to where you want to be. For instance, let's say you're an author. Your goal would be:

*From: 1,000 books sold in the first quarter.*

*To: 5,000 books sold in the next quarter.*

One of my favorite examples comes from a church I was consulting with. They had a strong need to create and implement an organizational communications plan. No small task, to be sure. It could have easily swallowed them whole. But because we created **S.M.A.R.T.** goals, the process was clear:

*From: Running around like chickens with our heads cut off.*

*To: Collecting one story per week from people who have been affected by the work our organization is doing.*

You could actually feel the relief in the room when the above goal was written down. ourself a set deadline and stick to it. Done is better than perfect.

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When you phrase goals them smartly, there's no guessing what needs to happen, by when, and by whom. It's all outlined and agreed upon. **The only action left to take is to get to work!**

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