

► BETWEEN ROUNDS WITH:

JEREMY STEINBERG

How Is Your “Collective Ambition” Working?

Our columnist challenges readers to analyze why they do dressage, what they want to produce, how they want to be known—and how they will get there.

PHOTO BY COURTENAY FRASER

I was rereading an old *Harvard Business Journal* article on the term “collective ambition,” which made me think about how these principles apply in our relationship with our horses, our clients, businesses and the people we interact with on a regular basis. The basic premise of collective ambition is that all the parts of a company are working toward the same goals; portraying the same ethics, on many different levels, with many people involved; that all parts are supportive of the common good; and no one individual is putting his or her desires ahead of the overall targeted goal.

There are many things that need to be agreed on for this to work. All people involved must have the same idea of where things should be heading. Our farriers, stall cleaners, clinicians, grooms, spouses and assistants must all share the common ambition for the collective to thrive. Think of it as a beehive where all the drone bees work in symbiosis to support the queen, but don’t think of the queen as a person; think of the queen as the goal itself. Think of all the drones involved as everyone,



“Why do you ride dressage or why are you involved in the sport?” asks Jeremy Steinberg.

including yourself, working to make that ambition become a reality.

This particular article defined the seven qualities that make a collective ambition model work, and I adjusted some of the wording to make it applicable to the horse industry.

I started breaking them down one by one to see how they could apply to our work, seeing how I could incorporate the idea into my own business and ethics. I’m always thinking how I can improve on what I am doing and figured I would run through the structure and hold

myself accountable. In doing so, I realized it’s something we could all apply to our day-to-day work, and I challenge everyone out there to take it for a spin.

Purpose

Your reason for riding dressage or being involved in a related business; it is the core mission of your enterprise.

This one seems easy, but really how many of us think about it? Why do you ride dressage or why are you involved in the sport? For fun, as a

money-making venture, as a means to an Olympic medal, the love of the art or the horse, for producing Grand Prix horses, for the ribbons?

Everyone should take a look at what has brought them to the sport. You need to know the real reason for the venture so that, as you steer the ship of ambition, you never get sidetracked or derailed.

If you have employees, they should also know and understand that vision. Whether it's the minutia of the monotonous tasks or the overwhelming catastrophes, you can stay on course to the end goal. Some of us just want to train horses and riders; some just want to show. Some people want to sell horses, and others just want teach. Some people want to run horse shows or own tack stores. Regardless of your entry into the sport, if you know what has brought you there, you are more easily going to know what will keep you there.

What do you want to produce in the end, and what do you want to be known for? If you know your reasoning for being in the game, you can create a collective ambition working toward that same vision.

Vision

The position or status you aspire to achieve within a reasonable time frame for you, your training, your enterprise or your business.

Once you know the reason and core mission of your enterprise, creating a vision of where you want to see yourself in a year or two, or 10 for that matter, becomes easier to attain.

When I was working for the U.S. Equestrian Federation, I implemented a program with the young riders called Long Term Strategic Planning to help them visualize where they saw themselves within certain time frames. I thought that if I could get them thinking with those long- and short-term goals, that any day they struggled, they would know to stay on course, and any day they succeeded, they would know they weren't finished. It was my job to guide them toward realistic goals if I ever saw them off course. If I knew where they envisioned themselves, I could help to preempt derailment or sidetracking.

You have to remember, however, that any planning is somewhat liquid. With the additional variable that our equine partners add to the equation we have to be willing to change and adapt. Within this system of collective ambition, you will always be double-checking, redoing and rethinking your vision and timelines.

Targets And Milestones

The metrics you use to assess progress toward that vision.

What metrics or milestones do you use to guide your success or failure as to your vision and timeline? What are reasonable systems we can put into place to assess the systematic advancement of our vision? Is it scores at shows, rankings throughout the year, number of horses sold or produced, student successes, ribbons, products sold, or otherwise?

Without these performance markers, we quickly can lose track of whether our actions and plans are really working. We need to set clear and reasonable goals, attainable within a set time frame, and work toward them with consistent indicators that can guide our advancement. This is easier said than done. Set small things at first so that you can clearly see the work you are doing and the changes you may or may not make along the way. With each and every success and milestone hit, raise the bar and keep striving.

Strategic And Operational Priorities

The actions you do or do not take in pursuit of your vision and how you prioritize your day-to-day structure.

You have to say to yourself, "If it is my priority to do _____, then I am willing or unwilling to do _____." The actions and ambition of the whole collective must be guided by the same moral base.

The actions you don't take can sometimes be the most influential, for example, skipping a horse show because the footing isn't right, missing out on a clinic to save money for the future, knowing when to stop a ride

versus keep going, not going out for drinks in the evening because you want to be your best in the morning, turning a client away because they are not a good fit within your barn structure. Many times the self-restraint or ability to resist peer pressure proves the most challenging, but in turn becomes the most poignant.

At other times, our actions can serve a greater good but can bombard the short-term struggle. When we know the operational priorities in times like these, we implement the art of compromise if needed and keep striving toward our vision. There have been many times in my life where I've taught lessons for free, even though I can't afford to do so, but I wanted to see a horse progress or a rider get an idea, which is part of my overall collective ambition as a teacher. That ambition is to see people succeed and ride well, and I make compromises when needed to turn that into action. That in turn creates an environment of learning in my own circles and promotes good horsemanship and knowledge, which, within my own collective, I can later call on for help if needed.

What priorities do you make in your work for the overall ambition of the collective? Are the horses the first one; is the tackroom set up at a horse show a priority; is riding in an Olympics your main goal; is sponsorship the greatest goal of them all? Is it important that when people walk in the barn they feel welcomed; is the priority to turn out Grand Prix horses or sell as many horses as you can? These priorities of the collective must be known, as they will guide the actions you take in the day-to-day running of things.

Some riders take out huge loans to buy horses to help progress a career so that later in life they are notable riders who can command a large income, while others work with lesser horses while saving money for a future horse to own outright and in the meantime are creating a sustainable lifestyle. Neither are right or wrong strategies, and both can be used to get where you want to go if you use the milestones and performance markers to

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Bisphosphonate
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Brief Summary (For Full Prescribing Information, see package insert)

CAUTION: Federal (USA) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

DESCRIPTION: Clodronate disodium is a non-amino, chloro-containing bisphosphonate. Chemically, clodronate disodium is (dichloromethylene) diphosphonic acid disodium salt and is manufactured from the tetrahydrate form.

INDICATION: For the control of clinical signs associated with navicular syndrome in horses.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Horses with hypersensitivity to clodronate disodium should not receive OSPPOS.

WARNINGS: Do not use in horses intended for human consumption.

HUMAN WARNINGS: Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. Consult a physician in case of accidental human exposure.

PRECAUTIONS: As a class, bisphosphonates may be associated with gastrointestinal and renal toxicity. Sensitivity to drug associated adverse reactions varies with the individual patient. Renal and gastrointestinal adverse reactions may be associated with plasma concentrations of the drug. Bisphosphonates are excreted by the kidney; therefore, conditions causing renal impairment may increase plasma bisphosphonate concentrations resulting in an increased risk for adverse reactions. Concurrent administration of other potentially nephrotoxic drugs should be approached with caution and renal function should be monitored. Use of bisphosphonates in patients with conditions or diseases affecting renal function is not recommended. Administration of bisphosphonates has been associated with abdominal pain (colic), discomfort, and agitation in horses. Clinical signs usually occur shortly after drug administration and may be associated with alterations in intestinal motility. In horses treated with OSPPOS these clinical signs usually began within 2 hours of treatment. Horses should be monitored for at least 2 hours following administration of OSPPOS.

Bisphosphonates affect plasma concentrations of some minerals and electrolytes such as calcium, magnesium and potassium, immediately post-treatment, with effects lasting up to several hours. Caution should be used when administering bisphosphonates to horses with conditions affecting mineral or electrolyte homeostasis (e.g. hyperkalemic periodic paralysis, hypocalcemia, etc.).

The safe use of OSPPOS has not been evaluated in horses less than 4 years of age. The effect of bisphosphonates on the skeleton of growing horses has not been studied; however, bisphosphonates inhibit osteoclast activity which impacts bone turnover and may affect bone growth.

Bisphosphonates should not be used in pregnant or lactating mares, or mares intended for breeding. The safe use of OSPPOS has not been evaluated in breeding horses or pregnant or lactating mares. Bisphosphonates are incorporated into the bone matrix, from where they are gradually released over periods of months to years. The extent of bisphosphonate incorporation into adult bone, and hence, the amount available for release back into the systemic circulation, is directly related to the total dose and duration of bisphosphonate use. Bisphosphonates have been shown to cause fetal developmental abnormalities in laboratory animals. The uptake of bisphosphonates into fetal bone may be greater than into maternal bone creating a possible risk for skeletal or other abnormalities in the fetus. Many drugs, including bisphosphonates, may be excreted in milk and may be absorbed by nursing animals.

Increased bone fragility has been observed in animals treated with bisphosphonates at high doses or for long periods of time. Bisphosphonates inhibit bone resorption and decrease bone turnover which may lead to an inability to repair micro damage within the bone. In humans, atypical femur fractures have been reported in patients on long term bisphosphonate therapy; however, a causal relationship has not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: The most common adverse reactions reported in the field study were clinical signs of discomfort or nervousness, colic and/or pawing. Other signs reported were lip licking, yawning, head shaking, injection site swelling, and hives/pruritus.


OSPPOS
(clodronate injection)

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► DRESSAGE

implement a financial plan within reasonable timelines with reasonable goals and work one step at a time toward them. If we lose sight of our goal and in turn, our timeline, we also lose sight of our operational priorities.

Brand Promise

The commitments you make to stakeholders (customers, communities, investors, employees, clients and partners) concerning the experience your work or endeavor will provide.

What promises do you make to people around you? Are you standing behind your product, and is your team standing behind you in that vision? Are you pledging to be on the line as much as them when the going gets tough? Are you in it for the long haul with them and promising to uphold the priorities, vision and purpose they believe in and have committed to? Have you ever offered a refund for work someone is not happy with? When you have someone buy you an investment horse, do you work with them if things go wrong to make good on their financial loss?

I hear people saying all the time they have a “team” horse and need a sponsor. I’ve heard people sell horses as potential team horses that are not scoring high enough to secure a spot on a team for a developing nation, but they don’t want to lose the ride on the horse, so they claim it as so. When you sell an image of what you can produce or create, are you being accountable for that coming to fruition? Is what you are selling or purporting factual and backed up with a system of purpose, vision, reasonable and strategic targets and milestones that have proven you can do what you are saying you can? What are the consequences if that horse does not turn out to be what you said? Do you stand behind your work?

People are always pleading for sponsors and corporations to come to the rescue of shows, individuals and teams. The elite are continually asking for money from the even greater elite and sometimes even asking for money from the poor to help support the elite. Think of the letters you get in the mail

from the USET Foundation or USEF asking for *you* to help support The Team. Many of the riders on those teams make far more money than you and I and live in worlds far beyond our means, yet we get the letters in the mail asking for continued support. Whether it’s a federation, organization or individual, what brand promise are they making me that if I do give money to help support their goals and ambitions for The Team, which by the way is not the collective ambition of my own personal team, that they will do good on my investment in them? Have they shown as an individual or larger entity the fruits of labor that these donations have provided? What brand promise do we give back to our supporters, rich or poor, elite or not, large or small, on their financial contribution?

Core Values

The guiding principles that dictate what you or the enterprise represent in good times and bad and which in turn shapes how you are viewed within the community.

What is the ethical code that escorts your collective along? What do you stand for, and does your team understand that code? When the bad times hit, do you have an overall guiding belief that can keep you on track? If your training sidetracks, do you have a back-up plan, and are you adaptable? What is it about what you do that defines you as you? What are the core beliefs of your business model or work within the industry? Do you have a philosophy you stand up for and live to, or do you fly by the seat of your pants? What is the creed or motto of the work you do, and how did you come to that?

Are your core values apparent in what you do, and if so, how so? Can people tell it’s your student from miles away by the seat you have created in them? People used to always comment on my teacher’s ability to produce a rider with a good seat and basics and could say without hesitation that they were students of his based on the way they sat on a horse. That was a core value of his: producing riders who sat well with independent and invisible aids. The business he created

was one in which the people working around him made it more possible for him to produce those results and in turn came to him for those results. It created an environment of true collective ambition as everyone involved had the same vision of wanting to become better riders, which he always produced and stood behind.

“What is it about what you do that defines you as you?”

When things go bad, as they inevitably always will, what do you do to dig yourself out? Do you respect yourself in the morning? I've always encouraged the young riders who want to become trainers to write down what they think of as their basic business model. Within that, I ask them what it is that defines them or makes them special, and what in turn becomes their core values to what they are producing. How do they want to be known in the community? If you're starting a business within the horse world, find a void and fill it. Find a niche that you fit in and work to create what it is you see yourself becoming. A huge part of what makes up that niche is your core values and can be what separates you from the rest.

There are many types of tack stores, training businesses, riders, show organizers and all other kinds within the industry. The values of how they do their work and the ethics and moral code they stand behind within that work often separates one from the other. Those virtues are more often tested in times of bad, so they should be in place and known well before problems arise. It's through actions that you prove your moral compass, but if you don't know what your core belief system is, you cannot live by it.

Anyone can go on social media and post quotes of Gandhi talking about the moral code they live by and how generous, kind or thoughtful they are, but it's not until something goes wrong and those ethics and integrities are truly challenged that those of talk are separated from those of action. If you don't understand what is guiding your actions, those around you can more easily affect you for the negative when stress or pressure arises. Good decisions are based on past experience and current knowledge, as well as guided by your ethical code. It is well worth knowing what you stand for and who you are in regard to the business or presence you want to be.

Leader Behaviors

How you as the leader of the vision act on a daily basis as you seek to implement your vision and strategic priorities, strive to fulfill the brand promise, and live up to the values.

You are the leader of the pack, and all those around you look to you for guidance. You are the captain of the ship, but also part of the crew and cannot forget either. You have to be strong enough to lead, but sensitive enough to empathize with the crew when needed. A good leader has compassion, compromise, strength and integrity. You cannot be weak, but if you are too strong you lose trust and can create dissension amongst the ranks. It is your responsibility to create an environment where all people involved, even down to the smallest part of the machine, feel like part owners in the endeavor. If everyone feels like the product is partly their creation and partly owned by them, they take pride in their work and work to create pride in others around them.

Write down how you as the leader want to be seen by those around you. Make a list of traits you want to be known by and strive to lead with those behaviors. You are not only the leader of your employees if you have them, but also your horses, veterinarians and/or anyone else involved in the collective ambition you are creating. If it is your vision, you are the leader.

You should also think about how

you want your clients to view you as the leader of the company, who in turn creates or sells the commodity they are buying, whether it's horse training and lessons or breeches and clothing. You as the leader are responsible for the employees that the consumer interacts with, so how does the consumer view the relationship you have with the employee and the way in which you work toward the core values of your brand?

A leader leads by example, and those examples create an environment of strength and trust. A leader lives by his or her word and acts accordingly. Leadership is built on action and illustration and never talk without substance. Are you a leader who acts or a leader who talks? Does your collective see you as a leader based on your actions?

When I apply these seven traits to my own collective ambition, I see many things I'm doing that are on track and many that need help. How do you fit? How do your endeavors or business, lifestyles or routines, fit those that create a successful collective? Are you in fact working with those around you to create such a thing in your own life, and are you also working to help create it in others as part of a team?

Run through the steps above, and ask yourself: are you involved already in a collective, is it yours or someone else's, are you the captain or part of the crew, and are you all working toward a common goal? 🐾

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Jeremy Steinberg was the U.S. Equestrian Federation Youth Coach from 2010-2014. He's a well-known rider, trainer and competitor based out of Del Mar, Calif. He's also a selector for the Developing Horse Program and one of five clinicians who works with the U.S. Dressage Federation in its Platinum Performance/USDF junior and young rider clinic series. He worked with long-time friend and mentor Dietrich von Hopffgarten extensively until his passing in 2004. Jeremy has trained and shown many horses up through the Grand Prix level. He now runs a small "boutique"-type training business and travels the country giving clinics. More information can be found at steinbergdressage.com.