

## Creating a Vision

When you begin the process of strategic planning, visioning comes first. When visioning the change, ask yourself, "What is our preferred future?" and be sure to:

- \* Draw on the beliefs, mission, and environment of the organization.
- \* Describe what you want to see in the future.
- \* Be specific to each organization.
- \* Be positive and inspiring.
- \* Do not assume that the system will have the same framework as it does today.
- \* Be open to dramatic modifications to current organization, methodology, teaching techniques, facilities, etc.

### Key Components for Your Vision

#### Incorporate Your Beliefs

Your vision must be encompassed by your beliefs.

- \* Your beliefs must meet your organizational goals as well as community goals.
- \* Your beliefs are a statement of your values.
- \* Your beliefs are a public/visible declaration of your expected outcomes.
- \* Your beliefs must be precise and practical.
- \* Your beliefs will guide the actions of all involved.
- \* Your beliefs reflect the knowledge, philosophy, and actions of all.
- \* Your beliefs are a key component of strategic planning.

#### Create a Mission Statement

Once you have clarified your beliefs, build on them to define your mission statement which is a statement of purpose and function.

- \* Your mission statement draws on your belief statements.
- \* Your mission statement must be future oriented and portray your organization as it will be, as if it already exists.
- \* Your mission statement must focus on one common purpose.

\* Your mission statement must be specific to the organization, not generic.

\* Your mission statement must be a short statement, not more than one or two sentences.

Here is an example mission statement: "By providing quality education, we empower individuals to become caring, competent, responsible citizens who value education as a lifelong process."

## Benefits of Visioning

The process and outcomes of visioning may seem vague and superfluous. The long-term benefits are substantial, however. Visioning:

- \* Breaks you out of boundary thinking.
- \* Provides continuity and avoids the stutter effect of planning fits and starts.
- \* Identifies direction and purpose.
- \* Alerts stakeholders to needed change.
- \* Promotes interest and commitment.
- \* Promotes laser-like focus.
- \* Encourages openness to unique and creative solutions.
- \* Encourages and builds confidence.
- \* Builds loyalty through involvement (ownership).
- \* Results in efficiency and productivity.

## Vision Killers

As you engage in the visioning process, be alert to the following vision killers:

- \* Tradition
- \* Fear of ridicule
- \* Stereotypes of people, conditions, roles and governing councils
- \* Complacency of some stakeholders
- \* Fatigued leaders
- \* Short-term thinking
- \* "Naysayers"

## Top 7 Tips for Creating an Inspiring Vision

By Kevin Kearns

[ [Print](#) | [Email This](#) | [Bookmark](#) ]

As a kid sitting in the very back of my parent's station wagon on road trips, I must confess I have uttered those famous words, "are we there yet!?" more than once. I learned the hard way to stop asking that question when my dad would threaten, "I will stop this car!" I stopped asking, but I still did not understand where we were along the journey. As a leader, you benefit greatly when your team understands where you are trying to go as a group. When your team understands and believes in the intended end result, they will not have to ask you "are we there yet"? These seven tips are sure to help you create a vision that inspires.

1. Hold up, wait a minute: Create a vision because you want it, not because everyone has one. Mission and vision statements have become a must for organizations. Unfortunately, the must came more out of keeping up with the Joneses rather than becoming better organizations. The value of a vision should be in its ability to provide direction, not in its ability to be checked off and placed in a frame. Take all the time you need to have a vision that inspires you.

2. Do over: If the current vision is not working, throw it out! If you already have a vision that is not very inspiring, put it (and everyone else) out of its misery. People want to be a part of something great and visions are no different. If the vision is not great, then the current reality probably isn't so great either. No need to limp along with an uninspiring vision, admit you need a new one and create it. Decide what you want and start making it happen.

3. Keep it Simple: Simple is as simple does. Too often, organizations create vision statements that take up an entire page or more. If you ask employees what the vision of the company is, they usually cannot tell you. This lack of awareness often includes management. Who is going to memorize an entire page full of big words that have little meaning in their daily

duties? Very few people. If the vision is short, sweet, and to the point, people will not only be able to remember it, they will be able to achieve it! Write it as you will live it. Is your vision too complex? Ask around and see if everyone gives the same basic answer.

4. Focus: Visions, they're not just for dreams anymore. It is great to think of gigantic visions, such as putting an end to everyone's fascination with realty TV shows! Sometimes big dreams can be too big, causing us to lose interest and become distracted. Have a focus to your vision. What are you going to accomplish in the next five years? Once you decide on a vision with an obtainable focus, get started. By comparison, grandiose visions usually lack an obvious beginning point. Maybe I can call FOX CEO, Rupert Murdoch, about the reality shows on FOX. Wait, I have to finish writing these tips, I'll call Rupert later (see what I mean?)

5. Believe the Hype: Be the biggest vision marketer. If you don't sell the vision to other people, who will? Better yet, if you don't know the vision, why should your staff? Know it, believe it, and sell it! The best time to sell a vision is when you first hire an employee. He or she is so excited and the future seems so bright. I can remember when I was 18 years old and obtained a great job with a major airline. They had a long hiring process that included flying me to another state to be introduced to the vision of the company. It worked! I was ready to be an active member of the "family." That is, until I started to work directly with other staff. Some jaded employees showed me another vision of the company. One of hypocrisy and neglect. While in the trenches, I heard more of "their" vision than I did the company's. In all fairness, it was not as bad as some were saying. However, it just goes to show that if you do not continue to sell your vision, other people may start selling theirs!

6. Now Showing: You can show them better than you can tell them. Even if you are able to sell the vision, it will not mean a thing if you do not demonstrate it in your actions every day. A big mistake many leaders make is to pump everyone up about a vision and when the rubber hits the road, they do whatever

comes easiest or cheapest. If you want your team to be inspired by your vision, show them what it looks like in action.

7. Show me the money!: Reinforce behavior that moves you towards the vision. You will lose excitement about a vision if it does not impact the day-to-day reinforcement of your team. Money is one tool for reinforcement. If you are unable to adjust salaries, give bonuses, or have other financial impact, do what you can do to reinforce behavior. A vision will lose meaning if you do not reward people for making progress towards it. Or worse, I have seen leaders set up reward systems that have nothing to do with the vision! In some cases this may be good for the short-term, however chasing the short-term is never a good long-term strategy for success. Even if you do all the other tips, if you are not careful about this one, you are fighting an uphill battle.

Now get out there and create visions that mean something to you and your team. Visions that focus. Visions that come alive. Visions that come true! We can always get back to that reality TV show vision of mine some other time – there I go again! Okay, lets start with a vision of the people reading these tips will watch no more than two reality TV shows a week! Who is with me?

Kevin Kearns is President of Kearns Advantage ([www.kearnsadvantage.com](http://www.kearnsadvantage.com)), a leadership coaching company. Kearns Advantage works with business leaders to define and improve results, guaranteed! Kevin holds a Master of Science degree in Organization Development and is a member of the Coachville Graduate School of Coaching. Kevin also mediates business disputes for the Better Business Bureau of Southern Colorado.