



Got Vision?

If your organization is like most others, you may be challenged by how to create a vision that is truly shared by all and has a durable shelf life. Shared vision can help connect people to a worthy purpose, speed up decision making and streamline priorities. It can help break through internal politics, turf wars and disconnects that subtract value from your mission, your customer, your results.

We offer up some practical guidelines that you can use.

What is shared vision?

It's not a poster on the wall or a catchy tag line in your marketing materials. It's a collective state of mind that unifies many views into one vision, inspires people and focuses effort. It contains all four of these defining characteristics:

- ✓ **Clear Picture** – not a vague aspiration but a concrete, understandable view
- ✓ **Future Success** – not constrained by today's realities, the picture breaks through the status quo towards a compelling tomorrow
- ✓ **Widely Owned** – not a top-down mandate or solution owned by a small group of champions, it is internalized and enriched by those whose efforts will make it a reality
- ✓ **Personally Felt** – not just a rational statement, a sustainable vision connects to the heart as well as the head.

Why shared vision matters

Our research and field experience confirms the work of many others. Those who experience shared vision achieve great things and enjoy the ride as well as the destination. When you “got vision” ...smart work happens, results ramp up, excitement is contagious, people commit.

For those who find shared vision lacking, it's a frustrating and unproductive experience. While you probably won't hear saying “*we don't have shared vision,*” you may be seeing warning signs when you hear people say:

“I don't get it...they don't get it...too many priorities...too much politics... my views don't get heard... better lay low and play it safe...that's THEIR vision, not MINE...too much change too fast....I'm out of here...”

And there are tangible effects on the organization and the people who work there:

The Organizational Cost

- Busyness
- Turf wars & political agendas
- Loss of customer & market focus
- Duplicated efforts
- Turnover
- Results suffer
- Low morale

The Human Cost

- “Enough to get by” effort
- “What’s in it for me?”
- Confusion
- Fear-based decision making
- Apathy
- Cynicism
- High performers leave

Take a candid look at your organization. Do you have shared vision – or is your vision blocked?

Vision Blockers: The five patterns

If shared vision is so important, why don’t we see more of it? We’ve found five common reasons. See if you can relate to one or more of these challenges.



Vision Stuck at the Top

The senior leader or leadership team has a pretty clear picture of where the organization needs to go. *“That’s the job of leadership, right? Setting the direction so that everyone can get the job done.... Why don’t I see the results I expect?”*

The picture may not be clear to others or refined by those closest to the customer. Yes, the leader’s insights are critical, but they are not enough. The vision has to be meaningful and inspiring to every person in the organization to gain their commitment and leverage their talents.

The remedy is to give up “vision control”. Let people shape and internalize the vision so that it becomes *their* vision - not just *your* vision.



Vision Caught in the Middle

Ever work on a mission-critical project where you and your colleagues were reading from the same playbook? The team worked hard to factor in diverse views, and achieve thoughtful, energizing results. Yet as you move out of your own circle of influence, you find that the rest of the organization just doesn’t get it. Your team wonders....

“What’s with these people? Why aren’t they as enthused as we are? They’re holding us back!” People have a way of slowing – or even stopping – effort that doesn’t resonate with their own, ingrained picture of the issues. It’s easy for those working closely to get way ahead of everyone else.

A key to your project’s success is to spread ownership and connect more people to the vision early and often. By getting more stakeholders connected to the vision, you’ll create more champions to propel the work forward.



Vision Not Linked & Synched

In any organization with more than one function, the inevitable happens. Each unit works to clarify its purpose and priorities. Good exercise, but often, it goes awry when the separate visions for each function aren't "linked and synched" as part of a collective vision. Disconnects lead to redundancies, inconsistent decisions and even turf wars as functions vie for the scarce resources of the business.

Create a big enough picture of the future for all groups to join, creating natural integration and powerful partnerships.



Vision is Vague

Some organizations have become so busy with activity, so caught up in an "execute" mode that they haven't taken collective time to reflect. *"No time for think, just do! Too much going on...got to keep moving."* Don't confuse activity with impact! You risk spending scarce time, money and talent on the wrong things. And there's a good chance that the lack of clarity and wasted energy are frustrating your staff and giving an edge to your competition.

The fix is to structure time to think about and commit to a compelling future –without compromising your ability to execute. A powerful organizing thought about your future will actually streamline activity – as it prepares your organization for the next big thing.



Vision is Dated

Why refresh your vision when constancy of purpose means so much? In fast-moving times, even the best ideas of a flawless future state demand an ongoing reality test. Maybe your markets have shifted, your staff has grown or you have recently merged, divested or acquired. Vision is a living therefore changing proposition. Key here is taking the time to refresh the vision to make sure that the target once imagined is still held. The process may end up affirming the purpose or it may yield a modification. Either outcome ensures that your focus is sound.

Get vision!

Be sure your planning processes and your culture invest in creating a clear, future focused vision. And invest time to make sure it is widely owned and personally felt. A vision is an energizing true north that helps guide your direction, make well aligned decisions, and execute with the enthusiasm commitment of everyone in the system. There's no better time than now to take make sure you are building shared vision – and reaping all the benefits that come with it!