

Business vision is not a plaque

In companies of all sizes one hears and sees many different types of vision statements. They decorate the halls in prominent places and are placed noticeably in annual reports and in strategic plans and other important documents.

Chemark has witnessed both the great as well as the poor achievements of companies with well-written vision statements. Why is it that some do poorly with time consuming well thought out vision while others find success? We would not suggest that a vision statement alone provides success or failure but based on our recent investigations, we know that without a strong vision, companies tend to do less well than those who do.

WHAT IS A BUSINESS VISION?

There are many definitions of a business vision, but we find the following sums it up best.

“Your vision is your long-term ambition—it is the center of why you do what you do. It does not necessarily relate to the actual things you do in running your business—it relates to why you are doing them. One may be running a coatings business—that is what you do. But you may do it to offer employment to young apprentices or to provide a secure financial base for your family, or to bolster the local economy, etc.” (Elphick, Mar. 2005)

Another, according to Lee (1993, p. 28), “when you create a vision, you’re writing a constitution, a frame of reference for everyone.”

Therefore, a vision is what pulls the whole thing along. It provides a mission, a sense of purpose to get excited about and a reason for being charged up, enthused and motivated. A strong business vision creates passion.

Passionate vision, in this sense, provides the business team a reason to struggle, a reason to fight and be ready to make sacrifices for the attainment of success.

Examples of simple, memorable vision statements perhaps, with little relevance include:

- “Doing Well by Doing Good”
- “Walk the Talk”
- “Stick to the Knitting”

If, in the case of the examples above, you have no clear direction, it’s tough to know or care—as a part of the business—where the business ship is going and why.

Another example is our struggling domestic auto industry.

What business is it really in? Building motor vehicles or moving people and goods?

If the desired vision, or end game, is to move people and goods, the day may evolve sooner than later when they should build monorails, small helicopters, shuttles or whatever mode of transportation is viable and feasible at the time.

CREATING A VISION

To aid success in your business, a clear vision requires us to do the following in its development:

- Inspire and motivate—Passion;
- Provide direction and foster success—Road map;
- Enable us to benchmark our progress and evaluate our outcomes—Milestones;
- Is essential to the organization of the future—Generational transfer.

It is always best to have disciplined hurdles that cause one to think carefully about such important elements as vision and mission which, left to a public relations department or outside PR firm to develop, can fall substantially short of providing the all-important employee buy-in. Hurdle questions that would help you develop a business vision are:

- What is our purpose?
- What is our driving force?
- What are our core values?
- What do we do best?
- What do we want to accomplish?
- What do we want to change?

The implication in this exercise is that a vision must be emotionally internalized and brought into by the entire company in order for it to have the impact of:

- Driving the organization forward—Fuel and engine;
- Pointing the way—Direction;
- Providing a sounding board for strategic decisions—Screens opportunities.

When addressing a vision statement development, someone said, “don’t try this at home.” We would turn this around and say, “Don’t try this alone.” Talk to your peers, subordinates, outside peer groups and others you respect, in or outside of your industry, prior to finalizing your vision. It’s too important to do it alone. **CW**

See Chemark’s ad this month on page 21.