

FEATURED



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How Visional is your Vision?

by Peter Streng

A serious question indeed! How transparent, inclusive, open, inspirational, vivid or visible is your organisation's VISION? Does it muster the scrutiny of all respective Stakeholders?

When assisting organisations to develop a Vision and then to craft that future dream of the organisation into a Vision Statement, I reduce the complexity of the task by using the most obvious word in the circumstance, i.e. Vision to facilitate the process.

In essence, the word Vision has both a denotative (direct or literal meaning) and a connotative (implied or alternative) meaning. It's literal meaning is often taken to mean "good eyesight" and its connotative meaning "a visualisation or dream of the future for the organisation".

Taken further; the word VISION is then further optimised as a sort of acronym of itself: using the letters of the word VISION to list its own inherent key success factors, if not non-negotiables, i.e.

V **I** **S** **I** **O** **N**

Visible **Inspirational** **Sustainable** **Inclusive** **Original** **Necessary**

The Visibility of the Vision is all-important. Visible to one’s Employees, Suppliers, Clients/Customers, Community, Business Associations, Bankers, Investors, Lenders, all State Institutions at whatever level and any person or organisation who has some interest in your organisation. In short, your universe, the totality of your Stakeholders need to envision your Vision. If your Vision is not visible, then your Stakeholders won’t know who and what you are; what your Organisations stands for, or believes in; what drives it and what you strive to achieve as an organisation. The Vision defines your organisation; it is the mirror of it’s soul, it is the DNA of the organisation, the raison d’être of its Organisation’s existence.

Clearly, the Vision should be Inspirational in that it should provide direction, that it should inspire, motivate and galvanise the organisation and provide a vivid idealised description of the desired outcome that inspires, energizes and helps you create a mental picture of your ultimate aspiration. Not just its inspirational message, however, but how it is translated into inspirational and visionary leadership through an equally exciting and inspirational communication process to reinforce both its Visibility and Inspirationality.

That the Vision should be Sustainable is the proverbial ‘no-brainer’ – it can’t be a pipe dream; it can’t be hope against hope wishful thinking. That it has to be a realistic and achievable (or very nearly) Lodestar, is really stating the obvious, otherwise it will convey an unintended message to each of your stakeholders. For example, if one’s employees do not think that the Vision is real, they will not take it seriously, in which case, at best it will be a failed PR exercise, and at worst, a performance disaster in the making.

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To foster employee commitment to the ultimate goal of the organisation, the Vision really has to be Inclusive. This suggests that some critical (primary) stakeholders need to be involved and engaged in the process of defining your Vision, e.g. through a Vision-generating process involving your Employees, the Board (if a public company), Investors & Lenders (where appropriate) who need to understand what it is that you want to achieve, and hence, their respective perspectives need to be added to the decision-making process (of defining your Vision).

Speaking to the Visibility, Inspirationality, Sustainability and Inclusivity of the Vision, it must be, therefore, Original. By this I mean, that the Vision must be owned by all who either participated in developing it and/or to whom it will directly apply. It can't be owned and inculcated if it is as transparent as fake news. It has no traction when it is Googled and/or 'cut and pasted' from that of another Organisation. It can't be Original, if it is not the 'real you'. It is rather best not to have one.

Speaking of which, what if your Organisation doesn't have a Vision. Well, it doesn't mean that the Organisation is not successful. It simply means, from the vantage point of all your Stakeholders, that you must, therefore, exist in a vacuum, in a bubble of isolation, concerned just with profits to the exclusion of all else. One can't exist with, and through Stakeholders, without a meaningful relationship, without a connection in some shape or form, or without some form of engagement. It is through Stakeholders that every organisation benefits. One vital way to reach that 'audience', to reap the benefits accruing from those relationships, is by having an effective Vision.

A Vision is, therefore, a beacon of sorts for the Organisation's Stakeholders, something they can see, experience, feel and relate to. Therefore, for long term viability and sustainability of the Organisation, it simply is a business imperative, a Necessity if you will, to have a Vision. Ignore it at your peril! Or, in line with the SABPP leadership standard, instil the vision in your organisation to set you up for success.

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