

Creating the Vision

It can start with a hunch, or maybe just a feeling...the sense that there must be a way to help more people better develop their potential. Maybe it's more than a hunch; it's the gnawing reality of desperately needed programs, people, or financial resources. Maybe it's a mandate that you will find the resources to reach new audiences with new or existing programs, or reach current audiences with more innovative approaches.

Whatever your degree of discontent, it's the impetus for change. It's the making of a vision. That difference between what is and what could be serves as the creative tension for a planning process that will involve others, and a resulting program that involves even more.

The Value of Vision

Dr. Maples is a corporate speaker and management consultant. This segment is based on his articles "Foresight First", which appeared in Delta's Sky magazine in October, 1991.

Is vision really important? A vision exceeds importance. It is vital. We either create our destiny, or we live out someone else's creation. That's the choice.

A vision is like a lighthouse which illuminates rather than limits, gives direction rather than destination. Almost all successful individuals, organizations, and communities have one thing in common: the power and depth of their vision. A positive, meaningful vision of the future supported by compelling goals provides purpose and direction in the present.

What exactly is a vision? First of all, a vision is greater than us. Vision is always about greatness.

Vision transforms momentary strategies into a way of life. Vision engenders change. Vision is creating an ideal, preferred future with a grand purpose of greatness.

A vision is different from a mission statement.

A mission statement comes from the head; a vision comes from the heart.

A vision is a consciously created fantasy of what we would ideally like the community or organization to be, a waking dream, and this idea is not new. A vision statement is often another name for "guiding principles" or "core values."

Vision is from the heart. It may not necessarily be considered practical or reasonable. The loftiness of a vision may seem as though it asks too much of us. If it does, then one is on the right track.

How can a vision be grand if it doesn't take a quantum leap from the ordinary? If it spells out our highest ideals and wishes, it stands to reason that it will stand above the commonplace. It will set us apart from the crowd.

Great visions are not handed down from above. They are not dictated or manipulative. That would be yet another form of control. Visions are created, crafted, and shaped by those in partnership, built by those who will be living the vision.



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Putting the Vision on Paper

*Before you can help others see your vision and move your organization closer to it, you need to discover and define it. Dr. Michael Brazzel, the strategic planning expert for USDA Extension Service provides these visioning guidelines, based on Block, Frity, Kiefer and others. This adaptation was taken from the **Making the Grade** Community Workbook.*

GUIDELINES FOR VISIONING

Focus on the end result of what you truly want for the organization, not the intermediate steps of getting there.

Separate what you want from what you think is possible. A vision is about what you want. Focus on what you want, not on avoiding what you don't want.

Avoid making choices for specific other people, groups and organizations.

Express vision in the present rather than future tense (for example, "We are" rather than "We will be.") in order to begin "living into" your vision of what you truly want the organization to be.

Keep it short, concise, concrete.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CLEAR AND EFFECTIVE VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement...

- Is a *shared* expression by the people of an organization about what they **want** the organization to be. The deepest expression of what we truly want for ourselves and for the organization. The deepest expression of the values of the organization.
- Is a *stretch* from where the organization is today.
- Can include:
 - What the organization does and how it does that.
 - How people in the organization relate to the people, groups, and organizations outside: clients, suppliers, cooperators, and competitors.
 - Anything else – leadership, number and composition of clientele and staff, organization structure, climate, programs, delivery mechanisms, funding, location. Organization values and norms, what it is like to be part of the organization, etc.
- Is a living document, There is continual renewal through recreation of vision.
- Has the quality of being exciting, motivating, compelling. It is lofty. It engages our spirit; captures our imagination. It generates ownership and movement toward what we choose to be.

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