



## TOOLKIT 8 – CREATING A VISION FOR YOUR BUSINESS

- ❖ **Provide focus and direction for everybody in your business.**
- ❖ **Enable your people to create the future you want.**
- ❖ **Harness the energy and commitment of all your people.**

A vision is the picture of where you want your business to be at a specified time in the future. It is a key step in setting future strategy.

Vision is much more than management jargon - it really does help to drive the business forward. The benefits that business people report when they have had a clear vision include:

‘Provided both energy and direction.’

‘Helped guide our key decisions.’

‘Challenged us to high levels of achievement.’

‘Provided a common understanding of where our business is headed.’

‘Enabled our people to work out how they could personally add value to our business.’

## HOW TO CREATE A VISION

The benefits of establishing a clear vision can be seen in the following story.

### **STORY – DAVID HALL PARTNERSHIP LIMITED**

Ian Anderson took over as CEO of the David Hall Partnership Ltd in November 1990. His brief was to build the business from £1m to £5m profitability by 1995.

He got the management team together and followed the 'Creating a vision for your business' toolkit.

The initial brainstorm came up with lots of ideas and the team voted for the following five year vision:

- No surprises for shareholders
- Confident competent people
- Delighted customers
- Business expanded geographically
- Reduced dependency on public sector funded work
- Long term partnerships with key customers
- All staff engaged in personal development
- Minimum 5% net profit
- Joint product development with customers

The vision was adopted and then stage 2 in the toolkit was completed.

This led to a year one plan in order to deliver the vision:

- Establishment of personal development plans for all staff
- A full time networker being dispatched to Scotland to begin market development
- 3 joint research projects established with Training and Enterprise Councils on new products
- A consultancy business established targeting private clients (to reduce dependency on public sector)

'The lesson we learned was to ensure you prioritised your actions and then to allocate good people resources to it. Objectives without plans and resources don't work,' said Ian Anderson.

The plan was successful in growing the business to £4.5m sales by 1995. Unfortunately the nature of the public sector clients changed which reduced the profitability. 'On reflection I would give us 80% for implementation of the vision,' said Ian Anderson, 'but the important thing was we learnt invaluable lessons from the process and it certainly provided everybody with a clear focus and direction.'

### **STORY – KEEPMOAT PLC**

This story is a personal reflection by the author (David Hall) on the lessons learned by working with the business vision over several years.

Fifteen years ago Keepmoat included 'Delight Customers' as part of its vision. They set out to recruit marketing people with the remit of delighting customers, included it in people's job guides, measured it monthly, built it into business plans and talked about it until it became part of the vocabulary of the business.

This took five years to build into the culture but has now become their competitive edge. Customers want to do business with them and they have become a leader in the market sector. So this was a success.

At the same time they decided that 'every person a business person' was part of the employee part of their vision and then did not do enough about it. Some of Keepmoat's people still had a building mindset instead of a business mindset. So some of the issues they currently face relate to the lack of business skills of some key people.

The difference between 'delighting customers' and 'every person a business person' was commitment and action planning. So one worked, one didn't.

The lessons for their business here are to try to get the balance of focus on customers, employees and stakeholders. Ignore one at your peril.

## Here's how to do it

### STAGE 1

- Gather your team together. Tell them this is an opportunity for them to shape the future of the business. Select people who can add value to the process and whose buy-in is critical to your future success.
- Provide flipcharts and pens. This helps in creating a shared process.
- Agree a time frame for your vision that suits your business e.g., three or five years into the future. You select the time frame that suits you.
- Ask your people to address the following question (write it on the flipchart), ***'If our organisation is to be really successful by meeting the true aspirations of our customers, our employees and our investors, what will have been accomplished in 'x' years time?'***

There is a growing body of evidence that successful businesses seek to balance the interests of customers, employees and shareholders. Something for all the key stakeholders is a key principle in establishing a vision because then the stakeholders might support it.

- List their answers on a flipchart.

#### EXAMPLE – 3 YEARS VISION

- We have delighted our customers.
- Our people have shared in our success.
- We have the best return on investment in our sector.
- We have built several strong key customer partnerships.
- We have helped our people achieve their full potential.
- We have introduced three new successful products.
- We have a positive cash bank balance.
- Deliveries have constantly exceeded 98% on time.
- Our succession plan process ensures we have strong internal candidates to fill key positions.
- We have a culture of continuous improvement.

- Apply the rules of brainstorming.

#### Rules of good brainstorming.

- Everybody is equal
- All ideas are recorded
- Negative comments are banned i.e., 'That's a stupid idea...'
- Get everybody to volunteer ideas
- Listen to people's contributions
- Seek to build on ideas i.e., 'That's a good idea, we can also...'
- Record contributions verbatim on the flipchart
- Go for quantity not quality at this stage

TIP: Write the aspirations in the present tense if they have been accomplished e.g., '80% new business comes from referrals.'

- Get the team to vote on or prioritise the aspirations. One way is to provide three green stickers – the type you get with wall planners – and let them each vote in any way they want for the best ideas. They can use three votes for one idea or two for one and one for a different idea or any other combination. This is a democratic prioritising method.

Count the number of votes – highest first, second highest second etc. Aim for 6–8 vision statements.

- List the prioritised aspirations on a separate flipchart in priority order.

TIP: You know the process is working well when the energy levels in the group increase during the process and people start getting excited, building on rather than disagreeing with each others ideas.

- This is now your first draft 3–5 year vision.
- Leave the process at this point, to allow time for reflection. Polish up the vision at a later date.

Ask your team:

Q. Does it excite people?

Q. Does it look challenging?

Q. Is it worth doing for everybody?

However a vision without a plan is a dream, so the next stage is to work out in year 1 what needs to be done in order to move towards the 3–5 year picture.

## STAGE 2

- Put this question on a flipchart:

**'If we are to move towards our vision what do we need to accomplish in 12 months' time?'**

- Get the team to list actions that need to have been accomplished e.g.,

Three year vision: *80% of new business comes from referrals.*

Therefore in 12 months we should have:

- *Agreed our customer delight process*
- *A system in place to monitor the source of new enquiries*

- List the actions in the present tense.
- Build these actions into your next business plan and budgets. Bring them to life.
- Make sure you make somebody or a team responsible for each action.
- Communicate the vision as widely and as passionately as possible throughout your organisation.
- Talk about it enthusiastically at every opportunity.
- Model the vision in your day-to-day activities e.g., if your vision is to delight your customers make sure you do all the things personally within your role which creates delighted customers and that your people see you do it.
- Aim to win hearts and minds.
- Put the review of vision on regular meeting agendas.
- Celebrate and share success as you begin to achieve your vision.

# TROUBLESHOOTER

## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Your vision is simply an extrapolation of the past.

Unbalanced vision, not enough in it for a key stakeholders i.e., customers, employees or shareholders.

Vision not translated into action.

## SUGGESTED REMEDIES

*Challenge the team to create a different future 'how do we want it to be'. Let's worry about how we get there later. Vision is a mixture of the past and your hopes and aspirations.*

*Review the vision as a team, ensuring that there is something for all the key stakeholders.*

- 1. Debate and agree plans on how the vision will be accomplished. 'A vision without a plan is a dream.'*
- 2. Keep pushing for **actions** to be completed. Be persistent, it's a key leadership responsibility.*

*'If our organisation is to be really successful by meeting the true aspirations of our customers, our employees and our investors, what will have been accomplished in 'x' years time?'*

<b>5 Year Vision</b>	<b>Therefore in 12 months time we will have undertaken the following</b>
<b>Priority 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Priority 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Priority 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Priority 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Priority 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Priority 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>