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The Value of Your Company's Vision – How to Make It Real for Your Employees

All too often, people get caught up in the daily routine of their jobs, and lose track of the importance of the work they do and the role they play in helping the company achieve its vision. The result can be a career turning into a job, a job becoming work, and work feeling like a grind. When this spiral down progression happens it's easy for employees to become less focused, feel they are being taken for granted, and question the relevance of the work they do. The next thing you know, good talent is walking out your door.

As employers, we need to own the role of visionary. Find ways to help employees see the bigger picture and understand how their value and the work they do is needed for the bigger picture to be successful. Accomplishing this is not easy. It takes creative thinking, planning, risk taking, time, applied sociology and psychology, a sense of humor, a bit of mind reading, and focus on the end results. Once you put your vision together, communicate it to your employees, and let them do what they need to do in order to turn the vision into reality.

Creating Your Vision Statement



A company's vision statement is a key building block for everything that happens in the business, long into the future. Although sometimes thought to be interchangeable with a company's mission statement, the vision statement articulates the mental picture of what you expect the company to look like over the next three, five or more years. It defines your ambitions and aspirations.

On the other hand, a mission statement describes what the company does, and for whom. Walgreen's vision and mission statements are a good example of how these two elements are connected, but very individual.

Our Vision – To be the first choice in health and daily living for everyone in America, and beyond.

Our Mission – To be the most trusted, convenient multichannel provider and advisor of innovative pharmacy, health and wellness solutions, and consumer goods and services in communities across America. A destination where health and happiness come together to help people get well, stay well and live well.

As you begin to develop your vision statement, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- No two visions are alike, nor should they be. Every company is unique unto itself, and every leader's vision should be their own. The intention of the vision statement is to be a compass or a guiding light that keeps everyone involved, inspired, focused, and driven.



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- A vision statement needs to be brief, concise, reasonable, achievable, and memorable. Google's vision is short, to the point, and easy for everyone to remember -"Organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."
- When a vision statement is thoughtfully written, it doesn't usually change over the life of the business. Economic cycles, mood directed factors, or changes in leadership should not influence a rock solid vision. The only time a vision may change is when a company changes its focus. As a company evolves, however, they may choose to incorporate language into the vision that describes the change (like expanding markets or new programs or products).

Communicate the Vision

Once you've completed your vision statement, take it public. Start by communicating it with your employees, using it in your internal and external marketing materials, and posting it on your company website, LinkedIn and Facebook pages.

As the previous owner of a commercial design and furnishings firm, I would frequently explain my vision to the team this way "It doesn't matter what role you play in this company, the work you do contributes to helping people feel better about themselves while they are at work - the place they spend the majority of their waking hours." Every member of the team knew why we were in business, and that the work they did individually and collectively had a positive impact on our clients lives. The team felt connected to the vision, and for 20 years, 83% of our business came from repeat and referred customers.



While it was important for the employees to understand my vision for the company, I also needed to understand how they saw themselves fitting in to that vision. If we were not aligned, the employee's departure became inevitable.

Gaining and Maintaining Alignment to the Vision

Communicating the vision openly and frequently will make it a lot easier to do team building activities that help get and keep people aligned with the vision. There are many ways to achieve this. Use your divergent/creative thinking and make it fun.

One way the design and furnishings company encouraged alignment to the vision was by organizing ad hoc groups called "consumer group." Consumer group was made up of team members not involved with a particular aspect of a project. For instance - if designers were working on a concept, plan, or color schemes for a project, they would make their initial presentation to consumer group, before presenting it to the client. Or, if the controller had a complex billing issue to discuss with a client, they

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would present the information to consumer group first, making sure they had all the details and the details were easily understood. Consumer group was a great way keep everyone involved with the projects and process, and connected to their role in the vision. If the ideas passed the consumer group's scrutiny, we knew we were ready to present to the client.



Some companies take team members on field trips to visit customers, and see how their product is being used. Others have idea walls where employees can write notes about what they did that day or week to contribute to the vision. There are many ways to keep your employees connected to the vision. Bring your leadership team together and start brainstorming. Make the experiences fun and worthwhile

for everyone. One of the returns on this investment will be employees that clearly know the importance of the work they do, and how it connects to achieve the company vision.

KEY NOTES:

- Stay focused on what you want the company to look like and where you want it to go. Let your employees do what they need to do to make the vision a reality without micro managing them or the process – mingle, don't meddle.
- Be consistent with application and reference to the company's vision. The more you reinforce the vision with your employees, the more it will stay top of mind and help keep them inspired.