Vision Statement Formula

Step 1: Define what you do as an outcome

Start by being exceptionally clear about what it is your organization actually does. Be careful to remain 'outcome focused' rather than 'output focused'. For example, Microsoft famously had a vision statement to *Put a Microsoft powered computer on every desk in the world* (slightly paraphrased).

Strictly speaking, what Microsoft 'do' is make computer software, but for the purposes of their Vision, they looked forward to the actual outcome of this process - i.e. computers on desks.

Let's look at some other hypothetical examples:

- A bakery makes bread. But the outcome is consumers enjoying that bread.
- A consulting company gives advice. But the outcome is the success of others based on that advice.
- A government department does...lots of things. But the outcome is better lives for the citizens they serve.

Whilst this process may seem obvious - you would be surprised by how rarely organizations actually go through this process in a formal, written way.

Doing so will take you a long way towards creating your vision statement - BUT it's not enough alone! If it was, all bakeries, for example, would have the same vision statement - which is hardly inspiring!

TIP: If you are not sure where your organization wants to be in the future, you can use different tools, like **SWOT** or **SOAR analysis**, that will help you formulate your vision and future-oriented goals.

Step 2: Define what unique twist your organization brings to the above outcome

Very few products or services these days are truly new - most are more like reinventions of something that exists already, but with a different approach, focus or spin.

At some point in your organization's lifespan - someone will have believed that the reason that THIS organization would be successful where others have failed, was because of.........something.

You need to define **that something!**

Let's take our bakery example. So far, our vision statement looks pretty generic, along the lines of customers enjoying our bread. But why will they enjoy our bread MORE than the bread from the place next door?

Is it because we use centuries-old traditions passed through generations of our family? Because we only use premium grade locally sourced ingredients? Whatever your **unique selling point** is - let it shine through in your vision statement.

Step 3: Apply some high-level quantification

Ironically, a common problem with a vision statement that isn't as good is that it's too visionary! With no possible end in sight (or a totally unrealistic one) - the initial inspiration derived from a solid vision statement can quickly turn to frustration or even cynicism among employees and customers.

That said - this doesn't mean you should put numbers or any financial metrics to your vision statement. This will come later in your planning process.

However, you still want to add some high-level quantification to make it achievable.

Sticking with our bakery example, we might want to refine our target audience to 'every customer who walks through the door'. That's fine, or maybe we want to be bolder: 'every customer within walking distance of a store'.

The quantification we apply could also be industry specific. If you're a B2B - are you shooting for small businesses or multinationals, for example?

Step 4: Add relatable, human, 'real world' aspects

OK, your vision statement by this point should be getting pretty close to finished. But one final trick you can apply to help make it even more memorable is to add a real-life aspect.

This will allow people to conjure up a solid mental image to associate with your vision statement.

Let's look at an example - which of the following statements is likely to be more memorable:

a) To have every working person in the world using Microsoft product.

or...

b) A Microsoft-powered computer on every desk.

I would argue that (b) is more memorable because as I read this, I'm actually visualizing a computer (in my case) sitting on a wooden desk in a room.

There's nothing wrong with (a) but it's highly conceptual and thus difficult to transform into a mental picture. Let's look at another example:

"Ensure that every customer who leaves our store, does so smiling."

Here, using the word 'smiling' as opposed to 'happy' is powerful, because it conjures a mental image of a person smiling.

It won't always be possible to bring this level of tangibility to a vision statement - but if it is, I would strongly encourage doing so.

Final check

Our tip for creating a good vision statement is to use our formula, which we explain below, in conjunction with the CASCADE vision framework.

Ask yourself the following questions to check if your vision statement checks all boxes of a good vision:

- Is it **C**lear?
- Is it **A**mbitious, but not seemingly unattainable?
- Is it **S**timulating?
- Is it **C**oncise?
- Is it too **A**bstract?
- **D**uration: Is it limited to a specific time range?

Does it **E**ncourage you to take action?