



Encyclopedia of Health Care Management

Vision

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The *vision* for an organization is generally reflected in a statement of direction and future for the organization. The vision statement reflects organizational aspiration, whereas the organization's mission statement reflects the organization's purpose. The gap between the mission statement (what we are) and the vision statement (what do we aspire to be) provides the basis for the setting of goals and objectives to move the organization from the mission to its vision.

The vision statement, in its best form, provides an energizing force around which the organization's executives, employees, stakeholders, and financial analysts rally.

The statement typically is brief, consisting of one or two sentences. A well-conceived, effective vision statement will

- Convey a broad sense of direction that unifies organizational direction
- Aid in changing organizational direction and the rationale for redirection when internal resistance exists
- Provide all levels within the organization a clear understanding of where the organization's future lies
- Provide executives with an opportunity for a clear, consistent compass for resource justification and allocation
- Rally and energize employees and stakeholders
- Set an expectation of energy and action
- Provide confidence in the organizational leaders to set direction

When the organizational leader communicates the organization's vision, it sends a signal throughout the organization that change is happening. The vision may serve as a catalyst for new thinking and at the same time may ferret out internal resistance to change. The vision for the organization's future, by definition, will necessitate the rethinking of resource alignment to accomplish the vision.

The vision statement is frequently considered the “drumbeat” of the organization. It is clear, consistent, resonant, and often repeated. The vision statement frequently is written as a logo or catchy phrase that captures the internal and external public. It is the “march” of the organization providing a cadence and direction for the organization's future purpose. The vision often sets a tone for organizational pride, thus stimulating ideas and a new work ethic. The drumbeat must be repeated often and reinforced at every opportunity to ensure organizational acceptance and commitment.

Developing and Communicating the Vision Statement

A vision statement is not just plucked from the air. Rather, it is the result of thoughtful analysis and assessment of the environment in which the organization exists. Technology, regulation, economics, competition, politics, demographics, and the social environment are just a few of the factors that mold and change the dynamics in which an organization operates (the external environment). Some of these factors will provide opportunities for the organization; others pose threats to the organization's viability. The tone and direction of the vision statement is developed by the analysis of the industry's driving forces and the possible directions available to the organization as a result of this analysis.

A vision statement must be perceived as achievable. It is not essential that all strategies be known when the vision statement is developed; however, the vision must be viewed as possible. Slogans and platitudes without substance will not engender the outcomes sought through an appropriate vision statement. Over time the articulated vision would be viewed as a dream rather than a potential reality. The organization will become disenfranchised to future change. Thus it is important to frequently communicate successful progression toward accomplishing the vision.

Finding the most effective means of communicating the vision statement is as critical as its development. The

statement should create a visual image that evokes excitement and pride. Ideally it should be simple enough to be remembered yet complex enough to establish commitment. The vision should be transmitted through media that gets the attention of the organization. Most important, the highest-ranking executive must consistently and clearly articulate the vision in every forum in which he or she participates. The vision must always be recognized as coming from the top of the organization.

Vision Statements and Strategic Planning

Unlike mission statements, which are frequently developed down to the department level, vision statements are generally developed for the organization as a whole. The exception to this is for those very large multinational conglomerates that have unrelated business units. The multinationals may have a strategic vision for the corporation as a whole and one for each of the strategic business units, depending on the level of diversity among the units.

As the vision directionally sets the purpose for change and the mission statement focuses on the existing purpose, the gap between these two statements necessitates goals, objectives, and strategies to move the organization from its mission to its vision. The external environmental analysis used to develop the vision and the internal assessment of the organization's strengths and weaknesses supporting its mission must converge. This convergence effectively links internal resources with external factors essential to accomplish the vision and is reflected through the strategic plan at the corporate level.

The vision statement, broadly defined, sets the direction, whereas the strategic plan charts the course. As an example, if a local hospital sets a vision to become a regional hub, the strategic plan will articulate the steps (both short term and long term) to accomplish the vision.

Vision Statements in Health Care

The health care industry has, over the past decade and into the foreseeable future, been highly affected by government regulation, population demographics, and political legislation. These factors have required health care providers to reassess who they are and the services they will deliver. Some organizations have narrowed their scope of operations in favor of specialized services, while others have expanded their scope of operations through acquisition and other strategies to large and specialized population segments. Each strategy, whether product based or customer based, requires changes in operations. It is critical, especially in times of dynamic environmental shifts, to develop and articulate a new strategic vision. By communicating the vision, confidence is gained that senior management is willing and ready to meet new challenges, that employees do not have to be worried about changes ahead, and that stakeholders (the community, the customers, the stockholders) are assured that the organization understands its industry and can provide and deliver the services or product to meet these challenges.

- missions and mission statements
- mission
- strategic plans
- organizations
- staff
- organizational change
- demographics

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See also

- [Leadership](#)
- [Mission](#)
- [Organizational Change](#)
- [Strategic Planning](#)

Further Reading

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