

## Creating the Vision

By Chris Boleman

Having a vision is one of the most powerful components of leadership. All great leaders have visions of what they want to see in the future. Martin Luther King, Jr's "I have a Dream" speech was a vision of the future. John F. Kennedy wanted to place a man on the moon by the end of the 60's. The list is endless.

The key is not only to have a vision, but to take the additional step of writing the vision down to have a blueprint in place. Having your vision in place will help you decide where you are and where you want to go.

At the beginning, it is also important to point out the difference between Strategic Visioning and Strategic Planning.

*Strategic Visioning* is a proactive plan for the future. It is the future of the individual or organization. It starts with (as the name implies) a vision. It is a view of the future that everyone can believe in.

*Strategic Planning* is the process that provides specific direction and meaning to the day-to-day activities of the organization. Strategic planning places the vision into motion. It identifies all the steps and timelines to meet the vision. A typical time frame of four years is used in planning. This includes a year to identify and prioritize issues (while completing programming efforts from the previous plan) and three years to develop, implement, and evaluate programs.

*Steps to Create Your Personal Vision.* Before we talk about organizational visioning, let's first talk about developing your personal vision. Writing a personal vision statement is actually more in-depth and thorough than an organizational vision statement because it forces us as individuals to take a close look at ourselves and to make decisions about who we really are and what we believe in.

There are numerous exercises to help develop a personal, community, or business vision statement. The following steps modified from Fritz, Brown, Lunde, and Basnet (2005), can be followed to write a personal vision statement.

- Step 1: Write first paragraph on your life guiding principles to define who you are.
- Step 2: Write one paragraph that introduces your five most important roles.
- Step 3: Describe each of these five roles in individual paragraphs.
- Step 4: The last paragraph should focus on your vision based on how you would answer "What are five things you would like to do to make a difference in the world."

### *Creating an Organizational Vision.*

Lussier and Achua (2001) define an organizational vision as "an ambitious view of the future that everyone in the organization can believe in and offers a future that is better in important ways than what now exists" (p. 388). It is important that vision statements in organizations be developed as a group so that people from all levels of the organization are involved in the vision statement process.

An organizational vision serves a number of purposes. These include (adapted from Lussier and Achua (2001) :

- Prioritizes values of an organization
- Inspires followers to feel important because they are a part of the visioning process
- Links the present to the past by rationalizing the need for changing old ways of doing work.
- Establishes excellence in the work the organization does.

An organizational vision statement is typically much shorter than a personal vision statement because the vision is for the entire organization and making it a long statement will not clearly communicate the vision of the organization. The organizational vision statement should have the following components:

- Who the organization is
- What the organization does
- Where the organization is going

A vision is the starting point of change for an organization. Below is a schematic of a process organizations may elect to go through when change needs to happen.

- Step 1. Write a Vision Statement
- Step 3. Set Goals
- Step 2. Develop a Strategic Plan to Reach the Goals that contain objectives to reach goals.
- Step 4. Implement Strategy
- Step 5. Measure Results and Return to Step 1.

In order for organizations to stay viable with their clientele, it is imperative that they think strategically to evaluate where they are and what they are about. This starts with an organizational vision. Following these five steps helps to ensure that the organization is staying current.

## **References**

Fritz, S., Brown, F. W., Lunde, J. P., Banset, E. A. (2005). *Interpersonal Skills for Leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Lussier, R. N. and Achua, C. F. (2001). *Leadership: Theory, Application, Skill Development*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing.