

Transforming Vision to Action

By Leadership Outfitters, Inc.

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What will your organization look like in the future? What will you offer your members? How will the environment differ from that which your members experience today?

Most leaders have an idea of what they hope their organization will look like in the future. We usually have a clear picture of what we would like to see happen. But how many of us know how to facilitate the realization of that idea? As author John Maxwell states, “Anyone can dream. Effective leadership is knowing how to lay down the action steps for yourself and the organization so that the vision can be realized”.

Vision

Merely having your own vision of the organization is not enough to be an effective leader. We must inspire others to see what the future holds and to collaborate with them on facilitating the outcome of that collective vision. By including others in conversations about vision, you bring the team closer together around a common dream. This builds a foundation for the process of planning how you will achieve the dream. You may also want to consider how the future vision of different components of the team (departments, areas, committees, etc.) link with the overall organizational goal.

Mission/Purpose

When your co-workers come to work or your organization’s members come to a committee meeting, do they know why they are there? What is the mission of your organization – why do you exist? Many organizations have lengthy mission statements that may confuse rather than clearly define and direct the organization. Consider drafting a short purpose statement for your group. A great example is the purpose stated by Disney – “To make people happy”. What is your purpose?

Goals

As stated earlier, the tough part of this process is plotting the course toward achieving the vision. What has to happen, change, or be eliminated in order for the vision to be a reality? All those involved in the organization should have authentic involvement in identifying actions and setting the goals and strategies for the future. One way to involve everyone is to fold individual or committee goals into the goals of the organization. In other words, if the organization has a goal to increase membership by 10 percent in two years, then how will individuals support and contribute to achieving this goal?

How do you prevent your goals from becoming like New Year's resolutions – a great idea, but quickly abandoned? Goals must be measurable; they must answer the question of how much, by when, with how many? In this way you know your measure for success.

For instance, almost every membership-based organization wants to increase its membership size – but what is a “successful” increase? If we bring in one new member this year is that enough? Is this a successful measure of “increasing membership”? This may seem like a simplistic example, but often we just say, “improve the newsletter” or “offer more education opportunities” and then wonder why we don't achieve our goals.

Try being more specific and create excitement around how you will work toward success. This way, everyone can participate in the discussion of how they will contribute to the measurable goal. Make individual goal setting part of the process of envisioning and working toward future organizational goals.

What is the vision for your organization and how will you all work toward achieving it in the future?

- Engage others to share a conversation on the vision of the future.
- Identify what has to happen, change, or even cease to enable that future to become reality.
- Set clear, specific and measurable goals that help you define what successful achievement looks like.
- Incorporate individual goals into the organizational goal setting formula.
- Continuously review and celebrate successes on the way to achieving your vision.

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