

What Is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement is a document that states the current and future objectives of an organization. The vision statement is intended as a guide to help the organization make decisions that align with its philosophy and declared set of goals. It can be thought of as a roadmap to where the company wants to be within a certain timeframe. A vision statement is not only used in business, as nonprofits and governmental offices also use them to set goals.

That doesn't mean a vision statement is set in stone. They can be returned to, reviewed and revised as necessary. Though it is true that any changes should be minimal because a vision statement should have been given a great deal of thought before finalizing it.

A vision statement doesn't have any particular length. It can be as short as an aspirational sentence or pages long, depending on how much detail you want to give it. However long it is, the vision statement is formally written and is used as reference in company documents to serve as a guide for actions now and in the future.

What Is the Purpose of a Vision Statement?

A vision statement isn't a pie-in-the-sky document that collects the shared fantasies of the organization and then is filed away. It's a living document that is referred to as a lodestar to lead a company to its next innovation.

Some might think a vision statement is a waste of time, but it fills a vital need for the company. For instance, it sets a broader strategic plan for the organization. It's very easy to get bogged down on the day-to-day details of running an organization. The vision statement helps you plan long-term.

You can set whatever goals you want, but, without motivating your employees to achieve that goal, chances are you're not going to get anywhere. A motivational vision statement will both motivate existing employees and also drive talent to the company. They'll want to work at a place with vision.

A strong vision statement also works to help differentiate your company from others. All companies want to become profitable, but a company that can set an agenda to achieve that goal is going to set itself apart and inspire others. Use a vision statement to focus the efforts of the organization on the core competencies it needs to achieve its goals.

Best Practices for Writing a Vision Statement

There is no template to writing a vision statement, however a common structure for successful ones includes these traits:

- **Be Concise:** This is not the place to stuff a document with fluff statements. It should be simple, easy to read and cut to the essentials, so that it can be set to memory and be repeated accurately.
- **Be Clear:** A good rule of thumb for clarity is to focus on one primary goal, rather than trying to fill the document with a scattering of ideas. One clear objective is also easier to focus on and achieve.
- **Have a Time Horizon:** A time horizon is simply a fixed point in the future when you will achieve and evaluate your vision statement. Define that time.
- **Make it Future-Oriented:** Again, the vision statement is not what the company is presently engaged in but rather a future objective where the company plans to be.
- **Be Stable:** The vision statement is a long-term goal that should, ideally, not be affected by the market or technological changes.
- **Be Challenging:** That said, you don't want to be timid in setting your goals. Your objective shouldn't be too easy to achieve, but also it shouldn't be so unrealistic as to be discarded.
- **Be Abstract:** The vision statement should be general enough to capture the organization's interests and strategic direction.
- **Be Inspiring:** Live up to the title of the document, and create something that will rally the troops and be desirable as a goal for all those involved in the organization.

Examples of Great Vision Statements

These examples prove that a vision statement isn't a templated document that only differs from other organizations by the branded logo on top of it.

IKEA

"Our vision is to create a better everyday life for many people." That's aspirational, short and to the point. More than that, it sets the tone for the company and makes it clear that they're in the market to offer low-priced good furnishings that suit everyone's lifestyle.

Nike

"Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world. (*If you have a body, you are an athlete.)" Nobody cared much for sneakers in the past. They were just another piece of sports equipment. But Nike saw a

future that had not yet existed, in which they delivered products that inspired and motivated people. Notice how they include everyone as an athlete. It's clever and inclusive.

McDonald's

"To be the best quick service restaurant experience. Being the best means providing outstanding quality, service, cleanliness and value, so that we make every customer in every restaurant smile." The power of this vision is that it's constructed like a checklist. The word best is a word that requires definition, and McDonald's provides it with qualifiers, making the roadmap to success clearly marked with signposts.

Patagonia

"Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis." Talk about inspiring, Patagonia first outlines a [product vision](#) of what the best product means for them as a company. Then takes it one step further by stating they'll run their business to carry that environmental policy to a global level.

Oxfam

"A world without poverty." This may seem to contradict one of the traits of a good vision statement in that it feels unrealistic. But as challenging visions go, it's hard to see how anyone wouldn't be inspired and motivated by this short and powerful one.

CAHU Vision Statement: Every Californian has access to solutions for health, financial and retirement security with the services of insurance professionals.