

## Strategic Vision

Vision can be defined as ‘a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organisation.’ In developing the purpose of the organisation, there are two views on the value of developing a strategic vision for the future of an organisation:

- that it is irrelevant;
- that it has value.

Looking at the former, it may be that short-term needs of an organisation take priority. It may not be appropriate to develop a strategic vision for an organisation where the very survival of the firm is at stake, and where management efforts need to be focussed on how to keep the business going.

However, most companies will have a need for a strategic vision. It needs to be a challenging and imaginative picture of the future role and objectives of the organisation, significantly going beyond its current environment and competitive position. So, why develop a strategic vision.

There are five possible reasons:

1. Most organisations will compete for business and resources. They will have ambitions that go well beyond the immediate future and any full investigation of purpose needs to explore this vision.
2. The organisation’s mission and objectives may be stimulated in a positive way by the strategic options that are available from a new vision.
3. There may be strategic opportunities from exploring new development areas that go beyond the existing market boundaries and organisational resources.
4. Simple market and resource projections for the next few years will miss the opportunities opened up by a whole new range of possibilities. Extrapolating the current picture is unlikely to be sufficient.
5. Vision provides a desirable challenge for both senior and junior managers.



It is important to understand the difference between vision and purpose. Vision is the future picture, with purpose being the more immediate and broader role and tasks that the organisation chooses to define based on the current situation.

Five criteria have been suggested for judging the relevance and appropriateness of a vision statement:

- Foresight – What imagination and real vision is shown? Over what time frame?
- Breadth – How broad is the vision of the changes likely to take place in the industry? And of the forces that will lead to the changes?
- Uniqueness – Is there an element of uniqueness about the future? Will it cause our competitors to be surprised?
- Consensus – Is there some consensus within the organisation about the future? If not, there may be a problem if too many different visions are pursued at once.
- Actionability – Have the implications for current activity been considered? Is there basic agreement on the immediate steps required? Have the necessary core competencies and future market opportunities been identified?

Having reviewed and prepared the vision of the organisation, there are two important considerations which need to be reviewed:

- Do we have the technology and skills to meet this vision?
- What will this mean for market development? How can we take the opportunities as they arise?

A concluding thought. Vision has little meaning unless it can be successfully communicated to those working in the organisation., since these are the people that will have to realise it. Bear in mind, that not all staff will be supportive!