

If Your Vision Is to Be Number 1, How Will You Achieve It?

By Renate Rooney

After countless hours of discussion and working with your leadership team and key stakeholders within the organization, your team has defined the organization's vision, supporting core values and strategy.

You've defined the company's vision statement as "To be number one in the market we serve." Your team is feeling confident with the work they've done to date, but they may not realize that the real work has only just begun.

Leadership Role

It isn't enough for leaders to define the vision of an organization. Today's leaders need to participate actively to make their vision a reality. Before implementation can begin, it's important, as a leader, to understand your role.

Communicate

Executing strategy takes commitment from people at all levels. Leaders who can break down corporate strategy across the organization so it is directly relevant at each level – corporate, department, team and individual – help everyone to focus on the organization's key activities. Companies that recognize and embrace this level of collaboration strengthen their chances of success.

Leaders need to clearly articulate the company's vision in a way that motivates, inspires and

excites employees to commit to their individual work. The key to success is to communicate the vision through multiple means.

Various techniques organizations use to communicate their visions include:

- disseminating the vision in written, hard copy form
- using the company's intranet to communicate electronically
- delivering the message in speeches, interviews or press releases by the organization's leaders

It's important to remember that leaders don't communicate with words alone. Their actions speak volumes.

Example

One high-tech company we know took some powerful action to showcase its vision. Quarterly, the president and CEO and his senior leadership team visited each location within the organization to conduct town meetings. During these events, they met with employees to share the vision, solicit ideas and celebrate successes.

In addition, the president and his team periodically would spend a day assuming different roles within the organization, from working the helpdesk to taking customer calls to going on sales calls, to understand the challenges and opportunities employees faced on a day-to-day basis.



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As upper management walked the talk, they strengthened their connections with employees at all levels. They fostered a sense of camaraderie and accessibility and enhanced the company's ability to make its vision a reality.

Embrace Change

Business strategies and processes have lifecycles. When change occurs, success can quickly turn to failure. The need for change can come from many different avenues – from a competitor, a new market requirement or a significant environmental shift outside of your business model.

Even the best leaders can't predict every change, but the best organizations are able to adapt rapidly.

Example

One Maine company that ranks first in its marketplace always strives to do better. Employees continually ask, "How can we do better?" To that end, they consistently look at their customer processes from a cross-functional and customer perspective, making improvements that keep them number one in the market.

Plan for Implementation

Implementing the organization's strategies cannot happen without a detailed, prioritized action plan. Change takes time – you can't do it all at once. For a change implementation to be effective, you need to do the following:

- 1. Establish priorities.** You've established the organization's objectives, now prioritize them. Trying to do everything at once sets you up for failure.
- 2. Develop detailed action plans with accountabilities for each objective.** Translate your strategy into operational terms through specific action plans, programs, budgets and procedures. Implementation involves successfully identifying and allocating the required capital and human resources and executing the necessary organizational changes. People will be more successful if they understand the objective and their accountabilities, deliverables and timeframes.
- 3. Identify risks and develop contingency plans.** Every change has risk associated with it. As soon as you can identify risk, develop contingency plans. Don't be afraid to execute the contingencies.

4. Conduct stakeholder analysis.

Proactively seek the opinions of those affected by the change. Failing to recognize those who influence or are influenced by the change can have dire consequences to its successful implementation.

- 5. Measure, monitor and control.** Establish appropriate metrics. Whether the news is good or bad, measure the performance and results and act accordingly. Weigh the project priorities, evaluate the risks regularly and implement contingency plans when necessary.

Develop an Operating Model

An Operating Model is a tool used to define how the organization will implement its strategic or tactical plan into its operating environment. It encompasses all core work, competencies, tools and technologies, organizational structure and processes needed to execute the organization's strategies.

An effective Operating Model:

- Helps build capabilities and commitments to new ways of managing both change and operations work.
- Helps align business objectives.
- Helps an organization manage change that is vital to the enterprise, division or department.
- Creates a well-defined, structured organization that achieves its objectives by aligning human capital and business needs to stated goals.
- Allows the organization to be proactive and adapt to changes in technologies, in the marketplace, etc.
- Creates a framework that serves as an enabler of process-centric, customer- focused and

information-driven business models.

- Links organizational change with performance to create a framework for making change work.

Example

The management of a healthcare firm adopted a strategy to grow the business through acquisitions. The company's Information Technology group recognized the need for a solid integration plan and execution process. As such, they developed an Operating Model that identified M&A integration as a component of their core work. They then identified the competencies needed to support the core work, identified an optimal organizational structure and hired and trained accordingly.

Another component of their model development was to acquire tools and technology and create an integration process that enabled them to ingrate new businesses efficiently. Poor integration of the acquired organizations could have been fatal to the company's strategy and existence.

In the last few years, the company has acquired eight companies and successfully integrated them into the IT operations. The strategy worked because management translated it into practical terms designed to encourage the IT group to be innovative.

The Operating Model allowed them to align the company's tactics and strategies to meet its objectives, thus delivering value.

By communicating successfully, embracing change, developing implementation plans and creating Operating Models that make sense, your organization can take the loftiest of visions and transform them into a profitable, fulfilling reality.