

## The Checklist to Use When Drafting a Compelling Vision Statement

Vision is not the result of working to agreement or consensus. It will cause consensus.

The purpose of vision is to create the future. It is about a state of being at some point in the future.

Vision is conceptual, but it is also practical.

Risk is a natural and an unavoidable outgrowth of vision. It is not safe or easy. It is better for vision to be too great than not great enough.

Vision, when properly articulated, does not make people afraid or doubtful, instead it is magnetic and exciting, positive and inspiring.

The Vision Statement creates images of the desired future. It is unencumbered by how you will achieve it.

Vision is not constrained by time, it usually outlasts the visionary. You may not see it all the way to fruition.

Vision is specific, distinctive, comprehensive, customized, detailed and unique to a given organization.

Vision is the future focused and positive, it does not fix things that are currently wrong or bad in an organization or community.

*List compiled by Wayne Vick, President of Vick Associates (703-913-6513), and printed in the September, 1998 issue of The Facilitator.*

### **The most effective visions**

- are ambitious enough to force people out of comfortable routines
- aim in a general way at providing better and better products and services
- take advantage of fundamental trends, especially new technologies
- make no attempt to exploit anyone and thus have a certain moral power

*From: John P. Kotter, Leading Change. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. 1996. ISBN:0-87584-747-1. p. 79.*

When you've drafted your vision statement, ask yourselves these four questions:

1. Does the statement stretch, challenge or innovate?
2. Is the statement grounded in real-life examples; can it, in fact, be achieved?
3. Is it what you want? Are you passionate about it?
4. Is it stated in affirmative, bold, present tense terms, as if it were already happening?

*From: Quality Management to a Higher Power (QM2), Building On Your Strengths*

### **Characteristics of an Effective Mission Statement**

A good mission statement conveys:

- why it is important to do what you do
- how it enhances the well-being of others and improves the quality of life
- who benefits as a result of its work
- how the organization relates to its publics and communities
- what service it provides

If your mission statement takes an inward focus rather than an outward-looking stance, your organization will make decisions without relating itself to the external environment and without seeking information about its market niche.

Decisions in nonprofit organizations affect the public, cost money, and require substantial commitment of time by board members, staff, and volunteers. It is shortsighted to make decisions with little or no knowledge of the prospective audience or program recipient.

Most mission statements fall short because they simply list organizational activities and fail to identify a greater purpose or intended audience. They are uninspiring and vague, and many sound formulaic.

Check your mission statement frequently to gauge its relevance and clarity. Make sure it includes the two most critical elements: why the organization exists and for whom.

A well-crafted and well-used mission statement is a key governance and management tool.

*Adapted from: Gail Anderson, Editor. Museum Mission Statements: Building a Distinct Identity. Professional Practice Series. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums. 1998. ISBN: 0-931201-44-6.*

**ANNE W. ACKERSON**

Management, Development & Creative Services for Cultural Institutions  
1914 Burdett Avenue Troy, New York 12180  
Tel/Fax: 518-271-2455 Email: [anne@awackerson.com](mailto:anne@awackerson.com)