



Achieving radical and sustainable improvement in top line performance

## ***Vision Statements Revisited***



**April, 2015**

### **Lessons Learned:**

As we have shared in earlier newsletters, creating a vision statement is generally a waste of time unless the CEO and other C Suite members commit to use it. While there are many valiant attempts to create a compelling and uplifting statement, the tendency has been to pack too many ideas into the statement. Below are some of our observations from an examination of publicly available visions.

1. There is a tendency to combine and confuse the vision statement and the mission statement. Simply stated the vision is the answer to the question, what are we trying

to create? When it is described in as few words as possible, it creates a better result. Less is more. The vision statement is not measurable, that is the purpose of the mission statement. Whereas a vision is written for public consumption, a mission statement is typically written NOT for public consumption and answers the question, how big will we be, typically within the next 2-3 years? And a mission statement is measurable and contains key words that can be linked to measurable goals.

2. The best visions are inspirational, clear, concise and most important, memorable. If you have to think more than 5 seconds about your organization's vision, it's probably too long.

The best examples of well-written vision statements are simple, short, clear and concise.

The best examples include inspiring, dynamic, powerful and compelling words about the future.



Below are 10 example vision statements for non-profit organizations and 10 big for-profit organizations.

### Non-Profit:

1. **Human Rights Campaign:** "Equality for everyone."
2. **Oxfam:** "A just world without poverty."
3. **National Multiple Sclerosis Society:** "A World Free of MS."
4. **Alzheimer's Association:** "Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's."
5. **Habitat for Humanity:** "A world where everyone has a decent place to live."
6. **Make-A-Wish:** "Our vision is that people everywhere will share the power of a wish."
7. **The Nature Conservancy:** "Our vision is to leave a sustainable world for future generations."
8. **NPR:** "With its network of independent member stations, NPR is America's pre-eminent news institution."
9. **Boy Scouts of America:** "To prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law."

10. **VFW:** "Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country."

### For-Profit:

1. **Nike:** "To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world."
2. **Toys 'R' Us:** "Our vision is to put joy in kids' hearts and a smile on parents' faces."
3. **Disney:** "We create happiness by providing the finest in entertainment for people of all ages, everywhere."
4. **Amazon:** "To build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online."
5. **Avon:** "To be the company that best understands and satisfies the product, service and self-fulfillment needs of women - globally."
6. **Heinz:** "The World's Premier Food Company, Offering Nutritious, Superior Tasting Foods to People Everywhere."
7. **Ikea:** "Affordable solutions for better living."
8. **Starbucks:** "To establish Starbucks as the most recognized and respected brand in the world."
9. **Mattel:** "To be the premier Toy Brands - today and tomorrow."
10. **Health Net:** "To help people be healthy, secure and comfortable."

### So What?

It is interesting to note that the non-profit vision statements contain fewer words, probably because their purpose is more focused in its cause versus the opportunistic nature of for-profits.

What is your reaction to both lists? Do any jump out and are easier to recall?



### What Works?

**Test it.** Before announcing the vision statement internally across the organization, we suggest sharing it with a few focus groups and/or thought leaders. The idea is to have others in the organization who are not part of the crafting process see what you see, and if there is alignment you will have a shared vision that resonates throughout

the entire organization. In addition, be sure it will withstand the test of time. It should be enduring.

**Use it.** A vision statement is not simply for hanging in your lobby or putting on your internal letterhead. The vision is a tool that will help everyone, including the Board, govern towards creating greater impact in your marketplace. Our experience is that the more often the CEO and the senior leadership team refrains on the vision, the greater the likelihood that it will stick and become part of the fabric and culture of the organization to help guide individuals in their daily behavior. Use it or lose it.

A great habit to cultivate is to have this question asked for each and every decision that employees and the Board have to make. "How will this fit with our vision for the future and the market(s) we serve?"

### **What's Next?**

If you have a vision statement that you would like to share with us, we would be pleased to review it with you. If you would like to create one with your team, we would be pleased to help facilitate the crafting of a vision statement as part of the strategic planning process. If you have additional best practices we would welcome hearing those as well. You can reach us at [kappainfo@kappaeast.com](mailto:kappainfo@kappaeast.com).

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