



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
HILO

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Purpose: Information

Characteristics of a Good Vision Statement: integrated and paraphrased from various sources including the *Academic Leadership Journal*

Action required: SPC members are asked to:

- **Note** the information presented re: characteristics of a good vision statement, and bear these in mind when developing a draft vision statement for UH Hilo

1. Brevity

A good vision statement is succinct, which makes it easy for managers and leaders to communicate and employees to remember. Vision statements are less effective when they are too short (such as a one-sentence vision statement) or too long (such as a two or three page vision statement). But exactly how long should it be? The average vision statement is about 35 words, or two to three sentences. This length seems to be about right for effectively communicating the vision statement to employees. It is long enough to clearly describe the vision but not so long as to be difficult to remember. An example of a vision statement of typical length is the following:

We strive to bring pleasure to our customers by providing superior architectural woodwork at affordable prices. We want to make it possible for others to enjoy the beauty of high quality wood products. Toward that end, we build long-term relationships with suppliers, employ and reward skilled employees, maintain modern machinery and production methods, and minimize waste.

2. Clarity

A vision should unite the organization and provide a stable, transcendent goal. The vision should avoid using jargon and buzz words and should use understandable terminology. Writing concise sentences is another way of clarifying a vision statement.

3. Abstract and Challenging

An effective vision statement sets an abstract yet challenging goal. The goal should not be stated too concretely (e.g., “to build a new building”) but rather at a higher level of abstraction (e.g., “to create beautiful living spaces”). This allows it to be relevant to all employees, thus permitting it to guide their daily actions and decisions. Abstractness also provides for flexibility. The following vision statement does a good job at communicating an abstract, challenging goal in a manner that is both clear and succinct:

Our business vision is to make interior environments more beautiful through the valuable, careful, and efficient production of architectural millwork, thereby providing an enriched quality of life to all who view and use our work.

4. States the Organization’s Purpose

A vision should state a general idea of why the organization exists but should avoid including overly general statements such as to “develop new markets” or “to be the best”. These types of vision statements will not provide effective guidance to employees who are responsible for developing ideas for new products/services or addressing new competitors.

An effective vision statement should describe what the organization intends to achieve. The statement of purpose can include the organization’s current or desired products or services, its markets (industry, sub-industries, geographic locations, or customers) in which it intends to offer those products and services, and the impact that its products and services are intended to have.

5. Future Focused

Good vision statements are long-term, describing the organization’s desired end-state well into the future. Effective vision statements often describe on-going actions in which the organization will engage. The following is an example of a future-oriented vision statement:

Our goal is to achieve 100% customer satisfaction for every product that we sell. We will be relentless in the pursuit of that goal and will never vary from the principles of customer satisfaction: Quality, Value, Company Image.

6. Sets a Desirable Goal

A good vision statement inspires followers by setting a desirable goal. It may emphasize:

Fundamental values

We will nurture long-term partnerships with employees, customers, and suppliers built on consideration, trust, open communications, integrity, and professionalism.

A collective identity

We will strive to be the professional team of choice, offering quality engineering and technical services focused on customer satisfaction. We will provide a quality product, on time and within budget, which will exceed our customers' expectations.

The organization's uniqueness (its employees, customers, resources, etc.)

We will be known for the striking beauty of veneer cabinets that we will sell to the nation's most famous hotels.

Employees' worth and efficacy

We are determined to become a university whose people take pride in their accomplishments and their future potential.

7. Matches the Organization's Success Measures

Achievement

We will make production as efficient as possible while keeping our commitment to quality.

Affiliation

We will strive to always be courteous in dealing with our neighbors, visitors and customers.