



Creating a Shared Vision

The world is such a changeable place that you need to have a well-articulated long-term sense of where you're going, which gives you the base, the confidence, to take on whatever adaptability issues come along without losing your sense of direction. You've got to respond to the issues of the moment without losing that long-term sense

- Professor G. Morgan; *Riding the Waves of Change*

Creating a shared vision gives any group or organization a strong foundation or a base that can be built upon. Because visioning is conducted at the beginning of the planning process, it offers a useful mechanism for convening the community and building enthusiasm for the process, which then lays the groundwork for strategic planning and provides a common framework for subsequent phases.

In a recent survey, which drew from the experience of people working in co-op development, "Creating a shared vision of the future" was one of the top Rules for Success suggested by survey respondents.

Creating a shared vision:

- Inspires and mobilizes people into action
- Generates enthusiasm and kindles excitement about the direction
- Shows participants with conflicting viewpoints the common ground they share
- Provides the opportunity to think collaboratively
- Develops a common set of values
- Unites individuals with differing perspectives by focusing on common beliefs and values
- Clarifies what the group believes to be important
- Provides focus, purpose and direction for the strategic planning process, and assures congruence between beliefs, plans, and actions

Although there are many ways to facilitate a shared visioning process, there are elements that are similar to all.

Conducting the Shared Visioning Process

- Introduction: The facilitator gives an introduction to the visioning process.
- Review the visioning questions. Give participants time to reflect.
- Divide the group into pairs so one person has the opportunity to answer the questions and voice their ideas while the other person listens. Listeners can ask clarifying questions, but should not critique another's vision. The listener should take notes and capture the highlights of what they hear. When both participants have had the

opportunity to be both a visioning participant and a listener, the pair should review their notes and look for aspects or ideas that support or enhance their own vision.

- Have the participants form larger groups (6 to 8 depending on the overall size of the group). Designate a facilitator who will make sure all voices will be heard and report back to the entire group. Designate a group recorder to summarize the reflections, and capture key elements as they are being discussed. Each participant should present highlights of their partner's vision, and reveal anything that surprised them. **Share what you learned about the person you interviewed.**
- As a group, identify the key elements of your group's vision. Look for common themes and values. Make groupings of the shared core values. Name the groupings. Identify characteristics, dimensions, and values implicit in the vision.

Formatting the Vision Statements

The vision statements act as a stimulant that inspire and mobilize a group into action. They are not meant to be logical or rational but rather organic and emerge from the visioning process.

- Have participants collectively compose a vision statement that reflects all the groupings. This often works best if you divide up into small groups first. You can divide the groupings of core values up and ask each small group to work on just one core value or you can ask each small group can write something for each grouping of core values then bring it to the whole group to work on collectively.
- Vision statements:
 - Should express future ideas as if they already exist
 - Are based on elements that surfaced during the visioning process
 - Stretch the group beyond the familiar
 - Take the group where the participants of the visioning process want to go

Keeping the Vision Alive

It is the collective responsibility of the group to keep the vision alive. It is the base you will build upon. Use your shared vision to move you through the strategic planning process. Remember your vision during times of difficulties and let it remind you where you are going.

Sample Vision Statements

Farmer's Cooperative Creamery

To be the best company, not the biggest company, leading the way in producing quality milk, butter, and powder products as well as pursuing new product lines in the sustainable and organic markets. A company that helps provide owners and employees with the reality of meeting their families' needs and goals.

Oregon Woodland Co-op

We give our members professional timely service in marketing and managing their forestland; working with members to find the best price for their product.