

DEFINING YOUR VISION AND MISSION

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, you should be able to

- describe the difference between a vision and a mission
- use a vision and mission to create alignment and excitement, and
- run a workshop to define or iterate a vision and mission statement with your team

NOTE

You might see the words 'vision' and 'mission' used interchangeably. It can be confusing.

What's important is that you, your team and your leadership have the same definition.

VISION

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WHAT IS A VISION?

How would you describe a vision?

Can you remember a vision you've heard?

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Example from your current or a previous job

Example from a product or company you know well

WHAT IS A VISION?

A vision describes a bold, inspiring picture of the future we're aiming to bring about for users.

It's a vivid image of where we want to end up. It's ambitious and requires a leap of faith.

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It's future-focused and aspirational. It feels achievable but just outside our reach. It's user-centric rather than stating how the organisation will change.

Example

“Create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce.”

Whose vision is that?

Example

“Create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce.”

LinkedIn!

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It's LinkedIn!

Can you think of things LinkedIn might do to help them achieve this vision?
What products or features might they release?

WHAT MAKES A GOOD VISION

- A bold and inspiring outcome *for users*
- A clear, understandable future state
- Specific and actionable, not just ‘be the best’
- Aligns with organisational goals and strategy
- Acts as a guiding principle for decision-making

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The key purpose of a vision is to unite people to create a future we think should exist for users. It's the better world we're trying to create.

It needs to be clear and understandable. If people don't get why you'd want to create that future state, it's worth finding out what's confusing. It may help make the vision better, or expose a key bump in the road to avoid hitting.

It's best if it's actionable in some way, relevant to what you're doing. For example, Amazon doesn't just talk about providing the best buying experience for users, they talk about being the most customer-centric buying experience out there.

A good vision also defines some guardrails to stay within. You don't want to be a jack-of-all-trades, you want to define some boundaries to stay within.

THE VISION TEST



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SIMON SINEK – THE VISION TEST

*What does Simon
say makes a good
vision?*

*Does the vision for
our platform fit the
Vision Test?*

IT'S JUST A STORY, IN A SENTENCE

A vision is a story we tell ourselves, and each other, to remember what we're heading and why.

Writing a vision is a creative act that helps you and your team see the future world you could bring about.

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I've done that sort of creative exercise before. I've sat down to try and imagine what the world might be like for users 10 years in the future. It can be really useful trying to describe that world.

If you can imagine it, you can create it.

QUESTIONS?

We'll move on to Mission next...

MISSION

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WHAT IS A MISSION?

How would you describe a mission?

Can you remember a mission you've heard?

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Example from your current or a previous job

Example from a product or company you know well

WHAT IS A MISSION?

A mission is a stake in the ground, a bold step along the way to fulfilling our vision.

It tells us a specific destination, what's better, who for, and how we might get there.

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So this is really about how we move forward and where we move to. If a vision is over the horizon, a mission is a point on the horizon.

We also want to make some claims about what will be better, who for, and by how much. It's a more tangible end state.

Example

“We’re going to land people on Mars by 2025 by manufacturing and launching advanced rockets and spacecrafts”

Whose mission is that?

Example

“We’re going to land people on Mars by 2025 by manufacturing and launching advanced rockets and spacecrafts”

SpaceX!

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That’s Elon Musk. Think it’s from 2020. Obviously they haven’t got to Mars yet!

But it’s good to have some determination, to have a specific mission to rally around.

What other aspects might make it a good mission?

WHAT MAKES A GOOD MISSION

- A tangible point on the horizon
- Describes what's changed, for who, by how much
- Talks about how we might get there
- A step towards fulfilling our vision

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If a vision is off in the future, a mission is a tangible point on the horizon we can start moving towards.

It describes what's changed, for who, and by how much. That's what makes it tangible and understandable, we can think about how to get there.

A good mission helps your team start thinking about how to get there too. It's not a journey into the complete unknown, it feels achievable, within reach, like they could see how to get there.

IT'S JUST A STORY (AGAIN)

Like a vision, a mission is also a story we tell ourselves. It tells us where we're going next and how we'll get there.

Writing a mission is a creative act that brings a distant future closer into range. It's less overwhelming and feels more achievable.

EXAMPLE: GITLAB

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Let's look at an example to see how it fits together.

NOTE

This is one of those times you will see the words 'vision' and 'mission' used interchangeably.

The key point is about cadence.

GITLAB

Our mission is on a 30-year cadence. It is the inspiration for our company vision, which is on a 10-year cadence.

Our vision here is reflected in our company strategy, which is on a 3-year cadence.

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Some times you'll see people talk about vision being 2 to 5 years, mission being 10 years, and strategy a lot smaller.

Again, the specific numbers don't matter, as long as you, your teams and your leadership all have the same understanding.

OUR TIME HORIZONS

Vision: 7 to 10 years

Mission: 3 to 5 years (ish)

Strategy: 1 to 2 years

Not official, just a useful thinking device.

QUESTIONS?

We'll cover exercises next...

EXERCISES

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Coming shortly...

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THANK YOU!

Questions?

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