



01 Vision, Mission, Goals

Hamel and Prahalad, prolific business authors and academics, said in one of their publications:

If we took the mission statements of 100 large industrial companies, mixed them up while everyone was asleep and reassigned them at random, would anyone wake up tomorrow and cry 'My gosh, where has our mission statement gone?'

On the other hand, would that be true of smaller companies? How many smaller companies have a mission statement anyway? Not many, that's for sure, which is a pity because it's the smaller companies who stand to gain the most.

First things first, though. A Mission statement 'don't mean a thing if it ain't got that Vision swing'.

Vision Statements

The value of expressing a Vision is that the process of formulating it either reveals or creates the underlying driving force behind the enterprise. It speaks of the desired quality of relationship between the business and its customers, a differentiator between the business and its competitors, and an inspiration to all who are involved in it.

The Vision in question is that of the business owner. In close companies, it should be shared by all of the board, and in any case by key employees. By explaining the Vision to staff and taking careful steps to ensure that they know that they are stakeholders too, everyone in the organisation has a sense of purpose and a referential framework within which to align their performance.

The vision, which should be written down, is how the owner wants their business to be. For example, they may want to be seen as the most reliable supplier of high-

quality widgets in the UK. The Vision is company-focussed.

Mission Statements

The usefulness of the Mission statement is that it defines in high level terms *how* the vision is to be realised. It continues the development of the shared sense of purpose started by the Vision, and defines the values and principles that drive the business. Here are some examples of larger companies' missions:

GlaxoSmithKline: *to improve the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer.*

Ogilvy & Mather: *to be the most valued by those who most value brands.*

Amazon: *to be the earth's most customer centric company.*

Note that the first didn't mention drugs, the second didn't refer to advertising and the third didn't mention books, CDs and the rest.

Again, the mission statement should be committed to paper and employees encouraged to take ownership of it. The Mission is mainly for the benefit of internal customers, explaining why the Vision matters to them.

In formulating the Vision and Mission, it is fairly usual for one to run into the other and some confusion about which is which to arise. This actually doesn't matter too much, though, as long as the strategic development of the business is helped.

Taken together, the Vision and Mission must bring focus and clarity to the owner's aspirations for the future of the business, inspire staff to work towards that future and guide them in their actions.



Transforming Business Performance

Goals

Work done on the Vision and Mission statements provides the springboard to the formulation of sensible Goals at a company and individual level. Whereas the Vision is about the future, with no time constraint, company Goals can be aligned with the timescale of the Mission, whilst individual Goals are very much about the present and immediate future, typically covering periods up to and including the next 12 months. They are steps which, when taken successfully, fulfil the aspirations of the company Goals, Mission and Vision almost as a by-product.

Company Goals are formulated as a result of work done on Strategy (discussed in the next paper in the series). How far down an organisation individual Goals should be set would depend upon the circumstances. Goals at different levels within the business should be 'nested'. What that means is that the Goals of, for example, the sales people should together contribute upwards to those of the sales director, which in turn should be aligned with those of other departments or functions.

For some time the discipline of framing SMART goals has been adopted across industry:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time-bound

Additionally it is recommended that goals are also drafted to have these attributes:

- Stated in the positive
- Within the control of the owner of the goal
- Definition of what success will look like
- Identification of resources needed
- Identification of the first steps to be taken

And of course, all Goals must be clearly relevant to the Vision and Mission.

In Summary

You've heard the saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. In our context, each step on that journey is a Goal, the journey is the Mission and the destination is the Vision.

Before setting a horse at a jump, the rider has to 'collect' it – in other words, ensure that his mount is focussed on the challenge ahead, aware what is to be expected of it, given the opportunity to judge the distance, and steady itself to get its explosive sprint securely supported and not wrong-footed.

Taking the time to develop and establish Vision, Mission and Goals does the same job for the business.

As an example, here's an extract of an organisation's Vision, Mission and Goals:

Vision

To inspire, engage and educate people on the issues, practices and enjoyment surrounding food and cooking; through managing, valuing and celebrating culinary and cultural diversity and history.

Mission

(the Company) will harness people's enthusiasm for food and encourage them to think about the food they eat from its origins, production, distribution and cooking. People will be introduced to food and cooking from around the world alongside celebrating the contribution diverse communities have made to British food culture.

Goals

Develop and implement a range of educational programmes to engage people at all stages of their learning in culinary history and diversity through out-reach, teacher information packs and other means.
Hold events that will create excitement, enjoyment and increase awareness of food.

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