



Creating an organisational vision statement





Dissatisfaction and discouragement are not caused by the absence of things but the absence of vision.

ANONYMOUS

What's it all about?

Having a strong vision statement can be a good mechanism for giving your organisation consistency, focus and direction. There is often confusion between vision and mission statements, or they are simply used interchangeably. There is no need to get hung up on the language as long as you are clear about how you use the terminology. Accepted practice suggests your vision statement should answer the question 'what will we become?' It should help you describe the difference you want to make in the world. Whereas your mission statement should answer the question 'what do we do?'

- There are some basic ground rules for writing a compelling vision statement:
- Keep it short – ideally, no more than two sentences
- Keep it simple
- Make it relevant
- It should be inspiring and ambitious
- It should embody your organisational values and culture
- Involve your team, including your governing body, and stakeholders (where appropriate)

What's it for?

This tool will help you to create or review your organisational vision statement.

Going through this process will allow you to:

- Understand and articulate your ambitions
- Clarify what is important to you as an organisation
- Ensure your strategies are aligned with your vision
- Define what is distinctive about what your organisation stands for and does

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Using the tool

This tool will take you through five steps:

1. Developing
2. Formulating
3. Testing
4. Refining
5. Announcing

Developing:

In developing your vision statement there are five steps you can work through to start the process:

1. Brainstorm as many words as you can think of that describe your organisation
2. Now brainstorm words that describe what makes you successful at what you do
3. If you have an existing vision statement this is a good time to revisit it:
 - a. What still works about the statement?
 - b. How well did the organisation work towards that vision?
 - c. Did everyone understand it?
 - d. What needs to change?
4. Collect as many other vision statements as you can find – they can be from any sector. In fact, the more diverse they are the better
5. Review the vision statements you have found:
 - a. Which ones work well?
 - b. What makes them work for you?
 - c. Which ones do you like least?
 - d. What puts you off these statements?

Formulating:

Taking your various words clouds, and the vision statements that appeal to you start assembling some sentences. Do not worry about how they flow or whether they make sense, they can just be assemblages of words at this point. You can fine tune later.

Ideally, work with a group and write up your sentences in a way that they can be seen by everyone. Take a note of any discussion points, capture what is resonating and what is being rejected? Use your values as a reference point, are they reflected in what everyone is writing?

If you have time, leave these assemblages up on a wall and live with them for a few days, let the discussion percolate for a while. You could ask people to vote on their favourites over the next week.

When you revisit the sentences try selecting your top three, this can be by discussion, or if you have not already done it, ask people to vote for their top three. Taking your shortlist, highlight the aspects that you think are accurate and that inspire you.

Now the hard work really starts! Using all you have done so far, draft your first Vision statement/s. You might want to go with a few alternatives at this point. Try and produce a sentence that creates a clear image of what you are aiming for, e.g.

- Sightsavers: Our vision is of a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes, and where people with disabilities can participate equally in society.
- Oxfam: to help create lasting solutions to the injustice of poverty.
- Wellcome Trust: supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone.

Testing:

Once you have something you think is getting close to what you want, open the discussion up. Ideally, by this point you will have three or four draft versions. Share these with your team and any relevant stakeholders. You could run focus group type events to gauge people's responses.

Collate the responses and revise your statements to produce a final draft.

Refining:

Once you've got a statement you think you are happy with take it through one last editing process. Ask yourself:

1. Does it resonate?

2. Is it memorable?
3. Is it understandable?
4. Is it all show and no substance?
5. Is it distinctive?
6. Is it a stretch but still realistic in outlook?
7. How will you report against it?

It is also worth looking out for the common vision pitfalls:

1. Is it too generic? A good test for this is to insert the name of another organisation in your sector into the statement and see if it would still apply
2. Is it trying to please everyone?
3. Does it overpromise or overreach - has lost touch with reality?
4. Is it solely aimed at your external stakeholders?

Announcing

This is the step where you take your shiny new vision public. Think about your audiences and how you want to announce it. You may want to keep it low key or you may decide on a launch event.

Consider how you want to share it, what formats and channels will you use? Try not to confine yourself to purely written versions. You may want to create a video, use Tik Tok, create some infographics etc.

Give thought to how you will share it with your team. Go beyond a simple 'presentation,' consider interactive events, or relevant training sessions. Help them explore what the vision means in practice and how they can contribute.

What Next?

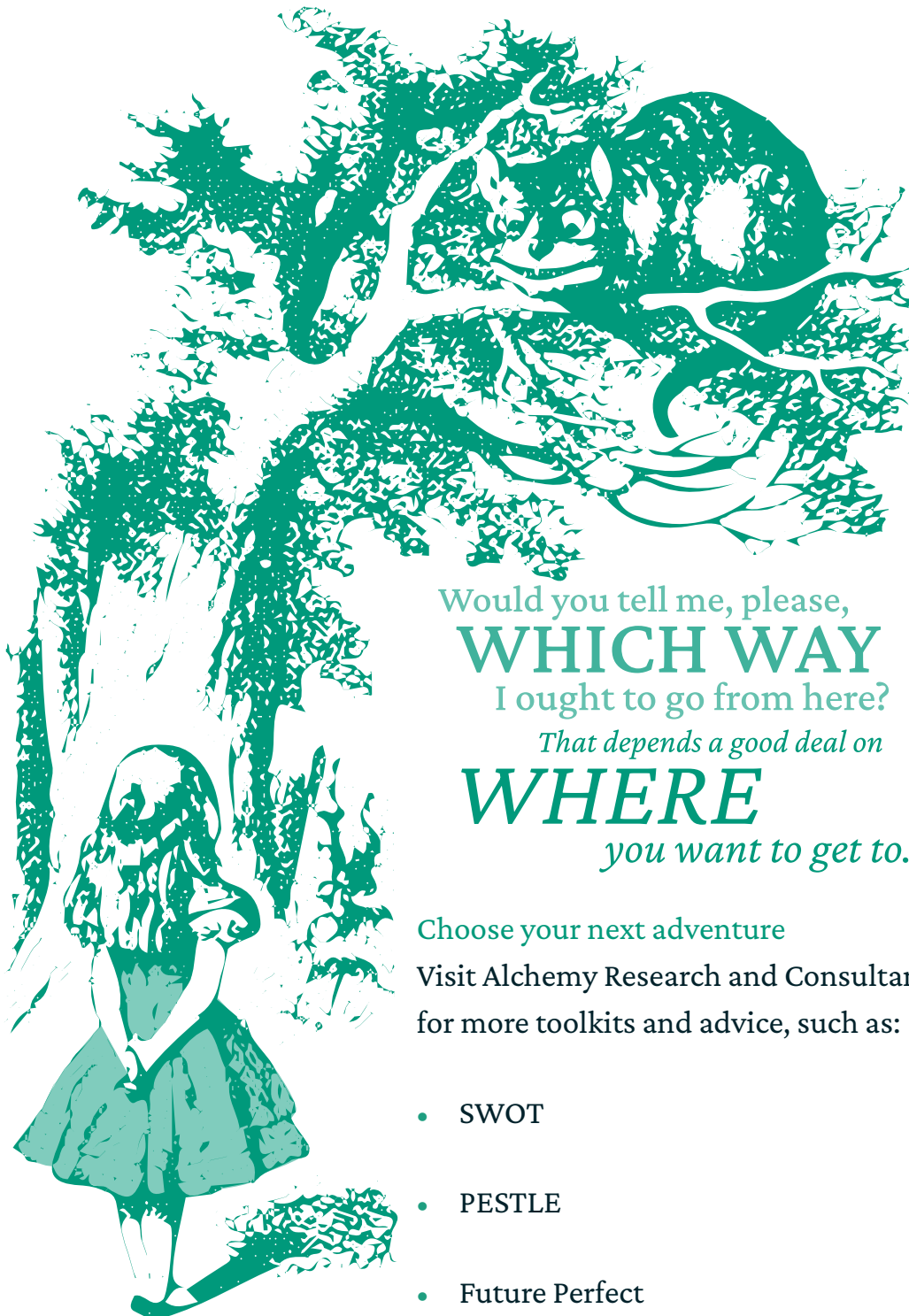
After the vision statement has been released keep a note of how people respond. Has it been well received? Do people understand your ambition? Is the team committed to it? Think about how you will use it to inform your evaluation frameworks, consider how you will know whether you are moving toward your vision.

Quick tips

- Try not to make it a top-down exercise, you will get more buy in and understanding if people are involved at all levels of the organisation
- Consider setting up a time limited visioning group drawn from all levels of the organisation to lead the exercise
- Allow time for the development process, try not to let it be a rush job driven by a funding deadline
- Be honest in your evaluation of past successes and what describes you as an organisation - check your assumptions with some external allies



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supporting people to understand change in action.



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I ought to go from here?
That depends a good deal on
WHERE
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