

DEVELOPING VISION: QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR EACH STAGE.



These stages offer a comprehensive menu which can be drawn from to guide you from the start of a vision journey to seeing it put into practice effectively. How much is helpful will depend upon your situation and context, so it may well not be necessary to engage with every suggestion. Most of the suggestions are applicable to any organisation, but the more church-specific are highlighted with a **+**

The stages are:

FORMING A VISION TEAM

**SETTING-UP THE PROCESS:
QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM TO ASK**

SEEING **WHAT IS:
LISTENING AND BEING REMINDED**

**STARTING TO FORM A VISION:
DREAMING OF **WHAT COULD BE.****

**WRITING THE VISION DOWN: **WHAT
WILL BE.** QUESTIONS FOR THOSE
CRAFTING STATEMENTS.**

**COMMUNICATING, TESTING AND
STRENGTHENING THE VISION**

**DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY FOR
PUTTING THE VISION INTO
PRACTICE**

MAKING THE VISION STICK



1. FORMING A VISION TEAM

Who are the people who might oversee the process?
Do we have a good mix of right and left brained people, between imaginative and data-analysing ways of thinking?
Do we have a mix of those can help shape the vision, refine it or keep supportive watch over the community/organization in the process of change?

✚ How much does our team reflect the five "voices" of the picture of the church in Ephesians 4?

2. SETTING-UP THE PROCESS QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM TO ASK ITSELF

Is this the right time for this process?
Would creating a vision and/or joining a learning community be the best way forward?
How formal or informal should this be?
At what point should we announce it to the whole organization?
How many people should be involved in developing it?
How might we communicate a sense of urgency or the need for having a vision process at this stage?
How far ahead are we looking?
How long shall we spend on this?
Do we have clarity on the meaning of the different terms we are using? (Vision, mission, values, strategy etc.)

✚ How will this process be rooted in prayer and listening to God?

3. SEEING WHAT IS LISTENING AND BEING REMINDED

What will help us reflect on our timeless identity and purpose?
Does this need to be done before or during the vision process?
What will help us to be reminded of who we are called to be (or who we aspire to be), what we are called to do (what has to happen to get our job done) and what we value?
How can we be reminded of the story of our particular organization in our place and our time? (Why did we start? How have we changed? What have we learnt?)

✚ What do we need to remain faithful to in the story God is writing in and through us?)

Activities: Opportunities to share together, research into the history of the organization and area.

Sermons on the nature of church and God's mission across all time, Scripture studies.

✚ **Listening to God.** How are we giving people opportunities to pray and feedback any insights along the way?

Listening to others. How can we ask people who are already invested in our organization these questions: "What are our current opportunities/challenges?" or "What needs fixing around us?" or "What gifts, passions or resources do you/we have?" or "What do you think we stand for?" When and how would it be good to ask about future-orientated questions such as: "What would you like to see in....years' time?"
What will help us approach a vision as a way to be fruitful, rather than as way to ensure our survival?

✚ How might we live into God's preferred future (or in whatever language works)?

If we already have a vision:

Are we sensing that this is a time reaffirming this original vision, but recognising that in order to be faithful to it some practices need to be given fresh emphasis, adjusted or stopped? Or does the vision itself need to be redrawn, and our current activities need to be re-examined? Or have we moved so far from the original vision that it needs to be brought to an end in order for something new, which can faithfully express the vision, to come into existence?



Listening to our context. Where can we get perspectives that aren't at the centre of our organization?

Whose perspective might we be in danger of missing?

Who might be natural partners we could come alongside?

✝ Where is God already at work and how can we join in? or
What does God want for our area?

Activities: Group conversations, informal conversations, gathering statistics from local organisations or questionnaires.

4. STARTING TO FORM A VISION DREAMING OF WHAT COULD BE.

Questions and activities to help those formulating vision:

If resources were unlimited what would we like to see in ...years' time?

What will have improved in...years if we are faithful to our calling...What problem(s) do we want to see addressed for the greater good?

What are our hopes and dreams?

Who and what are we inspiring to change?

Who will draft our statements?

✝ How might we live into God's preferred future (or in whatever language works)?

What gaps are there between where we are now and where God would like us to be?

Activities: Writing a letter to a friend five years from now describing what has been happening in the organization and sharing it.

Describing the story of the organization thus far in terms of book chapter headings. Having done that people could be invited, alone or in groups, to write the chapter headings for the next few years.

Using pictures from magazines, or words from newspapers, and getting people to choose them and talk about them in relation to vision.

Describing the future of your organization as a kind of animal and exploring why.

✝ Picking a biblical story which says something about future vision and exploring why.

Getting people to brainstorm future vision under the headings "Up" "In" or "Out".

5. WRITING THE VISION DOWN: WHAT WILL BE QUESTIONS FOR CRAFTING STATEMENTS

As we write our statements in general terms do they:

Answer the question, "If someone new was visiting what would they see as our priorities?"

Focus on being as specific and local as possible?

Help us take responsibility for the life we have been given?

Give us a clear rationale for determining priorities?

Prevent us from being pulled in too many directions by making clear what we are called to do, but also what we are not called to do?

Respond to the issues that need addressing?

Communicate through clear language so that they are able to be understood by everyone — putting into words what the group will be doing or look like in clear terms?

More specifically:

The vision:

Does it express the main thing(s)?

Is it timeless, inspiring, compelling and memorable?

Does it reflect who we will be/are becoming and/or how we want to see the world impacted? Does it summarize why we exist as a group?

Is it more attractive than the present?

Is it in the future tense ("To...." or, "This is who we are becoming...")?

✝ Does it express God's preferred future for us?

The mission:

Is it focused on what we will do to get to the vision?

Are the actions laid out in the mission straightforward and easily understood, reflecting that it is better to do a few things well?

Are they feasible within the time frame or the vision - even if they require a step of faith and commitment to new resources?

Does it outline what must happen for our "job" to be done?

Is it succinct, only stating the main things that are done?

Does it address these questions: What do we do? Whom do we serve? Whom do we work with?

✝ Are they God-dependent aims?

Values:

Are they focussed on the way the vision will be done?
Do they emphasise those we are more likely to forget?
Are they all the things we will not compromise on, or sacrifice, in order to get to the vision?
Are they memorable and easily communicable?

6. COMMUNICATING TESTING AND STRENGTHENING THE VISION

Once the first draft is in place (or after any strategic steps have been identified – see below) those leading the process might want to ask these questions:

Can we personally give ourselves to living out this vision?
How do we start to breathe life into the vision by starting to embody it for the community?
How do we test the vision and get feedback? Who needs to be involved and at what level?
What are the different ways in which this could be communicated publicly – visual, spoken, written?
Where are we giving opportunities for dialogue to occur?
How are we listening with empathy and giving individual attention where needed?
How can we ensure people are able to engage with the vision in multiple ways?
Are we offering as much information to as many people as possible to ensure people can understand?
Who might be in the late majority who would appreciate being consulted personally? Which of our innovators or early adopters might be good at influencing in this way?
How can we anticipate anxieties and what might help? What do we need to do in order to continue to offer confident leadership?

7. DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

FOR PUTTING THE VISION INTO PRACTICE

Whether or not the more detailed work of how to put the vision into practice is drafted at the same time as the vision or as a separate stage after the vision has been agreed will depend on the size of the organization. Those drawing up the strategy might want to use these questions:

Which of our current activities help move us towards this vision? Which might block it?
What, in measurable ways, are the goals which are the real things we want to see as fruit of the vision?
How long do we think they might need?
How can we organise ourselves in roles or teams to make these happen?
Who will be responsible for making sure different activities happen?
What resources we will need to carry them out in terms of finance and people?
Is the strategy accessible and able to be easily understood by those who need to?

8. MAKING THE VISION STICK

How and how often will we help each other by reviewing, supporting and offering accountability for the vision?
If a previous activity needs to close, how do we end it well through celebration and thanks?
How can we give the opportunity for people to get involved?
How are we noticing the fruits of the vision?
How can we continue to unpack what this vision means in terms of real changes?
How can we create markers for different stages of the vision which will help the community notice these fruits, celebrate moving forward and thank those involved?

And finally...

When do we need to revisit the vision in order to be doing it in a time of fruitfulness, rather than a reaction to decline?

WHAT WILL BE