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## What Is a Vision Statement?



Sean Peek, Business Ownership Insider and Senior Analyst

Writing a vision statement for your business can be challenging because it must define your company, values and future goals. While many established companies focus on their [mission statement](#), a vision statement is a valuable tool for inspiring your team and forging a corporate identity.

We'll explore vision statements and their importance, as well as offer tools and best practices for crafting an inspiring vision statement that powers your growth strategy.

### What is a vision statement?

A vision statement is a written declaration clarifying your business's meaning and purpose for stakeholders, especially employees. It describes the desired long-term result of your company's efforts. For example, an early Microsoft vision statement was

“a computer on every desk and in every home.”

“A company vision statement reveals, at the highest levels, what an organization most hopes to be and achieve in the long term,” said Katie Trauth Taylor, owner and CEO of Untold Content, a writing consultancy. “It serves a somewhat lofty purpose – to harness all the company’s foresight into one impactful statement.”

A vision statement matters because it outlines the common goal of everyone in the company. Businesses that are working toward a higher aspiration are more appealing to current and future employees.

A vision statement can affect a company’s long-term success, so take the time to craft one that synthesizes your ambition and mobilizes your staff.

## Did You Know?



A vision statement can increase [employee engagement](#) while making it easier to [hire new employees for a cultural fit](#).

## What’s the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement?

Mission statements are based in the present and convey to stakeholders and community members why a business exists and where it currently stands. Vision statements are future-based, and they are meant to inspire and give direction to employees.

“The vision is about your goals for the future and how you will get there, whereas the mission is about where you are now and why you exist,” said Paige Arnof-Fenn, founder

and CEO of Mavens & Moguls, a global strategic marketing consulting firm. “The vision should motivate the team to make a difference and be part of something bigger than themselves.”

Mission statements and vision statements are both crucial for [building a brand](#). “While a mission statement focuses on the purpose of the brand, the vision statement looks to the fulfillment of that purpose,” said Jessica Honard, co-CEO of North Star Messaging + Strategy, a copywriting and messaging firm that serves entrepreneurs.

Although mission and vision statements should be core elements of your organization, a vision statement should serve as your company’s guiding light.

“A vision is aspiration; a mission is actionable,” said Jamie Falkowski, chief creative officer at marketing and communications company Day One Agency.

Creating the perfect vision statement may seem overwhelming, but it doesn’t have to be. Follow these suggestions and best practices when crafting your vision statement.

## **Determine who will shape your vision.**

The first step in writing a vision statement is determining who will craft it. In a small business, you may be able to ask everyone for their insight. In a larger operation, you may need to be more selective while still capturing a range of employee voices.

## **Evaluate your company’s published materials.**

Your company likely already has published goals and established values in its [employee handbook](#), marketing materials and other publications. Use this information to guide your work, suggested Alison Brehme, an author and content, marketing and media strategist.

“A company’s mission, purpose, goals and values are all involved in the creation of a company vision,” Brehme said. “Weave these concepts and beliefs into your vision statement.”

## Hold workshops to brainstorm your vision.

Brandon Shockley, former vice president of market research at branding and marketing firm 160over90 and now head of investor research and insights at Vanguard, recommended hosting workshops with key stakeholders representing a cross-section of your organization. Then, he said, assemble teams and use [collaboration tools](#) to create alternate versions of the statement, and gather [employee feedback](#) about how each version resonates.

## Get individual input.

Falkowski also suggested conducting interviews with individual stakeholders to encourage honest feedback. Employees can identify common themes, describe the organization's future in words or use [visual branding](#) tools as a basis for the vision statement.

## Check out competitors' vision statements.

Look at your competitors' vision statements to determine how you can differentiate your business from theirs. [Related article: [How to Do a Competitive Analysis](#)]

## Keep it short but meaningful.

A vision statement should be concise – no longer than a sentence or two. You want your entire organization to be able to repeat it quickly and, more importantly, understand it. However, a vision statement must be more than a catchy tagline.

“[It] can be smart and memorable, but this is for your team and culture, not for selling a specific product,” Falkowski said.

## Create a longer version for leadership's eyes only.

Don't fret if you feel that a short vision statement doesn't fully express the intricacies of your vision. You can create a longer version, but it should not be the one you broadcast

to the world.

“Let’s be honest – most business leaders, not to mention boards of directors, won’t be able to sum up their vision in a pithy sentence or two. That’s OK,” said Shannon DeJong, owner of brand agency House of Who. “Have a full-length version of your vision for the leadership’s eyes only. Think of the long version as your reference guide to why you’re in business in the first place.”

## Map out your business’s biggest goals.

When you’re crafting your vision statement, start by mapping out your business’s most audacious goals, Taylor suggested. “Reviewing your long-term goals in a collaborative setting will help you then zoom out on what your organization and the world will look like if you achieve them. That zoomed-out view of your success is really the heart of your vision statement.”

## Consider your company’s potential global impact.

Ask questions that reflect your business’s eventual scale and impact, Honard advised. “Once you’ve answered these questions, you’ve created a roadmap between your present and your future.”

These are a few of the questions Honard uses in guiding clients to identify their vision statement:

- What ultimate impact do I want my brand to have on my community, my industry or the world?
- In what way will my brand ultimately interact with customers and clients?
- What will the culture of my business look like, and how will that play out in employees’ lives?

## Dream big.

Don’t be afraid to dream big once you gather all the information and get down to

writing. Don't worry about practicality for now; what initially looks impossible may be achieved down the road with the right team and technologies. Work on shaping a vision statement that reflects the specific nature of your business and its aspirations.

## Be daring, not generic.

Shockley said there's nothing wrong with a vision statement that is daring, distinct or even disagreeable. "If a vision statement sets out a generic goal that anyone can agree with, it is likely to produce mediocre results. A goal like 'delivering an exceptional experience' applies equally to a hospital, bank or fitness club."

## Consider creating a brand vision board.

If you're interested in taking your vision one step further, create a brand vision board, Taylor suggested. A vision board includes your company's tagline, a "who we are" statement, a "what we do" section, a business vision statement, an overview of your ideal clients, client pain points, your content mission statement, advertising, products and SEO keywords.

"A vision board serves as a one-page [business plan](#) that anyone in a company can reference quickly to remember the key concepts that drive the work," Taylor said.

## Quick tips for your vision statement

Here's a quick breakdown of what to do when formalizing your vision statement:

- Project five to 10 years into the future.
- Dream big, and focus on success.
- Use the present tense.
- Use clear, concise, jargon-free language.
- Infuse it with passion, and make it inspiring.
- Align it with your business values and goals.

• Create a plan to communicate your vision statement to your employees.

- Prepare to commit time and resources to the vision you establish.

Your completed vision statement should offer a clear idea of your company's path forward. Honard said many of her clients have used their vision statements to direct their overall plans for the future. For example, they've adopted new marketing initiatives to move them closer to their vision, pivoted their focus to clearly reflect their desired outcome, or doubled down on one particular aspect of their brand that is working to serve their vision.

## Tip



When you're [setting business goals](#) and taking actionable steps to achieve them, take time to visualize what your goal achievement will look like.

## What to avoid when writing a vision statement

- Don't mix up your mission statement and vision statement. Mission statements are generally easier to write because they reflect what you're doing now. Remember, a mission statement is what you are working to accomplish today, while a vision statement is what you want to accomplish in the future.
- Don't overthink your wording. One of the hardest parts of creating a vision statement is coming up with the right wording. You may find yourself endlessly rewriting and fretting about getting it right. Does this sentence or two define your values and shine a light on your corporate identity without sounding too vague? Don't get lost in the pressure of perfect wording; a specific and unique vision statement is a good place to begin distinguishing your business from the rest of the industry.

## How to use your vision statement

Determine where your vision statement will appear and what role it will serve in your organization. This will make the process more than an intellectual exercise, Shockley said. It's pointless to hang a vision statement in the lobby or promote it via your [business's social media](#) channels if you never genuinely integrate it into your [company culture](#).

"The vision business statement should be thought of as part of your strategic plan," Shockley said. "It is an internal communications tool that helps align and inspire your team to reach the company's goals."

As such, you should view a vision statement as a living document that will be revisited and revised. Most importantly, it must speak directly to your employees.

"If your employees don't buy into the vision, you'll never be able to carry it out," said Keri Lindenmuth, director of marketing with the Kyle David Group, a web and tech solutions provider. "The vision statement should be something your employees believe in. Only then will they make decisions and take actions that reflect your business's vision."

### Tip



Help employees take ownership of the vision by asking them to identify ways they could incorporate the vision statement into their daily jobs. Reward employees with [cool job perks](#) when you catch them exemplifying the vision.

## 20 examples of inspiring vision statements



Some memorable and distinct vision statements may be all the inspiration you need to write your own. Here are some of the best examples of inspiring vision statements:

1. Amazon: “Our vision is to be earth’s most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.”
2. Ben & Jerry’s: “Making the best ice cream in the nicest possible way.”
3. Caterpillar: “Our vision is a world in which all people’s basic needs – such as shelter, clean water, sanitation, food, and reliable power – are fulfilled in an environmentally sustainable way, and a company that improves the quality of the environment and the communities where we live and work.”
4. Cradles to Crayons: “Provides children from birth through age 12, living in homeless or low-income situations, with the essential items they need to thrive – at home, at school, and at play.”
5. Google: “To provide access to the world’s information in one click.”
6. Habitat for Humanity: “A world where everyone has a decent place to live.”
7. Hilton Hotels & Resorts: “To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality by delivering exceptional experiences – every hotel, every guest, every time.”
8. IKEA: “To create a better everyday life for the many people.”
9. Intel: “If it’s smart and connected, it’s best with Intel.”
10. LinkedIn: “Create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce.”
11. Oxfam: “To be a self-organized people actively creating a just democratic and sustainable world where power and resources are shared, everyone lives in dignity, and poverty and inequality are no more.”
12. Patagonia: “Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.”
13. Prezi: “To reinvent how people share knowledge, tell stories, and inspire their audiences to act.”
14. Samsung: “Shape the future with innovation and intelligence.”
15. Southwest Airlines: “To become the world’s most loved, most flown and most profitable airline.”
16. Sweetgreen: “To inspire healthier communities by connecting people to real food.”

17. TED: “We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives, and, ultimately, the world.”
18. Walgreens: “To be America’s most-loved pharmacy-led health, well-being and beauty company.”
19. Warby Parker: “We believe that buying glasses should be easy and fun.”
20. Wyeth: “Our vision is to lead the way to a healthier world.”

## Key Takeaway



Often, the hardest part of creating a vision statement is coming up with wording that truly defines your values and shines a light on your corporate identity without sounding too vague.

## Can vision statements change?

Many companies benefit from having a vision statement from their inception, but it’s perfectly acceptable not to commit to one specific vision immediately.

“Getting too tied into one master statement can really mess with the learning and creation process in the early stages,” said Sonia Elyss, president of marketing and communications collective Round Twelve. She encourages her clients to write a vision statement monthly, save the previous drafts, and see what sticks and what doesn’t over time.

“After the first year, you can look back and see how much you have evolved,” Elyss said. “What parts or words within the statement stuck around, and what was dropped? Those key words tend to end up being major brand pillars you can always come back to and eventually become part of the brand ethos.”

Tying yourself to a particular vision statement in the early days of your business may limit your opportunities for growth or blind you to the need for change.

“At the end of the day, trust your gut; test and check; look at the analytics; invest in the feedback your customer is giving you,” Elyss said. “If you aren’t willing to step outside of your initial vision for your business, you might miss a huge opportunity!”

Regardless of how many years you have been in business or how long you have had your vision statement, you’re not stuck with it. Don’t be afraid to change it – even if you spent time and money developing it – if it stops feeling right.

## The vision for your vision statement

A vision statement is a tool that can help your business grow and achieve brand success. Along the journey of growing your business, you’ll face good months, rough months, and every detour and roadblock imaginable.

Above all, your vision statement should constantly remind you and your team of the end goal. This message is important to hold on to, especially on the most challenging days.

*Bassam Kaado and Paula Fernandes contributed to the writing and reporting in this article. Source interviews were conducted for a previous version of this article.*

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Sean Peek is the co-founder of a self-funded small business that employs more than a dozen team members. His years of hands-on entrepreneurial experience in bootstrapping, operations management, process automation

and leadership have strengthened his knowledge of the B2B world and the most pressing issues facing business owners today. Peek uses his expertise to guide fellow small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs in the areas of marketing, finance and software technology. Peek excels at developing customer bases and fostering long-term client relationships, using lean principles to drive efficiency and cost-saving, and identifying growth areas. He has demonstrated his business savvy through collaborations with Forbes, Inc., Entrepreneur and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

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