

VISION

One of the most cited characteristics of successful managers is having vision.

The meaning of vision which concerns you as a manager is a vivid idea of what the future should be. This has nothing to do with prediction, but everything to do with hope. It is a focus for the team's activity which provides sustained long-term motivation and which unites your team.

A vision has to be something sufficiently exciting to bind your team with you in your common purpose. For instance your common purpose in Credit Management is to 'Maintain the Highest Possible Level of Debtors – Outstanding for the Shortest Possible Time'

- **You need to decide where your team is headed**
- **You have to communicate that vision to them**

Communicating a vision is not simply a case of painting it in large red letters across your office wall (though, as a stunt, this actually might be quite effective!) but rather bringing the whole team to perceive your vision and to begin to share it with you. A vision must become a guiding principle for the decision and actions of your group.

Now vision is still a rather hard to pin down, hard to define usefully; a vision may even be impractical, so there is an extra stage which assists in its communication. Once you have identified your vision you can illustrate it with a concrete goal - a mission. This leads to the creation of the famous "mission statement". A mission has two important qualities:

- **It should be tough but achievable**
- **It must be possible to tell when it has been achieved**

To maintain an impetus it might also have a time limit, so that people can pace their activity rather than getting winded in the initial push.

The scope of your vision depends on how high you have risen in the management structure and so does the time limit on your mission statement.

Heads of multinational corporations must take a longer view of the future than the project leader heading a group of people on looking at effective ways of reducing queries. The head of a multinational corporation may be looking at a strategy for the next twenty-five years, while the project leader may look to increasing customer satisfaction and profitability by reducing queries and costs within the next year or so.

If you are stuck for a mission then think about using quality as a focus, since this is something on which you can build. Similarly any aspects of great management which are not habitual in your team at the moment could be exemplified in a mission statement.

Once you have established a few possible mission statements you can try to communicate (or decide upon) your vision. This articulates your underlying philosophy in wanting the outcomes you desire. Not the ones you think you should desire, but an honest statement of personal motivation.

In general your vision should be ongoing and inspirational. It is the driving force which continues even when the mission statement has been achieved.

It can be as simple as Walt Disney's vision, "To Make People Happy". As a manager yours might be something a little closer to your own team.

There is no real call to make a public announcement of your vision or to place it on the notice board. Such affairs are quite common now and normally attract mirth and disdain. If your vision is not communicated to your team by what you say and do then you are not applying it yourself. It is your driving motivation - once you have identified it act on it with every decision you make.

CMT has a vision to see Directors of Credit at Board Level. Together we can make this happen.

Steve Savva