



**BRISBANE:
MAKE IT YOURS
AT INCE08**

**IN THIS
ISSUE**

- > Australian National Compact
- > Do you have to pay income tax?
- > Issues in not-for-profit accounting
- > Maximise your membership revenue when times get tough
- > Why most vision statements suck
- > Attracting sponsors and corporate partners - How to raise your game

Why most Vision statements suck

Vision statements, social innovation and you. **Steven Bowman, Conscious-Governance.com**



A Vision statement has traditionally been where an organisation has stated what its core values and core purposes are for the organisation, maybe with some values thrown in for good measure. This is essentially inward looking and all about the organisation.

This is why most Vision statements suck. They are too often about the vehicle of delivery, the organisation. Our point of view is that the Vision statement should be about the future your organisation wishes to create for the community and stakeholders you wish to impact. The vision could start off with something like...“Our vision is for a community where...”

Creating a Vision statement is quite simple and easy. It is usually done as part of the strategic planning process, as one of the first exercises of the strategic plan facilitation (See www.conscious-governance.com/planning-tools.html for strategic plan facilitation tools). The planning group (consisting of various people who have points of view about the organisation that truly matter to the organisation) are asked the question:

“What is the future we would wish for our community (not for this organisation!)”

“What lasting legacy would we desire for our community?”

“Who is the community we are servicing? Will they change? Do we need a broad or narrow description of our community?”

These questions will assist to get at the core essence of why the organisation was created in the first place. This should take no more than about an hour. The days of Vision fatigue are over (you’ve heard about this, when large groups of people meet over lengthy periods of time to debate wordsmithing of something that no-one will ever use?).

Here are some examples of Vision statements that don’t suck:

“We value a community where there is **confidence in aged care**, where **cultural diversity is truly celebrated** and **family and community remain connected**.” – World class regional Aged Care facility specializing in multicultural care

“Our vision is for an **ethical environment** where **training and employment services lead future requirements**, **career pathways are valued equally**, **safety and security is paramount** and **people and teams are motivated to excel**.” – Large and innovative training and employment organisation.

These Vision statements have “oomph”, they get at what the organisation strives to create, it represents why the founders created the organisation, and why Board members choose to sit on the Board.

When was the last time you heard someone say “Our Vision statement truly guides all our decision making” Or “Our vision statement is what holds the organisation together”. Or “People really get our vision and work with us to achieve that vision”? Yet isn’t this what vision statements are for?

One of the most powerful strategic focusing tools that your nonprofit organisation can create is a Vision statement. A Vision statement is an expression of what your organisation would like to see as a possibility and a future for the community and stakeholders you serve. Having created the Vision statement, then all decisions, projects and services can be filtered through the vision statement to assess whether they are truly “Vision-driven” and hence creating the future and the impact that your organisation desires. We call this “social innovation”. What would it be like if your organisation chose to function from the space of social innovation?

The next discussion then should be about how well we map our existing programs against the key elements of our Vision statement, and how we "walk the talk". Here are some strategies that truly make a difference.

1. Have the vision statement on each Board agenda to remind the Board why they are meeting
2. Encourage the Chairman and other Directors to use the Vision statement to assist in gaining clarity around a discussion or decision
3. Describe in the annual report how you are using the Vision statement to drive the organisation forward, and provide stories that illustrate the "walking the talk".
4. Embed discussion of the Vision statement into the Board induction program with new directors.
5. Use the Vision statement as the first point of discussion and filter at your strategic planning session
6. Ensure that all strategies and actions from the strategic plan directly align with the Vision statement (see www.conscious-governance.com/productstoreebooks.html for some resources in this area)
7. Evaluate how the Board understands and uses the Vision statement as part of your Board evaluation process (see www.conscious-governance.com/conscious-board.html for more articles on this area)
8. Evaluate how key stakeholders perceive the Board understands and uses the Vision statement as part of your Board evaluation process

9. Embed the key elements of the Vision statement into the performance management framework of staff, especially senior leadership
10. Ensure that all new projects specifically address the key elements of the Vision statement
11. Revisit the Vision statement annually as part of your annual strategic plan review, and ask the questions: "Does this still represent the essence of what we want to create?" "Has anything changed that will necessitate a change in our Vision statement?"

If you are able to show that all the above are in place, then you are truly a vision-driven organisation, a social innovator, an organisation that makes a difference in all it does, and an organisation that is creating a better place for the stakeholders who have placed their trust in you.

Are you willing to be the social innovator that your Vision statement invites you to be? Are you willing to lead your nonprofit organisation towards the creation of that possible future?

Steven Bowman is a director of LifeMastery and the Conscious-Governance.com online resources, based in Melbourne, Australia. He is sought after by nonprofits globally as an expert adviser on conscious leadership, governance, strategic innovation, and awakening the power of strategic awareness within nonprofit organisations. Visit www.conscious-governance.com, or email steven@conscious-governance.com ■

Are you a not-for-profit looking for growth?

Download our whitepaper

'for growth - not-for-profit' by visiting our website today.

Many Not-For-Profit organisations do not anticipate or recognise the signs of impending financial doom. Nor should Board members be expected to notice the effects of inflation eating away at their assets.

Global Partnerships is a leader in the provision of financial advice for Not-For-Profit groups and we specialise in managing investment portfolios in both good and turbulent times.

Our white paper offers valuable insight and research in a simple format for you to read. Please visit our web site at www.gpfc.com.au to order your copy our white paper - 'for growth - not-for-profit' or telephone 03 8614 1616 to arrange an appointment. We do provide service to interstate clients.

