

every
woman

WORKBOOK

How to build and communicate your vision

Part 1 – building your vision



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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

Established in 1999, everywoman advances women in business. Our aim is to ensure women from all over the world fulfil their potential. We produce workbooks, webinars, articles, and videos on topics that matter most to our members, and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to kick-start your career, at a time and place that suits you.

In this workbook, we're going to focus on your vision, the direction you want to take - be it for a team, a department, a division or the entire company. It's one of those subjects that tends to fill people either with fear ('help, I'm not sure I have a vision! If I do, is it good enough? What's the difference between a vision and a mission?') or boredom ('oh no, another of those corporate obsessions. Why can't we just get on with the job?').

When asked, "What do you look for and admire in a leader (defined as someone whose direction you would willingly follow)?" 72% of respondents said that after honesty, the second-highest requirement of a leader was that he or she be forward-looking.

Harvard Business Review¹

The truth is that having a vision is the difference between routine management and inspirational leadership. One keeps the business ticking over, the other leads to growth and greater success.

Recent research shows that employees who find their company's vision meaningful have engagement levels of 68%, 19 points above average, and employees who are more engaged tend to be more productive².

In today's business world, it's incredibly difficult to carve out 'thinking time' to consider the task and look into the future. Reality always intrudes, with meetings, urgent



deadlines and unforeseen problems but it really is worth taking some time to explore those random thoughts that keep coming back to you, when you do have a second to think. 'What if we approached that differently?' 'There seems to be a gap in the market here'. 'We could be the ones to lead the way....'

This workbook is part 1 of a 2-part series and it is designed to help you to get to grips with the process of pulling your vision together. Part 2 will help you to communicate your vision to your team in a way that motivates and energizes them.

You'll find it hugely rewarding, not just in lifting you out of the day-to-day and empowering you to lead, but for your team too. As Geraldine Laybourne, who led the team that created Nickelodeon, says, "When you have your purpose in life, you're making a difference for the people round you."

So let's get started - dare to dream and make it real!

We'd love to know how you get on.

Share your experience with contact@everywoman.com. Good luck!

Maxine & Karen

The everywoman team

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

There is a video on the everywomanNetwork in the everywomanClub 'Voices of experience' series in which a number of different woman talk about leading powerful teams³. During the video, Mitzie Hoelscher (Chief Leadership Officer at Gap International Inc.) talks about the power of a team united around an aligned vision:

“I think what makes a powerful team is alignment. Alignment not only to the end results, like what the goals are and what you're out to produce and deliver together, but also alignment to each other and what you value.”

Effective leaders have a vision, whether it is for the organisation overall or their team within it, and from that vision, they determine a strategy and a set of goals which can be communicated clearly and supported with enthusiasm.

At its heart, the job of leadership is to achieve a task, and to develop teams and the individuals within them. The task may be one small cog in the wheel but the next task and the one after that, all depend on the first one having been achieved effectively. A leader needs to understand the task, be clear about their own responsibilities and authority and build a team of capable individuals who are motivated to complete the task in the best way possible.



What has changed significantly over recent years is the *context* in which leadership takes place. The days of command and control management have gone. People in business today want - indeed they need - to understand the context in which they are working. They want to belong to a team and feel connected to the purpose of the organisation. They need to know their work is worthwhile. If you, as a leader, can create that sort of working environment, you will have a committed team.

“A powerful team is one that is very focused and is working in unison towards a common goal”

Nina Wright, Managing Director,
UBM Live Built Environment⁴

MAKING A DIFFERENCE AND HAVING AN IMPACT

Making a difference and having an impact is about not settling for the day-to-day but looking beyond today's task to see what else can be done, what more can be done or what can be done better. It is about creating change. This workbook will help you to focus on developing your vision and it applies whatever level you have reached in your organisation.

So, how can you be a forward-looking leader? One who can achieve the task in the present while also communicating a vision towards which you will lead your team in the future?

Achieving the task in the present is about effective management and there are many workbooks and texts to help you achieve that (including the *Time Management* and *Performance Management* workbooks available on the everywomanNetwork).

The steps to communicating your vision and making a difference are the same whether you are running the company or a team within it.



In her book *Act like a Leader, Think like a Leader*, Herminia Ibarra talks about 'becoming a bridge'. She says leaders must devote time to doing these things:

- Bridging across diverse people and groups
- Envisioning new possibilities
- Engaging people in the change process
- Embodying the change⁵

The best leaders work as bridges between the team and its external environment.

To start the process of leading and envisioning, talk to your team. They, better than anyone, will know how things get done. What's good, what can be improved, what others are doing, what they need to improve performance.

“A really great leader listens to everybody. I am a great believer in a bottom up mentality when it comes to creativity and innovation and some of the best ideas will come from your most junior members of the team.”

Claire Irvin, Editor-in-Chief, Bauer⁶

EXERCISE

In the space below, sketch out a basic plan for how you can start the process of leading and envisioning. Who in your team do you want to talk to? Should this be done individually or as a group? What are the key questions that you want to ask in order to have the opportunity to listen?

Armed with that information, you can talk to your manager about what you are thinking and broadly what you plan to do. They will be able to help you refine your vision for your own team, and think about how that will align with their own vision for your department and the overall vision of your company.

CREATE YOUR VISION

Many organisations have a vision statement. It's there in the annual report, in banners around the office or possibly even on the packaging. Someone has spent time and money working it out. Sometimes, that's it. A box has been ticked, that task is done. But in the best organisations, the vision is the inspiration for everything that's done. Everyone understands it and pulls together in the same direction.

Vision statements from famous brands

Toys 'R' Us
“Our Vision is to put joy in kids' hearts and a smile on parents' faces.”

Ikea
“Affordable solutions for better living.”

Amazon
“To build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.”

Avon
“To be the company that best understands and satisfies the product, service and self-fulfillment needs of women - globally.”

Nike
“To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world.”
*If you have a body, you are an athlete.

Sources: ⁷

EXERCISE

Start by thinking about your own organisation's vision. Are you clear exactly what it is?

Write it down here, without referring to any company materials!

If you can't do that off the top of your head, do your homework. Look it up, talk to people about it, make sure you fully understand what the company stands for and get to a point where you can articulate it clearly.

This is necessary because as a leader, it is your job to translate the vision of the organisation into the vision for your team.

To achieve the task today, you need to be able to answer these questions, both for the company overall and for your own team within it:

What are we here for?

Where are we going?

How do we measure success?

The following exercise will help you to plan out your approach to these questions.

EXERCISE

Take some time now to answer the questions using the table below.

	The organisation	The team
What are we here for? What is our purpose? <i>This is the vision</i>		
Where are we going? How can we achieve it? What are our goals? What are our priorities? <i>This is the mission</i>		
How do we measure success? What does success look like? How do we prove success through qualitative and quantitative methods?		

Next, ask yourself whether the individuals who make up your team are clear about these things. If they are, that's great. If not, there is work to be done to make sure both the company and the team vision and task are clear, communicated and up to date. Part 2 of this workbook will help you to develop strategies for effectively communicating your vision to your team.



ENVISIONING – DON'T SETTLE FOR THE STATUS QUO

Once you are clear about what you are doing, you can start thinking about 'what else?'. What are the new possibilities that will move the dial? In due course, you can add an extra section to the chart that you worked on in the previous section:

	The organisation	The team
Where do we go next?		

Vijay Govindarajan, author of *The Three Box Solution: a strategy for leading innovation*, talks about the way things are done in an organisation on a daily basis as the 'performance engine', funding day-to-day operations and generating profits for the future.⁸

However, many businesses focus too much on present needs and can be reluctant to let go of values and beliefs that once were valid but now just anchor a business in the past.

Despite time and resource constraints, the role of a leader is to envision, which is defined as 'imagine as a future possibility; visualise'. Your job is to create a compelling image of the future, be it macro or micro. Don't worry that all this must come from within. You don't have to work out what needs to change and how to do it all by yourself. To engage others in your vision, you will need to involve them in the process. Your vision will develop as you consult others and their engagement will come from the fact that the vision is shared and reflects their own ideas and aspirations.

“There is little time to think about why you do what you do, about the meaning and purpose of your work beyond the immediate deliverables. It's no wonder routine crowds out strategy.”

Herminia Ibarra⁹

Talk to your own team and ask them what is new, how they see the future and what could be done better. Ask them:

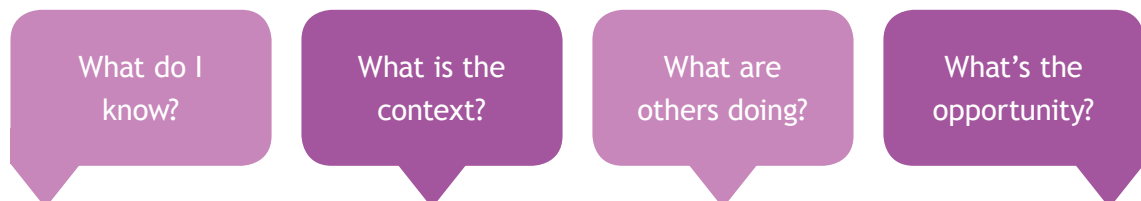


Take the task you are trying to achieve as a leader and think about how well you do it and what the future possibilities might be. How can you add or create value? If you know about the future direction of your organisation you can think about how your own team can move that way. You can also consider this from the perspective of what you and your team can do better, to grow, achieve more and innovate.

LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

Strategic thinking requires a view of the big picture. How can you develop that perspective? Who can you talk to? Who do you know who can help you expand your thinking or fill in some of the gaps?

Aim to answer these questions:



You want to find out what **opportunities** and **threats** exist in the external environment so that you can bring an external perspective to the team and the task.

Start from your own perspective:

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which way is the market going?• What is changing in your own field? e.g. technological impact• Can you see any opportunities that are not currently being addressed?• Do you have contacts who can help you develop your thinking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the external factors affecting your company or team?• Think PEST: Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors• What external problems do you currently face in achieving the task?• Who might be more advanced in their thinking/development/innovation?

Consult widely. After your team and colleagues, develop your own ‘advisory group’, made up of peers, stakeholders, suppliers and customers. Go beyond your regular networks in your quest for information.

EXCERCISE

Make a list of all those who may be able to assist you as you develop your overview and stay flexible during this process. As your knowledge grows, don't hang on to your own view. Allow new influences to inform your thinking. Use a table like the one below to help to organise your thoughts.

What do I want to know?	Who has that knowledge?	How can they help me?	Next steps
<i>More about the new markets we are targeting</i>	<i>My boss</i> <i>My peers in other organisations</i>	<i>By introducing me to the development team</i>	<i>Raise at my next one to one</i> <i>Email x and y</i>
<i>What is happening in the industry</i>	<i>Industry publications</i> <i>Blogs</i>	<i>Arrange to meet over lunch</i>	<i>Make time each day to read relevant articles or blog posts</i>

After the consultation process, you will have a lot of ideas and you may want to use an **affinity diagram** to organise your information and see how it's all connected.

Sometimes if you amass a lot of information, it can be overwhelming. You may struggle to make sense of it, feel you may be missing something or else just can't see the wood for the trees.

Japanese anthropologist Jiro Kawakita originally developed the affinity diagram as a means of grouping unorganised ideas into meaningful themes, so that you can see the connections between them.

This is how you go about it:

EXERCISE

This will help you to pull together a clearer picture of all the information you have gathered and give a framework to your thinking.

- 1 Grab a pack of sticky notes and write one thought or idea on each, in random order, just as they come to mind or from your notes
- 2 Group the sticky notes into themes
- 3 Give a title to each group of notes, e.g. competitors, internal processes
- 4 Think though how you can use the information
- 5 Identify any gaps and consider how you can fill them



You may find you have a reasonable idea of what you want to do and where you want to go next. At this stage it is all an educated guess based on what is happening, what can be improved and what your options may be. Start to narrow it down. On the basis of what you've learned so far, which of your ideas will make the biggest impact?

This is the time to take a reality check. Talk to your team. Explain how you arrived at your vision. Invite their comments and listen to their input so they start to take ownership even at this early stage.



Go back to your group of advisors and talk to them about the vision you are developing. Listen carefully to their feedback and decide what changes you will make as a result and what you may wish to discard. Do you have all the information you need to proceed? Is there any more you need to learn?

CREATING A VISION YOUR TEAM WILL BUY INTO

The secret of an effective vision is to turn it into a mission that your team can buy into. The story of an Olympic Rowing Team has become apocryphal but it clearly illustrates the point...

This particular rowing team was extremely effective and won many races but their performance was inconsistent and they often came in second. Their coach wanted them to have a real chance in the Olympics. His vision was very clear: to win the Olympic Gold Medal. This, as you can imagine, won the hearts and minds of his team. They bought into his vision and it became theirs.



How could they actually win Olympic Gold? They had to be the fastest boat. That became the mission: to make the boat go faster. All of their training focused on that one thing. What made the boat go faster? Anything that did not achieve that goal was discarded. Their mission was very simple, often repeated, by the team as well as the coach and became ‘the way we do things round here’.

There is nothing mysterious about a leadership vision. It is simply your conviction of where you need to go – your winning idea – based on your knowledge of the task, wide consultation and research of the possibilities.

Once it is honed and articulated, you will use your vision to develop a strategy, otherwise known as the plan of how you will achieve it, and you will then develop priorities to put it into action and ensure those priorities are widely understood by your team.

In the second part of this workbook, we will look at how to communicate your vision and achieve buy-in from your colleagues.

EVERYWOMAN EXPERTS

This workbook has been produced and edited by everywoman, with content commissioned from associate expert Pippa Isbell. It is part of the everywoman portfolio of resources that have been specially created to support and develop women as they advance their careers and businesses.

Pippa Isbell



Pippa Isbell has been an everywomanClub member and supporter for many years. She has a wealth of business experience, which she now shares through training, coaching and consultancy. Throughout her career, spent mainly in communications and investor relations in the travel industry, running her own business and with famous brands such as Orient-Express Hotels, she has been passionate about working with women to help them get the best from their careers and their businesses. A qualified trainer, she also has a Practitioner Diploma in Executive Coaching awarded by the Academy of Executive Coaching.

Maxine Benson MBE & Karen Gill MBE



Co-founders of everywoman, Karen and Max have spoken to thousands of women about the challenges they face at work. Through their own experiences of starting a business, they uncovered a real need for a network where female entrepreneurs and businesswomen could interact and share experiences. The everywomanNetwork, launched in 2012, serves as a truly global tool to enable members the world over to propel their careers through online membership.

everywoman workbook team

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Any topics you'd like to see covered on the everywomanNetwork?

We'd love to hear from you: victoria@everywoman.com

FURTHER READING

Books

The Game Plan: Your Guide To Mental Toughness At Work, by Steve Bull
(Capstone: 2006)

Why should anyone be led by you? by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, published by
Harvard Business School Press

The Leadership book by Mark Anderson, published by Pearson Education Ltd
Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action by Simon Sinek,
published by Penguin

The Three Box Solution: a strategy for leading innovation by Vijay Govindarajan,
published by HBR Press

The Leader's Guide to Storytelling by Stephen Denning, published by John Wiley and
Sons

ENDNOTES

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