



Your Vision is Weak!

The 19 Worst Shortcomings in Your Vision

A Checklist with Troubleshooting Tips

Leader's Foresight

Tools for Leaders and Trailblazers

by Dr. Pero Mičić, CEO of the FutureManagementGroup AG

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Dear Leader,

I'll admit that I likely don't even know your vision. But I read the visions of many companies on a regular basis.

It is painful to see how much potential is squandered, just because a vision is considered something you only grudgingly jot down because you have to have it.

Many companies only have a vision, because they wanted to have a quality certificate, and that requires that you develop a vision. If you didn't have one, you just wrote something down.

It's a truism: You will garner countless advantages from an appealing, motivating, jointly developed and realistic idea of your company's future.

Precisely because this seems so banal, it surprises me every time to see how rarely, and if, how badly, this truism is made a reality.

What is the idea that channels and fuels all your projects and initiatives? A highly networked system – and your company is such a system – cannot be managed with goals and action plans alone.

If all you have is a weak vision, you'll forgo profitability.

This edition of "Leader's Foresight" describes the 19 worst shortcomings your mission and vision could possibly have. Examine how many of them apply to your ideas of the future for your company.

I will also offer recommendations for erasing and avoiding these mistakes.

I look forward to your tips, comments and questions: PM@FutureManagementGroup.com and +49 172 6520 660.

Have a bright future!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and strokes, representing the name Pero Mičić.

Dr. Pero Mičić

01

Too Bad:
You Don't Even
Have a Vision!



Too Bad: You Don't Even Have a Vision!



You can live without a vision, your company can't. Human beings go on living and can be very happy, even if they don't have a vision in the true sense of the word.

Companies, on the other hand, are communities of people and without a mission, a vision and guidelines, they cannot take shape. Companies deteriorate when they lack a clear mission and vision, because that means that they are lacking a defining foundation.

Lacking an effective vision, employees will fill the vacuum with their own ideas of the future. Each his own. Only a long-term idea of a desired future can provide the necessary orientation, focus and harmony of purpose. A vision works like a magnet for attentiveness, like a pattern to a puzzle.

If used correctly, your vision is your strongest leadership tool. Don't voluntarily forgo the enormously positive effect of a clear mission and vision, lest you dispense with your employees' engagement and performance, with the consolidation of your strength and energy, and hence, in the end, with a portion of your potential profit.

02

Too Bad:
You Underestimate
the Benefits of
a Vision!



Too Bad: You Underestimate the Benefits of a Vision!



It is the mind that creates the body. This is what Friedrich Schiller wrote in "Wallenstein's Death". Schiller was ill his entire lifetime. His vision gave him the strength he needed to endure his pain and to become one of the most prolific and successful German poets nonetheless.

The vision is the immaterial cause of all material effects, in other words: for everything that does or does not happen in your company.

Your vision is the joint mental map of your management team and your employees showing a future that is aspired by all, appealing, and realistic. It will significantly increase the efficiency of discussions.

Your vision empowers your "mental focus," which is necessary in this complex world. With your vision, you can consolidate all your strengths that manifest in time, brain power, and money. You can work far more effectively and be far more successful.

Your vision is your most profitable investment.

What is the Use of a Good Mission and Vision?

How Can Your Vision be Profitable?			What are the Effects?		More Efficiency	Less Time	Less Cost	Less Effort	More Motivation	More Security	More Joy
Choice	Analytically and emotionally, you decide for and against certain elements of your vision to focus your activities on a few areas.	You have more consolidated strength as manifested in money, time, and brain power for your focus activities, which enables mental focus, too.									
Attraction	With your vision of a better future, you offer your employees an appealing deeper meaning of their work.	Those who make your vision their own have something to look forward to, something they can work toward with great motivation and confidence.									
Anticipation	You create a future image that can constantly function as a mirror for the potential effects of actual events.	You recognize threats and opportunities earlier than if you'd only check market developments against the reality of your current company.									
Orientation	You align and coordinate all activities, from the management team to the individual employee.	You create a harmony of purpose and action.									
Agility	Early on, you decide which future you wish to create and know what you need to do to make it a reality.	You act rather than react to the competition. By comparing it to reality, your vision shows which actions you need to take.									
Activation	You create ambitious and challenging expectations for your future competitiveness.	You activate and use the performance potential of your employees and resources.									
Uniqueness	With your foresight and forward thinking, you take the opportunity to make your company unique.	You find and describe the differentiation that is most beneficial to you in the competition.									
Deduction	You make all fundamental decisions at the same time and with an all-inclusive view, thus creating a future image without inconsistencies.	You create a pattern with clear orientation for thousands of singular decisions during daily operations.									
Alignment	You make all major decisions with your management team. Together, you create mental maps to achieve the highest agreement and harmony.	You have fewer exhausting and time-consuming discussions.									
Authority	You as the leader are equipped with the most powerful leadership tools.	You can only lead into the future if you have an image of that future and are able to convey it effectively on a rational and emotional level.									

03

Too Bad:
You Have to Look
up Your Vision!



Too Bad: You Have to Look up Your Vision!



Only if they are conscious can thoughts have effects and knowledge be used. Seems obvious.

And yet, time and again I see that even top leaders of corporations have to read up on their own mission and vision.

Do you know your vision by heart? Can you see clear images of your vision in your mind's eye? What about your closest colleagues? And what about your employees, those you work with closely and those you work with less closely?

Essentially, you should not rest before you are able to give a motivational speech about your mission, your vision, and your strategic as well as cultural guidelines – on the spot.

As is well-known, visualization can be very helpful with this.

04

Too Bad:

You are Mixing up
Mission and Vision!



Too Bad: You are Mixing up Mission and Vision!



Your company is built upon its mission and your vision. In the end, that is how it is defined.

Your mission is the fundamental long-term purpose you fulfill for your customers. The mission describes the game. The game rarely changes.

Your vision is your concrete image of your company's appealing, jointly desired, and realistic future. It describes what kind of player you want to have become in the game described by your mission. You change your vision periodically.

The individual situation decides whether mission or vision play a more important role. Employees at Apple are more excited by the mission that says "bringing the best personal computing experience." Employees in the area of auto-mobility at Siemens are more enthusiastic about the vision "zero emission, zero accident."

Therefore, mission and vision are a little less differentiated here than they may be in practice.

05

Too Bad:

You are Mixing up
Guidelines and
Vision!



Too Bad: You are Mixing up Guidelines and Vision!



If your vision includes statements such as "we are fair" like it does at Harley Davidson, then you do not have a vision. After all, you want to be fair right now, all the time, and not only in a distant future.

Desirable behavior such as "we are fair" or "we work in an ecological and socially sustainable manner" should be documented in guidelines, in your strategic, organizational, or cultural standards.

Guidelines and vision satisfy two fundamentally different human needs. Guidelines offer the framework for the daily co-operation of your employees and the strategic behavior of the company. The vision, on the other hand, offers the long-term goal of daily operations, while the mission describes their point and purpose.

When the core statements of an organization are unclear and unstructured, the organization that aligns itself accordingly is unclear and unstructured as well.

06

Too Bad:
Your Vision is an
Egocentric Dream
of Importance and
Wealth!



Too Bad: Your Vision is an Egocentric Dream of Importance and Wealth!



World market leader, the greatest, the most profitable, the fastest growing, the richest. If your vision sounds like that, it is fundamentally flawed.

The mission of your company has to include a notion of creating real value and emotional effects for your clients in order to be useful to society. Turnover is the quid pro quo. High turnover reduces costs and increases profits. Great for stockholders and top-management.

Your employees, however, could not care less. Where complex tasks are involved, money does not motivate and does not render work meaningful.

In an MRI, a "brain scan," you can see that people feel comfortable when they are doing their "thing" while at the same time doing something good for others.

That is why it must be your vision to make as many clients as possible a little happier. Yes, that even works if you produce machine parts. Importance and wealth will come naturally – but later.

07

Too Bad:
Your Vision Also
Works for Your
Butcher!



Too Bad: Your Vision Also Works for Your Butcher!



"We are a leading manufacturer of products with a high quality and ultimate functionality. That is what excites our customers on a daily basis. Their satisfaction is the focus of our work." Something like that. Missions or vision like that are commonplace on websites and on glossy posters displayed in the offices of many a Board of Directors. These visions and missions say nothing of substance at all. Often they don't even name the business. Even your butcher could have this same mission or vision.

Recaro says: "We fascinate our customers with pioneering solutions for better seating." A wonderfully clear an mission focused on the customer's benefit, albeit a little too broad.

Google, too, has a clear mission: "Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." Here the mission is purposefully broad, for Google has extended the limits of its mission more and more.

Your mission has to indicate your area of business and your company's unique role within.

08

Too Bad:
Your Vision Also
Works for Your
Competitors!



Too Bad: Your Vision Also Works for Your Competitors!



The Warema AG says: "We are the sunlight-managers." Warema has defined its own market – with assistance by the FMG, by the way. By now, even Warema's installation partners define themselves like that: the sunlight managers. Such a unique mission and vision establishes an enormous power of focus and attraction.

A clearly defined mission and vision is your most powerful tool when differentiating yourself from your competitors, and hence provides leverage for a successful and profitable company.

If you are not successful in assigning a unique value proposition and a unique identity to your company, then it won't happen in more detail, either. Then you've missed a great opportunity.

It is not easy. It requires imagination and care. But if you are successful, it is infinitely valuable.

09

Too Bad:
Your Vision
Does Not Matter!



Too Bad: Your Vision Does Not Matter!



"Just because it is written in the mission does not mean we have to do everything in line with it."

Those who say something like that have not understood the significance of a mission and vision. And worse, with such statements, they keep your mission and vision from ever fulfilling their potential. Mission and vision are degraded to a fair-weather declaration, which can be interpreted any which way and is not really to be taken seriously.

The mind creates reality and the vision creates the business, the turnover, the cost, and the profit. The decisions documented in your mission and vision determine the development of your company. They constitute it.

Your vision is your most powerful and important leadership tool. Consciously think about your mission and vision before every strategic decision. Begin and end every presentation with your mission and vision.

Make it unequivocally clear that your mission and vision are the existential foundation of your work together.

10

Too Bad:
Your Vision Does
Not Create an
Image!



Too Bad: Your Vision Does Not Create an Image!



If you are putting together a puzzle, you need a table, the puzzle pieces, and at least one person. And you need – a pattern! You'd never let anyone you like – or someone you pay by the hour – try his hand at a puzzle without a pattern. This would be highly inefficient and foolish.

But in most companies, employees are forced to puzzle without a pattern, because the only guidance they have are a bunch of nice words that don't make a mission or vision. In daily operations, they have to poke around in the fog and cannot see, let alone walk, the most effective and efficient path toward the vision.

Vision derives from the Latin "videre," i.e., to see. Present your mission and vision with images, graphics, and videos. This helps to visualize and remember the vision. Thus, in everyday life, the vision becomes stronger and more conscious than words alone.

This places the strongest leadership tool into your hands. You will save costs and nurture energies. Everyone knows that, and yet, not nearly often enough do we use the tool and act accordingly.

11

Too Bad:
You think Your
Slogan is Your
Vision!



Too Bad: You Think Your Slogan is Your Vision!



The vision is supposed to give you, your colleagues, and all employees a meaningful long-term goal that is worth your commitment.

In many of the projects where we help developing the vision, our clients fall prey to the temptation of suggesting their advertising slogans as their vision.

A summarizing phrase can and should be the title of your vision, but your vision should never be just this one single sentence.

Your vision cannot be a slogan like "Advantage through technology," "The joy of driving," "Nothing is impossible," or "The bank at your side." Thoughts such as these can be part of your mission or vision, but these slogans have too little substance to communicate an effective vision.

Those who shine on the outside have to sparkle on the inside. Slogans serve an advertising purpose and address the client or the public. Your vision, however, should primarily work on the inside.

For the sake of your competitive edge, only a small portion of your vision should be known to be public.

12

Too Bad:
Your Vision has
Hundreds of
Authors!



Too Bad: Your Vision has Hundreds of Authors!



Some advisors favor large group processes when developing a vision. I clearly and strongly advise against that.

"We will be market leaders," "We set the bar in XY-technology," "We strive for excellence," "Content employees are content clients." If you think of your vision as a few beautiful and honorable thoughts, then you can work with large groups. Even 100 or 100,000 employees can agree on the obvious.

But that is not what turns your vision into your most significant and powerful leadership tool. Instead, the often difficult decisions should be coded within your mission and your vision. Those are decisions a large group can never make. Large groups always end up with a democratic consensus on the lowest common denominator.

As a "leader," it is your first and most important job to develop the vision. You cannot delegate this task. You can collect ideas from everyone, but it is the leadership team that has to author the vision. Not only is this the most important task, it is also one of the most beautiful tasks.

13

Too Bad:
Your Vision Does
Not Hurt Anyone!



Too Bad: Your Vision Does Not Hurt Anyone!



Did you develop your vision according to the following formula: today's company plus a few elements you'd like to have, minus a few elements you'd like to eliminate? Was everyone able to contribute equally? Yes? That means you have a dangerous vision!

A vision needs to comprise clear decisions. To make decisions, you need alternatives. Don't just develop one vision, but develop three or five or eight alternative visions for your company. Those are the candidates from which you choose your vision.

Let your vision candidates compete with each other in pairs, as if in a tournament, in several disciplines. One of these disciplines tests the performance of your vision in several different future scenarios of your market. The winner in this tournament will form the core of your vision.

Everything else will be "de-cided," i.e., not pursued, cut off, not made a reality – even if it is painful. Nothing works without difficult and painful decisions.

That is how you will end up with a crystal clear, well founded and – in your market – likely unique vision.

14

Too Bad:
Your Vision Takes
All Things Today
Into the Future!



Too Bad: Your Vision Takes All Things Today Into the Future!



It is rather unlikely that you can, should, and will take everything that defines your company today with you into the future. If you have developed your vision from a present viewpoint into the future, i.e., if your starting line was today's company, your vision will be dominated by the present.

If, in addition, many actors from many divisions in your company contributed to this vision, you can assume that they wanted to make sure their future role would be included. That means that, essentially, you simply transposed your company today into the future.

Correct is, however, to develop your vision from a future viewpoint. The vision discards and leaves behind what does not fit into the future. Initially this does not entail any consideration for today's version of your company.

Only then do you proceed to include in your vision what you want to or have to take along. That alone ensures that your vision encompasses what shall be in the future. It leaves behind anything that doesn't fit while integrating everything new that should be incorporated.

15

Too Bad:
Your Vision is
Revolutionary!



Too Bad: Your Vision is Revolutionary!



The most conservative vision may be your best. Daimler could be in terrific shape if they had not aspired to be an integrated technology corporation or an international stock company. 60 billion Euro could have been invested in better cars and services.

There is a strong longing for a vision that inspires goose bumps and ecstasy, a vision that serves the desire for adventure.

Visions like that are usually demanded by those who don't have any responsibility for the potential failure and the potential loss of a huge amount of money.

No. Revolutionary visions should only emerge from necessity, only if today's business has no more chance. And of course, a start-up with an entirely new technology or a disruptive business model needs revolutionary visions, too.

Don't ask too much of your clients. Don't ask too much of your employees or your owners, either. Use an ambitious, but realistic measure of challenges. Consider your history, your present, skills, and culture.

16

Too Bad:
Your Vision is
not Robust!



Too Bad: Your Vision is not Robust!



We've heard them all, the stories about the visionary hero. With unbelievable ingenuity and imagination, he has seen what nobody before him could see. His admiring followers in his wake, he has revolutionized the world. He is a Steve Jobs.

A great deal of success- and leadership literature is made up of stories like that. However, behind every single one of these success stories are likely ten, one hundred, one thousand, or even more cases in which the ingenious visionary has missed a decisive factor and therefore ended up a desperate debtor.

Given the complex nature of today's businesses, founders and particularly leadership teams have to invest much care into the development of their vision.

Base your vision on solid assumptions about future changes in your market. He who does not protect his vision against surprises and eventualities accepts high risks that cannot be justified.

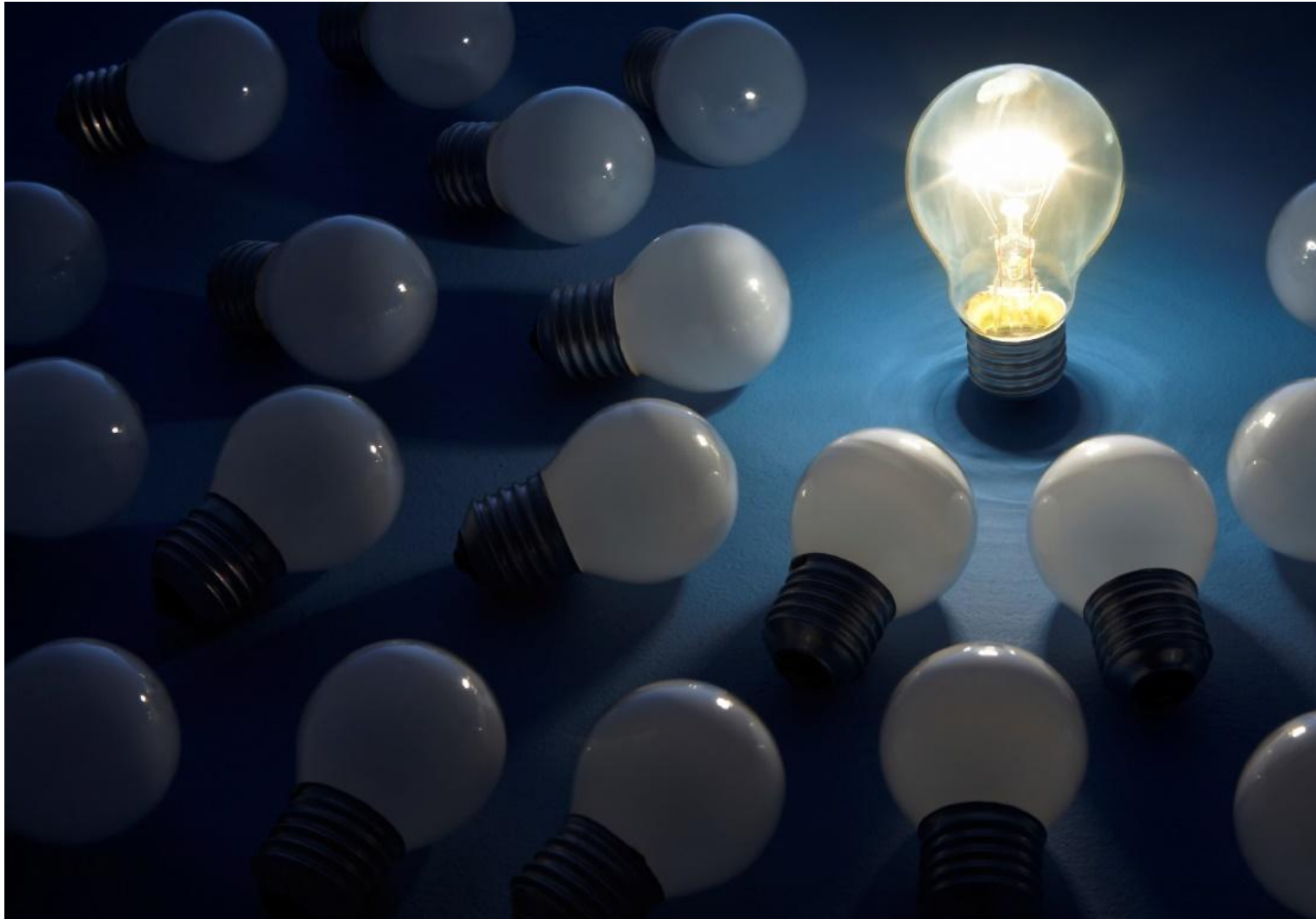
Make your mission and vision future robust.

17

Too Bad:
Your Business
Divisions do Not
Have Their Own
Vision!



Too Bad: Your Business Divisions do Not Have Their Own Vision!



"We have a relentless drive to invent things that matter: innovations that build, power, move and help cure the world. We make things that very few in the world can, but that everyone needs." Given the many business divisions, General Electric has no choice but to make such a generalized statement.

But your mission and vision has to mean something to your employees. Yet if all divisions are combined on the corporate level, it won't. With every division that is added, the statements become more general and removed.

The real work is done not on the corporate level, but in the divisions, in the units and entities, in the "unities", if you will. At Villeroy & Boch, one division deals with food and drink, another with the bathroom, i.e., toilets and sinks. An overarching mission and vision in such cases is necessarily less clear than the statements of the respective divisions.

Define the framework. Then provide each division with a separate mission and vision. And finally, summarize your mission and vision on the corporate level.

18

Too Bad:
Your Vision has Not
had a Check-Up for
Years!



Too Bad: Your Vision has Not had a Check-Up for Years!



A wide-spread misconception is to believe that a vision is only successful if you realize it exactly as it was developed years earlier.

This may be true in a few individual cases. But it would be unusual if we did not learn anything in the years between the development of a vision and its original time frame – say, for example, in the ten years between vision 2026 and the year 2016, in which it was developed.

We learn new things every day, develop a better understanding of the customer, the market, the environment, and one's own company. It would be foolish not to incorporate what we learn into our vision.

A vision is supposed to unfold its effect in the present. It is supposed to help us decide today where the next step will take us. It is supposed to make a difference today. Realizing it the way it was conceived is far less important than we think.

Your vision has to be a periodic construction site. It has to be on the bench to be checked regularly. If necessary, it has to be amended, adjusted, and changed.

19

Too Bad:
Your Vision has
Been in
Development for
Years!



Too Bad: Your Vision has Been in Development for Years!



I have witnessed cases where many years were spent searching for the perfect words to describe a mission and a vision.

As important as the quality of your mission and your vision is: worse than a less than perfect image of the future is to have no notion of the aspired future at all.

Virtually no software company these days develops perfect specifications before they begin programming. They develop an initial rough vision, then create prototype after prototype, until they've found a marketable product.

If there is no notion of the "what for?", there is no motivation to get involved and to make an effort.

In these cases, you need to be pragmatic. Minimize your compromises, but then live with them.

Too bad: Your Vision is Weak!

The 19 Worst Mistakes in Your Vision



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You Have to Look up Your Vision!



04
You are Mixing up Mission and Vision!



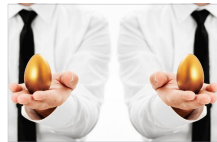
05
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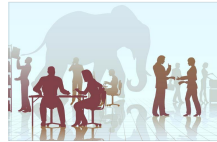
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