

MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Kurt Ulrich, City Administrator

Date: June 9, 2015

Subject: Vision Statement

**Purpose**

The purpose of this case is to discuss and determine a vision statement, or draft vision statement, to be incorporate in the City's recent three-year strategic plan.

**Background**

In 2013, the City Council and staff completed the following visionary structure that included a working mission statement, working vision statement, guiding principles, and organizational values.

VISIONARY STRUCTURE

**In 2006, the City of Ramsey launched Ramsey3, an innovative grassroots initiative dedicated to imagining the future of Ramsey. This collaborative process provided the visionary framework for the city. The Strategic Planning Committee determined that it would be helpful to supplement the City's visions with a visionary structure that was focused on a three to five year period to address the pressing issues facing the city.**

**To address the lack of trust and ensure that the city operates in a transparent and open environment, the following documents were also developed: guiding principles, city's organization values, code of conduct, and roles and responsibilities for elected officials, appointed commission members, staff, and consultants.**

Three-Year Working Mission Statement

***To work together to responsibly grow our community, and to provide quality, cost-effective, and efficient government services.***

Three-Year Working Vision Statement

**Achieve economic vitality with strategic infrastructure investments through market-driven growth.**

#### **OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**The elected officials, appointed commission members and staff will:**

- 1. Ensure responsiveness to the public (residents, business owners, taxpayers) that fosters an atmosphere of communication within and outside the organization.**
- 2. Ensure alignment of goals and resources.**
- 3. Take personal ownership for the success of the City of Ramsey.**
- 4. Operate with clear roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability.**
- 5. Operate in a transparent environment.**
- 6. Strive for “win-win” strategic thinking and planning under which interests and objectives of the city, commissions, and departments are considered; avoid personal agendas and department and commission turf protection.**
- 7. Take action based upon objective analysis of the facts.**

#### **OUR CITY’S ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES**

**We commit to:**

##### **ETHICS AND INTEGRITY**

**We believe that ethics and integrity are the foundation blocks of public trust and confidence and that all meaningful relationships are built on these values.**

##### **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**We believe that fiscal responsibility and the prudent stewardship of public funds are essential for citizen confidence in government.**

##### **COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK**

**We believe that the public is best served when elected officials, departments, commission members, and employees work cooperatively as a team in a trusting environment.**

##### **OPEN AND HONEST COMMUNICATIONS**

**We believe that open and honest communication is essential for an informed and involved citizenry, to build trust, and to foster a positive working environment for employees.**

##### **EXCELLENCE AND QUALITY IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

**We believe that service to the public is our reason for being and strive to deliver quality services in a highly professional and cost-effective manner.**

##### **TREATING PEOPLE WITH RESPECT AND FAIRNESS**

**We believe that all people are to be treated with courtesy and respect and deserve the best service we can provide. Decisions are to be fair and based upon the interest of the whole community.**

## ADAPTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING


We believe that individuals need to be adaptable to changing environments and circumstances. Continuous learning, education and training of our elected and appointed officials and employees enables us to better recognize current opportunities, anticipate change, and prepare for the future.

## 2015 Strategic Planning

During the course of our 2015, the Council and staff leadership team reaffirmed our mission and our major goals of: *financial stability, a connected community, smart, citizen-focused government, and an effective organization.*

Some time was spent discussing and shaping a vision for the community. This work included defining a big, hairy, audacious goal (BHAG), and providing descriptions of what the City would look like if it achieved this big goal 10-30 years from now. However, we stopped short of development a vision statement to include in the plan.

## CITY OF RAMSEY VISION

	TEAM 1	TEAM 2	TEAM 3	TEAM 4
<p><b>BHAG</b></p> <p>Big, hairy, audacious goal that revs up our city (goal that may take 10-30 years to achieve).</p>	<p>Create a community that connects a variety of quality destinations that balance the gifts of natural beauty, rural character and economic vitality.</p>	<p>HUB and sustainable community.</p> 	<p>A national leader in municipal services.</p>	<p>Move the reputation of Ramsey as a sleepy bedroom community toward vibrant workplace destination community.</p>
<p><b>VIVID DESCRIPTIONS</b></p> <p>Paint a picture of what it will be like to achieve the BHAG.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highways 10, 47 and river crossing.</li> <li>• Sustained tax rate.</li> <li>• Design and viewshed.</li> <li>• Some rural, some urban.</li> <li>• Quiet, safe neighborhoods and privacy.</li> <li>• Trees and yards.</li> <li>• Close, but not too close.</li> <li>• Mix of uses and destinations.</li> <li>• Sustained and well-maintained landscape.</li> <li>• Variety of design.</li> <li>• Pedestrian crossing.</li> <li>• Trust Brook Greenway.</li> <li>• Engaged citizens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety – maintain level of safety and grade crossings.</li> <li>• Key part MRT and other river recreation activities, athletics, game fair, and golf.</li> <li>• COR developed, vibrant.</li> <li>• In demand business parks.</li> <li>• Transportation corridors upgrade and smoothly – Highways 10 and 47.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher than the national benchmark in all quality of life measures.</li> <li>• Nationally recognized (e.g. money, magazine, #1 “Best Places to Live” Fortune).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax base growth of 3%.</li> <li>• Population growth by X% yearly – influenced by market.</li> <li>• Infrastructure to support safety response in line with growth.</li> <li>• Parks and recreation become life cycle experiences.</li> <li>• Shift the balance ratio of commuter population with workforce population from 80/20 to 60/40.</li> </ul>

## Forming a Vision

The vision statement for the City of Ramsey should be a relatively concise statement of how we see the community in the future (in the next say 10 years), if we have been successful in accomplishing our strategic plan. With that in mind, here are some sample vision statements for Ramsey:

### Vision Statement

- *The City of Ramsey is a progressive community that balances natural beauty with the conveniences and opportunities of modern urban life.*
- *The City of Ramsey is a prosperous and fiscally-sound community committed to providing the highest quality of life for its residents. Ramsey is a City that provides a great place to live in comfort and security, raise a family, and grow a business.*
- *The City of Ramsey is a progressive community committed to creating the highest quality of life for its residents. We provide a great place to raise your family, grow your business, and to live a great life.*
- *Ramsey is a progressive City that balances a unique combination of rural beauty and urban economic vitality to create a sustainable community.*
- *Ramsey is a leader in municipal services and a vibrant community, of rural and suburban character, with well-connected destinations.*
- *Ramsey is a City that has achieved economic vitality with strategic infrastructure investments through market-driven growth.*
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (yours)

Obviously, there is no right or wrong answer, but the vision statement should try to capture the essence and character of the future community that we are building now. Attached is an article to provide additional reference for the purpose and scope of a mission statement.

# What Is a Vision Statement?

By Katherine Arline, Business News Daily Contributor December 11, 2014

A carefully crafted vision statement can help you communicate your company's goals to employees and management in a single sentence or a few concise paragraphs. While a well-thought-out statement may take a few days or weeks to craft, the result will be a tool that helps inspire strategic decision making and product development for your business for years to come.

Why is this important if your company is already successful? According to a recent study that appeared in the [Harvard Business Review](#), up to 70 percent of employees do not understand their company's strategy. Failure to understand your company's position can lead to poor decision making at all levels of an organization. For that reason, the first step toward crafting a vision statement is to take a careful look at where you are as a company, your place in the industry and your realistic goals for the intermediate and long term.

Vision statements are aspirational; they lay out the most important primary goals for a company. Unlike [business plans](#), vision statements generally don't outline a plan to achieve those goals. But by outlining the key objectives for a company, they enable the company's employees to develop business strategies to achieve the stated goals. With a single unifying vision statement, employees are all on the same page and can be more productive.

Linsi Brownson, founder and creative director of business strategy group [Spark Collaborative](#), said a vision statement is an opportunity to revisit what first fueled your interest in starting or owning the business. "The best way to begin is to reflect on some of the most significant events or ideas that have impacted the company so far," Brownson said. "It often dates back to the owner's childhood interests or experiences that ignited a passion, which ultimately led to the creation of the company."

So, what should a vision statement contain? "A high-quality and inspiring vision statement for a small business should have two key characteristics: It needs to state where the company wants to be in the near future, and it also must have a level of excitement and motivation to it," said Andrew Schrage, founder and CEO of financial consulting firm [Money Crashers](#). "Use your company-culture description for more details on the goals and direction of your business."

## **Vision statement vs. mission statement**

A vision statement should not be confused with a [mission statement](#). Mission statements are present-based statements designed to convey a sense of why the company exists to both members of the company and the external community. Vision statements are future-based and are meant to inspire and give direction to the employees of the company, rather than to customers. A mission statement answers the question, "Why does my business exist?" while a vision statement answers the question, "Where do I see my business going?"

"I view a 'business vision' as a combination of both aspirational and tangible goals," Brownson said. "A mission statement is intended to clarify the 'what' and 'who' of a company, but a vision statement adds the 'why' and 'how' as well."

As a company grows, its objectives and goals may change. Therefore, vision statements should be revised as needed to reflect the changing business culture as goals are met. However, when you're writing the vision statement, you should approach it as a document that will last at least several years, said [Tiffany Silverberg](#), a professional writer and editor for businesses.

Silverberg noted that a vision statement should go beyond profit margins and internal benefits and look toward the long-term effect they want to have on their customer base, their industry, the economy and/or the environment.

### **How to write a vision statement**

Writing your vision statement is a time for creativity, ambition and fun, but the task should be approached seriously. "There is a process to this, and it's not usually quick or simple," Brownson said. "The best way to begin is to reflect on some of the most significant events or ideas that have impacted the company. It often dates back to the owner's childhood interests or experiences that ignited a passion, which ultimately led to the creation of the company."

To get started, dream big and make a list. Don't worry about practicality for now — what initially looks impossible could be achieved down the road with the right team and technologies. Brainstorm with a group of employees to visualize where you may see yourselves in the midterm and long-term future.

"Identify some core values that have been brought to the organization," Brownson said. "Then, pose the questions, 'What do we do right now that aligns with these values? Where are we not aligned with these values? How can we stay aligned with these values as we grow over the next five years, 10 years?' Those questions address your current situation, for better and worse, and help identify the bigger-picture vision."

Next, ask yourself what problems your company hopes to solve in the next few years. What does your company hope to achieve? Who is your target customer base, and what do you want to do for them?

"Based on your responses to these questions, ask yourself what success will look like if you accomplish those things," said Jené Kapela, owner and founder of [Jené Kapela Leadership Solutions](#). "This answer should shape your vision statement."

Roy Farmer, owner of leisure-product company [Allstate Home Leisure](#), recommends writing an imperfect first draft "from the heart," and then choosing the elements from that draft that really speak to you. Consolidate and review the list, and then rewrite, he said.

"Repeat this process a few times, until you feel like it's done," Farmer told Business News Daily. "Then, take your statement to people you respect and trust. Ask them what they think, but be

prepared for both positive and negative feedback."

Another strategy to follow when writing your vision statement is to imagine that your company will be appearing in a publication in five to 10 years.

"Draft out a short article describing your business in this projected future," advised Neil Desai, director of marketing agency [Dynamic Digital](#). "What has been its biggest accomplishment? How many employees does it have? What is its net worth? How does your company compare to its rivals? Go all out, even if it's unrealistic."

Asking a professional for help might be appropriate in some situations, Brownson added. "People are usually resistant to the first [brainstorming] part of the exercise, but that's actually the easiest and most fun," she said. "The hard part is distilling it into a phrase that is flexible, consistent and concise. Internal issues and marketing or sales issues are often a sign of a vision disconnect. That may be a great time to bring in a professional!"

### **Tips for crafting your vision statement**

Vision statements should stretch the imagination while providing direction and clarity. A good vision statement will help inform direction and set priorities while challenging employees to grow. It's important that the vision statement be compelling not just to the high-level execs of your company, but to all employees.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- When describing goals, project five to 10 years in the future.
- Dream big, and focus on success.
- Use the present tense.
- Use clear, concise language.
- Infuse your vision statement with passion and emotion.
- Paint a graphic mental picture of the business you want.
- Have a plan to communicate your vision statement to your employees.
- Be prepared to commit time and resources to the vision you establish.

Your completed vision statement will give your employees a clear idea of your company's path forward. Then, it's up to you to nurture and support that vision and to inspire your employees to do the same.

*Elaine J. Hom also contributed to this story.*