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Vivid Vision: A Remarkable Tool For Aligning Your Business Around a Shared Vision of the Future

by Cameron Herold

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22 Highlights

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 115

Laying Out a Vision Is Like Building a House Another way of looking at this miscommunication problem is to imagine that you're a contractor who wants to build a house for me. Suppose I tell you I want a 6,000-square-foot house with a nice porch and a beautiful outside landscape. How could you build a house from that one-sentence description? It is so vague that it's nearly useless.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 154

Again, the reason companies spend so much time managing people, holding them accountable and running a permission-based system, is because nobody knows where they're going. They don't even know the revenue goal or the operating budget. Everyone is doing an individual job without understanding its ultimate purpose and how that role ties into the bigger picture. A sentence, no matter how descriptive or inspiring, will not—it cannot—align a company. For that matter, neither can a vision board. The concept behind the vision board is a set of pictures, which, as we know, each paint a thousand words. You put those pictures on a bulletin board, and the idea is that they will add up, create synergy, and spark a clear vision. In fact, a vision board can be very good for doing exactly that—for you. But if I look at your vision board, I will probably see something entirely different. The vision board is only meant for one individual person.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 177

One the one hand, the Vivid Vision is about precision, but on the other, it's based on the future, not on where you currently stand. The focus is on where you intend to be three years down the road, regardless of where you might be now.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 209

If you imagine big enough, you'll meet some doubters. If you told your employees that you want to design an electric car that can go 300 miles on a single charge, go from 0 to 60 miles per hour in three seconds flat, seat seven comfortably, and look as sexy as an Aston Martin, somebody will say, "There's no way." That tells you you're on the right track.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 327

A vacation is a really great time to write a Vivid Vision. On vacation, your mind is completely relaxed and open. When you enter this state, your mind can wander.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 338

It's not your job to pick up a hammer and nails; you have trained professionals to do that. Your job is to communicate to the professionals what you want—they will construct it, wire it, paint it, and do everything else that is necessary to make your dream home real.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 379

Remember, too, that among the branches of your business, you want to consider every aspect of the organization—the culture, the vibe, the informal codes of conduct, the fiscal environment, the scenery—all of that. Deliberately leave out numbers and data. Get a feel for the place. When you step out of your time machine three years from now and walk around the office, what's happening? What can you say that is typical of the business three years from now?

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 392

The Vivid Vision, as I stated earlier, is a personal experience. It requires a visionary to conceive it and deliver it. The CEO must be the one to put the vision into words. Although others can weigh in and provide insights, you cannot delegate this responsibility to someone else in the company. You also don't want this process to be a kumbaya campfire group hug—if you get everybody together and merge all of their ideas, the Vivid Vision will be too watered down. It's like getting seven people to decide where to go for dinner, with the goal of making everyone happy. In the end, you either settle on something bland or you cancel plans to go out.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 531

When others read your Vivid Vision, they need to experience a moment of awe and wonder. If their jaws don't drop a little bit, you need to think bigger. Small, safe, calculated plans don't inspire.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 561

After the group has read through the pages, you want each employee to circle any of the sentences or phrases that most excite and inspire them. Ask them to share their thoughts with the group. This is not a forum for discussion or debate. This activity exists for employees to simply understand where the CEO wants to lead the organization. In later meetings, there will be opportunities to discuss how each statement will be accomplished, but for now, this material just needs to sink in and provide a source of contemplation and inspiration. By getting your people to think, "What if?" they become engaged and aligned.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 567

Each new quarter, you will want to break out the Vivid Vision again and reread it. Open it as a Word document, and highlight in green any of the sentences that have come true since the last quarter. Then, highlight in yellow any of the sentences you're currently working on. Now, everyone will begin to see the future taking shape!

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 577

If your scope is too small, too milquetoast, or too watered down, or if everyone likes it, no one will love it. If this is the case, you have failed.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 593

It's OK to lose people because of the Vivid Vision. Those aren't the people you want around in the first place. It's better to know this on day one, than to spend two years trying to align and inspire them. The same is true of potential employees. Your potential employees are going to read your document and either think, "Hell yeah, I want to interview here," or, "Hell no, I don't want to go anywhere near that place." Now, you're not wasting time interviewing those people who aren't a good fit, much less spending money because you hired them. At the end of the day, when everyone can see where you're going, you will save time and money.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 603

Don't worry if a few sentences become moot along the way. Just let them be. This document is a beacon of light, safely guiding your crew.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 810

Reverse engineering essentially looks at the finished state of a goal, and then you work backward from the end point to where you are now to determine the steps you need to take to get to the future.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 857

You'll likely be tempted to constantly tweak the document or course-correct as you go along, especially when you see that things happen that you didn't expect or intend. The reality is you will probably have to make some minor course corrections as you go. It's like putting a rocket into orbit—it's not a straight line. You have to adjust for various unaccounted-for factors that arise along the way. But the key thing is that you're always pointed in the same direction. You don't want to change the items on the Vivid Vision during the three-year period unless there has been some massive, seismic shift in your industry or in the world. What happens when you hit the end of the three-year period? What does success, actually, look like? At the end of the day, most people will wonder, "Well, there's a bunch of stuff on our Vivid Vision that didn't turn out to be true. So does that mean we've failed?" The answer: Absolutely not! Crossing items off the list isn't the only metric by which you can or should measure your success. One of the purposes of the Vivid Vision is to create alignment on your team. At the end of the three years, you should consider how well-aligned your team became. How engaged were they? Are people more clear on their duties and responsibilities than they were before you released the

Vivid Vision? How much harmony was created inside the office when projects were being planned and picked out?

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 948

If you are a \$4 million company today, and that is all your customers see about you, then you're not helping yourself or them. They need to see you as the \$10 million company you will be three years from now. That will both better inform their decisions and increase your appeal as a company. Suppliers and customers, of course, are making investments in your company, but then there are bankers, financiers, venture capitalists, or maybe shareholders, who are literally investing in your company. These people are already looking three years into the future. If you don't share your Vivid Vision of what your company will look like with them, they'll have to rely on their own imagination as to what your company will look like. Their imagination doesn't help you. Years ago, one of my clients was trying to get a bank loan. They actually took their Vivid Vision document into the bank and walked the banker through it, looking three years into the future. Afterward, the banker looked up and said, "Wow, I finally understand your company and where you're going. I never really understood it from the business plan and your spreadsheets, but now I get it."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 965

And if you lose people, like my client who lost 15% of his team when he rolled out his Vivid Vision, that's really OK. The people who stay are the ones on board with the direction of the company, the ones who accept their roles in bringing about the document's goals.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 983

As a species, we have a fascination with novelty. We want to see new things. We were blessed with the gift of imagination that we may create original things. That inspires and excites us. Naturally, this is the stuff that people want to read about. Journalists, knowing this, are eager to share stories about the "next big thing."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 992

As I am fond of saying, in the absence of facts, people make up their own.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1006

As humans, we don't really think about what we want our lives to look like down the road. Instead, we tend to take it as it comes, reacting, rather than being proactive. The purpose of the personal Vivid Vision, and the sharing and rereading of it with family and friends, is to live a more conscious life.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1191

If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there, as the Cheshire Cat from Alice in Wonderland explained.

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