



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Stepping Stone

January 2006 – Issue No. 21

Creating Your Vision

by Gerry Fryer

This article is about how to develop vision statements, which are fundamental to the future of any entity. It will start with the visions of organizations and move on to how individuals might begin to create their own vision statements.

Visions emerge from ideas. For example:

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills...”

“Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.”

“I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Vision statements are at the core of strategic planning. Organizations and political parties, even nations, develop their visions to launch themselves into the future. They answer questions like these:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- Where would we like to be in 10 years?
- What do we want to become?

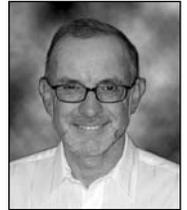
Once it creates its vision, organizational management can develop long-range plans with strategies and goals, including location planning and staffing and systems plans. Within that framework, short-term plans enable the organization to operate on a day-to-day basis.

A vision needs to soar and to touch people in a profound way. A great organizational vision, such as the Toastmasters vision above or the GE vision of some years ago—“Progress is our most important product”—has the following characteristics:

- It talks about the future and about possibilities and direction
- It is a compelling and memorable statement
- The vision is inspiring to those who hear it and galvanizes them into action
- It is inclusive and makes people feel that they are part of something larger than themselves
- The speaker of the vision feels transformed

What is included in a vision statement? Usually the major focus is in one area. First is Excellence. A prime example of this is the quest to reach the moon within a decade as set out by President Kennedy. A second theme is Helping People. That is what the Toastmasters vision is all about. The last possibility is Building a Better World, which is the essence of Dr. King’s “I have a dream” speech.

The most powerful visions resonate through history or set the stage for a lifetime of meaningful personal activity and growth. Here is



Gerry Fryer, FSA, FCIA, is principal of Renaissance Coaching, a coaching firm specializing in actuaries in Thornhill, Ontario. He can be reached at rencoach@rogers.com.

**The most powerful
visions resonate
through history or
set the stage for
a lifetime of
meaningful personal
activity and growth.**

one possibility: “As a business owner, I am going to accumulate sufficient assets in an ethical way so that I can retire at the age of 55 and devote the rest of my life to family and philanthropic causes.”

Creating a personal vision is not a trivial endeavor. A major part of the exercise is to perform a strategic self-analysis to discover your own strengths, values and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats that exist in the environment. This takes an investment of time and resources; but without a vision, you probably are allowing others to determine the direction of your life from that point forward.

Writers on leadership and human potential point out that people with a powerful vision are more likely to succeed than others.* Even the self-analysis that begins the process has great standalone value. The vision may begin and end with your own fulfillment, or it may be directed outward toward building a better world.

Now I invite you to start the process for yourself. Choose a timeframe and think about your unique definition of success. Here are seven powerful questions to start you on the path to developing your personal vision statement.

1. What am I really good at doing?
2. What do I love to do?
3. What am I interested in learning more about?
4. What are my core values?
5. What were the two most fulfilling things I did during the last seven days?
6. What is the one thing that is missing in my life that I can do something about?
7. What do I want to become?

There are many resources available that will help you with the self-analysis process and to answer the questions above. These include books, seminars, Web resources, mentoring and personal coaching. A coach will support you both in developing your vision and then with its implementation.

When your vision is first created, how do you know if it is the right one for you? Surprisingly, the answer to that is easy: If the words in the vision, and the pictures and feelings that they evoke, are so compelling that you feel you must immediately take action in order to begin to make them become real, then you and your vision are one.

The grand task of realizing your vision is up to you: “If it’s to be, it’s up to me!” You have the dream, you have created it, and it’s one you want so badly. Now you can develop the strategies and action steps to bring it to fruition. □

* See, for example, http://businessknowledge-source.com/blog/will_and_vision_000573.html

