

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR
**PERSONAL VISION
STATEMENT**

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CHARTING
YOUR FUTURE WITH PURPOSE AND PASSION

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WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Leadership is the ability to elicit courage.

This means you must cultivate leadership within yourself before you can inspire and develop courage in others. Part of courage is confidence, and the ability to know exactly what you want.

HOW CAN YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT?

You can identify exactly what you want from your personal and professional life by investing time to map out your vision, mission, and values, and by putting them down on paper – with specific goals. When you complete a personal vision statement, and have clear goals identified within a specific timeline, you can hold yourself accountable. Goals drive action, and action drives results.

We expect performance in jobs or businesses to be measured against goals or deadlines, right? We do this to better understand the return on investment (or ROI) for initiatives or activities, and a regular cadence of reporting on results. Our personal lives are just as important to map out – and to take control of. You will not get out of life what you do not put in.

YOUR PERSONAL LIFE REQUIRES A PERSONAL STRATEGY

A vision statement for your personal life is no different than in business – except it focuses directly on you. Having a “personal strategy” will help you achieve progress and stay the course in your personal life. Consider it “personal ROI”.

Rather than letting hopes or dreams float around with no timeline, put them on paper. Start thinking forward and get clear with what you want, so you can hold yourself accountable to timelines and progress. This is the power of goals.

Let's get started.

WHAT IS A VISION STATEMENT?

A vision statement is a long term, high-level snapshot of a desired future state. In an inspirational personal vision statement, which should also serve as your “Northern Star”. It is the beacon you check back to often, to ensure you are maintaining the original course you set out 5, 10, or 20 years prior.

Here is an example of a personal vision statement by one of my favourite leaders, Sir Richard Branson, Founder of The Virgin Group:

"To have fun in my journey through life and learn from my mistakes."

What is most remarkable about Branson’s statement is that it does not mention business. His statement far transcends business, serving and supporting a bold vision that drives personal, professional, family, and social growth.

It is often intimidating to consider long term, lofty goals – but remember you have a long period of time to accomplish them. Vision statements are meant to last years, decades, or even lifetimes.

WHAT WILL A PERSONAL VISION STATEMENT DO?

Beyond thinking longer term, developing a personal vision statement will force you to think deeply about your life. It will help clarify your life’s purpose and identify what is really important to you. It is also important to consider that over time, as your life evolves and you gain different experiences, your personal vision statement may evolve too.

Here’s what else you can expect from developing a vision statement:

- It helps you articulate and embody your deepest beliefs and aspirations,
- It firmly imprints your values and purposes in your mind so they become part of you rather than something you only think about occasionally, and
- It serves as your moral compass.

HOW TO START

Consider the following questions:

- What are my life's aspirations?
- What do I value?
- What are my talents?
- At the end of my life, what do I want to have accomplished?

These are the principals on which you will anchor your vision. Take time to respond thoughtfully, because it may not come to you all at once. Consider these questions over several days or weeks, and write down what comes to you. Be honest with yourself: embrace vulnerabilities and leave behind what I refer to as “social armour” (the things we hide behind – such as ego or material things – to protect ourselves from being vulnerable).

Over time, you will identify repeating themes or characteristics in your responses. Pay attention to these, as they are expressions or examples of what you are truly passionate about – ultimately manifesting your vision.

Another example of a great personal vision statement is by Oprah Winfrey, Founder of OWN:

“To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be.”

Again, her statement reaches beyond professional life. It is clear, powerful, long term, and is one she can continually improve on and work toward.

Ultimately, how you express your vision statement is how you will spend your life. Consider how you want to serve yourself or others, and how those actions will lead you to fulfillment in your days. There is no right or wrong vision statement. It is *yours*, and is there to serve you and only you – whether you choose to apply it to one or more aspects of your life.

When you have spent time writing down, revising, and refining your responses to the questions above, you will now have a personal vision statement. Make it bold, and make it visible. This will keep you accountable to it – every day.

IDENTIFY YOUR PERSONAL VALUES

Part of the support network behind a powerful vision statement is values. These are the mechanisms (a “values system”) to help steer your moral compass directly toward your vision – in other words – personal values are a moral code to keep you accountable to yourself.

Every set of values is different.

Write down a list of values you hold close. These are moral characteristics you consider important, imperative, and that are part of who you are – or who you want to be.

A helpful exercise is to consider those you look up to most: how would you describe them in 3-5 words? These words are values you exemplify or want to embody. For example, your values list can include:

- Accountability
- Action
- Adventure
- Authenticity
- Balance
- Boldness
- Calmness
- Community
- Consistency
- Courage
- Creativity
- Dependability
- Diversity
- Enthusiasm
- Fairness
- Faith
- Freedom
- Frugality
- Generosity
- Honesty
- Humour
- Individuality
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Intelligence
- Intuition
- Kindness
- Longevity
- Modesty
- Open-Mindedness
- Optimism
- Originality
- Peace
- Professionalism
- Resilience
- Respect
- Sincerity
- Tradition
- Wealth
- Wisdom

When you have completed your list, identify the top 5-6 values most important to you. This is your values system.

BREAK IT DOWN FURTHER

Now that you have a personal vision and values system outlined, you can break down goals into a mission statement as well.

A mission statement is a concise, short-term definition of your purpose – it drives your vision in smaller increments. It also supports and influences daily decisions, actions, and priorities (vs. a vision statement that is higher level and longer term). Examples of personal mission statements:

“I want to visit 20 countries before I’m 30.”
“I want to become the person my dog already thinks I am.”
“To treat my family with kindness and respect every day.”

First, identify your motivators (desired end state). These are often a combination of: family, security/wealth, flexibility, freedom and/or travel, and health/longevity. Then, identify your timeline. This can be daily, weekly, monthly, or within one or five years. Your timeline can be “before I’m 50” or “within this lifetime”.

Next, consider the pillars on which your mission statement will be founded. The pillars of your mission statement can touch on one or more of the following, depending on which are most important to you:

- Personal: Write about yourself – what do you want to be known for?
- Family: Write a paragraph about your family, spouse, kids, or parents. For example, if you intend to call them every day, but never do, you may need to adjust your paragraph to be more realistic.
- Professional: Write about your professional life. How do you want to be known in this realm? Are you high-integrity, an innovative game-changer, an ethical defender, or always reliable? Be clear.
- Community: Write a paragraph about community – what will your contribution be? Is there a cause you're passionate about? If so, include it. The best leaders are those that give back to others.
- Spiritual: What is your relationship to or with a higher power?

Lastly, marry your motivators, timeline, and pillars together into 1-2 sentences – your mission statement – which will drive your daily actions and responsibilities.

PUT YOUR WORK TOGETHER

Now that you have your personal vision statement, a personal mission, and a personal values system, you know exactly what you want. Congratulations – you have successfully charted your future with purpose and passion!

Next, you must put this work into action: publish your vision, mission and values on something visible. Whether in a framed portrait, on a chalkboard, or at your desk – the power behind goals is keeping them visible.

When goals are visible, they help you maintain regularity and accountability in your progress. In addition, your goals will give you a boost on tough days when you might lose sight of your end goal (or vision).

The most successful people have personal vision statements identified, but the surprising reality is that most people don't have one at all. This is culprit behind months and years sometimes escaping us, without having achieved meaningful change or progress. Recall my earlier statement:

Goals drive action, and action drives results.

When you drive results, you move closer to your goals.

Since you have completed your vision, mission, and values, you're already halfway there. Encourage those around you to do the same – a spouse or colleague – to increase your accountability.

When you find people who are aligned with your goals, aren't afraid to think big, and are passionate about making a change, consider them your "tribe". They will be your biggest champions through the long, adventurous process of working toward your vision.

Congratulations: you have just accomplished a major milestone in leadership! Not only have you begun to elicit courage within yourself, you can now inspire and develop it within others.

You know exactly what you want – go get it.

BUILD YOUR MOMENTUM

Keep learning to keep leading.

To learn more on developing accountability, building resilience in leadership, and turning vulnerability into a powerful force: [view my TEDx Talk here](#).

For free tips on building your brand and business, and to get exclusive offers on leadership develop, [sign up here](#).

For personal strategy sessions, contact me directly.

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