

BEING A LEADER

Articulates a clear vision, engaging others in the process



Introduction

An organisation, department or team's mission is their core purpose or reason for being. Their vision is what it will look like to fulfil their purpose and deliver their strategy and aspirations.



Vision is more than a short statement on a website, although this is helpful too. Managers need to be clear on what success looks like, for their team and their customers or stakeholders, and to be able to inspire others to co-create a shared vision and/or understand the vision and be enthused to be part of working towards this.

Teams need to take time out from day-to-day planning to ensure they are aligned on a clear purpose and vision. New team members need to feel engaged in the vision and have the chance to consider how their contributions support this.

Vision statements (often used externally) are usually short, simple and concise. They ring true – behaviours and values are aligned. They are aspirational. They describe what the business does as an output, i.e. what their clients, customers and stakeholders can expect from them. They might describe a desired future state, e.g. MIND the Mental Health Charity: 'We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.' Oxford University's Mission and Vision statements are set out below.

Once the team purpose and vision have been collectively agreed on, it is helpful to consider how this can be manifested in the ways you work together, so it's not just a statement in a dusty drawer. It's also important to regularly revisit your purpose and vision as it can change with time, context, new hires, new initiatives, etc.

Reflection

- How clear are you on your team purpose and vision?
- How clear are your stakeholders on your team purpose and vision?
- Take some time to note down what you feel is most important. Use the reflection questions in Activity A to help you.
- How well do you personally demonstrate your purpose and vision? What gets in your way? How confident are you at engaging your team to articulate or deliver your vision? What would help?
- If someone asked every member of your team what the team mission and vision are, would the answers be the same?
- How long is it since your team discussed your core purpose and vision?



LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR MANAGERS

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ACTIVITY A

- 1) In advance, have a go at answering the questions below, and ask your team to select and ask your team to select and reflect on a few of them:
 - What do we exist to do?
 - What can we do that no-one else does?
 - What do we do better than everyone else?
 - What would happen if we weren't here?
 - If we won an award, what would it be for?
 - What are you most excited about or most proud of in our work?
 - Why have we selected our current priorities?
 - What will it mean for our organisation if we fulfil our priorities?
 - Where do our stakeholders hope we will take them/need us to take them?
 - What data can we draw on to inform our understanding?
 - Where do we need to be in the next three to five years?
 - What do we want to be able to say about our team in three to five years' time? What do we want our stakeholders to say?
 - What will success look like and feel like? What will be happening?
 - How are we supporting Oxford University's mission and vision (set out below)?
- 2) Collate and value everyone's ideas and pull out key themes.
- 3) Agree who will have a go at producing some short statements. If you need an outward-facing vision statement, then someone needs to craft this, based on your themes. If the discussion is intended just to ensure you all have a good understanding of the vision and are able to articulate this to others, then you don't need to polish it too much!
- 4) Share the summary points and ensure you have agreement from everyone that it reflects the purpose and vision and that they can see how their role contributes to this.
- 5) Decide how you will seek stakeholder input on your vision. What data do you already have from stakeholders?
- 6) Consider what opportunities you have to revisit and stay aligned to your agreed vision.



Complete the Reflection sheet

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ACTIVITY B

If you have already worked on articulating your purpose and vision:

- 1) Allocate time in a team meeting or away day to review and refresh.
- 2) In advance, ask your team to select and reflect on a few of the questions below:
 - What examples do you have in your work which you particularly feel demonstrate our purpose or vision?
 - How clear is our vision to our stakeholders? What more could we do here?
 - Are you clear how your role supports our purpose and vision?
 - How well are we living our mission and working towards our vision? What could we do differently to align more closely?
 - Does our mission and vision still feel live? Has anything in our context changed that we would like to reflect in our mission and vision?
 - How are we supporting Oxford University's mission and vision (set out below)?
 - What can we celebrate?

University of Oxford

Mission

The advancement of learning by teaching and research and its dissemination by every means.

Vision

We will work as one Oxford bringing together our staff, students and alumni, our colleges, faculties, departments and divisions to provide world-class research and education. We will do this in ways which benefit society on a local, regional, national and global scale. We will build on the University's long-standing traditions of independent scholarship and academic freedom while fostering a culture in which innovation and collaboration play an important role.

We are committed to equality of opportunity, to engendering inclusivity, and to supporting staff and student wellbeing, ensuring that the very best students and staff can flourish in our community. We believe that a diverse staff and student body strengthens our research and enhances our students' learning.

The University's distinctive democratic structure, born of its history, will continue to offer a source of strength. Likewise Oxford's collegiate structure provides the University with key aspects of its academic strength and its highly attractive student experience. Oxford will continue to foster the interdisciplinary nature of the colleges, their teaching strength, and their defining and enduring sense of community.



Complete the Reflection sheet