How to use brand vision to bring your future into focus

Category: Branding
written by Steve Harvey | 4 January 2018
Behind every world-changing business is one all-important ingredient: an effective brand; and behind every brand, is a story built upon a strong vision.

A brand is much bigger than a company. While your business gives your customers something they want, your brand creates an emotional connection, using values and identity to inspire loyalty. With a brand, you can engage your audience, and help them to start supporting your business, based on what they know about your organisation.

However, to create a brand, you'll need two important elements, a brand mission, and a brand vision. While a mission tells your investors, team, and audience where your company is focusing today, a vision tells the most important people around you where you're going tomorrow. It highlights where you hope to find yourself in five, ten, or even twenty years.

So, why is your vision so important? Well, Harvard studies find that companies with vision statements grow four times faster than a standard business.

Your brand vision definition is what gives life and structure to your company as you pursue your own unique idea of success. For some, it's a simple sentence, whereas others prefer a short paragraph. Regardless of the individual nuances, all vision statements should define the core ideals that give your company direction, and pave the way for brand loyalty.

Here, we'll dive a little deeper into the concept of a brand vision, and offer some examples to help you get a better view for the future of your business.

Brand vision definition: What is brand vision?

A lot of companies get confused when it comes to establishing a brand vision definition. After all, vision and mission statements are so closely connected, that some businesses believe they're the same thing. However, although your vision is linked to your purpose, identity, and mission, it's not the same thing. While a mission outlines what you're trying to do right now, a brand vision shows where your company is heading, and what you aspire to.

Your brand vision should be a short, clear, and easy-to-understand statement of intent, designed to inspire your audience and your team. For instance:

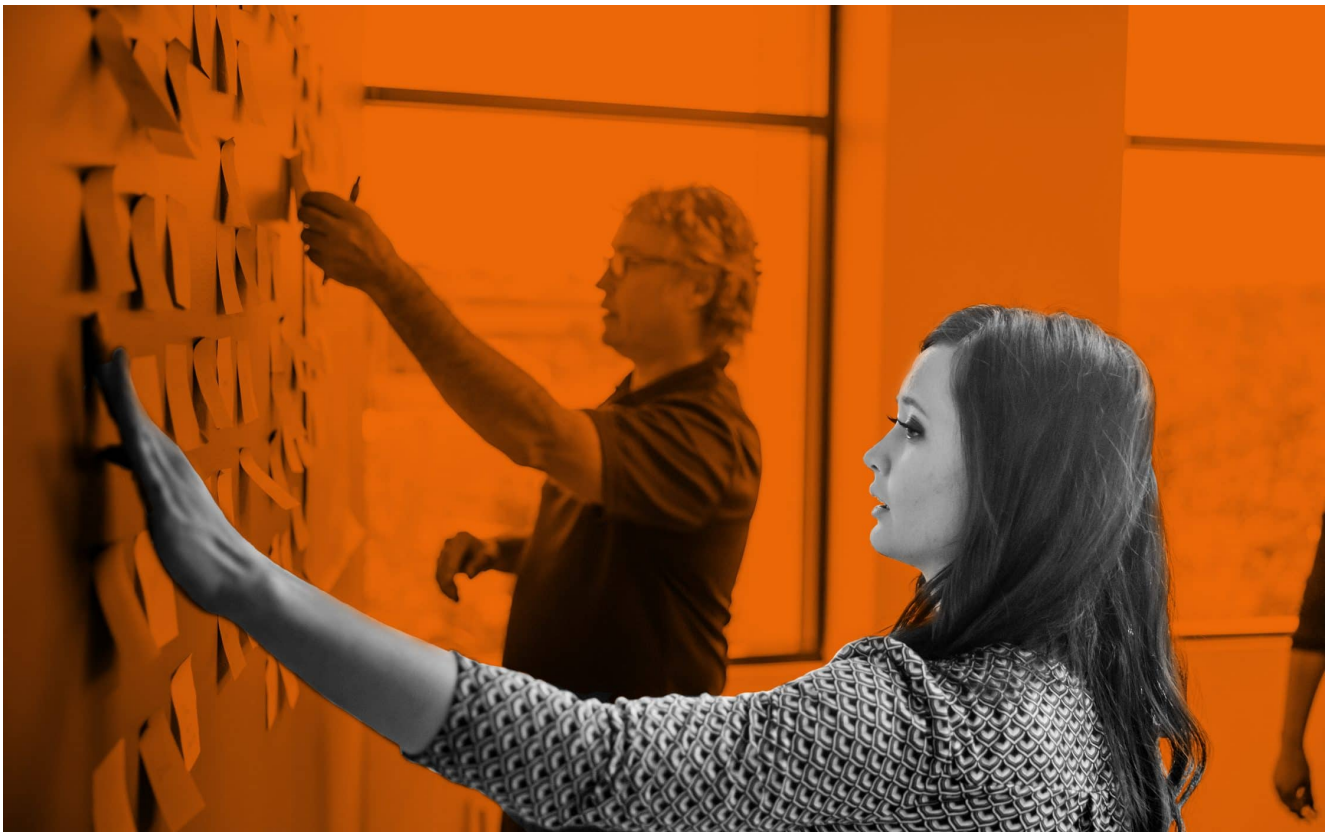
- **Microsoft's vision was once:** "A computer on every desktop, and in every home." Now, their mission is to help people and businesses to "achieve more".
- **Instagram's vision is:** "To capture and share the world's moments".
- **Wikipedia's vision is:** "To create a world where every person has access to the sum of all human knowledge."

You'll notice that these statements aren't just a couple of words meant to inform a marketing strategy. Each of the brand vision statements above aim to change or improve the world in some way. They're huge and bold, but they're also accessible too.

Importantly, unlike the values of your company which may remain the same for several years, or your tone of voice, which constantly remains in tune with your brand identity, a brand vision definition is more subject to things like timelines and change. For instance, Microsoft had to change their vision statement when they achieved their goal of global technology access.

The ever-evolving trends and needs of the marketplace mean that vision statements can easily fluctuate. That's why it's so important to place timelines around your visions and ensure you stay aware of the current marketplace too.

Your brand vision can be a powerful way to highlight a direction for your company and the way you want to grow. However, it doesn't necessarily have to outlive your business. As your brand grows and the industry continues to change, your vision will need to keep pace, constantly pushing you forwards. If you're no longer striving towards the future with your brand vision or your goals are no longer relevant, then you'll need to go back to the drawing board.



Starting the search for your brand vision

When you work with a brand vision agency or even a brand consultancy, you'll learn that all brands begin with two important statements: the vision statement and the mission

statement. Your mission statement defines the effect you hope to have on the world around you, and the approach you're currently following to achieve success. Your vision statement explains why you're doing what you're doing, and the ultimate result you want to achieve with your brand.

Your core ideology and envisioned future

Finding your own brand vision can be a complicated process. After all, it's about asking yourself where you see your business going in the next ten, twenty, or thirty years. According to Jerry Porras and James Collins, every brand vision should include two core components: an envisioned future, and a core ideology.

Your core ideology is the part of your brand vision that doesn't change with time. It's a concept that's built off your brand values and remains consistent with your overall identity. For instance, your ideology might be that you want to make technology simpler for customers while remaining true to environmental ethics. Your "envisioned future" on the other hand, is the lofty and dream-like goal that you want to obtain in the mid-term future.

A brand vision requires you to ask yourself not just what you stand for, and how you're different to other competitors in your space, but also how you're going to achieve something that's never been done before. A vague, or cliché goal isn't enough. You need something that's going to inspire change.

Your brand vision definition begins with value

Since your vision should be focused on how you're going to deliver value to the world, and your customers, it's important to place value at the centre of your search for meaning. While all companies have value, the challenge is choosing a vision statement that defines your values.

In general, you'll need to start by thinking about what you believe your responsibility to your customers is. If you already have brand values in place, this should help you think more carefully about your brand promise, and how you plan on differentiating yourself in the marketplace. Your values might include:

- Selling the most environmentally friendly products around.
- Offering the highest-quality materials or products.
- Supporting happiness and satisfaction within your corporate culture.
- Providing competitive prices, while still making profit.
- Serving and supporting local communities.

Defining your hopes and aspirations

Another thing to remember about your brand vision is that it should identify the single most important reason your business exists. Regardless of whether you rebrand, change your name, or update your logo, your vision of what you're aiming to achieve should remain the same until it becomes outdated, or you reach your goal.

As you start to look into your own brand vision, keep the following questions in mind:

- What makes you and your team members want to come to work each day? You could earn a living in a million places, so what do you feel passionate about in your job?
- What change are you trying to make in the world? Your brand should exist for a reason, and leave the world different than it was before you began.
- What ultimate benefits can your services and products deliver?

Use your answers to those questions, and your understanding of

your unique values and promises to your customers, to compile a “vision statement”, that describes the perfect future for your brand.

Tips for a stronger brand vision statement

Creating a brand vision statement is a long, and complicated process (and something we’ll cover in a later blog post). For now, however, it’s important for you to realise just how crucial it can be to get your statement right. Vision statements aren’t just a way to help you build stronger affinity with your audience. The right vision statement can also help you to keep hold of your key employees for longer. Forbes found that 70% of workers don’t understand their brand vision, but those who do have engagement scores of 68% or over.

For both your team and your target audience, it makes sense to situate your fantasies and aspirations for the future into a roadmap you can use for success. Just remember, before you get started, all brand vision statements should be:

1. Easy to identify

Because vision statements can sometimes be confusing, they’re often lost within the various documents that identify your company or form your brand manifesto. Unfortunately, a vision statement can’t really work for your company until it becomes something that your team members can use as a sort of mantra for success. Your vision statement needs to be something that both your customers and your company know by heart. Make it clear, concise, and easy to recognise.

2. Easy to understand

A vision statement can be, in part, a grandiose dream of the

future. However, it still needs to be something that your people can see in their mind’s eye. Make sure that you don’t use any vague statements or terms that might go over the heads of your customers and employees. Your brand vision is an idea of what the future could be like if your customers advocate on your behalf, and your employees stand for your brand. If your people can’t really see what you’re all about, then they can’t feel connected to your vision statement.

3. Short and sweet

Finally, while you want people to be inspired and moved by your brand vision definition, you also want to make sure that they remember it too. When it comes to improving your chances of industry-wide understanding and recognition, less is more. Try to bring your vision statement down to a couple of sentences when possible.

If you’re struggling to find a brand vision definition that works for you, or you don’t know how to conduct the right research to plan for your future, then you’ll need to turn to a brand vision agency for help. Still, to get you started, it can be useful to look at a few other big-name companies for inspiration.



Brand vision examples: Companies who use vision to inspire

A brand vision is something that's personal to your company. It's a one-of-a-kind concept of what you want to accomplish in the future. That means that you can't exactly rephrase something that another company has said and claim their vision as your own. However, checking out other successful brands, and doing a little competitor analysis could still be key for bringing your vision to life.

Evaluating the "visions" that have been created by other businesses in your industry can give you an insight into which ideas your customers resonate with the most. At the same time, a little research into some big-name brands from across the globe could also give you the understanding you need to create a brand vision that truly inspires and motivates.

To help get you started on your journey towards brand vision, we've put together a few of our favourite brand vision

examples from over the years.

1. Life is Good

If you do a quick search for brand vision examples online, you'll find countless references to the company "Life is Good", a retail store that thrives on the power of optimism. Life is Good sells clothing and apparel for men, women, and children, but the most appealing part of its offering is its brand vision "to spread the power of optimism" around the world.



To bring its vision to life, Life is Good has used its mission to spread optimism around the world in many different ways. From creating inspirational slogans for their t-shirts to getting involved with countless community and charity campaigns, this is a brand that lives and dies by its brand vision.

2. Warby Parker

Warby Parker is a company that sells eyewear. However, their

vision has set them apart as more than just another retailer. Warby Parker wants to "offer designer eyewear at a revolutionary price", while they also create more socially-conscious companies across the globe. The brand isn't just trying to improve your eyesight, they're also helping to create a better vision of the future. While their mission centres around selling their products, their vision hinges on socially conscious behaviour.



As brand vision examples go, Warby Parker ticks all the right boxes. They're emotional, socially-conscious, and their mission fits perfectly with their vision.

3. IKEA

The chances are that when you think of Ikea, you think of a place that offers versatile, cheap furniture. However, the vision behind the company is to "create a better everyday life" for everyone. In other words, their focus isn't on delivering attractive and affordable furniture to the masses, although that's certainly part of their mission. IKEA wants to make your life easier, and they're using their unique store to

do that.



IKEA believe that they’re serving their vision by making decent furniture available to as many people as possible – regardless of their budget. This vision resonates perfectly with the voice and personality of the company, which remains consistently friendly and devoted to its customers.

4. Northrop Grumman

Northrop Grumman is a tech company dreaming of a future where they can offer secure, simple technology solutions to their customers. While some believe that Northrop isn’t one of best brand vision examples because their statement is so long, it does give budding companies an insight into what they should be thinking about when crafting an idea of the future.



The vision statement is a paragraph or two in length, but it also communicates the goals and values of the company very well. Plus, it's worth noting that being a defence technology leader is a tough task – it may be that Northrop Grumman struggled to identify their brand vision with fewer words.

5. Amazon

Finally, Amazon.com is probably one of the best-known online marketplaces in the world today. They say that their vision is "to be the world's most customer-centric company". Amazon also wants to "build a place where people can discover anything they want online".



As brand vision examples go, this is a great one. Amazon not only define their values and mission in their statement but they also clearly define it as a “vision” statement on their website too. Their idea of the future links back to their values of being a “customer-centric” company, while highlighting a lofty goal of a future where everything can be found on a simple, connected marketplace.

The value of vision

At this point, you should have a good idea of what a brand vision is, but you may not understand how your vision can help to differentiate your company. At the end of the day, there are companies throughout the world that resonate in the marketplace, and connect with their customers. These are the brands that know what they stand for and know where they want to be in the future. Ultimately, if you aren’t aiming for something in business, then you’re not going to achieve anything.

There are plenty of companies out there that know their Unique

Selling Point, and not much else about their brand. These organisations are content with simply being present in the marketplace. While they focus on using content marketing and other common methods to advertise themselves, their efforts are somewhat hollow, because they've got no intention to change the world. All they want to do is make a profit.

There's nothing definitively wrong with conventional companies that concentrate on putting cashflow first – we all want to make a profit, after all. However, without a vision, there's nothing in your business that can motivate your customers, inspire your workers, and earn you the long-term loyalty that comes with things like word of mouth marketing and brand loyalty.

If you want to be a truly unforgettable company, then you need to be willing to change the world, just like:

- Harley Davidson did with motorcycles.
- Starbucks did with coffee.
- Apple did with personal computing and communication.
- Google did with online search.

These companies aren't just successful because they introduced something new and innovative to the marketplace. They're successful because they pushed the envelope to bring their vision to life. They imagined what the future could be like if they were to solve the pain points and problems of their target audience.

If you want to be the kind of business that sets the standard for your industry, inspires your customers, and changes the world, then you need a vision statement – and not just any old brand vision will do. A brand vision is about thinking big, striving to make the world a better place based on what you know about your customers and your competitors.

A great brand vision isn't a kitchen-sink statement that's designed to appeal to everyone. Your vision needs to say

something unique about your company, focus on the future, and clearly define what you can offer your community.



Need company clarity? Use a brand vision agency

As we mentioned above, a brand vision can be difficult to clarify. It needs to:

- Define what industry you’re in.
- Focus on the future.
- Say something powerful about your business.
- Be inspirational and aspirational.
- Fit with your strategy, mission, and values.
- Respond to the trends of the day.

That’s a lot of elements for your company to think about. Unfortunately, without a brand vision, you can’t really define your values and purpose, and without those elements, you have nothing to set you apart from your competitors.

The more specific and clear you are about what you want to accomplish with your brand, the more you can prioritise the things you want to accomplish, and determine where you need to make changes for success. Your brand vision lays the pathway to help you achieve your business goals while keeping your customers loyal, and your team members motivated. That's why so many businesses turn to a brand vision agency for guidance.

A brand vision agency can dive deeper into the defining features of your company, and discover the points that make you unique. By highlighting your unique values, a brand vision agency can inspire you to create a brand vision that energises your business. Eventually, you'll end up with a concept, and strategy, that can help you to change the world with your brand.

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