Searching for success: How to write a brand vision statement

Category: Branding
written by Steve Harvey | 16 January 2018
Take a moment to imagine some of the world's greatest brands. Apple, Disney, Google – there are countless names to consider.

The thing that makes these companies so appealing, isn't their stellar products, their fantastic approach to customer service, or their incredible theme parks. While those things definitely help, the feature that drives loyalty, commitment, and advocacy from the consumers behind these brands, is the fact that they can inspire true enthusiasm in their customers, and dedication in their employees.

If you want to be successful in today's marketplace, then all you need to do, is remember that businesses build products, but brands build relationships.

If you want to create a stronger connection with your customers, that's based on something deeper than price points, and packaging, you're going to need a range of important elements, intended to help drive you towards your goals. These elements include things like your values, identity, and of course, your brand vision.

A carefully-crafted vision statement can form the heart of your brand's "human side", showing your overall goals and values to the world, and helping to provide your team with the roadmap it needs for future decision making.

In the past, we've told you all about the benefits of brand vision. Now, let's take a look at how you can plan for the future, by learning how to write a brand vision statement.



What is a vision statement? The basic rules for your plan

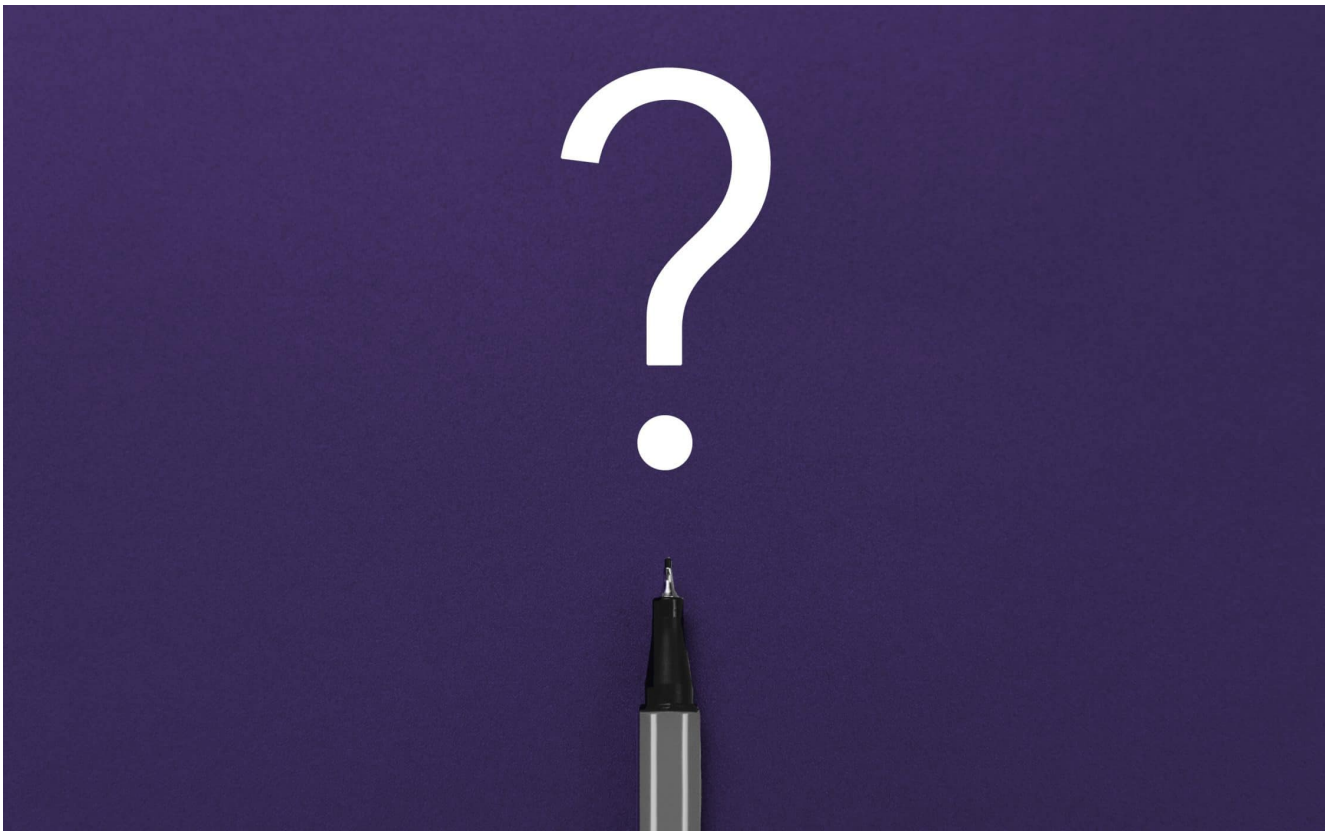
From a basic perspective, writing a brand vision statement begins with understanding, and defining your company. In a world where customers are searching for stronger, more authentic connections with their favourite organisations, no business can survive without a strong identity.

While part of your identity comes from choosing things like your tone of voice, personality, and your marketing media, another part will come from the "story" of your business. This story outlines where you come from, and where you want to go. That second part is the focus when learning how to write a brand vision statement, and it involves asking the following questions:

- What does your business do?
- How do you help people?
- What are you trying to achieve?

- How are you planning on achieving your goals?

A brand vision basically goes beyond the unique selling point and other features that set your company apart in the industry, and asks, why do you exist? While different companies will form their brand vision statements in different ways, there are a few common rules that apply to pretty much any successful vision. For instance:



1. All vision statements must be short and unambiguous

A lengthy, complicated brand vision statement will go right over the heads of your customers and employees. That's why the key to a successful statement will often lie in its length. While there isn't a specific word count, you'll need to restrict yourself to one or two sentences at most or else risk compromising on clarity. If you can't define your vision in less than two sentences, then you haven't clarified your objectives enough.

Your message also needs to be unambiguous. While telling people that you want to be "the best technology brand" is great, it's also vague. You need to create something that's specific, impactful, and inspirational. Choose words that give your brand vision statement depth, and make sure that the point you're trying to make is clear for instance: "We hope to be the fastest, most customer-focused technology company in the UK"

2. Be ambitious, but keep it simple

Simplicity is crucial if you want your brand vision statement to be memorable. Remember, the aim is to create something that can live in the hearts and minds of your customers, and brand ambassadors for years. While you need to motivate these people, you also need to keep your message simple enough to avoid any inconsistency or confusion.

Technical jargon is not appropriate for a vision statement. Don't expect your people to read between the lines to find out what you're all about. Don't "imply" anything. Tell people what you want to achieve in simple, effective language.

3. Keep it specific to your business

A brand vision statement is like a mantra for your company. In other words, it shouldn't be something that could just as easily work for a dozen other companies in the same industry. Just in case you were thinking of "borrowing" a statement from one of your competitors – remember that that's not going to work either. Your vision statement should be the embodiment of your personality, and your brand ideals.

While vision statements don't need to outline your specific products or services, they do have to be a part of what makes your company unique. Think about how you can share your one-of-a-kind approach with the world, through one or two simple sentences.

4. Align with business values

Finally, your vision statement should come from a strong understanding of your business values. You can't tell people about how you want to be the best company in your industry for customer service, if your values are focused on speed over personalisation. A brand vision statement is the key to helping you stay on track towards your goals, and making sure you "practice what you preach".

Look at what you've claimed "matters" to your business, and use your statement as a sort of banner for what you stand for as a company throughout your vision statement template.



How to write a vision statement: The process

At this point, you should have a relatively good understanding of what a vision statement needs to consider before it can be effective. With these "building blocks" in mind, you should be

ready to discover how to write a vision statement that really resonates with your audience.

The following vision statement tips, and building steps, should give you everything you need to craft your roadmap for a stronger brand story. Remember, this is your chance to earn the loyalty, and respect of your customers. So, grab a pen, and a piece of paper – and let's get started.

Writing a vision statement step 1: Why do you exist?

A brand vision statement needs to be business-specific if it's going to be effective. When figuring out how to write your brand vision statement, you might find it useful to refer back to some of the other business statements in your portfolio. For instance, your mission statement should highlight your business purpose, and the strategies you hope to use for success. This can be crucial in helping you figure out where you're heading in the future.

Using your mission statement, brand manifesto, and values for guidance, write some notes that outline exactly what your organisation does. Remember, do this with a focus on "output", rather than input. For instance, Microsoft famously wanted to put a computer on every desk in the world. While what Microsoft actually does is build computers, their vision focused on the output of their activities – a more empowered world.

Example: [Name] is a bakery that wants to **give more people access to cake**.

Writing a vision statement step 2: Define what you contribute

Any computer company could deliver more technology into the world. The key to a really powerful brand vision statement, is

figuring out what makes you different. Your USP should help you with this. Look at what you consider to be the most significant parts of your business in terms of differentiation. For instance, do you put customer service above all else? Are you the innovative company in your industry?

Using your unique position in the marketplace, jot down a few things on your vision statement template about what makes your business special, and think about how you can implement those things into your brand vision statement.

Example: [Name] is a **gluten-free** bakery that wants to give people access to more cake.

Writing a vision statement step 3: Outline your core values

Once you've decided what you can offer the world, and how you're going to achieve your goals in a more unique way, you can begin to think about how you can include the core values of your company into your brand vision statement. Learning how to write a brand vision statement requires you to think about not just why your company exists, but why it's better than your competitors.

The values of your brand should inform almost every part of your identity, from your company name, to your brand logo design. Depending on what you hope to accomplish with your company, your values might include things like honesty, integrity, and sustainability. Think about how you're using your values, to take you closer to your organisational goals.

Example: [Name] is a gluten-free bakery **delivering ethically-sourced, high-quality** cakes to people around London.

Writing a vision statement step 4: Think about the future

Finally, remember that a vision statement is not intended for the here and now. Anyone can tell you what your company is doing right at this moment. Your brand vision statement is your roadmap for the future. It’s there to motivate your employees, inspire your customers, and remind you of what you hope to achieve in the next five, ten, or fifteen years.

You can ensure that you’re focusing on the future with your brand vision statement by answering some of the following questions:

- What will our business look like in that time? Do we still want to do the same things?
- What will your business have accomplished by your chosen deadline?

Once you have an idea of your future, you can adjust your vision statement accordingly.

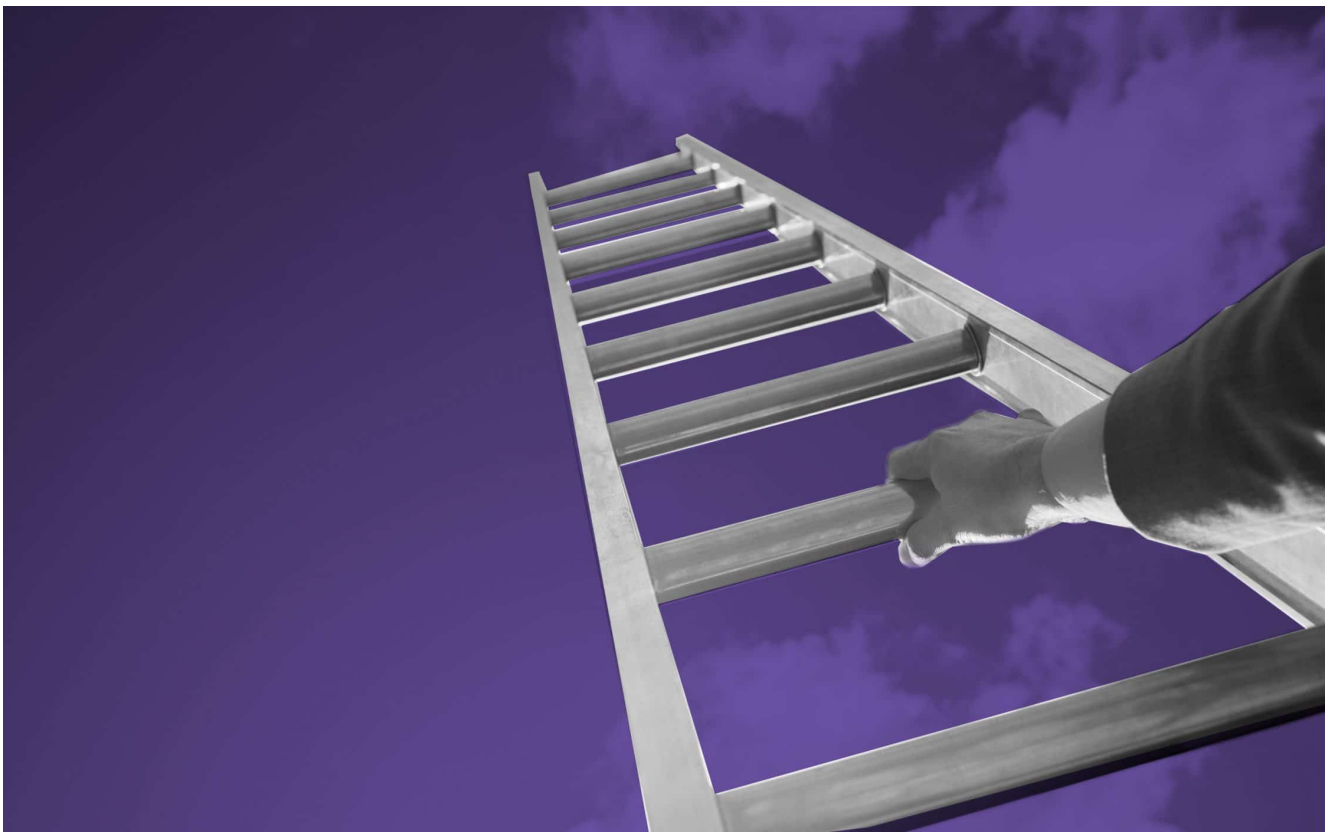
Example: [Name] is a gluten-free bakery in London that wants to deliver ethically-sourced, high-quality cakes to people **all across the United Kingdom**.



Reviewing your vision statement template: Be open to change

Writing a vision statement doesn't have to be a difficult experience. However, writing a brand vision statement that truly encapsulates your brand identity, and what you want to accomplish can be much tougher. While building a brand can be a time-consuming and complicated experience, it's important not to rush through the process.

One thing to remember is that while your vision statement shouldn't necessarily be changing with the seasons, it is something that's open to flexibility as your company evolves, and the industry around you opens the door to new concepts and trends. Living by your brand vision statement is key to success, but you don't have to keep up with a single statement and stick by it for the rest of time. Instead, you need to be aware when your vision statement is no longer inspirational, or appealing.



The Windows statement about getting a desktop in every home seemed inspirational back in the 1990s, but today, it's pretty much redundant. Your vision statement template should include room for growth, just in case it starts to lose that spark.

Review your vision statement regularly, and think about how it aligns with what your customers need right now, and what your business is doing. Are you moving closer to your goals? Do you and the people in your industry believe in what you're doing? Remember, your brand vision statement should be:

- **Inspirational:** A great vision statement is something that inspires and moves the people around your brand. It pushes your employees to be better at their job, and helps to transform your customers into people who are truly devoted to your brand.
- **Challenging:** If something already exists, then it's not really a vision. Your statement needs to be aspirational, something that forces your company to challenge itself every day. Your vision shouldn't be an easy target, but that doesn't mean it should be impossible either.

- **Achievable:** People aren't engaged by things that seem impossible. There's nothing wrong with lofty goals, but your vision can't be so far-fetched that it's perpetually out of reach. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be the best gluten-free bakery in the UK. However, being the best bakery in the world might be a little over the top.
- **Collective:** Discovering how to write a brand vision statement shouldn't be something that's done only by the main executives in a business. Your vision should be something you can share with everyone in your company – no matter their place on the corporate hierarchy. If you're all working towards the same goal, then you have a much better chance of success.
- **Aligning:** A brand vision statement can be powerful, in that it has the ability to align people from different backgrounds and environments towards a common understanding of one ultimate goal. In times of confusion, the brand vision statement can keep your company on track.
- **Clear**: Finally, the best vision statements are always worded in concise, clear language, that's easy for anyone to understand. This means avoiding "kitchen sink" statements designed to appeal to anyone, and anything, and staying away from jargon or complex terms.

Tips for simplifying your vision statement

One of the biggest benefits of writing a brand vision statement, is that it can give your company a way to organise your thoughts, and distribute goals throughout the organisation. If everyone knows where a brand is headed, then it's much easier to keep different teams and departments on the same track. However, a brand vision statement still needs to be carefully planned if it's going to be successful.

While learning how to write a brand vision statement means thinking about your company in terms of what might be possible in the future, and considering lofty ambitions, you still need your template to be grounded in reality. Here are a few tips for simplifying your vision statement, and making sure it's actionable for your entire audience.

1. Make sure your vision statement, mission statement, and values align

Before you can dive into concepts like brand awareness and recognition to help share your ideas and messages with the world, you need to make sure that the elements that make up your brand are consistent, and properly aligned. If your vision statement portrays an entirely different set of ideals to your brand values, then your customers, and employees are going to end up feeling confused.

At the same time, if your mission statement seems to imply that you're moving on a totally different track than your vision statement, then you're going to end up losing yourself somewhere along the way. Your brand vision, mission, and values all need to work hand-in-hand for them to be effective. Make sure you double-check this before you close the book on your brand identity.

2. Dream big

When writing a brand vision statement, it can be difficult to decide which ambitions are "too big" for your company, and which are too small. To some degree, making this decision will require you to think realistically about your ability as a business, and what you can do. For instance, if you're a small bakery with only one storefront, and about three ovens, then you probably won't be able to provide cakes to companies around the world anytime soon. But you also don't have to restrict yourself to being just "the best bakery on your

street.”

Give yourself a lofty goal. You don’t know where you’re going to be a couple of years from now. Being the best bakery in London might seem like a big step, but it’s definitely achievable.



3. Use a formula

When filling out your vision statement template, you should have a basic idea of what the future of your company looks like in mind. For some companies, this might mean sifting through a range of potential achievements or goals that you could direct yourself towards. To help keep you on track, try using this formula:

[Five/Ten/Fifteen] years from now, [Company name] will be [_____], in [____] with [_____]. For instance: “Five years from now, Cakery will be delivering gluten-free cupcakes in London, with a focus on ethically-sourced ingredients”.

This framework will help you to choose what you consider to be

the most important goal for your brand at this time, and the deadline you're giving yourself for success.

4. Commit to your brand vision statement

Finally, writing your brand vision statement, and living by it are two entirely different things. Just like the other elements of your brand manifesto, like your mission statement, USP, and values, you should be using your vision statement to help you make decisions about your company when it comes to long-term business planning.

Keep your vision statement alive in everything you do. Share it with your staff members, your employees, and your potential partners. If your vision statement becomes just another sentence in a steam of things you'd like to become associated with your business, it won't have any real authenticity or meaning. If you live by your statement, then you'll be more likely to create customer affinity and brand advocacy.



Your brand, your vision

When it comes down to it, writing a brand vision statement isn't exactly rocket science. With the template above, and the tips provided in this article, you should have everything you need to envision a future for your company. However, just because writing a brand vision statement isn't hard, doesn't mean it's necessarily straightforward either.

Creating the perfect statement for where your company wants to go and what it wants to do can be a complicated experience. Your vision statement is your chance to look into the future, and start writing a roadmap of how to get to wherever you want to be. You can use this statement to focus your message, and improve operational efficiency, or you can access it as a way of motivating your workforce. Either way, a vision statement can help to align a corporate culture, and give your customers something more powerful to connect with.

Though the best brand vision statements are simple and concise, designing the perfect idea of the future takes a lot of planning. You'll need to know your business completely, and identify the values, mission, and personality that's going to go into everything you do. After all, a vision statement that you can't believe in, simply isn't worth writing.

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