



White paper

Without a vision the people perish

How your vision for your product affects everything you do

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Scoutwest, Inc.

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Vision statements are popular to write, but technical people often don't like them. They don't like touchy-feely ambiguous statements without substance, and they don't like over ambitions and unattainable ones. Technical people can sniff out this drivel quickly and usually lose confidence in managers who employ them. Because of these pitfalls, vision statements are tricky things to write, but still important.

Every project has a vision, whether or not it is ever articulated or documented. That is, the reason for a project is known to its visionaries even if it is never communicated any farther. The questions become: have the stakeholders thought through the vision enough to know they really want it, or something else instead, and have they been successful in communicating that vision to the troops? A vision statement helps to serve those basic purposes. It makes you think, and it makes you communicate.

Your vision for a product is your purpose for its existence. Everyone has a reason they create products, and hopes for their success. That is the vision. Each new release of a product also has a purpose. For instance, you might produce a new line of eyeglasses to attract young influential buyers. Another line might be targeted to senior citizens who need reading glasses. These two product lines have entirely different purposes. The vision statements for each would be quite different. It would be crucial to communicate this vision to everyone in the organization before proceeding with the design.

Your vision for a product release should dictate how much time you wish to spend on it, the budget, and the proposed features. It should give you the strength to ignore everything else and focus on the task at hand. It's easier to ignore the noise when you have a clear purpose and measurable results. You can focus on doing that one thing that will yield a predicted result. Singleness of

mind is a powerful aspect of business, and singleness of vision for the entire team is unbeatable. A clear vision puts you on a rail, headed straight for the destination.

A vision statement should help you choose the detailed features for a product release. If your vision is simple and well defined, it's usually easy to determine if a certain feature helps you reach that goal. However, sometimes during the process of choosing features, you may realize that your vision is not comprehensive enough. Under these circumstances, it's okay to change it, but beware that a broader vision allows more features to be added, and can result in a bigger budget and timeframe than you originally intended. An increased budget or implementation timeframe may itself violate the vision.

Your vision may focus on budget, timeframe, features, or even customer groups. Focusing on meeting the needs of certain customers is a wonderful way to determine the features for a product release. Knowing the needs of your customers helps you focus and keep from going down rat holes that don't benefit the end-user.

Sometimes it's impossible to involve everyone in your vision. Don't be discouraged by that. There are plenty of independent people who think they are above team involvement. Sometimes these people are quick to criticize or undermine your vision, but slow to involve themselves in improving it. Keeping the vision simple and realistic can help a lot. It's easy to criticize a vision statement that is too lofty to fulfill.

About Us

Scoutwest, Inc. develops and publishes project management and time tracking products for consulting, manufacturing, government, and general business applications.

Thousands of small to large businesses, in dozens of countries worldwide, trust their mission critical business processes to Scoutwest products. Standard Time® and Standard Issue® work together to offer well-rounded project management solutions.

We specialize in packaged software for timesheets, project management, time tracking, defect tracking, and issue tracking. Standard Time is a web-based timesheet that also runs on Windows, Palm OS, and Pocket PC. It can be used for client billing and task management. Standard Issue is used for bug tracking and general issue tracking.

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