



Keeping a Focus on Mission & Vision

RESOURCE

KEEPING A FOCUS ON MISSION & VISION

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Holding a focus on your mission and vision may feel easy when you're writing your annual report, having a conversation with funders about your organization's work, or creating a three-year strategic plan.

But how can you maintain that focus every day, in an abundant way? In short, by seizing every opportunity to embed your organizational mission in the work of the board, staff, and volunteers.

Here are seven tips to keep your mission and vision top of mind, every day, no matter what your role in your organization:

1. Celebrate success.

Celebrations may be formal, such as an annual review of strategic priorities, or informal. At Vantage Point, we have a culture where everyone is encouraged to share 'mission moments' with the rest of the team: positive feedback from a client or funder, or another organization sharing our resources or blog posts indicate to us that we are getting closer to achieving our goals of transforming the not-for-profit sector. Those small indicators of success are celebrated as much as larger milestone achievements.

2. Create a one-page strategic plan and make sure that everyone connected to the organization has a copy to easily refer to.

Strategic plans don't work when they're tucked away in a binder on a shelf or desk drawer. To keep your mission and vision top of mind, keep it visible. Share your one-page plan with everyone: your volunteers, board members, and staff. Encourage staff members to post it in their workspace. Bring a copy of it to your board or committee meetings. Post it in your break room and on your website.

3. Embed your vision, mission or strategic goals into your board meetings.

When the board stops talking about mission, a drift away feels inevitable. But a few techniques can prevent this. One strategy is to organize the board's agenda according to strategic objectives. Use your strategic objectives as headers or themes for each section of the agenda. This can create rigour around what the board discusses. If an agenda item does not clearly connect to fulfilling a strategic objective, board time will not be spent on discussing it. Another might be to add generative and strategic questions to the board agenda that direct the focus back to the mission and vision. For example, when considering a new project, you may want to add the question "How will this help us deliver our mission?" to the agenda item. Be sure to send the agenda out in advance so board members can come to the meeting prepared to dive into discussion.

4. Support your strategic plan with an aligned annual operational plan.

Why is linking the big picture, game-changing work you set out in your strategic plan to your day-to-day reality powerful? Because it provides a fail-safe way to ensure that even when things become busy and our focus shifts from planning to doing, your efforts are directed towards moving towards the mission. It can also provide flexibility to focus on different aspects of your strategic plan each year. When creating your annual operational plan, remember that engagement is important. An operational plan needs to have many fingerprints on it – ideally all staff members should have a role in creating an operational plan. Finally, be sure to include the efforts of your volunteers and knowledge philanthropists in your plan. This way, you can take a holistic approach at planning and ask: are we effectively directing all of our key resources – board engagement, financial supports, or volunteer and staff contributions – toward our mission?

5. Review your annual operational plan once per quarter.

A good place to starting is by reviewing your vision, mission and strategic priorities before you discuss individual projects, operational KPI's, or financial outcomes. Reviewing your operational plans and progress can provide information useful to the board, too. Staff feedback might prompt the board to consider questions such as: Should the organization adopt a new approach to accomplishing strategic priorities in the next planning cycle? Do we need to set different operational or strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to measure our progress towards mission?

6. Clarify the connection between individual effort and organizational success.

Make it clear that no matter what your role in the organization – senior staff, board member, support staff or volunteer – there is a linkage between your work and the organization’s drive towards mission and vision. For board members and volunteers -- those in the organization who do not create individual annual development goals – it can be even more important to see this connection clearly. Why? Because it reveals that the opportunity for leadership and mission impact exists at every level of the organization.

7. Create individual staff development goals that align with organizational goals.

Setting individual goals is a key component of your performance support system, but it also serves a larger purpose: reinforcing a clear connection to the high-level organization goals. This can begin with the step above, clarifying the connection between individual’s role and organizational success. To take that to the next level, have each staff member label their individual development goals with one of your organization’s strategic priorities. Sharing these goals as a team can then roll-up to demonstrate how, by working together, you will accomplish your strategic priorities and, ultimately, fulfill your organizational mission.

Looking for further learning on Abundance?

Check out Vantage Point’s [Year of Abundance](#).

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