

1.1.1 Develop a clear vision

(Excerpt from *A Critical Skills Handbook for Performance Excellence in K-12 Educational Technology Leadership*)

A clear vision creates a picture of the organization's desired future with an inspiring purpose. High-performing leaders develop a clear vision through a deeper understanding of their leadership role. Their vision has greater depth and is far more reaching than just "*where they are going.*" It is about who they want to be or become. Their vision embodies the organization's mission which includes "*the why.*" It encompasses an articulated picture of "*the what.*" It's so compelling, others can't imagine not being part of it.

It's more than just a vision with a statement of words. The vision embodies the leader's credibility and influence. It's what the leader stands for that makes the vision come alive. The vision only becomes a unified vision when people believe in the leader and choose to follow. The goal is for the people to embrace the vision as if it belongs to them.

Developing a clear vision takes time to prepare because it involves visualizing what the organization will be in one, three or even five plus years. It requires a higher order of imagination to make the vision clear and inspiring. It needs to be relatable so that people can associate a mental image with the vision. The vision is most effective when you can increase the energy levels to motivate people to give their best and work through complex challenges. The following are some ideas to show you how to develop a clear vision.

- *Start with the heart.* The most impactful vision is one that involves a worthy cause. What could be more well-intentioned than providing education technology programs and services so students can learn and be successful? Taking it to heart will arouse the level of emotions that are needed to keep the momentum going over time.

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- *Take time to imagine an improved future.* Crafting the vision is hard work. It requires concentrated effort on your part. You may want to step away from the office or your surroundings. Start with a statement that is extremely ambitious.
- *Don't get stuck on the how.* It's a delicate balance because people need a clear picture before they can embrace the vision, but the vision isn't the mission. It's not *how you will get there*. The vision is *where you are headed and why*. It is your big picture with grand ideas for the future. Don't get bogged down in the details.
- *Write down specific descriptions of what success looks like.* Ignore any challenges you foresee. Include what you would like to see happen. To make it more believable, write in the present tense, as though it has already happened. The result will be a narrative that may be several pages in length. A condensed version of the vision is helpful for others but for you as the leader, you need specific details so you can effectively communicate the vision. Consider these four (4) questions:

1. *Who are we in the future?* This helps you visualize success. Here are some examples.

This level of detail brings depth to your vision.

- We are technology experts that are talented, customer-oriented with impeccable character.
- We are driven and eager to serve K-12 staff and students.
- Our team works together to ensure we exceed all customer expectations.
- We are agile, open to change and able to embrace new technologies quickly.

2. *What technology programs and services will you deliver?* This answers the question, what do we do? People must have a clear idea of the programs it creates and what services it offers.

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- We provide innovative technology solutions.
- We help educators use technology in a meaningful way.
- We elevate student success.
- We deliver world-class technology programs and services.

3. *Who do we serve?* These are your customers. This is who you are trying to reach.

- We serve all students ranging from Pre-K to 12th grade.
- We serve teachers and administrators that provide service and support to students.
- We serve support staff that provides student services.
- We serve parents and legal guardians of our students.

4. *What impact will you have?* Go ahead and describe the intended impact of your vision.

- Because of our technology solutions, educators and support staff won't waste a minute of their valuable time.
- Our students ready to enter college or the workforce with certifications or specialized knowledge and skills.
- Students are creative, life-long learners.
- Customers are engaged and have all the programs and services they need to be influencers of education technology.

Vision, by definition, is an unseen future reality. A great leader makes that vision come alive for others, so they are not only inspired but also directed to act. Make your vision concrete, specific, and inviting, and others will join you in making it a reality. Here are some examples.

- The most innovative technology solution provider of K-12 digital solutions in the nation.
- Trusted technology partnership elevating education through innovative technology.

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- World-class, best of the best technology solutions serving students and educators.
- The most innovative, responsive, customer-driven technology partner in K-12.
- Seamless technology service most admired for its people.
- Moving education forward and giving students and customers the best technologies and services in the nation.
- Providing world-class technology programs and services to satisfied customers through continuous improvement driven by the innovation, teamwork and creativity of our people.
- The premier technology programs and services in K-12 education.
- To fulfil student dreams through the experiences of innovative technologies.
- Delight our customers 100%, every time, all the time.
- Enablers of the future through technology innovation.
- To realize the tremendous potential of every student by providing technology services that consistently exceeds our customers' expectations.
- The preeminent education technology support team that fully engages our people, passionately embraces new ideas, seeks out transforming technologies and performs with unbending customer service performance standards.
- Bringing growth to our community, serving education and making our students dreams become a reality.
- To create an efficient world-class education technology system that engages and prepares all students to be globally competitive for college and careers.
- Dedicated to creating the most epic technology experiences...ever.
- To never waste an instructional second of time due to technology disruption.

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- Be the district that transforms education.
- Where technology is always on, always fast, always innovative and always seamless.
- To be the benchmark example of the best education technology in K-12 across the nation.
- To be the partner-of-choice for best-in-class education technology services.
- To become the world leader at connecting students and educators to technology experiences.
- The go-to technology partner for K-12 education.
- Education technology in the hands of everyone and always available.
- Giving students and educators the power to connect, work and learn.
- Connect students and educators so they are productive, successful and lifelong learners.
- Be the fabric of innovative, real-time communication and learning in our school system.
- Help students and customers have the best possible experience with technology.
- To give everyone the power to learn, work and share ideas and information instantly, consistently.
- To be the education technology team that is admired its people, partnerships and performance.
- Spark transformational learning enabled by innovative technologies.

Once your vision is concrete, share it. Read it every day. Depending on the dynamics of your organization, you may want to solicit input from your key leaders. Build momentum by bringing the picture alive through posters, logos, excitement, or whatever it takes to consistently reinforce the vision. It's not enough to just communicate the vision. You must believe in the vision wholeheartedly. With your leadership influence and a clear vision, you help everyone in the organization be and become their best.