



HOMWORK 2: VISION

What is Vision?

Vision sets your church on a course toward a desired destination. It takes who you are (values) and points that uniqueness toward what you can accomplish.

Vision:

- **Paints a picture.** People see where you're going so they can determine if they want to go there with you.
- **Focuses you.** It narrows down what you say "yes" to and what you say "no" to so you mobilize all your energy and resources in the same direction.
- **Shared by leaders.** Most pastors have a personal vision for their church, but they cannot make that vision a reality without unifying with staff and laity so everyone is pulling and pushing in the same direction.
- **Builds momentum.** As a leader, you see where you are going so clearly that your passion about it is contagious and others feel compelled to come along.

How does knowing and understanding your church's vision impact your **MARKETING PLAN**?

It points you in the direction where your **MARKETING PLAN will take you.**

Your vision will help you decide what marketing strategies and tactics will steer you in the direction you want to go, propelling you farther along in that direction.

Example 1:

A church's vision statement: To "transform spiritually distracted families in our local community to know and love God."

Their marketing strategy targets busy soccer moms driving kids around town. Their tactics include a) radio spots before and after school, b) a summer arts camp for kids, and c) showcasing their café's free wireless so dad can work while waiting for son to play basketball.

Example 2:

A church's vision statement: To "find and accept the diversity among God's creation and show everyone how to love God and love others."

Their marketing strategy targets minorities who are seeking a church to belong to. Their tactics include a) a free ESL program for the minority community, b) bi-lingual flyers posted at local ethnic grocery stores/restaurants, visually illustrating the church's openness to diversity, and c) hosting a yearly ethnic festival at the church and encouraging the minority community to participate and attend.

Creates the messages around which you will center your **MARKETING PLAN**

Your **MARKETING PLAN** needs to center around key messages ... words and concepts that communicate with the people you want to reach and inspire to respond. Knowing your vision lays the foundation for those key messages.

Example:

The church mentioned above in Example 1 might use the following as their key messaging (Elevator Statement). Note the use of the vision statement to communicate where they're going.

"Our community is filled with families that are spiritually distracted. They are driven to succeed, to find happiness, to live lives of fulfillment and purpose. But the things that drive them actually distract them ... away from God and the life of fulfillment and purpose that only He can offer."

"There are families at ABC United Methodist Church who are driven toward spiritual fulfillment. They have found true happiness, friendships, fulfillment and purpose as the church has helped 'transform them into knowing and loving God."

"ABC United Methodist Church and the individuals who comprise it want to reach and transform spiritually distracted families in our local community so they come to know and love God. We do this by:

- Welcoming people into an inspiring and intimate worship experience.*
- Offering relevant studies and spiritual formation opportunities to help them become followers of Christ.*
- Serving to make a difference and benefit our community and world.*



STOP!

Core Values? Vision? These words are *so* confusing!

You're right! Companies and churches use words like, values, vision, mission, strategy, and guiding principles, all the time and they mean different things in different environments. For the development of your **MARKETING PLAN**, we're only focusing on Core Values and Vision; let's use them in this way:

Core Values: Who You Are *at the Core*

Your church's foundational principles that rarely change. They tell YOU who you are throughout the life of your church, no matter what your strategies, surroundings and circumstances are.

Vision: Your *Outward* Destination

Sets your church on a course toward a desired destination (that may or may not be tangible). It takes what God has uniquely created your church to be (values) and points you toward what He designed you to accomplish.

Your **MARKETING PLAN** is one of many components that move you toward your vision. Other components that support your vision and move you toward it:

- Organizational Structure
- Staffing
- Resource allocation
- Decision making

Read/Respond/Reflect

Prepare through prayer. You might consider reading through Nehemiah chapters 1 and 2 to learn about God's vision for his people.

Here's a story about a person who lost focus on their vision. Read the following story and answer the questions below.

I was on my way to an important company meeting in another city. Having never traveled to this city, I entered the address into my GPS and carefully planned my departure time to allow for an early arrival to make a good impression.

As I got closer to the city, I realized I should have eaten something. I recalled that a friend had told me about a great restaurant nearby where I could get "the best milkshake on the planet." I reset my GPS to find the restaurant and headed in that direction.

As I headed toward the milkshake, I realized I was actually too tight on time and couldn't make it to the restaurant and still be at the meeting on time.

Now, feeling a little anxious about being late, I turned back to my GPS. Having headed off track and now anxious, I looked at my GPS and thought, "It says I'm supposed to go north, but I'm certain that the meeting location is south." I had taken my eyes off my original destination, and with thoughts of milkshakes and meetings swirling in my head, I decided not to trust my GPS.

Ten minutes later, my anxiety grew to panic as I realized looking at the clock, my meeting was started and I was not there yet. And, now finding a trustworthy landmark, I realized I had just driven 10 miles in the wrong direction.

Now 30 minutes late, I enter a full room of people already engaged in work. While I hoped to enter invisibly, the facilitator turned to me and said, "Nice that you could join us."

From this story, why was it important to keep vision in front of you?

Do you recall a time when you have tangibly or intangibly lost your vision? What opportunities did you miss?

Draw/Reflect

The Vision that Brought Us Here:

In the space below, draw a picture or describe what your church looked like 5 years ago (or less, depending on when you first connected with the church). Consider:

- What type of people made up the church?
- What type of people was the church reaching out to and connecting with/serving?
- What was the main thing the church was known for?
- What did people talk about?
- What activities/initiatives thrived? What activities/initiatives were dying?
- What was your favorite thing about the church?
- What was your least favorite thing about the church?

Now turn back to your **Homework 1: Values** and consider the questions above in today's context. Describe or draw a picture of what the church looks like today.



If you know what the church's vision was five years ago, write it below. If you don't know what it was, write a vision statement that you believe could have been in place that led to the church being what it is today.

Now think ahead to five years from now. Looking at the church from your situation and from that of the people in your family and your community, draw a picture or describe what your desire would be for the church to look like. Consider:

- What type of people make up the church?
- What type of people is the church reaching out to and connecting with/serving?
- What is the main thing the church is known for?
- What are people talking about?
- What activities/initiatives thrive? What activities/initiatives die?
- What will be your favorite thing about the church?
- What will be your least favorite thing about the church?



Now write a potential vision statement that would focus the church toward what you described above.

Read/Reflect/Respond

Your **MARKETING PLAN** has the most potential for success if church leaders clearly communicate (through words and decisions) priorities that are within the church's Values and Vision. Then resources need to be released and redirected toward emphasizing those priorities.

Read the example below of what happens when vision is not clear or unified, then answer the reflection questions.

Example:

A pastor has a heart for outreach and a vision for seeing his congregation inviting co-workers and neighbors to a special Christmas program.

The event arrives. It's done well – excellent execution, relevant message, beautiful music, poignant testimonies, and the potential of personal application for people dealing with any life situation. But, the room was full of people who already called that church their home. No guests attended.

What happened?

- **Resources were directed in ways out of alignment with a vision for outreach.**
The church's staff and lay leaders focused their time, energy and budgets on the preparation of the event itself.
- **Messages competed for attention.** All the communication tools (Sunday announcements, bulletin, web site, e-news) asked people to volunteer, donate supplies, attend the event, etc. Any messages encouraging people to invite others were buried or suffocated by all the other "asks."
- **Outreach was an after-thought.**
If the idea of inviting a friend was discussed, it was something ministries and members did *in addition* to other priorities as opposed to it being core to who they are.

From this story, what are ways the pastor could have clarified the vision so it became a priority?

Based on how you described the church looking in five years, what is taking place right now that could make it a priority? What could compete with it being a priority?



STOP!

Having a clear Vision is crucial to implementing your MARKETING PLAN

The exercises in this section are designed to help leaders:

- Clarify your church vision (so everyone understands where you are heading); and
- Unify fellow leaders around the vision (so everyone is heading in the same direction.)

Throughout this step of your **MARKETING PLAN** process, you will see STOP signs signaling you to stop and evaluate if your team has **vision clarity and unity**.

If at any point you find:

- **Your vision is foggy** – you can't clearly see the specific direction where God wants your church to focus; or
- **Your leaders are not in agreement** – the lead pastor sees the church heading in one direction while other leaders are focusing on another direction,

Then stop! Take time away from your **MARKETING PLAN** process to work toward clarity and unity. It will add more time to the process, but Your Plan will be so much stronger and exciting in the long run.