

*This is the 4th article of 5 in the Visioning Toolkit series.
You can download the articles in this series, and other tools, at:
atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation*

Visioning = Mission + **Vision** + Values

The Vision statement paints a compelling picture of what the world would be like if the organization was successful in fulfilling its Mission. For example, in our previous article on Facilitating Mission, we looked at the **Mission** statement of Kiva.org:

To connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty.

Kiva's **Vision** shows us the world they hope to create:

We envision a world where all people – even in the most remote areas of the globe – hold the power to create opportunity for themselves and others.

A Vision should stretch our sense of what's possible and inspire us to give ourselves to the challenging work of social change, year after year after decade.

Amnesty International:

Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

Save the Children

Our vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

Methods for Facilitating Vision

Visioning is all about reaching past what seems possible today to create a dream of a better future.

However, when people in organizations try to think about the future, their imagination often runs into the wall of current "reality." Budgetary limitations. Unfavorable environment. Competition for resources. Well-organized opposition. Lack of public support. Lack of capacity. To facilitate dreaming, the visioning process needs to lift us past the obstacles of the present and literally time-travel us into the future: to see, feel, hear, smell and taste the future we want to create.

Future Travel Exercise

A simple yet very effective method of time travel is “guided visualization.”¹ In the Future Travel Exercise, people are invited to take an imaginary trip into a future where the organization has actually achieved its Mission. With eyes closed, through various prompts, we invite participants: to add more and more detail in their mind’s eye, to bear witness to the powerful impact of their work in the world, to take a walk through this future workplace and feel its generative power. People are encouraged to paint a vivid picture of their highest hopes for this work. At the conclusion of the visualization, people pair up as if they are meeting in an airport some years in the future. They interview each other about the great success of their organization and its work. The partners draw each other out with provocative questions like, “What was the big breakthrough, the turning point that really helped make this dream come through?”

For complete instructions on facilitating this exercise, see our tool: *Future Travel Exercise*

Magazine Article Exercise

This exercise is great for collective co-dreaming. Small groups are given the assignment to time travel “x” years into the future and collectively write the outline of a magazine article describing the success of their organization’s vision. The specs for the article typically include the title, the headline, the hot lead story, 3-4 bullet points about the success of the organization’s mission, a couple of photographs, and finally, a description of the big breakthrough or tipping point that led to success. Groups may also play-act a television news special rather than drafting a magazine article.

For complete instructions on facilitating this exercise, see our tool: *Magazine Article Exercise*

Both of these exercises consistently free up people’s imaginations as well as generate excitement and positive energy about new possibilities. Out of the vision-generating exercises, a small writing group can extract key phrases and images to begin to craft the vivid description. There’s work ahead, but these kinds of processes help organizations break through the barriers of the present and into a visionary future.

“When we stop dreaming about what is possible, when we stop imagining a world we all share that is guided by great feelings of love, we become our biggest barrier... The other world is something we must dream of, it must first be something we feel when we close our eyes and use our imagination...”

– Robby Rodriguez, Social justice leader

¹ For those unfamiliar with the technique, **guided visualization** (also called guided imagery or guided meditation) is a widely used process in which participants are invited by the guide to close their eyes. The facilitator suggests a series of scene and images, the details of which are filled in by those being led, creating an experience a bit like a waking dream. Guided imagery is used very effectively as a tool for relaxation and complementary forms of healing, as well as for accessing intuitive information and creative problem solving.

Tips for facilitating Vision

Watch the energy

The energy generated and released in visioning is almost as important as the content. Monitor the group energy through the visioning process. Do what is needed to keep the energy fresh, alive and creative: take breaks, use energy raisers, switch formats, break into small groups or dyads. But, don't keep pushing to generate an alive and exciting vision if the energy is tired or "off."

Tests for a good Vision statement

- Does it vibrate with a sense of the organization's purpose?
- Does it bring to life what it will really look and feel like to achieve the Mission?
- Can you see it? Does it use words that create a clear, vivid picture in the mind's eye?
- Does it use specific, concrete examples and metaphors that bring the vision to life, rather than generalities and bland platitudes?
- Is it worth what it would take to create it?
- Is it what people *really* want?
- Is it inspiring – filled with passion, intensity and conviction?
- Does it motivate people to give it their all? Are people willing to fully commit to it?

Other best practices

The tips in *Visioning Toolkit #2: Best Practices* all pertain to creating Vision statements:

1. Seek maximum engagement
2. Engage the heart
3. Focus on alignment
4. Avoid the rabbit hole of wordsmithing

The Vision statement is an extraordinary opportunity for an organization and its people to dream and claim the world they are dedicated to bring into being. The Vision becomes like a North Star, guiding the organization to fulfill its Mission.

For tips on how to facilitate the other two elements in visioning, see our articles:

Visioning Toolkit #3: Facilitating Mission

Visioning Toolkit #5: Facilitating Values