

“Developing A Vision – Reality or Hyper Reality?”

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THE AUSTRALIAN SOLUTION

The Irrigation Association of Australia

is pleased to announce

IRRIGATION AUSTRALIA 1996 CONFERENCE EXHIBITION

When : May 14th – 16th 1996

Where : Adelaide Convention Centre
Adelaide, South Australia

Introduction

"...I could detect a distinct correlation between the notion of vision and performance. The good ones had a vision. As for the bad ones, it was hard to tell why the people come to work in the morning..."

Donald Povesil, Vice President, Corporate Planning, Westinghouse

Many organisations spend much time and effort developing a shared vision for their organisations, and regularly revisiting it. The main reason for this is that the process of developing a shared vision makes the organisation look at itself, ie. "naval gazing", in a rapidly changing world. It makes you ask the right questions about your organisation. The process is just as important as the answer. If you get it right, it has a very powerful positive effect on the performance and profitability of the organisation.

One of the key qualities of high performance organisations is that they have a clear picture of what they are trying to create together ie. a shared vision.

One of the suggested tasks for the Australian Irrigation Council is "*to prepare vision and strategy for implementation...*" Thus the peak body of your industry has recognised the need to develop a shared vision. You have started down the road of developing a shared vision (see appendices 1,2,3 & 4). Congratulations.

There is at least one good reason for the irrigation industry to develop a shared vision and strategy around the vision. The reason is to handle the negative perceptions of the impact of irrigation held by urban voters. The negative perceptions revolve around the abuse of a natural resource by degradation of the land and water ie. salination, polluted and rising water table, less water for flood plains, negative impact on native fauna and flora etc.

It is academic whether you agree or disagree about the perceptions of the urban population. Many urban voters are saying " *...stop muddying and polluting our water pot...*" Australia is governed by people elected from an urban population who have as number 2 or 3 issue of concern the environment.

Yet the irrigation industry has a good story to tell ie. around \$6 billion of product produced, export earnings (now and future), regional location, employment etc.

What is a Shared Vision

Before passing judgement on developing shared visions we need to understand what a vision is, provide some examples, describe its importance, how a vision is developed (ie. principles, link with mission and core values and some questions to help develop a vision) and a summary (key points in developing a vision).

Initially 4 questions need asking.

- i) How many feel that the irrigation industry needs a shared vision"
- ii) How many of you have a dream of what you want your organisation or company to be like for the next century?
- iii) How many of you belong to an organisation or company that has a written shared vision statement"
- iv) How many can recite their vision statement?

A definition of a shared vision is "*It is an image or dream of what your organisation aspires to be or become...*"

Developing a shared vision involves leadership, ownership and being proactive.

Samples of Visions

Listed below are several examples of successful shared visions :

1. NASA

"Before this decade is out, landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth"

Look what has happened to NASA since they achieved this vision ie. it has lost its way.

2. Microsoft

"A computer on every desk and in every home, running Microsoft software"

Microsoft is one of the business success stories of recent times.

3. Salvation Army

"Making respectable citizens out of society's misfits and outcasts"

4. USA Peace Corp

"Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country"

In the late 60s and earlier 70s many young Americans went overseas to work and live in developing countries : they lived and worked under the same conditions as the locals.

Why is a Shared Vision Important

There are 8 reasons that a shared vision is important :

1. Improve the performance of the organisation ie. people know where they are going;
2. Generate the power of a common cause ie. unifying people especially during difficult times;
3. Motivates people;
4. Coordinates the work of different people;
5. Builds a foundation for planning and decision making;
6. Challenges zones of comfort and lays the basis for change or transformation;
7. Identifies unacceptable behaviour;
8. Identifies the degree of alignment of group and individual values.

Principles of Visioning

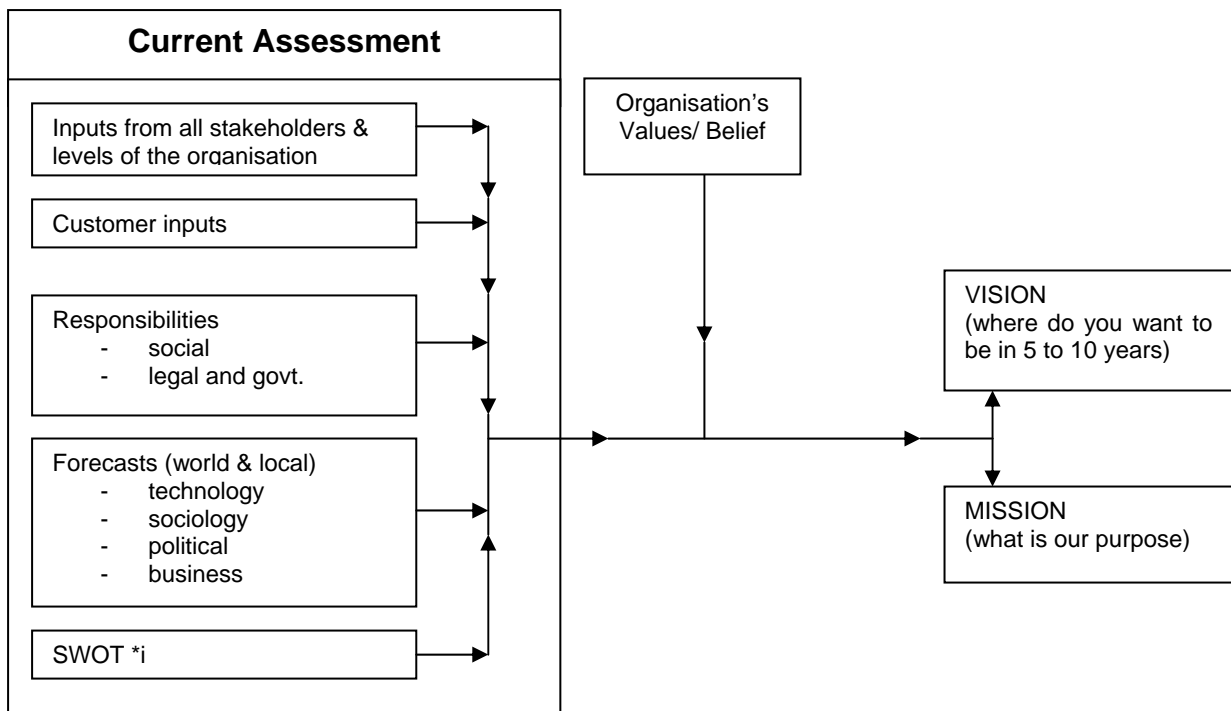
The main principles for developing a shared vision are :

1. Maximum participation from all stakeholders in creating the vision means that they will own it and speed up its implementation;
2. The process of developing the vision is as important as its outcome;
3. Visions are best stated in the language of the key stakeholders;
4. Vision helps to focus the planning process; thus needs to be developed before planning takes place;
5. Picturing excellence.

Mission and Core Values

Vision is linked with mission and core values. The mission is the operational approach to achieving the vision. While the core values are the few critical values that your organisation must live by to succeed.

A Sequence for Developing a Shared Vision



Notes : i) S = Strengths; W = Weaknesses; O = Opportunities; T = Threats

Creating a Shared Vision

It is "...a mental image of what we want to create in the future..."

It is an image of how we see our purpose unfolding, a picture of the preferred future we seek to create and an answer to the question "What do we really want to be?"

It should be worthy, meaningful and definitive.

Sometimes a share vision tends to evolve but it needs to be big enough so it does not change substantially every few years.

Use a shared vision like a compass. It can guide you when all other indicators of direction have disappeared. Visions are strongest when they focus on an image that has capability. Shared visions help individuals and groups make sense of what is going on by stressing the core competencies on which constant improvement can be built.

It is important to extend your vision further than you like ie. beyond your zone of comfort.

It is different to the traditional approach of managing ie. planning, controlling and scheduling. For developing a shared vision there is a need to take the basis focus of the organisation and pull it forward into the future in a way that is compelling to others.

The process is hard work, and can be painful and emotional as you are questioning basis assumptions about the organisation.

If you cannot develop a common vision for your organisation it shows that all is not well in your organisation. Issues will arise in the process that need addressing to improve the performance of your organisation.

Usually developing a vision is the start of the strategic planning process and/ or change process.

Questions to Help Develop a Shared Vision

Listed below are some questions that help for the basis for developing a vision :

- Why does your organisation exist?
- Who are our customers and who should they be now and in the future ie. 2000 or 2005?
- Where are your customers and what do they consider as value?
- What industry or business is your organisation in and should it be in?
- What industry or business will your organisation be in the future?
- How are you different to your competition?
- What are the right things to do?

Summary – Key Points in Developing a Vision

- “Aha” effect ie. gets people attention and creates excitement and energy.
- Maximum stakeholders involvement in creating a shared vision ie. cast the net of participation widely like employees, customers and shareholders.
- Must be actively supported from the top down ie. top managers actively involved.
- Ideally no more than 7 words ie. easy to communicate, clear and simple.
- Never a goal or objective or key result area ie. not market share and avoid focus on immediate problems.
- Never about money or numbers or being no 1 ie. returns on investments.
- Not problem solving ie. not about incremental improvements.
- Able to be remembered easily and be expressed in the present tense.
- Sweeps people away ie. it captures minds, hearts and spirits.
- Believable and achievable (not necessary to be realistic) ie. stretches people beyond their zone of comfort.
- Focus on what you want to create, not on how to make it happen.
- Revisit and review regularly especially as organisations go through cycles in growth and development.
- If no formal vision there is a “default vision”.
- Be careful of slogans ie. we are customer obsessed.
- Fits in with the highest values ie. gives people a higher purpose and rationale for their actions.
- Are strongest when focus on how people interact with each other or serve their customers or society in unique ways.

Developing a Vision – Is it a Wank?

Size of organisation	No. of Staff	Branches/ Offices	WANK		
			Yes	Maybe	No
Small	Few	One		X X	
Medium	Many	Several			X X
Large	Multitudes	Many			X X

The table above shows that an organisation needs a shared vision if it has more than one branch or office or farm or depot, and/or staff are no longer reporting directly to the top manager. In other words when an organisation moves on from hands on management to a more delegated type of management structure then developing a shared vision is important.

Hopefully you agree that developing a vision for the irrigation industry is not a want but urgently needed.

How many now feel that developing a vision for the irrigation industry is not a wank?

Lastly if I may make a recommendation to you, it is to think of your industry as part of a food and fibre factory.

(Acknowledgements : Karl Albrecht, Bill Conway, Jason Jennings, Peter Drucker, Cynthia Scott, Dennis Jaffe and Glenn Tobe)

APPENDIX 1.

In a newsletter (15th November 1994) entitled “A vision for irrigation” listed some of the background issues for developing a vision statement.

The list is summarised as follows :

Main Topic	Components	Details
Irrigated food exports	Stable supplier of high value fresh food exports	South – East Asia
	Export of traditional products enhanced by GATT negotiations	Liberalisation of trade
	Value adding and service opportunities	Processing and packaging
	Strong and viable irrigation equipment industry	Export and domestic markets
Management of irrigation	On farm management	Better use of new technology
	Supply agencies eg. COAG	Privatisation of irrigation infrastructure
		Regional management of irrigation systems
		Trade in water
	Govt. support	
Tariffs and price of water	Set prices to	Efficient use of water
		Reduce access to groundwater
		Maintenance of irrigation systems
		Upgrading of irrigation system
Supporting industries	Marketing	Govt. and private funding
		Value adding
		Handling infrastructure
Environmental issues	Rivers and land management	Flood plains – wetlands and marshes
		Native flora and fauna
		Use of chemicals
		Watertable
		Salinity
	Urban irrigation	Water efficiency
		Water conservation
Water recycling		

Sources : Australian Irrigation Council

APPENDIX 2.

ANCID’s suggestion for a vision.

HOPES

- Environmental responsibility
- Sustainable agriculture
- Financial viability of irrigators
- Financial viability of irrigation authorities
- On property efficiency in water use/ application
- Adoption of technology
- Creation of viable vibrant irrigation communities that contribute and enhance the Nation’s wealth
- Export focus and enhancement of local consumption of irrigated agriculture
- Create environment where constituted irrigation districts and **viable** diverters are both seen as viable options

VISION

- Best practice
- Acknowledging exports requirements in term of quality, size and timing
- Maximising irrigator's gross return
- Adoption of technology to improve returns and efficiency
- Enhancing competition
- Maximising returns while being environmentally responsible and sustainable
- Maximising water efficiency and opportunities on a market

(Source : BW Kilpatrick, Chairman ANCID – 1995 – “The Australian National Council of Irrigation and Drainage – its mission statement objective and role in the irrigation sector” ICID CIID, Wagga workshop)

APPENDIX 3.

1. Definition of the Australian Irrigation Industry :

“...encompasses irrigated agricultural, horticultural and recreational pursuits and includes irrigators, water supply agencies, research and advisory agencies, educators, manufacturers, retailers, installers and specialist consultants...”

2. Some suggested tasks of peak body are :

- Prepare a vision for irrigation and strategy for implementation of that vision
- Prepare an irrigation industry strategy
- Prepare an irrigation research strategy
- Prepare irrigation research priorities
- Represent the industry at the national level

(Source : Australian Irrigation Council)

APPENDIX 4.

NNF conducted a series of seminars/ meetings with the aim to determine *“the desired future direction of agriculture from the broadest possible range of interested parties and to identify industries with competitive edge and to build on this...”*

Some of the results :

- Food and agriculture have competitive edges
- Need to improve farm financial and business management
- Attract people with broad and diverse skills
- Move from producing bulk commodities to producing products more attractive to our customers especially Asia.

(Source : NNF's New Horizons [1992])