

# 1 The Role of Strategic Vision Process in Business Development in 2 Nigeria

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5 *Received: 23 July 2011 Accepted: 17 August 2011 Published: 28 August 2011*

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## 7 **Abstract**

8 This paper examines the role of strategic vision in the present economic realities. In Nigeria.  
9 This paper proposes a managerial approach to strategic vision development for the future.  
10 The approach is developed in a way that attempts to respond to top management concerns  
11 regarding the need to manage by strategy in today's rapidly changing environment thus  
12 contributing meaningfully to business development in Nigeria.

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14 **Index terms**— Strategic vision, vision, strategy, corporate vision, strategic thinking, strategic direction,  
15 strategic intent, business development.

## 16 **1 INTRODUCTION**

17 o business in the real world operates according to the clear-cut, on-off, black or white principle of the binary  
18 system. In recent years, it has been increasingly obvious that there is need to make a fundamental change in the  
19 way businesses are run. Low productivity, loss of customers, declining profits, recessionary pressures combined,  
20 have put a lot of strain on every business operation. Few executives would dispute that something of substance  
21 needs to be done in order to revive their declining enterprises. Today, more than ever, they are prepared to  
22 listen to new ideas. Business executives are no exception. The more severe the pressure and the more urgently  
23 a broader view is needed, the dangerously their mental vision seems to narrow down. This especially likely to  
24 be true of a business executive who is obsessed with the idea of winning and sees everything in terms of success  
25 or failure. Such an executive may be almost unable to perceive that there is any room for intelligent choice  
26 among various course of action. Yet if that executive would try changing the objective from success at all costs  
27 to avoiding the worst, he would be sure to find a great many possible choices opening up because some managers  
28 failed today as they lost sight of the range of alternatives that were still open and rushed with ever narrowing  
29 mental vision to their own destruction.

30 Strategic thinking in business must break out of the limited scope of vision that entraps failed organizations.  
31 It must be backed by the daily use of imagination and constant training in logical thought processes. Top  
32 management and its corporate planners cannot sensibly base their day-to-day work on blind optimism and apply  
33 strategic thinking only when confronted by unexpected obstacles.

34 Managers should develop the habit of thinking strategically, and they must approach it with real enthusiasm  
35 as a stimulating mental exercise. Managers who think strategically are able to envision their organizations in the  
36 context of world trends and events and to spot interdependencies, they focus on how organizations should act  
37 and react to emerging opportunities and obstacles. It may sound elementary to ask the question of why make  
38 changes to the structure of an enterprise. The answer may be that we can see the future.

39 The aim of this paper is to critically examine strategic process in the light of present realities with a view to  
40 improve corporate performance. The objectives of this paper are as follows: i. To gain insights into the concept of  
41 strategic vision. ii. To ascertain the characteristics and five criteria for judging the organization's investigation  
42 of its vision. iii. To examine the reasons for developing a strategic vision for the future. iv. To describe strategic  
43 vision process and its values. To explain the approaches to communicating strategic vision and its associated  
44 factors for effective communication of strategic vision.

### 3 NATURE OF VISION, STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC VISION

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45 This paper is significant in that knowledge about vision will give organization a sense of purpose and a set  
46 of values that, together, unite workers in a common destiny. More so, managing an organization without first  
47 establishing a vision can be counterproductive. This paper about strategic vision will also provide focus and  
48 direction to the enterprise.

49 The following questions were raised to guide this paper: what is meant by vision, strategic vision? What are  
50 the characteristics and values of strategic vision? What are the steps in strategic vision for the future? What  
51 are the five criteria for judging the organization's investigation of its vision?

52 In writing this paper, descriptive method was utilized .

## 53 2 II.

### 54 3 NATURE OF VISION, STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC 55 VISION

56 A vision is a difficult thing to describe and no wonder most executives find it difficult to formulate a clear vision  
57 for their organizations. Many enterprises therefore, creating a mission statement which, though a step in the  
58 right direction, fails to provide a truly compelling vision (Osoka 1997). A vision is simply a N shared mental  
59 framework that gives form to the future of an organization. It must be challenging and create a sense purpose of  
60 a more tangible perception of a promise to brighter future.

61 Leaders are expected to create a vision for the firm. A vision is more than a goal. It's the larger explanation  
62 of why the organization exists and where it's trying to head. A vision is simply a picture of what the company  
63 would like to become. A vision is a mental picture of a now and better world that the manager wishes to create.  
64 A vision is a mental image, in that it is something that the manager carries around in the head to bring about  
65 the desired changes in the society. Vision specifies a destination and not a route.

66 The vision of the organization refers to the broad category of long term intentions that the organization wishes  
67 to pursue. It is broad, all inclusive, and futuristic.

68 Vision is a general statement of intended direction that evokes emotional feelings in venture member. Vision  
69 is clear perception especially of future developments.

70 According to Crupra, Crollakota and Srinivasan (2007) strategic direction involves developing a long term  
71 vision of the firm's strategic intent. The long term vision comprises of two parts-a heritage statement, and  
72 a vision statement. A heritage statement provides the ideological foundation to the firm's uniqueness, wile a  
73 vision a statement seeks to stretch this uniqueness and delight the stakeholders by committing to an entirely new  
74 value-adding scenario.

75 As the word 'vision' suggests, it is an image of how the organizations sees itself. It is in most cases a dream,  
76 the aspirations the organization holds for its future, a mental image of the future state. It might therefore be  
77 difficult for the organization to actually achieve its vision even in the long term, but it provides the direction for  
78 the organization to actually achieve its vision even in the long -term, but it provides the direction and energy to  
79 work towards it.

80 When people talk about shared vision in organizations, it is expected that members of the organization share a  
81 common mental image of the future, which integrates their efforts towards the future state. The vision statement  
82 clearly and crisply illuminates the direction in which the organization is headed. It should be highly motivating,  
83 inspiring and challenging. Good vision statement act like slogans that drive people towards a dream.

84 Good vision statements specify the category of intentions that are:

85 ? Broad, all inclusive, forward looking.

86 ? Aspirations for the future -ends rather than the means. ? Mental image of the future state.

87 ? A dream that is hare across the entire organization.

88 ? An ideal vision statement should be:

89 ? Inspiring, motivating and challenging.

90 ? A slogan -it could be encapsulated in an actionable slogan.

91 ? Easily communicated and shared among the whole organization and its stakeholders. Strategy can be  
92 described as an organization's sense of purpose. Ansoff and Drucker clearly refer to this aspect of strategy:  
93 mapping out the future directions that need to be against the resources possessed by the organization. Purpose  
94 alone, however, is not strategy. Plans or actions need to be developed to put the purpose into practice.

95 Chandler states that strategy is the determination of the basic long term goals and objectives in an enterprise  
96 and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.  
97 General electric defined strategy as a statement of how resources are going to be used to take advantage of which  
98 opportunities to maximize and threats to minimize in order to produce desired result.

99 According to Wheelaersand Hunger (2008), strategic vision is description of what the company is capable of  
100 becoming. It often communicated in the company's mission and vision statements. A mission statement describes  
101 what the organization would lie to become. People in an organization want to have a sense of mission, but only  
102 top management is in the position to specify and communicate this strategic vision to the general workforce.  
103 Successful CEOs are noted for having a clear strategic vision, a strong passion for their company and An ability  
104 to communicate with others. They are often perceived to be dynamic and charismatic leaders which is essentially

105 important for the high firm performance and investor confidence in uncertain environment ( Waldman, Ramirez,  
106 House and Puranam, 2004). They have many of the characteristics of transformational leaders, that is, leaders  
107 who provide and improvement in an organization by providing a vision for that change ( Bass 1990). This  
108 transformational leaders are able to command respect and to influence strategy formation and implementation  
109 because they tend to have three key characteristics.

110 ? The CEO articulates a strategic vision for the corporation as it envisions the company not as it is currently  
111 is but as it can become ? The CEO presents a role for others to identify with and to follow by setting an example  
112 in terms of behavior, dress and actions. The CEO's attitudes and values concerning the corporation's purpose  
113 and activities are clear cut and are constantly communicated in words and deeds. ? The CEO communicates  
114 high performance standards and also shows confidence in the

## 115 **4 DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE FU- 116 TURE**

117 When developing the strategic options of an organization, it is important to develop a vision of the future within  
118 which it will operate -that is, an awareness of why, where and how the organization and its competitors will be  
119 competing in the future. There are five reasons for this: 1.

120 Most organizations will compete for business and resources. They will have ambitions that go well beyond the  
121 immediate future and it is important for options to reflect this vision. Even not-for -profit organizations or those  
122 in the public sector usually need to compete for charitable or government funds and often wish to increase the  
123 range of services that they offer; such organizations will also benefit from a picture of where they expect to be in  
124 the future.

### 125 **5 2.**

126 The organization's mission and objectives may be stimulated in a positive way for the strategic options that are  
127 available from a new vision.

### 128 **6 3.**

129 There may be major strategic opportunities from exploring new areas that go beyond the existing market  
130 boundaries and organization resources (Hamel and Prahalad 1994). 4.

131 Simple market and resource projections for the next few years will miss the opportunities opened up by a  
132 whole new range of possibilities, such as new information technologies, biogenetics, environmental issues. New  
133 materials and lifestyle changes. Virtually every organization will feel the impact of these significant developments.  
134 Extrapolating the current picture is unlikely to be sufficient (Hamel and Prahalad 1994). 5.

135 Vision provides challenge for both senior and junior managers without the rigidities of an agreed mission and  
136 objectives.

137 Vision is therefore the backdrop for the development of the purpose and strategy of the organization. It is  
138 not the same as mission and objectives, vision is the future picture; mission and objectives describe the role and  
139 tasks that the organization chooses to adopt, based on the current situation. However, it may be that the vision  
140 will lead to the mission and objectives; for example the UBA vision led to the acquisition of Trade Bank.

141 However, vision will not always lead to mission, for example a small company competing against a new  
142 hypermarket sees its vision as being increased competition from a newly opened hypermarket. It might then  
143 change its mission and objectives to that of moving from that geographical area, rather than being driven out by  
144 the larger store in two years time. Hamel and Prahalad have suggested five criteria for judging the relevance and  
145 appropriateness of a vision statement. These are shown in Table 1 they are important because it would be all  
146 too easy to develop some wild and worthy that bore no relationship to the organization, its resources and the  
147 likely market and competitive developments. It is also necessary to consider how the vision of the organization is  
148 to be developed. It is likely that this will be guided by the Chief Executive Officer. To quote Bennis and Nanus  
149 (1985) in their well known text on leadership:

150 "To choose a direction, a leader must first have developed a mental image of a possible and desirable future  
151 state of the organization ? The critical point is that a vision articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive  
152 future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists".

153 IV.

## 154 **7 STRATEGIC VISION PROCESS**

155 Vision does not simply descend from above. The creation of vision comes from a considerable amount of exploring;  
156 analyzing, and rooting around in the territory of the problem. First-hand data, from spending time with the  
157 people involved, is almost always needed, along with the more quantitative, impersonal data acquired by analysis.

158 Strategic vision process can be divided into six steps namely: 1. Identifying the opportunity; or problem  
159 formulation. 2. Creating the solution. 3. Planning the business. 4. Selecting the management team. 5.  
160 Implementation. 6. Evaluation and Monitoring.

161 The first three steps in the strategic vision process are largely mental, involving realization, creativity and  
162 reasoning. This is a period of intense concentration which is frustration to spouses and subordinates. The second  
163 three steps are more actionoriented; seeking partners and employees, producing, communicating, persuading and  
164 negotiating.

165 V.

## 166 **8 VALUES OF STRATEGIC VISION**

167 A vision is beneficial to the organization in the following areas: 1. It provides a consistent and constant sense of  
168 direction to the organization by being the 'light at the end of the tunnel'. 2. It inspires the management to move  
169 towards a defined course. In doing so, it must seek to render conventional wisdom regarding possibilities and  
170 limitations. It must also cast off failures, frustrations and even cynicism that may have characterized previous  
171 managerial building efforts.

## 172 **9 APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATING STRATEGIC VI- 173 SION**

174 Some important approaches to communicating vision are as follows: a) Chief Executive's Dream Here, the Chief  
175 Executive presents the vision as a coherent whole in order to create a unified picture. The Chief Executive's  
176 dream approach is an explicit explanation about their vision by describing the better world just as they see it  
177 with the notion that other people should find it attractive, shares his opinion and be drawn towards it.

### 178 **10 b) Relating Specific Goals**

179 The Chief Executive here breaks down their vision into series of specific goals by relating the economic outcomes,  
180 values to be gained, relationships to be created. Talking about the specific goals by the Chief Executive depends  
181 on his/her intention, situation, message (vision), time and the hearers' disposition.

### 182 **11 c) Talking strategy**

183 Here the Chief Executive relates about means. Strategy denotes a general program of action and development of  
184 emphasis and resources to attain comprehensive objectives. Strategy relates to the approach that the business  
185 venture will take to achieve goals and tasks that must be undertaken in order to create new world. The new  
186 world to be created by the

187 The Role of Strategic Vision Process in Business Development in Nigeria Chief Executive will bring about  
188 the much needed and desired change in the society with a view to attract others to the journey as well as the  
189 destination.

### 190 **12 d) Story -telling**

191 In this approach Chief Executives think of their vision as a 'stage' on which the vision is on course as the  
192 stakeholders played their parts as actors on stage. Chief Executives aim to motivate people by carrying them  
193 along to their roles in the future event within the story as he/she communicates their vision in a dynamic form  
194 of story-telling.

### 195 **13 e) Benefits**

196 The Chief Executive breaks down, package and communicates the vision to the target audience so as to be able  
197 to focus on the benefits that they will gain. The Chief Executive tailors the strategic vision in such a way that  
198 the commitment of his/her listeners is ensured. This approach should not be misused by the Top Management so  
199 as not to turn recipient to 'mercenary', self centered set of people purely motivated by personal gain or allowed  
200 the people to nurse the feelings that their commitment or loyalty is being bought. f) Stating why things can  
201 be better Here the top management state what things are done wrongly rather than what will be better in  
202 the New World. The aim is to push or arouse people curiosity in things they are dissatisfied with rather than  
203 pulling them forward by motivating or attracting them to new possibilities that will make life better. Too much  
204 emphasis on this approach will be detrimental to people as it demotivates and only encourages negative reasoning  
205 with no solution in sight. It should be noted therefore, that, the above discussed approaches are not mutually  
206 exclusive but they can be combined together to make up a meaningful overall communication strategy for the  
207 entrepreneur's vision.

### 208 **14 g)**

209 The particular strategy adopted by top management to communicate his/her vision depends on a number of  
210 factors. They are:

211 ? The nature and detail of the vision being shared;

212 ? The leadership style of the top management (authoritarian, democratic, participative, consultative, laissez  
213 faire (free rein) etc.

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214        ? The number and the personalities of the stakeholders. ? Desired commitment.  
215        ? The stakeholders' particular needs and motivations (economic, social, self-development). ? Type of  
216 communication (formal or informal, one to one, one to many, etc) and. ? Medium of communication transmission  
217 (face-to-face, verbal, written etc).  
218        ? The ability of the top management to build his or her leadership and power depends on articulate vision  
situation and effective communication to different stakeholders. <sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>

### III.

Figure 1:

## 1

CriterionIndicatives areas to be investigated  
ForesightWhat imagination and real vision is shown? Over what time  
Breadth frame?

How broad is the vision of the changes likely to take place in the  
Uniquenessindustry? And of the forces that will lead to the changes?

Is there an element of uniqueness about the future? Will it cause  
Consensusour competitors to be surprised?

Is there some consensus within the organization about the  
Actionability? If not, there may be a problem if too many different  
visions are pursued at once.

Have the implications for current activity been considered? Is  
basic agreement on the immediate steps required? Have the  
necessary core competencies and future market opportunities  
been identified?

*[Note: Source : Hamel, A. and Prahalad, C.K. (1994) competing for the future. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass p.122. The important action parts that arise out of the vision investigation are connected with two issues: ? Core competencies: do we have the technology and skills to meet the vision? The Role of Strategic Vision Process in Business Development in Nigeria? Market opportunities: what will this mean for market development? How can we take the opportunities as they arise?]*

Figure 2: Table 1 :

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management forward;

11. It should shape and change the Chief Executive's understanding of the personal motivations and motivation of others;
12. The strategic vision must create a new consensus and unite people behind common organizational aspirations or widely shared endeavours. Successful Chief Executive must rally followers or subordinates behind generally agreed ways of doing things and direction; and
13. VI.

Figure 3: 3 .

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