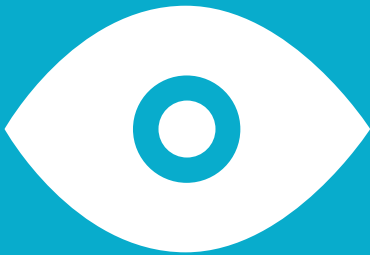




UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
Institute for Leadership Education in Engineering

Vision, Mission & Strategy



Handbook for Student Leaders

— **Vision, Mission & Strategy**

Motivation & Delegation

Personal Development & Mastery

Team Development

Recruitment

Reflection & Awareness

Transition & Succession

External Relations

Leadership Styles

Purposeful Leadership

What are you all about?

Why do you exist?

An attractive and ambitious future is a source of energy that helps leaders at all levels of an organization to create change. A specific challenge that student groups face is that executive members turnover each year and key leaders always graduate. This makes it much harder to have a long-term vision that is sustained. Some groups have found it motivating to have a yearly vision, in addition to their organizational vision statement.¹

Part of defining and clarifying vision is to dream about what's possible, and then be specific about the details.² These questions can help you generate and clarify a vision for your group:

- What reputation would it have?
- What contribution would it make?
- What values would it embody?
- What mission would it have?
- Who would be its clients or customers?
- How would people work together? How would they handle good and bad times?
- What would this organization bring you personally?

Shared Vision

In traditional hierarchical organizations, the vision is dreamt up by the positional leader, and then disseminated throughout the organization. The limitations of this approach is that no one else is able to contribute to a more cohesive vision, and people are less excited because their ideas are given no traction. On the other hand, building shared vision is being widely recognized as a core competency of more effective leaders.

A vision is the future place you want to get to and is different from your current reality. The desire to improve is a powerful force, and articulating what the future can look like is important in helping a group of people work together effectively.

Here are five keys skills for building shared vision:³

Encouraging Personal Vision

People's personal desires to see something different in the future are the source of shared vision: People have to care about something first.

Communicating and Asking for Support

Leaders need to be able to share their own vision constantly, rather than simply repeating the organizational "vision statement."

Visioning as Ongoing Process

Getting feedback in real-time can be key to keeping the vision shared. This comes from asking "What do we really want to achieve?"

Blending Extrinsic and Intrinsic Visions

While competing with other groups can be energizing at some points, it needs to be kept in balance with the desire for self-improvement, in order for the organization to maintain its momentum after initial successes.

Distinguishing Positive from Negative Visions

Positive visions aspire towards something, while negative visions aim to defeat or eliminate something. Negative visions tend to be more short term and can carry a message of powerlessness.

A vision is the future place you want to get to and is different from your current reality. The desire to improve is a powerful force, and articulating what the future can look like is important in helping a group of people work together effectively.

¹Peter Senge. The Leader's New Work: Building Learning Organizations. Sloan Management Review, 1990.

²Peter Senge et al. The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook. "Vision for the Organization" Pg 208

³Five Key Skills for Shared Vision. Society for Organizational Learning.
<http://www.solonline.org/res/kr/newwork.html>