

Topic 2.4: Founders' Vision

What is your long-term vision for your company?

Startup founders need to have an ambitious vision for their company. Although it may not seem to bear much relation to “hard” business topics such as products and marketing, it should nevertheless be developed from the outset, since it is an important determinant of the startup's potential.

The difference between a startup and a typical company becomes clear when the founder's visions for them are compared: Startup founders dream of their companies quickly becoming large and influential, whereas in most cases the founders vision is not that much greater than the initial business.

What giant thing is your current idea stage one of?

Paul Graham

What is a Founders' Vision?

The founders' vision is how they ideally imagine their company to be after a few years. It is their image of where they want to take their company. The vision is therefore also a mirror of their personal interpretation of success.

The founders' vision is the answer to the question, "Where are we going and what do we want to achieve when we get there?" It serves as motivation and as a guide – both for the founders and for their employees.

Six Functions of an Ambitious Vision

Having an ambitious vision for a startup has several advantages:

- It gives the founders the motivation and energy to work hard and to cope with setbacks, so that their startup will be a success one day.
- It provides guidance, because it serves as a reminder what the company should one day become. This can help founders with strategic decisions.
- It attracts the talented and highly motivated employees that the company depends on.
- It is common ground that unites the founders and helps them to get past differences of opinion and conflicts.

- It reveals the quality of the founders to investors, which is one of the most important elements of a startup's potential.
- It helps journalists to write positively about the startup.

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.

Google Inc.

Start Small, Think Big

According to the famous quote by Steve Jobs, startup founders should start small, but think big. A small start is important in order that it remains manageable and its chances of success are greatest. At the same time, big thinking helps the founders to keep their long-term goals in mind.

- Microsoft started out with a niche product for a hobby computer and is now the world leader in office software.
- Facebook began as an unofficial student portal at Harvard University, but now has more than a billion users worldwide.

Start small, think big.

Steve Jobs

Five Approaches

There are different approaches to formulating a founders' vision. Here are five examples:

- **Superlative.**
(We are the first/only/largest/...)
- **Performance.**
(We can do/offer/solve X.)
- **Goal.**
(We have achieved X.)
- **Meaning.**
(Thanks to us, X can now Y.)

- Range.
(*We can do X everywhere/for everybody/at any time/...*)

Of course, founders can include several such statements in their vision.

Two Examples

Boeing had the following vision in 1950:

[We want to] Become the dominant player in commercial aircraft and bring the world into the jet age.

Boeing

This sentence contains two examples from the above list:

- Superlative (“dominant”)
- Meaning (“bring the world into the jet age”)

IKEA has published the following company vision:

At IKEA our vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. Our business idea supports this vision by offering a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.

IKEA

This example contains three of the above suggestions:

- Performance (“offering a wide range”)
- Meaning (“create a better everyday life”)
- Range (“as many people as possible”)

This Topic's Key Question

- *Do you have the imagination and the ambition to make the most out of your idea?*

Link

- Topic 2.4 at founders-playbook.de:
founders-playbook.de/potential/founders-vision/