

Online library of Quality,
Service Improvement
and Redesign tools

Creating a vision



Creating a vision

What is it?

A vision will tell people why they should invest time and effort into your project. What do you aim to achieve? What ambition does this project have? How will this make things better for patients/public and (dependent on the project) staff?

The vision needs to be clear so everyone can understand it. The more people involved in creating it, the more people will feel they have ownership of it – so, wherever possible, try not to create a vision in isolation. This will help you in the long term, as your different stakeholders will be more likely to be committed to the project if they have co-created the vision that propels it. Be inspiring and use emotive language to demonstrate the vision. The vision should be a compelling vision of the future but the vision will not achieve itself – we need aims, measurable goals and the plans (strategies) for realising that vision.

Effective visions have six key characteristics.

- **Imaginable:** They convey a clear picture of what the future will look like.
- **Desirable:** They appeal to the long-term interest of those who have a stake in the enterprise.
- **Feasible:** They contain realistic and attainable goals.
- **Focused:** They are clear enough to provide guidance in decision making.
- **Flexible:** They allow individual initiative and alternative responses in light of changing conditions.
- **Communicable:** They are easy to communicate and can be explained quickly.

Source: *8 step model for leading change*, Kotter (1996)

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can’t blow an uncertain trumpet.”

Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, President of the University of Notre Dame for 35 years

When to use it?

As your vision will tell people why they should invest time and effort in your project you should take the opportunity to use this tool at the outset or “start out” of your project.

How to use it?

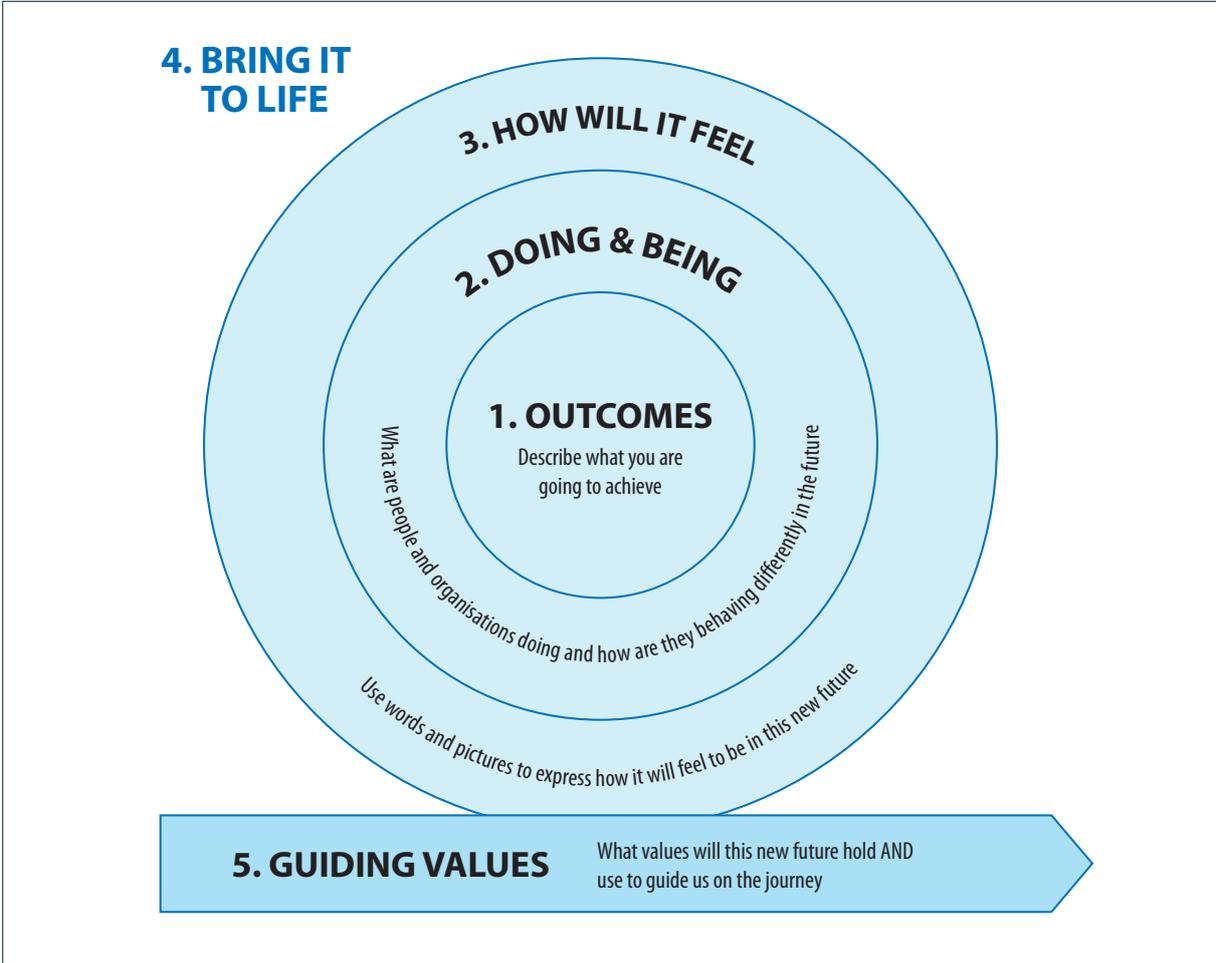
Build up your vision through a series of steps – starting with the logical and measurable then move into the harder to define and more emotional elements. The template in figure 1 should help you to do that. Don't forget, the vision is about building commitment and articulating direction without getting into detailed plans.

- Start with defining the desired outcomes and remember these should relate to hard measures as far as possible so you will know when you have achieved them.
- Now think about what people and organisations will be doing and how they will behave in the future – how is that different to what they are doing or how they are behaving now?
- Start to think about 'how it will feel'. We capture words and pictures that give a sense of what the future is like. This can often be more difficult to articulate clearly and you may find that pictures can help to convey messages or ideas more easily than simply words alone.
- Bringing it to life – is about developing ideas about how you communicate this vision. How can you communicate the vision so that it will have meaning to others who haven't so far been involved in developing it?
- Don't forget about values – what values should be important in the new future and what values need to guide the change journey?

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

Joel A. Barker

Figure 1: Steps to build your vision



Transformational Change through System Leadership programme