

That's what was missing

Now, watch out: Here comes my contribution to management world literature.

Vision, mission, guiding principles, strategy, values – sometimes even managers themselves can no longer find their way around them, and some ask the understandable question of whether this structure should be inflated even further? And I would venture to say: yes, we should. Because something is missing.

A strong indication that something is missing are the phrases you find when you look randomly at corporate websites and search for the vision there. The following examples are made up. Any similarity is something the companies in question have earned for themselves.

- "We are the preferred partner for security solutions in the financial industry." Or:
- "We are pioneers in the sustainable management of real estate." Or:
- "We are the leading provider for whatdolknow in Switzerland."

These are not visions, but ambitions. They are self-centered and do not answer the question of what this is good for in the larger context. This is then not far from "we make boxes because we like to make boxes." Yes fine, but for Generation Y – and perhaps others – maybe a bit too lacking (except for box freaks, but we'll get to that).

Ambition, however, seems to be an aspect of entrepreneurship that needs to be expressed. And rightly so: Ambition is a strong driving force, it spurs on to become even better. And that in turn can be exhilaratingly fun, let me tell you. It can be really cool. Imagine a company without ambition: "We'd just like to participate in that a bit"? Sounds like a leisure-oriented, easy-going attitude, if you ask me. That has its appeal, too, but not eight hours a day.

In order to bring order to this muddle, I therefore suggest separating the mixed things and adding the element of ambition separately in the guiding structures. Then the ambition will get its proper place without having to constantly shove the vision from its chair.

So here's management world literature (I mean this ironically, but seriously nonetheless). How about the following order:

- First, Vision: that's where you describe something that goes beyond your company, a state that is meaningful and desirable for the common good - in other words, something that your company can't do on its own.
- Second, mission: this is where you describe what concrete contribution you are making to get closer to this state. This gives you the opportunity to formulate something realistic in your niche and not claim that you are saving the world.
- Third, ambition: here you say at what level you would like to do this. You can also explicitly state that you want to outperform all your competitors or develop the coolest applications on earth.
- And fourth, mission statement and values: Explain which standards are important to you, because you don't want to do all this at any price.

This also gives you more plausible connection points for your employees. For example, there are people who can't do anything with big visions, but are totally passionate about their area of expertise; they can then feel at home in the ambition and flourish.

My assertion: in this case, it doesn't get more complicated when you add something, it gets simpler. In this sense: yes, that's what was missing.