



**Turn your vision into
actionable goals**

If goals and project vision get conflated, team buy-in becomes difficult. A vision which aligns teams toward success, often results in faster adoption rates and provides teams with a clear direction while facilitating collaboration.

Benefits of a vision

As part of a human-centered design approach, supporting a team through a visioning and goal prioritization exercise ensures a collective understanding of desired outcomes. While most leaders understand the power of a shared vision at the organizational level, few see the value in developing a vision for smaller projects or teams. Leaders will often default to the larger organizational vision and consequently draft a lofty team goal, but even small teams benefit from a vision that outlines their ideal future state, and an organizational vision can feel far away from the team's roles or project. So, defining the project or team vision is a great way to provide purpose to the team's daily work.

The difference between goals and vision

A vision captures the ideal future state and encompasses the ultimate purpose for operating. It is a highly transparent and leadership-sponsored statement that outlines what the organization, project or team is ultimately trying to achieve. Due to its brief and idealist nature, the vision statement defines where you want to arrive, but without guidelines for getting there. It's the North Star for strategy, goal setting and subsequent planning.

The biggest challenge when developing a vision is to ensure it hasn't inadvertently become a goal: While both are important, understanding the difference helps support a more effective project adoption.

- The vision articulates the successful future state, supported by a mission that highlights the intended impact on others
- A strategy follows and outlines the organization's tactics to achieve the vision
- Goals are the detailed tasks to accomplish all strategic planning

Vision and goals are on opposite sides of the spectrum and support success in different ways. A vision is achieved with collective accountability; a goal is achieved with individual or smaller group responsibilities.

A vision is like the beautiful concept image of a building, while the goals are the construction drawings. The attractive sketch is more likely to drive excitement than the plan, and excitement is a critical factor in sponsorship and project success.



The key differences between a vision and goals:

	Vision	Goals
Ownership	Collective adoption, managed by the highest leadership level	Small team or individual assignment, managed by direct reporting structures
Definition	A future tense statement stating the desired impact with wisdom, optimism and imagination	A result-driven statement with highly achievable targets, clear responsibilities and time frames
Time frame	The far-off future	Changes are created in the present or short-term
Achievability	It may take an undetermined number of years for fundamental transformation to occur. Could take lifetimes to become a reality	Closely associated with project management roles and structures. They are often structured as specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based (SMART)

Applying human-centered design thinking

Human-centered design thinking is a collaborative practice for gathering input and ideas that push formalized communication boundaries. Setting some guardrails, clearly defined goals and using tools will help your team adapt to such an open and collaborative nature and get the best return on time invested. Invite your team to participate in the creation of your vision with a visioning workshop.

Best practices for approaching a visioning workshop

Select your design thinking tools: There is no magic bullet for developing a vision with your team; choose the workshop tools which best suit your culture.

- Decide who should contribute. If the team is large, a visioning workshop might be appropriate for the most senior level management, while a small team of 20 or fewer could do a visioning exercise together. Contributors can vary
- Set expectations and make the process iterative. Communicate expectations and boundaries for input, refinement and final vision approval
- Make it stick. Be prepared to do the challenging change management work that follows. Start the communication and culture shifts necessary to align toward vision and timebox expectations

Best practices for turning a vision into actionable goals

Leverage the team's knowledge to uncover opportunities and challenges that will feed strategy development and prioritization. Much of what comes out of a visioning workshop will serve as some of the high-level strategies and goals.

- Frame findings around the organizational model (i.e., McKinsey's 7 model). Models help organize opportunities and challenges into categories that strategies and goals can directly impact. Have conversations around each type, examining what may impede or support the success of the vision
- Walk the talk. Set SMART goals that cascade across the organization to enforce strategy messaging in yearly goal setting. Set some parameters around how resources will align to goals, e.g., set time frames that move work forward but mix low-effort impactful goals with harder-to-reach stretch goals to help keep team members engaged but not overwhelmed

The opportunity is there

As strategy and project leaders, you have a powerful opportunity to evolve your vision into measurable, actionable, and results-driven goals. If our human-centric work at Luxoft is any indication, this approach is only the beginning of the visionary impacts for your teams and organization. If you have any questions or want to learn more about our methodologies and winning POVs, feel free to reach out to [me](#) or our strategy [leadership team](#).

About **the author**



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