

# Expanding your Vision

A strong, clear compelling vision is needed by leaders to see where their business is heading.

Leaders need to be able to see the future, to plan for and to take advantage of opportunities in the market, to develop new markets for existing products, and to anticipate and minimise disasters before they happen.

A compelling vision motivates a leader, and their team to persevere with a course of action, even when obstacles are encountered along the way. With a strong vision, a leader is able to treat obstacles as small, insignificant "speed bumps" rather than as brick walls.

There are many things which happen from day to day in a business which can distract a leader from the vision to be achieved by the goal. Having a well-formed vision provides the focus for a leader to pursue and achieve their goals. It helps leaders to focus on the important 20 per cent, rather than get caught up in the mundane 80 per cent, which can often be delegated to others to handle.

A leader with a grand vision can give purpose to our actions, provide the energy to pursue the vision and to encourage the team to go with them.

It is not enough for a leader to have a compelling vision. In order to achieve outstanding results for their team, the vision needs to be shared with the team and there needs to be a plan for it to be achieved. The plan is the leader's strategy.

*"Vision is a destination - a fixed point on which we focus our efforts. Strategy is a route - an adaptable path to get us where we want to go".*

Think of a jet plane flying to its destination airport across the other side of the Pacific. The plane has a fixed destination, but on its journey it will make hundreds of minor adjustments of its route, taking into account various factors including taking advantage of shifts in wind patterns, before it reaches its final destination. Despite the various changes in the route, the destination remains the same.

Similarly, a leader in business has a strong vision or destination in sight and an adaptable strategy to reach that goal. It is important to set strategic goalposts along the way to achieve the vision. A jet plane has computerised navigational systems to keep it on track. Without such a computerised system, a leader needs intermediate goals to keep them and the team on track to achieving the vision, and to provide progress points along the way to serve as minor victories, which should be celebrated by the leader and the team.

Great leaders are able to see beyond their own business and see the future of their industry, seeing potential opportunities which are not seen by their competitors. Opportunities can be found by seeing what has occurred, is occurring in other industries and adjusting the context to their own industry and business. For example, we know that Amazon started out selling books online, and is now a retail behemoth. It revolutionised the delivery of parcels, and is still forging ahead with developments in delivery technology.

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What can the flower industry learn from Amazon? How can the context of Amazon's technologies be adapted to the flower industry to drive business?

The business of the international cut flower market has undergone enormous change in the last 15 years. ABS figures show that imports of cut flowers into Australia have grown from \$14.8M in 2000-01 to \$64.1M in 2015-16, led by huge increase of importations from Kenya. At the same time, more than 50 per cent of imports from Kenya were infested with pests.

By contrast Australian exports of cut flowers was about \$10M in 2017.

Meanwhile, the local industry struggles to compete with the much lower cost structure of countries such as Kenya, Malaysia and Ecuador, all of which have substantially increased their exports to Australia over the last decade.

In its draft report issued last November, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is at last recommending that greater offshore, i.e. in country of origin, fumigation and disinfestation take place before the cut flowers are sent to Australia. This should have the twin effects of increasing cost a little, and reducing the amount of pests a lot.

What opportunities to your industry, business are provided by the findings contained in the DAWR report? What responses do you have as a leader in the Australian Flower industry to the recommendations in the DAWR report?

Consider the Australian wine industry. In 2017, Australian wine exports totalled \$2.5B. It has taken a long time to reach that level. In 1980, wine exports were at about the same level as cut flowers are now, about \$10M. Can you envision the industry growing exports from \$10M now to \$2.5B in 30 years? What lessons can be learned from the wine industry? What strategies could be designed and implemented to reach that vision?



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