

2020/THE VISION

A CLEAR VIEW OF A BETTER TOMORROW

INTRODUCTION

Besides being insanely convenient, why have we chosen 2020/The Vision for our conference theme? The answer is three-fold:

1. To identify who we are.
2. To declare where we want to go.
3. To explain how we are going to get there.

But let's start with basics. What is a vision and why do we need it?

I think it is interesting that the word "vision" has been coopted for purposes like ours. We all know how important physical vision is to each of us. To lose your vision or have it impaired is creates a real handicap. Even now, because I need one kind of vision aid to see you and another to see my notes, I am forced to choose between the two. Since I have seen some of you before, I choose to see my notes and guess at how you look this morning.

What do we mean we talk about the vision of a company, an organization, or a movement?

Google declares:

A vision statement is a declaration of an organization's objectives, intended to guide its internal decision-making.

But why do we need to limit this to an organization? Why can we not incorporate it into our individual lives?

George Washington Carver, a black American agricultural scientist and inventor from Alabama whose life spanned 1864 - 1943 (so imagine the obstacles he overcame every day), famously said:

"Where there is no vision, there is no hope."

Helen Keller, perhaps the most famous blind person in history, said:

"It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision."

And of course, Solomon, recognized as the standard of wisdom, wrote:

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

So, back to our reason for the theme 2020/The Vision:

1. To identify who we are.
2. To declare where we want to go.
3. To explain how we are going to get there.

WHO ARE WE?

It is important to know yourself. Otherwise, how do you know how to act or why you do what you do? Self-awareness is critical to becoming the best version of yourself for yourself and others.

To answer this question, we turn to a couple of things...

OUR MISSION

WE START EVERY DAY WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND: TO DO WHATEVER WE MUST TO DELIVER THE MOST VALUE TO OUR CLIENTS, PARTNERS, AND THEIR INTERESTS. TO THAT END, WE EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY, EXERCISE URGENCY, AND ACT WITH INTEGRITY.

A vision is where you want to go. A mission is the direction you take to get there. Since day one, when we first asked ourselves what we were willing to do to get where we wanted to go, the answer was clear: ***We will do whatever we must to deliver the most.*** We will start early. We will stay late. We will go the extra mile. We will do the work. We will carry the load. We will accept the responsibility.

Last year about this time, we began to ask ourselves what are our core values? What are the values that we hold and aspire to hold in order to support our mission and achieve our vision? We settled on six core values:

1. **Integrity** – We do the right things the right way because it is the right thing to do.
2. **Empathy** – We make every effort to walk a mile in “your” shoes, to understand your struggles and needs, whether you are the policyholder, the carrier, the adjuster, or whomever you are.
3. **Humility** – We don’t have bosses. We have leaders. Humility in leadership occurs when effective communication, empathetic engagement, and emphatic commitment to corporate success intersect. As Rick Warren says, “Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”
4. **Community** – We are not just building a company, but a culture; not just making a place to work, but a place to belong.

5. **Industry** – We believe that there is no substitute for putting in the work. “The harder we work, the luckier we get.”
6. **Responsibility** – We assume the responsibility for creating success and accept responsibility when a course correction is necessary.

This is who we are and if it is not, it is certainly who we want to become.

The mission statement is the map. The core values make up the vehicle. But where are we going?

OUR VISION

***IT IS OUR VISION TO BECOME THE NAME IN OUR INDUSTRY
SYNONYMOUS WITH OUTSTANDING CLAIM-HANDLING SERVICE
THROUGH INTUITIVE PROCESSES, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, AND AN
INSPIRED WORKFORCE.***

1. **Intuitive Processes** – we are working every day to improve our processes in order to deliver better service, a better product, and to do it in the most efficient manner possible. File review is one of the big things we tackled in 2019 and have seen dramatic results in terms of quality and efficiency.
2. **Innovative Approaches** – *if you always do what you have always done you will always get what you have always gotten.* The definition of insanity, someone has said, “Is doing something the same way over and over and expecting a different result.”
3. **Inspired workforce** – Mid-America is a company built by adjusters for adjusters. Your success is our success. We have built this company on *inspiration* and *perspiration*. We dream big. We work hard. Inspiration without perspiration is a daydream. Perspiration without inspiration is a nightmare. Put them together and dreams come true.

“One day in 1954, Walt called me and said, ‘Art, let me take you for a ride down to Orange County and I’ll show you where I’m going to build Disneyland. It’s a secret, so don’t tell anybody.’

“Well, I loved to hear Walt talk about his big plans, so we drove down with some researchers from the Stanford Research Institute. Along the way, we passed several little hamlets and villages I’d never heard of. They’re all big cities now, but back then there was nothing but dirt roads and little farm towns. We finally got to a place where some bulldozers had cleared out an orange grove. It looked like a big field of dirt clods.

“‘Well,’ Walt said, ‘this is it.’ He looked around and he could see it all in his imagination: the Disneyland Railroad, Main Street, Sleeping Beauty’s Castle, Adventureland, Frontierland,

Fantasyland, Tomorrowland. I looked around and saw nothing but a cow pasture. I thought, My poor deluded friend! He's going to put a bunch of merry-go-rounds and rollercoasters out here, forty-five minutes from L.A. He'll go broke! But out of respect for our friendship, I didn't say what I was thinking.

"Art,' he said, 'there's a fortune to be made here. If you buy up all the property around Disneyland, in a year or two it'll be worth twenty times what you paid for it.'

"Well, I was too smart to get caught up in Walt's enthusiasm! I didn't buy any real estate around Disneyland—and by being so 'smart,' I passed up a chance to make millions!

THE FUSION

So, how do we put them together? How do we fuse the Mission and the Vision to accomplish our goals?

Six things...

1. Strategize – He who fails to plan plans to fail. “The woodsman never wastes his time sharpening his ax.”
2. Mobilize – All the planning in the world means nothing if it is not executed.
3. Minimize – distractions! If what you are doing is not contributing to the realization of your vision, why are you doing it? One major distraction is criticism.
 - a. Don't give up because of criticism: “You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks.” – Winston Churchill
 - b. Don't settle for being a critic. It takes no talent to be a critic. All you need is an opinion and anybody can have one of those. Anybody can criticize.
4. Maximize – effort. Outwork your competition. Pay the price today to enjoy the prize tomorrow.
5. Capitalize – on your opportunities. Some people talk about luck. The Roman philosopher Seneca said, “Luck happens when preparation meets opportunity.”
6. Realize – your dream.

Some will leave this moment thinking, “Oh, just another rah-rah speech. I've heard 'em before. They don't affect me. They don't move me or change me. It's just pious platitudes. Not really what I am here for.”

OK. Fine. Leave as you came. Wake up a year from now satisfied that you were consistent, unmoved, unaffected. That is yours to choose if you wish. So, let me finish with a few words to those who among us who may yet aspire to do better, to be more, to dream big. It is by the Chairman and Chief Creative Officer of Siltanen & Partners, for Apple.

“Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently... They have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

Rob Siltanen

This time a year ago at this very conference in San Antonio, Texas, I gave the keynote address. I closed that day with these three words: *“It's Go Time.”*

And it was. 2019 was a year of setting the table, implementing new processes, and organizing for growth. 2020 is here.

Now...

It's Showtime, baby!