ARTICLES

From Gut Feeling to Clear Words: How to Refine and Articulate Your Vision

Every business makes hundreds of decisions a year: which customers to pursue, which projects to fund, which hires to make, and which opportunities to pass on.

The Sambia Team · November 4, 2026 · 5 min read

sambia.io/articles/vision-statement

Why your vision statement matters

A vision statement is the reference point for all of them. It describes where your company is headed five to 10 years from now, and it gives everyone on the team a shared answer to the question, "Where are we going, and why?"

Without one, teams drift. Goals get set quarter by quarter without a clear destination, and people make reasonable decisions that pull in different directions. With a clear vision, priorities line up, trade-offs get easier, and everyone can see how their work fits into something bigger.

What a strong vision statement looks like

The best vision statements share a few qualities:

- **It looks ahead.** It describes where you want to be in five to 10 years, not what you're doing this quarter.
- **It describes success.** It answers what ultimate success looks like and what's different about your customers, your industry, or the world because of your work.
- **It focuses on the outcome, not the output.** A bakery could say "We bake bread." A vision says what that bread makes possible, like bringing neighbors together around the table every day.
- **It's ambitious but believable.** It should stretch your team, the kind of "big hairy audacious goal" that takes years to reach, while staying grounded enough that no one dismisses it as fantasy.
- **It's written in plain language.** No buzzwords, no corporate-speak, no "best-in-class." A new hire should understand it on their first day.
- **It's short.** One to three sentences, ideally fewer than 20 words, so anyone on the team can repeat it from memory.

Knowing what a good vision looks like is the easy part; writing one is harder. The two exercises below uncover the purpose and values already driving your business, so you have the raw material to put your vision into words.

Exercise 1: The Five Whys

The Five Whys is a simple way to get from a surface-level answer to the purpose underneath it. Start with whatever comes to mind first when you think about why you started your business. Then ask "why?" about that answer. Keep going until you've asked five times.

Each round peels back a layer. Your first answer is usually about what you do. By the fifth, you're usually looking at why it matters, and that's where a vision lives.

Here's an example:

- **Why did you start your business?** I started my business because I want to help businesses grow.
- **Why do you want to help businesses grow?** I want to support local businesses creating jobs that improve my community.
- **Why do you want to support local businesses creating jobs?** It keeps our communities more tight-knit.
- **Why does that make communities more tight-knit?** When people work and act locally, they employ people in their community and respond to the purchasing preferences of the people who live there.
- **Why does that matter to you?** Because a community that keeps its jobs, dollars, and decisions close to home can take care of itself, and I want to help build places like that.

Notice how far the answer traveled. "Help businesses grow" could describe thousands of companies. "Help local businesses keep jobs and decisions close to home so communities can take care of themselves" describes a purpose, and it points straight at a niche: locally owned businesses that are growing and hiring.

Your answers also reveal your values. Read back through all five and note the ideas that keep coming up. In the example, "local," "community," and "tight-knit" point to values like community, local ownership, and self-reliance. Aim for three: few enough to remember, distinct enough to each mean something, and focused enough to guide real decisions.

Exercise 2: Crowdsource your values, then vote

Your Five Whys answers give you a starting list, but your final values shouldn't come from the founder alone. The people doing the work every day know what the company really stands for, and they're the ones who will live the values out. To build the list together:

- **Collect ideas.** Ask each team member to submit a few words that describe how the company works at its best. Anonymous submissions get more candid answers.
- **Group and share.** Combine similar ideas ("honest," "transparent," and "we tell it like it is") into themes, and share the full list with everyone.

- **Vote.** Give each person three votes so they have to prioritize.
- **Keep the top three and define them.** Write one sentence for each that describes what it looks like in practice.

The result is a short list your team recognizes as its own, which makes it far more likely to stick.

Putting it together: from raw material to a clear vision statement

With your purpose and values in hand, you're no longer starting from a blank page. Write a first draft that combines them. Using the example above, it might read: "We help businesses succeed by providing solutions that drive growth and create value." It's accurate, but it could describe almost anyone.

Refining is mostly subtraction. Read each draft out loud, cut the jargon and anything borrowed from someone else's website, and add back the specifics your exercises uncovered: who you serve, the outcome you create, and why it matters. The refined version might read:

"To be the partner that helps locally owned businesses grow, hire, and keep their communities strong."

That one sentence tells your team who you serve, what you help them do, and why it matters, in words anyone on the team can repeat. It also makes it much easier to say no to work that doesn't fit.

A vision only works if you use it

A vision that lives in a slide deck won't change much. Its real value comes when it shapes your roadmap, your quarterly goals, and your weekly conversations. Sambia.io keeps it front and center: plan your roadmap, set quarterly goals that ladder up to your vision, and review progress in structured weekly meetings where everyone can see how their work connects to the bigger picture.

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