

Module 7: Developing the AI Business Strategy using the "Ignition" Process

Lesson 2: Vision

The Power of a Shared Vision

A shared vision is not just a mission statement that gets put on a poster or in your employee handbook and is never thought of again. It's a powerful tool that can guide your business toward its goals.

It represents the north star of your organization, embodying your aspirations and serving as a compass for your strategic decisions.

Why a Shared Vision Matters

A shared vision unites the team, providing a clearly defined common direction and purpose. It can motivate and inspire, encouraging every member of the company to reach their full potential.

Imagine a rowing team. If everyone is rowing in a different direction, the boat spins in circles or just goes nowhere. But when everyone is in sync, the boat moves forward efficiently.

That's what a shared vision can do for your organization. It gets everyone in the same boat, in the right seats, rowing to the same point on the horizon.

Developing Your Vision

To develop a shared vision, it's essential to understand your organization's Core Purpose.

What unique value do you bring to your customers? What makes you different? And most importantly, why are you doing it?

The answer to that last question often goes deeper than one "why." Here's what we mean by that: Let's say you're working for a marketing agency. You might say the company's purpose is to help its clients drive more sales. And, of course, that would probably be true.

A great framework to guide you in this exercise is the "The 5 Whys," a technique developed and fine-tuned within the Toyota Motor Corporation as a critical component of its problem-solving training.

Taiichi Ohno, the architect of the Toyota Production System in the 1950s, describes this method as “the basis of Toyota’s scientific approach...by repeating why five times, the nature of the problem as well as its solution becomes clear.”

Ohno encouraged his team to dig into each problem that arose until they found the root cause. Here’s an example Toyota offers of a potential “5 Whys” that might be used at one of their plants:

1. **“Why did the robot stop?”**
The circuit has overloaded, causing a fuse to blow.

2. **“Why is the circuit overloaded?”**
There was insufficient lubrication on the bearings, so they locked up.

3. **“Why was there insufficient lubrication on the bearings?”**
The oil pump on the robot is not circulating sufficient oil.

4. **“Why is the pump not circulating sufficient oil?”**
The pump input is clogged with metal shavings.

5. **“Why is the intake clogged with metal shavings?”**
Because there is no filter on the pump.

In this example, you can see that the robot stopped because there was no filter. The blown fuse was just a symptom of the root cause.

If we had stopped at the first “why,” we would not be focused on solving the actual cause of the issue.

Ideally, the entire leadership team would be involved in this conversation. They will likely have some insight or inspiration that the founder didn’t think of and collectively be able to mitigate any blind spots. And when the leadership is part of the planning, they have investment and excitement from the beginning, which makes them your best allies in driving the adoption of the vision throughout the business.

Pro Tip: Have two different people taking clear photographs of the whiteboard at every stage of the Ignition process.

We're often asked who should be considered part of the leadership team when conducting an Ignition process.

Typically, it's the people in the C-suite, those reporting directly to the CEO or Founder. However, sometimes there are people in an organization, such as domain experts on specific areas of the business operations, whose insight would be especially helpful. It's up to you to decide whether to invite them.

The leadership team who starts this process is rarely the same team at the next annual meeting.

Because of the discoveries during the Ignition process, it's not uncommon for positions to be added or removed, as well as the people staffing those positions. And there are often some tough, honest decisions to make in order to grow not only in profit but also as a culture. More to come on that in our People module, **Module 10: Human in the Loop**.

Determining your Core Purpose is just the beginning. Once you complete this module and your Ignition event, you'll have a complete vision, documented in a simplified manner, that can easily be shared with your stakeholders.

Take a look at the sample vision summary in the downloads of this lesson. We will walk through each element of the document in this module.

Sharing Your Vision

Once you have the vision identified, it's essential to share it with your entire organization. Begin by sharing in an all-hands meeting. Communicating to everyone at once leaves no one out and ensures that the message isn't diluted or altered through the proverbial Game of Telephone. Everyone, therefore, hears the same message delivered from the same source (ideally, the CEO).

Record your message so that people can refer back to it at any time and so that it can be shared as part of new staff and contractor onboarding.

Share your vision at every opportunity — team meetings, newsletters, investor updates, even with your vendors and other stakeholders. Make it a central part of your company culture.



But communication is just the beginning.

You must also demonstrate your commitment to the vision through your actions. This means aligning your strategic decisions, policies, and procedures with your vision.

Remember, a powerful vision doesn't guarantee success — it must be combined with the right strategy, execution, and team. However, without a clear, shared vision, even the best team can struggle to achieve their potential.

So, invest the time to develop a powerful, clearly explained shared vision for your organization. It will provide the direction and inspiration you need to unlock your organization's success.