

Vision: a reflection of your company culture and values

This resource is part of SAIF's leadership project, which is meant to help employers and leaders of organizations establish strong and sustainable safety cultures using research-based concepts and strategies.

Vision

Reflective of culture and values

Future tense: Where we are headed

Meant to inspire and motivate

Aspirational

Mission

Reflective of vision

Present tense: What we do

Whom do we serve? How do we serve them?

Actionable

A vision is a statement of what an organization would like to achieve in the future, but it's much more than a goal. A vision can inspire people and connect employees to a common purpose. An effective vision can provide clarity in decision making and help guide employees in their daily work.

Because of its importance, a vision is considered a cornerstone of great leadership. One of the best things you can do as a leader is create a compelling vision statement and integrate that vision into every facet of your operations.

While an overall vision statement is important for every organization, creating a safety vision statement that specifically addresses your safety aspirations can improve safety and health, and can potentially impact the entire enterprise in positive ways.

Here are some benefits of a safety vision:

A guiding light

A vision for safety serves as a guide for decision making throughout the organization. This is especially important during challenging times or transitions within the company. When it comes to decisions that could impact the safety of your employees, a vision can offer more clarity in an employee's daily choices. Every day you and your employees face decisions regarding production, hiring, discipline, opportunities, expenses, maintenance—the list can go on and on. Employees should ask themselves: Does this decision lead to the company's safety vision?

If everyone in the company made decisions in line with your safety vision, how would that impact every part of your operation?

Imagination and growth

In addition to providing guidance and clarity, a good vision statement stretches the imagination and challenges employees to grow. Some of the best solutions to safety challenges come from ideas generated by employees. Having a vision that inspires imagination and motivates people to improve the workplace supports continuous improvement and creates a safer workplace.

Creating a vision

If you already have a safety vision, you may want to have a team review it to ensure it's up to date. If you don't have one, you can begin the process of creating one with the ideas listed here. Whether you are reviewing or creating, your team should include ownership, leadership, and employees. Embracing diverse ideas and opinions ensures you end up with a vision that unifies your organization. If you are a small business, you might have your whole team create a vision together.

Here are some questions to get started:

- What are our values, hopes, and dreams?
- What ultimate impact do we want our organization to have on our employees and their families? The community? The world?
- How will the culture of our organization impact our safety vision?

- What legacy do we want to leave?
- What defines success?

When writing your vision, make it clear, concise, compelling, and inspiring for employees at every level.

To inspire you, here's a few examples:

“Our shared vision is to provide a working environment free from harm by promoting a positive culture and continuously improving the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce.”

—Hydratight

“SAIF’s vision is to make Oregon the safest and healthiest place to work.”

—SAIF Corporation

“Dedication to safely producing the highest quality steel products for our customers.”

—AK Steel

Making your vision work

For a safety vision to be truly effective, it should be more than a slogan on a poster or website. It needs to be integrated into every facet of your company culture.

Here's a few ideas for leaders to integrate their safety vision:

Discuss the safety vision frequently. Tie business strategies and discussions back to the vision statement. Demonstrate how the work ties into the vision. Give employees an opportunity to see how their work connects to your vision.

Share emotional stories, and the practical purpose, behind the vision. People will relate to a vision that provides an emotional connection. Leaders should be passionate

about the vision and demonstrate this to their team in their words and actions.

Make the vision visually appealing to reinforce its message. It could be the first thing employees see when they walk in every day, or it could be printed on the top of your safety minutes to keep conversations focused and aligned on the vision. Ensure that visual messages are one part of your overall communication strategy and not a replacement for leadership demonstrating their commitment.

These are some ways to show leadership commitment to safety vision:

Executive level:

- Inspires employees when communicating the safety vision and values
- Describes a compelling picture of the future and what the workplace will look like when safety goals are achieved
- Promotes the vision in words and actions
- Recognizes employee behaviors and accomplishments that support the safety vision

Managers and supervisors:

- Discusses progress towards safety goals
- Reviews the safety vision during meetings
- Encourages employees to take an active role in safety tasks and to work to continuously reduce risks and exposures
- Supports innovative ways to eliminate risks and exposures
- Shares safe workplace information and suggestions from employees and others

Leaders shape vision

“As a safety leader, your ability to share a personal and compelling vision is critical to moving your organization out of the problems of the past and into a better future.”

– Rebecca Timmins, vice president of global consulting, BST

Activity ideas

- Work with a team to develop a safety vision for your organization. If you need additional guidance, consider using an organizational development consultant.
- If you have a safety vision, meet with leadership to discuss ways to integrate it into the company’s culture using the lists outlined in this document.