



4th Annual

Vision Stew
for
2010

What's cookin' in your business for your new year?

VISION STEW for 2010

I love this time of year to hibernate, reflect and introspect. Each year, at this time, I begin reviewing my past year. What inspired me? What took me by surprise? What knocked me around a bit? What were moments of celebration? This year has brought many lessons to me. Of lightness. Of love. Of trust. Of community. And most of all, of the power of story and the wonder of conversations—intimate and public, with friend and perceived foe, from self to other—to reclaim a sense of purpose and re-member who we are and what we are capable of being and doing...alone and with others.

We are the vision shapers of tomorrow, whether we acknowledge it or not. What role do we choose to have? During this last year I've had the opportunity to witness the power of individuals and organizations taking a stand and owning their wisdom. And, conversely, I've watched dreams fall apart when people lose sight of what's deeply, genuinely important to them.

This year's vision stew is a bit different than previous years'. To fully embrace the depth of this process, I am using this forum to explore my own vision stew. Initially I began by using a 'composite client', but that felt contrived and stiff. Since I am asking all of us to show up even in the midst of fear of judgment...I am going to start by leading the way.

I suggest you set aside two or three blocks of time—perhaps two hours apiece—to engage fully in this five-stage process: Stage 1: Naming Your 'No BS' Personal Inspiration; Stage 2: Brainstorming Your Big Picture Vision; Stage 3: Taking Stock with a Fearless Personal Inventory; Stage 4: Setting Detailed Goals; and Stage 5: Creating an Inspirational Reminder.

Truly crafting a vision for the year that honors you and your way of creating takes time: time to idea-ate; time to reflect; time to cull...and most importantly, time to make it yours!

So, let's begin.

STAGE 1: NAME YOUR 'NO BS' PERSONAL INSPIRATION

In this stage, take time to consider what inspires and fulfills you in your deepest essence. This piece can truly set the tone for a fiercely compelling life enterprise, especially in these challenging times.

Dee Hock, author of *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (and the founder of Visa), relates that, in this new age of change, those who will succeed must be able to craft anew and adeptly blend chaos and order. To do so, he

states, “a clear sense of direction and compelling principles and pursuit of it, are far more effective than detailed plans and outlined objectives”.

Stage One involves identifying your compelling principles for your own life!

As I think about my work, two of my compelling principles are:

1: I must have committed union with bright, heart-driven, invested people. It doesn't matter whether it is with a client, a friend or an intimate other. Through committed union I have seen magic happen. I can't even imagine life without it.

2: I am a provocateur of change—a shaper of NEW story. My love is collaborating with people to find the voice that gets hidden in the shadows, neglected, judged or misunderstood. The voice that calls forth a greater sense of being so that we, individually and culturally, can think in ways that inspire trust, growth and change. When individuals and organizations step it up and share their insights and wisdom, provoking or inspiring others to think, lives shift.

These guiding principles are the primary ingredients in our vision stew. They are NOT our vision, but rather what must be honored to successfully accomplish our vision. We each have our own, described in our own way. It doesn't even have to make sense to others. It just has to be your beacon of truth.

As tempted as you may be, don't skip this stage. When you bypass owning what resonates most deeply with your soul; when you focus your attention on what you think others want, what you THINK the market wants, or what you perceive others will 'buy into'; you lose the energetic, magnetic force that attracts the very people you want to have in your life. And, it's tough. Write a bunch. Edit later. Start with writing 'the part of me I want to fully honor...' and see what emerges.

What are your “No BS” Personal Inspirations?

STAGE 2: BRAINSTORMING YOUR 'BIG PICTURE' VISION

In this instant soup culture, we often believe our vision *should* magically appear. My invitation is to cook your vision like a good stew. First you explore what kind of stew you're making. That's the big picture. In Stage 4, you'll get to the details...adding spices and juices to blend, steep and simmer...to make it *your* stew.

A quick tip: get your ideas on paper. For the moment, don't censor yourself.

Studies show that you have a 70% greater chance of success when you write down what you seek to accomplish. Writing stops the brain from aimlessly churning and helps you focus on what you truly want.

Now, ON TO THE BRAINSTORM.

Everyone visions differently. Some people need to tell a story. Others doodle. Some like to move around. Choose what works best for you (or your group). If you find yourself dutifully making a 'To Do' list, take a break. Go back to asking yourself what you really want to create this year. Much like Dee Hock said, once you've clarified your direction, your detailed plans (a.k.a., your goals) will evolve naturally.

My favorite approach is to sit still and just breathe for a while, thinking of absolutely nothing. Then, I'll pull out my tray of different colored pieces of paper to identify my key categories—I call them my 'what' and my 'how'. 'What' stands for what I want to accomplish. 'How' represents how I want to stay connected in the world in ways that honor me and my clients/community.

This visual format lets me quickly see if I've put too much weight in a category or forgotten another. Also, the slips of paper can be easily moved around. *If you are working with a group, there are great computer programs that let you create these online and project them. It's a super cool way to keep the process fluid for a group!*

At the top of the table I will put my Personal Inspiration statement from Stage 1. I write it EXTRA BIG so I can remember what I really want to honor. One of my clients calls that the Granddaddy of Life Vision... honor that, and everything else falls into place!

What's important here is to be specific and succinct!

YOU MUST BE ABLE TO SEE WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. If you can't 'see' it, it is not your vision. Name what you want to create, simply and powerfully. In Stage 4 we will set specific, measurable goals. In this stage, we are seeking the broad stroke of what we want.

Here's mine for this year (it has two parts):

Part 1: To help progressive nonprofits, passionate creatives and kick-ass entrepreneurs craft and share powerful stories (both visual and written), presentations and messaging that inspire, provoke and ignite new ways of thinking in their clients and their communities.

Part 2: To work with individuals and leaders committed to living their BEST SELF in ways that inspire and enrich their lives.

How will I know whether or not I've accomplished this vision? You'll notice that there are no specific services or detailed objectives. These will come when I create my MEATY GOALS.

What is your Big Picture Vision? (I suggest doing this on the computer for adaptability.)

Now that you've written your vision, pause. Let it stew for a bit. Perhaps come back in a few hours, or a day. What tends to happen at this stage is that you get so excited that you begin to make a plan. Sounds great, right? Actually, wrong.

Before you make your 'plan', let's take time to identify what motivates or derails you. That way, when you begin to outline your specifics, you can do so in ways that will actually inspire you to act and follow through.

STAGE 3: TAKING STOCK WITH A FEARLESS PERSONAL INVENTORY

Once you begin to brainstorm, it's time to check in with yourself and see what feels true. A well-kept secret is that if you want to be successful, own your essential self and focus your vision based on your core purpose.

So...take a look. Now that you know your core purpose, dare to name your strengths, challenges and opportunities—without judgment (as much as possible). When you do this with fearless honesty and unwavering commitment to state what is true, you can begin to see how you BEST operate in life and use this to best serve you and your vision.

If you are leaning toward skipping this section, know that you are not alone. Seldom do people want to look under the covers and identify their strengths, challenges and opportunities. For some reason it seems so much

easier to let the winds of life toss us about and hope we end up in the right place. To this I say, “Phooey”. Know thyself. Lead with your strengths. Strengthen your challenges. And, please...oh please...learn how to spot opportunities. It will make goal setting so much easier!!!!

I prefer to use a computer for this process. It allows me to move from one category to another, randomly filling things in without worrying about space. If you are working with a group, you might put up two sheets of paper. It is great to have a different scribe for each category so the process can flow easily. It is NOT a linear process.

You might find it most helpful to work with a facilitator to help guide this process and keep you focused. I asked a group of trusted colleagues to give me honest feedback. And they did!

STRENGTHS

This space is dedicated to identifying the unique gift of how you interact in the world. Own it. Think about how you can fully utilize this in your outreach, your connections, your services—in every element of your vision. I find that it is very helpful to ask others whom you trust. They can be far more clear-headed, quick and objective than you can ever be.

EXAMPLES OF MY STRENGTHS (Remember to focus on what you DO well!)

Here are a few...as you let this unfold, you will find 10-30:

- *An uncanny ability to see need at a deep, intuitive level and quickly respond to it.*
- *Knowing the key players in different areas of the community.*
- *A strong ability to draw out another person.*
- *The ability to write in a way that evokes an emotional response and inspires action.*
- *The ability to transform the abstract into doable steps.*
- *The ability to develop creative approaches to connection.*

GO BACK AND LOOK AT YOUR VISION. Where, and how, can you utilize these strengths?

CHALLENGES

Ah, now your challenges. This candid, honest inventory is NOT a list of criticisms; it is an acknowledgment of your blind spots and limitations. As you identify your challenges, you might notice how they could be coupled with your strengths and opportunities to offer a new way of approaching a lifelong challenge. Or, you might realize that you simply need to accept them, be more compassionate with yourself, and find a way

to work with them rather than fight them.

I find that far too often we want to slip these under the rug and pretend they don't exist. For this reason, I have decided to be exceedingly candid about my own.

EXAMPLE OF MY CHALLENGES (and yes...there are more!)

- *Tending toward shyness and retreating away from people.*
- *Initially putting too much stock in what others think about what I'm doing.*
- *Taking things too personally. As a result, I can put a space between myself and others instead of letting the discomfort transform itself.*
- *Not having conversational ease within a group I don't know.*
- *Struggling with dyslexia; fearing others' judgment of my intellect and professionalism.*

As you make this list, please note...this is not about analyzing your navel, but rather, identifying the behaviors and beliefs that can sabotage the very thing you most want to create. This, my friends, is at the heart of a soul-centered business. By recognizing and working with your challenges, you build heart-centered connections that engender trust and long-lasting relationship.

Reflect back on your year. How did your challenges get in the way of your deeper intentions for your work? Don't judge it. Just notice. What did they teach you? What could you do differently in the future? They may...and most likely won't...change overnight. But being aware of them, and coupling them with your strengths and opportunities, can transform the way you live your vision this next year.

OPPORTUNITIES

And finally, let's take a look at opportunities. At any time, opportunities abound. The question is: how well do you spot them? Sadly, this is the biggest challenge for many. The good part is that once you begin to spot opportunities IN RELATION TO YOUR VISION...your specific goals almost shape themselves.

EXAMPLES OF MY OPPORTUNITIES:

- *People are turning to nonprofits to help them understand these confusing times.*
- *Nonprofits need to move past old-school ways of community connection to enhance their credibility.*
- *Nonprofits need to realize (in order to survive) that people want more than just to 'give'.*
- *Social & Transformative Entrepreneurs need to claim their value as wisdom sharers.*
- *Artists need to stop thinking others will 'take care' of them and get in the business game.*
- *Organizations that serve these communities want tools to help their members.*

Yes, indeed...opportunities abound! Now, I'm going to take this knowledge about myself, coupled with my insight into opportunities, and start ('cause I, too, am still brewing) to set some detailed goals so that I have a road map to follow.

STAGE 4: SET DETAILED, MEATY GOALS

Goals are different than the big picture vision. They provide a road map to follow (or, to keep with our stew metaphor, the goals are the ingredients). Measurable, explicit and time-based, they provide a point of reference to see if and how you are achieving your vision.

What makes MEATY goals?

Here are a few things I look for when working with clients to set powerful goals that will keep them, and their team, inspired.

- **Measurable** - Include quantifiable elements.
Ex: Work with at least 20 nonprofits individually to create a new culture of story.
- **Engaging** - Create goals that will engage and inspire you and your team. They should align with the character and values of the organization.
 - Community-building**—Partner with 10 organizations to weave story and leadership.
 - Vision Cards**—Lead 2 workshops per month on using Vision Cards with clients.
 - Coaching**—Work exclusively with committed leaders who endeavor to have greater impact within their chosen field.

If you don't feel a wee 'gulp', you probably have not yet named truly engaging goals.

- **Achievable** - It is great to stretch, but it is crucial that you set attainable goals. An important thing to note here: achievability is relative. Some people set seemingly impossible targets and surpass them. Others limp along for months on end and then suddenly burst forth with progress that seems oddly lucky. I find that the more driven you are to couple your mission with engaging others in the importance of your vision for them, the more seamless and 'lucky' success seems to be.
- **Time-based** - A time-based framework focuses your attention and resources. When you set goals, having time-specific outcomes will keep them 'front and center' and get things moving.

- **Yes!** - If you, your team or your volunteers don't say 'Yes!', it won't happen.

What are your MEATY Goals?

Take a moment to review the elements of your vision for the year (Stage 2). Now that you've gone through this process, some might be tossed or put aside for later consideration. For now, let's use the ones that are the most MEATY!

Write MEATY goals for this year—ones that will propel you toward your dream. These will guide your outreach so that you focus your connections with a specific purpose in mind.

What are your goals?

Now that you've established some MEATY goals, take a few moments to take them in. This is a great moment to pause and ask yourself, "Now that they're written...how do they feel?" Are they exciting? Do they feel ambitious without being overwhelming? Can you whole-heartedly say 'yes' to the work it will take to make them happen?

If not, cook your stew a bit more.

If yes, take a breath. And let's get ready for this year's ride!

Inspired action is incredibly powerful and can catapult a floundering venture into a successful one...**which brings us to the final stage.**

STAGE 5: CREATE AN INSPIRATIONAL REMINDER

Once you've set goals that inspire you, take a moment to create something visual that will remind you of your vision and inspire continued commitment. Mine is often a vision tableau, a montage of objects that represent my vision. Organizations might have a list or a poem (depending on your "personality"). I know one organization that created a beautiful paper wall hanging.

And now, begin by taking a step. A vision is only a dream until you start to act. Even if they are small turtle steps. Great. Those are the steps you can keep on taking!