



The title of the following article may be somewhat provocative, since those of us who are strategic consultants have, for many years, promoted the identification of a Company's Vision and Mission as a compendium of an organization's strategic direction. In fact, it is hard to find companies and institutions which have not incorporated this concept into the praxis of their organizations.

The Mission is Dead: Let's Boost the Organization's Identity

By Sabin Azua

In my opinion, the concept has the quality of summing up an organization's strategic plan, but it does contain some inherent practical limitations:

- 1) Most companies seek a marketing motto for its internal and external impact;
- 2) The motto is often suitable for the organization, and for the competition as well;
- 3) Generally, it is linked to an organization's future direction without considering other cohesive elements in the transformation process;
- 4) Normally, these mottos are either coined by consultants, or heavily influenced by them, and not by those in charge of guiding the company's transformation process.

I personally believe that both the competitive environment in which we operate, and the need to link a company to a unique business plan require a search for new concepts to be incorporated into an organization's strategic plan. Along these lines, we have been working on formulating the concept of Identity of the Organization as an alternative to the Mission.

The Organization's Identity is premised on the idea that no two business plans are alike. Consequently, there is a specific place within a competitive environment for that Organization to exist, which is to be occupied only by the Organization. We must, therefore, develop the best possible strategic designs to take possession of that space exclusively reserved for our Organization. From my perspective, the Identity of the Organization is based on the appropriate combination of the following three basic elements:

- 1) The Organization's History. Some call it an organization's Genetic Code. An organization is greatly influenced by past decisions and events that the organization may have lived through. Often, however, the conditioning factors produced by an organization's history are forgotten during the strategy planning stage.
- 2) Limitations and Opportunities of the Present Situation. The strategic plan needs to take into consideration the limitations and opportunities which arise from the organization's starting point, namely: the stockholders, the management team, the management systems and so on. Frequently, as a result of overlooking these elements in the design of the Mission, these very same elements become limiting factors to future development capacities.
- 3) A Sense of Ambition. This is the organization's dream for the future, the space it aspires to occupy and the model for transformation. It is the future direction which ought to provide orientation to the organization's decision-making process and innovation efforts to advance toward new, unique and differential spaces.

I am convinced that the search for new management concepts and the definition of the implementation mechanisms in organizations is one of the most relevant tasks in developing competitiveness in companies in our sector, with the formulation of innovative



strategies being the motor of an organization's transformation. I feel that the Basque Country Knowledge Cluster is the ideal place for innovation in this field.

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