

# Washington Smart CEO

## Required Reading for Growing Companies

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# eye to eye

## How to help your employees share your company's vision

Sure, you've got it all figured out. Your executive management team has spent hours creating and tweaking your business' vision statement down to the exact preposition, so there is no doubt in your mind what you see for your company's future. But what good is all your hard work if your employees don't know about it? SmartCEO asked Washington's business visionaries to share how they help their employees see in the same direction.



Katharine Giacalone, president of KGWorks, a management consulting firm in Washington, DC, provides five tips to guide CEOs through the communication phase of implementing their company's vision:

## vision in real life

- 1. USE THE RULE OF 50/50.** Spend 50 percent of the time creating the vision and 50 percent of the time communicating it. The vision statement needs to be clear, easy to remember and help the staff feel connected with the business. Writing it is just as important as "telling" it.
- 2. THINK "COMMUNICATIONS" THROUGHOUT YOUR PROCESS.** Even before your vision is finalized, take some time-outs along the way to answer these questions: Is the vision inspiring? What are the key messages we want our staff to live by and remember while they are at work? If you can't answer these questions, go back to the drawing board until you can.
- 3. GET BUY-IN ALONG THE WAY.** Even though your vision statement may not be completely finished, ask your staff for feedback. This will help you gauge whether or not you'll be able to communicate it effectively, and it will give you the opportunity to make some mid-course adjustments.
- 4. DELIVER THE VISION WITH STRONG CONVICTION.** Make the communication event special, but don't feel like you have to spend a lot of money. Get the senior staff involved in the communication strategy, show a unified front to the staff and weave the vision into everything you do – customer service, performance management and day-to-day interactions with staff.
- 5. ESTABLISH A POST-COMMUNICATIONS MECHANISM.** Hearing something once usually doesn't stick with employees. The message has to be played over and over again before it starts to become real. Until the vision becomes a part of everyone's work life, include a segment on the vision at staff meetings, conduct focus groups so staff has a chance to ask questions and post it wherever you can, on walls at the entrance of the office, on log-in screens or the intranet.