

# MAKING VISION STICK

Jay Anderson

Andy Stanley, founding pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia, has written a very helpful book called *Making Vision Stick* (Zondervan, 2007). In it, he outlines five crucial steps for instilling the vision and making it stick. "Vision is the lifeblood of your organization. It should be coursing through the minds and hearts of those you lead, focusing their creativity and galvanizing their efforts. . . . But, in order for that to happen, you've got to make your vision stick. That's your responsibility as the leader." This article summarizes Stanley's five steps for ensuring that vision sticks:

## 1. State the vision simply

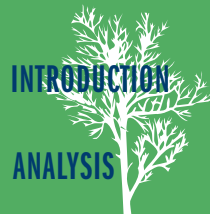
A good vision must be short, concise and memorable. Too many organizations make the mistake of trying to include everything in their vision statement. As a result, it ends up being too long to be easily stated or remembered. A simple, concise vision can be very compelling, even if it needs some further explanation, and is much more likely to be effective than a longer, more complex one. In *Making Vision Stick*, Stanley gives the example of a new vision his church was developing. The initial statement read "We envision fifty thousand people participating in weekly small groups that are committed to multiplying." Complete and comprehensive, yes, but hard to remember. What they eventually settled on was "5/50/10", which was short for "five thousand small groups with fifty thousand members by the year 2010." The short statement, though it requires some further fleshing out, is much more concise, and therefore more likely to stick. Ultimately, it will be more effective than the longer statement.

## 2. Cast the vision convincingly

Once the vision has been distilled down to a brief, concise, and memorable form, it must be communicated in a compelling way. Stanley breaks that process down into three steps:

1. Define the problem in a way that creates godly dissatisfaction with the present situation in the people you work with.
2. Offer a solution to the problem that invites their response and involvement.
3. Presenting a compelling reason why action needs to be taken, and taken immediately.

As Stanley writes, "If you haven't defined the problem, determined a solution, and discovered a compelling reason why now is the time to act, you aren't ready to go public with your vision. It won't stick" (pp. 32-33).



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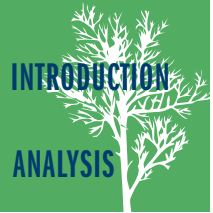
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### **3. Repeat the vision regularly**

Leaders often make the mistake of under-communicating the vision. I heard one leader say we tend to under-communicate the vision by a factor of 100. If we want the vision to stick, we have to repeat it multiple times, in multiple ways, in many different venues and forums, and in many different forms. As Stanley writes, “Casting a vision once is not enough to make it stick. Twice isn’t enough either. Vision needs to be repeated regularly. To make it stick, you need to find ways to build vision casting into the rhythm of your organization . . . at times, I feel a bit guilty. I feel like I’m repeating myself. ‘Surely they know this by know,’ I reason. But I go right ahead and do it anyway. Why? Because vision doesn’t stick.” Mentioning your vision once at the first large group meeting of the year isn’t going to cut it. We need to find ways of subtly (and not so subtly!) reinforcing the vision in not only large groups, but in small groups, at leaders meetings, in our one-to-one appointments, and at our conferences and retreats. To make vision stick, it must be repeated often, and regularly.

### **4. Celebrate the vision systematically**

One of the best ways to reinforce the vision is to celebrate real life examples of your vision being lived out in the real world—what Stanley calls “wins.” He says that celebrating the right things can be the single most effective way of making vision stick. Stanley writes, “What is celebrated is repeated. The behaviors that are celebrated are repeated. The decisions that are celebrated are repeated. The values that are celebrated are repeated. If you intentionally or unintentionally celebrate something that is in conflict with your vision, the vision won’t stick. Celebrations trump motivational speeches every time.” (pp. 40-41). Too often, organizations highlight and celebrate things that conflict with the vision, or simply have nothing to do with advancing the vision. Find ways of recognizing individuals who are living out the vision. Find ways to celebrate even minor steps of progress towards the vision. Systematic and enthusiastic celebration of the vision goes a long way towards making it stick.

### **5. Embrace the vision personally**

One leadership team I worked with had the motto, “If the leaders won’t do it, who will?” The idea was that we couldn’t ask people to do things that we weren’t first committed to doing ourselves. If we wanted people to be in small group Bible studies, all of us had to either lead or participate in those studies. If we wanted people to attend conferences and training events, we all had to attend those training events ourselves, and bring people with us. If we wanted people to pray, we had to lead the way, and be committed to prayer ourselves. If we expected people to be sharing their

faith with their non-Christian friends, we had to be modeling it for them in our own lives. “Your willingness to embody the vision of your organization will have a direct impact on your credibility as a leader. Living out the vision establishes credibility and makes you a leader worth following,” writes Stanley. “. . . When you embody the vision of your organization, people come to believe that your job is more than just a job for you.” We want our students to embrace the vision not because we tell them to, but because they see that it compels us to do what we do. If you are not living out the vision yourself, you are going to have a hard time making it stick.

In the opening chapter of his book, Stanley writes, “It is the responsibility of the leader to ensure that people understand and embrace the vision. . . . If the followers don’t get it, we probably haven’t delivered the vision in a way that makes it get-able. We are responsible for keeping the vision of our organization at the forefront.” To do that, we need to ensure that we follow all five of Andy Stanley’s imperatives: State the vision simply. Cast the vision convincingly. Repeat the vision regularly. Celebrate the vision systematically. Embrace the vision personally. If we are successful in casting our vision, students will embrace it for themselves, and begin to live it out in their daily lives, and then, God granting the increase, the gospel will be advanced on campus.



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# CASTING VISION: BE PREPARED

*Renea Livingstone*

*So you want to build your group in numbers and depth. How are you going to tell people why? This worksheet suggests a number of different ways you can prepare yourself to communicate your vision. As you work on articulating your vision, your vision will be refined. Articulation forces you to think harder about what you really want to see happen, and why. If your communication is effective, others will join you in the task and your vision will be further refined as you learn to speak it as a group.*

## **Bare naked vision: short and to the point**

1. Develop a short, punchy statement—no more than a phrase or a sentence—that communicates your vision. What do you want to see happen?
2. Vision is motivated by negative and positive reasons.  
The negative motivation answers the question, “Why is the present state unacceptable?” The positive motivation answers the question, “Why do I think change is possible? Develop a phrase or sentence each to communicate your negative and positive motivations.
3. Put them all together.

## **How much time do i have?**

You will need to talk about your vision in all kinds of situations. Sometimes you will have 30 seconds to get things across, sometimes you may have 30 minutes. Develop a plan to articulate your vision when you have these time frames:

1. 30 seconds
2. 5 minutes
3. 20 minutes

## **Hip-pocket sermons**

What passages of scripture can help you explain your vision? Identify three passages (one from the Old Testament, one from a gospel, and one from an epistle, perhaps?) and outline a short talk (10-20 minutes) based on each, in which you can cast your vision. Familiarize yourself with these talks so you can pull them out whenever opportunity knocks.

1. Passage 1
2. Passage 2
3. Passage 3



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### **It's personal**

Think of a personal story that shows people why you care about this vision. Develop a good way to tell it. (Or, develop two—one with a happy ending, and one that's more of a tragedy.)

### **Eye opener**

Develop a simple visual that can serve as a sign for the vision. (If necessary, get help from your graphically-gifted friends.)

*"Always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that you have"*

1 Peter 3:15b, NIV



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