



## Why Your Brewery Needs a Vision

By Dave Ketchen, Auburn University

Building a good business starts with a good vision for the business. Much like children are often asked “what do you want to be when you grow up?” a brewery’s vision lays out what its founders hope the organization will become in the future.

Although setting a compelling vision seems straightforward, a 1994 survey of 1,050 executives published in *Business Horizons* illustrates how challenging it is. When asked to identify the most important traits of effective strategic leaders, 98 percent listed “a strong sense of vision” first. Meanwhile, 9 out of 10 executives admitted they had serious doubts about their own ability to create a good vision. Thus, having a good vision can provide a company with an edge over competitors.

Visions work by getting employees focused on a common path toward a desired end. For example, the vision of one UK-based craft brewery is “to ensure Acorn Brewery will be renowned for brewing excellent quality beers as well as delivering fantastic customer service, by ensuring pride and passion underlines every brew and customer interaction.” One key here is reputation building – the brewery will not be satisfied with providing excellent beer and fantastic service but instead aims to become celebrated in the public domain for these strengths.

Acorn’s vision is brief enough that employees can keep it in the back of their minds as they perform their daily tasks. Imagine, for example, that a tap room customer lodges an unreasonable complaint about the taste of a pint. A server has several obvious options about how to respond – tell the customer they are wrong, offer a refund, or offer a substitute beverage.

Ultimately, the decision should be the one that best supports the focus on reputation building featured in the vision. This will hopefully lead the server to offer both a refund *and* a different beer and then encourage the newly satisfied customer to post a review describing the great beer and service received.



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