

Visionary Leadership: The Difference between Vision and Purpose

<http://www.lisapetrilli.com/2011/09/08/visionary-leadership-the-essential-difference-between-vision-and-purpose/>

Written on September 8, 2011 by [Lisa Petrilli](#) in [Executive](#), [Leadership](#), [Vision](#)

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As you might expect for a blog passionate about Visionary Leadership, I've heretofore tackled the [business-altering difference between vision and mission](#), and [the critical difference between vision and goals](#).

But it was in the comments of last week's post about [why business vision matters more in this economy](#) that I was asked an important question I hadn't yet addressed:

Curious to know your thoughts on the difference between a company's vision and a company's purpose. ~ [Greg Hartle](#)

I responded to Greg in the comments but wanted to share my thoughts with all of you here because it's an excellent question. Whereas others might say they all ultimately get you to the same place, I disagree. I think there is a clear difference between vision, mission, and purpose and they all play a role in keeping you focused and on the right path.

A Healing Example

I shared with Greg the following example that might be developed by a nephrologist (kidney doctor):

Purpose: To heal

Mission: To eliminate the need for human donors for people who have kidney failure, because many don't receive a transplant in time

Vision: A world where people with kidney disease no longer need dialysis or human transplants, but are able to live a full life via another therapeutic cure

The vision is the inspiration that keeps this doctor on the path when challenges to fulfill this daunting mission appear. But it's this person's purpose in life – to heal – that leads to this particular mission and vision. Without it, s/he will likely lose the fire to continue down the path when challenges arise.

The purpose is at the very core.

A healthcare company working with this doctor might define itself this way, focused on a shared vision:

Purpose: To save lives

Mission: To create an artificial kidney

Vision: A world where people with kidney disease no longer deteriorate, die, or need dialysis or human transplants, but are able to live a full life because of our products

It's the focus on saving lives will be at the heart of everything they do.

Ask Yourself

What's your true purpose in life? Is it to heal, teach, train, help, advise, nurture, love, create beauty...? If it's not at the heart of your current mission and vision, you just might be in the wrong career.

Your passion is ignited by your purpose in life, and your mission and vision enable you to apply that spark to change the world.

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Need help defining a business vision, purpose and mission and the strategies to support them? Hire me for [Visionary Leadership programs](#), and [work with me](#) by emailing me at Lisa@CLevelStrategies.com.