

Vision

Thinking big, thinking differently. Seeing around corners — and into the future. Painting a picture of a better tomorrow — and helping people get there. This sometimes-unwieldy process takes a lot of care. What have been your best experiences with it?

Arthur Sulzberger Jr.

The core purpose of The New York Times Company is to enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high-quality news, information and entertainment. ... Should be pretty straightforward. The key thought there is “enhance society.”

People ask, how do you know what kind of news or entertainment? Do you? Well, the kind that enhances society. So, it’s a tool. I think it’s an incredibly valuable tool. I think it’s made all the difference at The New York Times Company.



Our whole planning process lives on literally, week by week, month by month, because as soon as you lay a plan down, you know it’s going to have to change.

Some revisions you don’t make. You set out your broad strategic goals. We use a 10-year window or 10-year vision. The first one was from 1987-1997, and that was the creation of the six-section color daily newspaper with satellite printing in Washington and Boston and the building of the two new printing sites and (spending) a billion dollars, which for us was a lot of money.

Of course, that plan was approved by the board of directors about two months before the Wall Street crash in ’87.

And if we hadn’t had it, I don’t know where the *Times* would be today. But we had it. And through all those dark days when we lost two-thirds of our value, [we] kept those investments going.

All I mean to suggest is while you adapt, you hold firm to that core vision.

Dick Wald

Roone Arledge had been the president of ABC News for about a year when I joined him. If there had been four networks, ABC News would have been fourth. And it was third only because there were only three networks. And it was very small. It

had just about 400 employees. It had very few programs. It has had some highly talented people, but there were a lot of wheels spinning. It just never touched the ground and went anywhere. Roone never articulated a vision that I know of. He would walk around and say, that's really not quite good. You should have done it this way. You should have done it that way. But he had an absolutely tone-perfect sense of what a thing should look like — how it should be written, what each individual piece should be. He never prescribed how it should be written, what each individual piece should be. But he was himself a road map toward something much bigger. There's a myth that all this happened when Roone came in and he fixed it. It took 10 years!

Tom Johnson

Ted (Turner) has the sense of seeing an idea and bringing it back and basically saying to his management team, this is what we are going to do. ... I called him a one-person strategic planner and leader.

Otis (Chandler) was a planner. Otis would write down very meticulous notes. He was also a reader. He was very observant of the world around him, his world in Los Angeles, his world in the nation, his world internationally. He was so independent of all special interests and sought to excel in every way.

He looked at the best of the competitors.

We need mavericks like Ted and Otis in our business. They always wanted to be the best. Otis with his athletics, surfing, bicycling, motorcar racing or newspapering. And Ted, he set out to win America's Cup, and he did. He set out to win the World Series with his Atlanta Braves, and he did. He set out to win the news wars in the Gulf, and he did. And he even set out to win the heart of Jane Fonda, and he did. Just a passion to win.

Alberto Ibarguen

Other people from other newspapers and other industries have come in and made us richer asking the "Why not?" kinds of questions. As always, Yogi Berra had it right — you can observe a lot just by watching.

William Hearst III

It is very difficult to predict tomorrow's stock prices. But if you squint, you see the large-scale picture of the future. People think that tomorrow will be different in some way. And often it's less different. I remember as a kid I thought that the year 2000 would have people flying around in spaceships. And it's a lot more like 1950 than I thought it was going to be, with the addition of cell phones and computers.

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disruptions.**

You just have to stay interested. You must believe that there is an opportunity for disruption. To me, the thing that would kill vision is a completely stratified society, where if you were born at a certain level, you stayed there. If you couldn't go up or down, then having vision would be a lot less interesting. Vision in the business sense is really about (anticipating) disruptions. There used to be horses, then there could be railroads. If that's going to happen, what else will happen?

Jack Fuller

We were beginning to try to figure out how to deal with what we thought of then as the online environment. ...

I didn't know exactly — I still don't know exactly — where all of it was going to lead. But I knew we were going to have to participate. Commercially, we're going to have to participate in [it], and journalistically, we ought to participate in it.

So, all the key editors came into my office at one point. We spent a half a day talking about it. ... I asked everybody to think, if you are five years or 10 years out of your

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job, you're in retirement, and you look back at what you've done and what the paper has become, what are the key things that it has to be for you to be proud and happy? What are the critical elements?

When you work it that way, a fair number of superficial things drop out of it.



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Monica Lozano

La Opinion was founded with the intention of providing Mexicans living in the United States news about Mexico. So it was really to serve as an instrument of information for an immigrant population whose primary focus was on their country of origin. As the community has grown and evolved, it's much more diverse.

When *La Opinion* was handed from my grandfather over to my father, second generation, his mission was really to make it an American institution, an American news organization publishing a newspaper in Spanish. That was an interesting shift, because it was no longer focused on Mexico. It really meant to compete with major news organizations in the United States, only in a different language, serving a different population.

My generation, the third generation, has really been moved to make *La Opinion* a major metropolitan daily newspaper and to think of [it] as a major source of information that competes with major metropolitan dailies ... but that recognizes the unique perspective we have to bring to the news and the communities we cover.

Neal Shapiro

When you think vision, one of the best things is actually to try and include a lot of people in it. Try to come at it from different perspectives. If you limit your circle to the narrow group of people who are producing the program, you are all invested in it.

The other thing is to really be as honest as you can with yourself about your program and other programs. And say, what is it that works, why did it work? What about it made it interesting? That is an emotional thing, but it is a cerebral thing, too. ... Take things apart and look at them like that. And oftentimes, when you take things to the basic elements, that is where you try to shake things up. I am thinking about innovations that were not done by me but by other people. “48 Hours” changed the game a little bit. “48 Hours” said, “Let us stand production on its head. [Give] the camera ... freedom to roam. ... Give the editors much more creative [latitude]. And let us be less driven by producer-correspondent interaction.” That changed things.

Jay Harris

I was a publisher of the *Mercury News* at a glorious time — a time of enormous opportunity, enormous change — with the whole Silicon Valley explosion, the birth of a new medium, the creation of new ways of communicating. It was the story of a lifetime for our community.

And the question that faced us was whether we were simply going to reallocate our existing resources to do the best we could in covering the story of the emerging Silicon Valley.

The question, for leaders and for organizations, is whether you will rise to meet the new opportunity and challenge or continue with business as usual. My experience suggests that those who continue on with business as usual tend to do poorly, in life and in business. You have to go for the main chance.