

Transformers of the Business Vision

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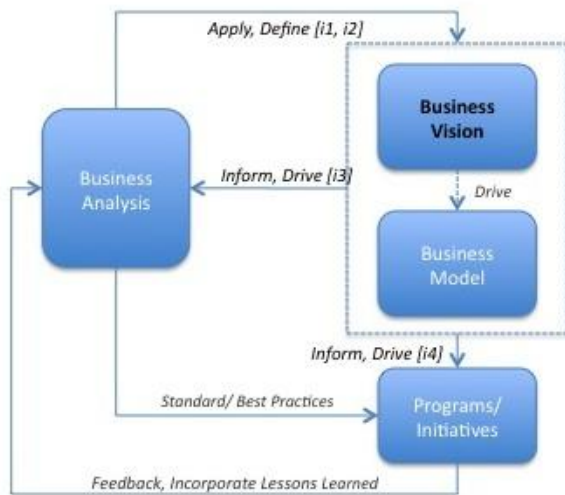
For several years I have been intrigued by the possibility of runtime functional architectures that manifest continuous firm-aware, business objectives driven, context-adaptable, enterprise-wide integrated processes. In essence, a directed network of cooperating, and potentially best solution competing, business-intelligent patterns that, in aggregate, form a real-time goal-seeking, current state of the organization as directly related to its competitive environment. Clearly, this presupposes a multi-tiered foundation built upon modern business and organizational principles: a deployed working knowledge of that which firms do in order to achieve intended goals.

A formalized business model, driven and informed by a structured non-trivial business vision, provides the requisite business-tier operational framework. This article focuses on business vision with objective to offer a high-level context to operationalize same: transform business vision from intangible to tangible, from a set of operationally detached statements to actionable and directly referable business guiding knowledge.

Background

The discipline of Business Analysis is well positioned to provide the upfront definition of both the business vision [i1] and a firm's business model [i2]. These in turn, once formulated, become drivers and points of reference for all business analysis activities (indeed, all activities) including best practices [i3] and program-level initiatives [i4]. *Please see Diagram 1.*

My work at a firm (2002) that provides business advisory management consulting services, afforded me an early opportunity to engage some of these ideas [i1, i2] in the form of a series of conceptual models including a business meta model, business idea and vision, market analysis, and strategic offerings definition. Further work in PMO best practices, and an interest in strategic organizational alignment of the BA function, provided insights into the dual properties and benefits of all derived associations [i3, i4].



- Diagram 1 -



- Diagram 2 -

About Vision

A business vision is not Mission Statement or a generic corporate communication describing lofty and admirable goals that provide minimal traction or ideology pertaining to an organization’s business purpose. A business vision has been defined as “an informed and forward-thinking statement of direction” (*Reference 1*), and “the basic shape of the future that allows an organization the flexibility of means to build around it” (*Reference 2*).

An analysis of business vision yields a set of terms/ concepts that can be associated and further provide an interface to inform and drive the organizational structure, business model, and operational systems. While a business vision may be the most abstract of the set of an organization’s blueprints (i.e. business model, strategic plan, operations plan, etc.), it is largely this quality that imbues it with the flexibility to adapt and exist over time.

A collection of fundamental properties includes: purpose (why the enterprise exists), ambition (expectation of what the organization will become), self-identity (how the organization views itself), strengths (in what areas does the organization exceed), approach (values, embodied beliefs, key assumptions, and culture). These properties should be reasonably immutable. A second set of properties is more prone to change over time and overlaps (or interfaces) with a firm’s business model, these include: customers, needs, stakeholders, competitors, offerings, employees, strategy, benefit, and, communities. Complex relationships and patterns exist between the aforementioned items. The first set is less tangible (applicable to formalized representation); nonetheless even a semi-formal representation can be utilized to provide an interface to the second set. *Please see Diagram 2.*

Pragmatics

As Business Analysts, we focus day-to-day on project initiatives and, to a lesser extent, Best Practices. I recognize that we are not typically in a position to approach the CIO with big ideas related to applying our skills and capabilities to formally defining the corporate model. Nonetheless, these ideas can be applied in stages and degrees, at smaller firms and via consulting opportunities. Finally, there is value in perpetually approaching all requirements and process related efforts with increased awareness, structured thinking, and conceptual models related to the big picture.

References

1. Hoover's Vision- Original Thinking for Business Success, Gary Hoover
2. Guiding Growth- How Vision Keeps Companies on Course, Mark Lipton
3. Business Models- A Strategic Management Approach, Allan Afuah

Comments and feedback always appreciated: contact@robertsgoldman.com