



JAMES SCHRAMKO

Vision in Business: Myth, Game- Changer, or Waste of Time?

Vision: the backbone of business or just fluff? VirtualDOO's Lloyd Thompson shares his expert take with James. Tune in as they examine both sides.



Lloyd Thompson

James: James here, and welcome back to my podcast. This is Episode 1029, where we have chats with different people in the world of business. I always love my chats with [Lloyd Thompson](#). Hello, Lloyd, good to see you.

Lloyd: Thanks for having me, James.

James: Are the waves any good today?

Lloyd: I haven't gone just yet, but straight after this podcast, that's what's going to happen.

James: Me too. So, in about seven minutes from now, we're wrapping. [laughs] No, I'm just kidding. But we've got an important topic to talk about today, we're chatting about vision. And I'm really curious to see what you've seen out there in the landscape. Of course, you're running [virtualdoo.com](#).

You work with visionaries. And you help them get all their visions implemented, especially through the help with team and systems, right? [People and systems](#). But it's amazing how many visionaries have this fantastic idea in their head of what they're trying to do, but maybe that's not made it all the way to the team. And I want to address a couple of aspects.

The difference when you tell the team

I think the big aspect is, is there a wild difference between people who have parlayed this vision to their team? Or not? Like, is it mandatory? Or is it optional? And then the second part is, if we decide that it's something worth doing, what are some different ways we might approach that? So first off, Lloyd, when you're working with visionaries, what different ways have you seen, you know, to what degree have they shared their vision to the team?

Lloyd: Yeah, normally, I find that there does exist a vision somewhere in their documentation, like somewhere deep within their repositories and their document management system that was done some time ago. But quite often, it's outdated. Or even worse, the team just doesn't know it even exists.

And so, yeah, the impact of that is that the teams aren't really aligned or don't even know this vision exists. What's their purpose? How can they use this artifact?

James: So it gets a bit frustrating for them.

Lloyd: Gets a bit frustrated, which means that the business owner ends up having to guide them and say, Well, actually, this is what I wanted. And that means that time is wasted. So it's like, if I had that document there in the first place, then all of these priorities that would have been better if they have been explained by the vision document wouldn't have need to have been addressed later by the business owner coming back in and say, Actually, this is more important than that, or, this is where I want to head to in three years' time.

James: I've seen different versions of it. I've worked for big corporates, as you have. I've got my own little business. The way I do it now is very different to the way that some of these corp - we had things like vision statements, we did values workshops; sometimes a slogan is enough, like for some of them. You know, what depth or variety do we need to have for the way that we're explaining our vision?

I've also seen all sorts of Gantt charts, and also there's been Draconian rules with penalty of termination, not life termination, just employment termination, you know? If you step out of line with one, like, it was like, very militant.

How do you do your visioning?

So I imagine there's different varieties of ways to do the visioning.

Lloyd: Yeah, the classic ones you see, often, certainly, corporate land does this, is the vision and mission statement. And so the vision statement is that future-based why, and the mission statement is like, what's our purpose here and now? So the classic example I'd use is Tesla, I like Tesla. And their one is, their vision, their future statement is create the most compelling car of the 21st century by driving the world's transition to electric vehicles. So you can get that. That's a good vision statement.

And their mission statement, to accelerate the advent of sustainable transport by bringing compelling mass market electric cars to the market as soon as possible. They're really good. Like, that's a textbook vision and mission statement. But the approach I really like is having the vivid vision. Because the vivid vision, this is like a multi-page manifesto, where you can put so much more information about your business.

Like, what it looks like and feels like to walk around your business in three years' time. Like, what's the sales team doing? What's the marketing team like? What's IT operations, finance, how do they work? What are your goals? What are your values? And this is a really good document that you can share, not just internally, but if you've written it well, and perhaps if you are going to share it externally, get like a copywriter to make sure this has got a really nice sheen to it.

And this is something that you can align, not just your internal team, but also like, your external - your clients, your vendors, so they know, this is where you want to end up. And perhaps they can help you get there. Or perhaps they read about your values, which is a part of this vivid vision, and they go, Oh, you know, this is a company we want to work with, we really like this. So I really like the vivid vision approach.

James: That's the [Cameron Herold](#) model.

Lloyd: That's the Cameron Herold model. You know, I've seen a few incarnations of that, but I really like that approach. And it's up to you if you go down this road, too. But I mean, I like the option of putting in something about what the founder's goals are in there, too. Like you can put something about how much time they spend in your business, what they're actually doing, but I like to extend that for myself with what I'm doing, like what my vision really is.

And what I like about this approach is it reminds me of Maxwell Maltz's Psycho-Cybernetics, that idea of having a vision and seeing yourself as if, in the third person on the theater, if you're just watching like, what does it look like imagining that and making edits to it, and that's your document? Or seeing yourself through your own eyes walking through this business, and how does it look and how does it feel?

It's an incredibly powerful artifact to share. And I think that by going with this, what you're doing is you're programming the subconscious. And that's certainly the approach that Maxwell Maltz wanted to go with when he came up with this approach. And I think that there's a lot of that in the vivid vision as well.

And it's not just yourself that's going to read this and think, Oh, this is what I should be paying attention to, this is what I should be focusing on to get me somewhere in three years' time. It's all of the people that are going to be reading that document as well. They're going to be thinking, Oh, okay, now I know they want to go down here in three years. And this empowers the whos in the business to work out how they're actually going to do it.

Putting people on a mission

James: So it's basically coordinating what success would look like.

Lloyd: Yeah, what good looks like, a number of true statements. But it doesn't have to be so rigid. I mean, when people talk about goals, I like measurable goals. But this vivid vision approach is really painting a picture of what it looks like. And then from there, you can reverse engineer. If you've got the right whos, they can work out how they're going to implement that plan. And then they can start putting in measurable goals.

James: Yeah, I like that. I remember the saying that people want to be part of a mission, they want to be on the mission, just like the troops are all rallying because they've been sold the outcome of what success looks like. I imagine in a traditional war scenario, to win the war would be the mission that they're on.

And then they'd break it into little sub-missions. We're going to go and storm this beach, and then we're going to take this town, right? So they understand the greater picture rather than just, I want you to hold this rifle, and I want you to walk forwards. Right? I think you had a similar story about bricklayers.

Lloyd: Yeah, the cathedral story. And I've just gone to the punch line already. [laughs] You've got two bricklayers working on a wall, and one gets asked, you know, what are you working on here?

James: Let me guess, the other one says, I'm building a cathedral.

Lloyd: Ta-da! [laughs]

James: Actually, I have a rim shot here.

Lloyd: But you know, working on a cathedral is so much better than working on a wall. And yeah, so that's a powerful thing, if they know where they're going to end up and why. Like, "why" is so much more emotional than the task at hand.

James: You hit the key word there - emotion. When you were reading that Tesla one, can you read the Tesla one again for me? The long one.

Lloyd: Yeah, to create the most compelling car company of the 21st century by driving the world's transition to electric vehicles.

James: The second one.

Lloyd: Oh, that's the mission. Sorry.

James: The mission.

Lloyd: Yeah. To accelerate the advent of sustainable transport by bringing compelling mass market electric cars to the market as soon as possible.

James: Yeah, it's okay. I guess it's lacking a little bit of emotion though, isn't it?

Lloyd: It is. I mean, I've got to say, it's pretty powerful, but there's still a lot...

James: Like, that's a big company. And a lot of the mission statements I've read, they're just like, they use big words, and it's all flowery, and you just think it's total disconnect.

Lloyd: What does that actually mean?

No statement, but all action

James: Yeah, it's like, it's just corporate bullshit. And you're like, Oh, I feel dirty. It's always engraved into a plaque and hung on to - it just does not connect. I mean, I could share with you perhaps a way that I deal with my team, and I want to ask you the same thing. Because when we're micro businesses, which a lot of us are, right, we have a little team of six.

How do I help them understand what I'm trying to do? Two documents that I put together. This is completely independent of this particular podcast topic. The first document is I've showed them what the business looks like. Because we deal online and a lot of people who are going to encounter our conversation are online.

We don't have a bricks and mortar shop, we don't have physical stock. So I show them what the business looks like in my mind. Like, we get traffic, we get ideas up here, and we build traffic and then we make content, whether it's podcasts or videos, and then that gets disseminated into platforms like Apple and YouTube. And some of it goes on our website, and we get some SEO traffic, and we have the book up there on Amazon.

And it all comes in. Eventually people will arrive into our email ecosystem. We may or may not engage in a conversation via email or direct message through the socials where it gets shared. And most people will be shown an offer that will be for my JS membership. Or they'll encounter my partners' offers, which is a big part of my business, about half my business these days. That's what our ecosystem looks like.

And then I break down - the second page here - and this is all just sort of the way I get it out of my head - that's the easiest way I can explain it, get it out of my head, and then I want to share it with my team. So on the team meeting, I say, Hey, team, here's my story: I went from being a debt collector to having real jobs to being good at my job to then running the thing and then saying, I think I could have my own business.

Then I had to cross over the chasm of employment to self-employment. And that was a very emotional thing. That's basically the why, I needed my own business, I needed to protect myself from doom and catastrophe. The what is I've got this online ecosystem that we just mentioned.

Who we help - and I talk to them about who we help, and I've broken it down into the three main types of characters that we help, which some people call avatars, or whatever. I've listed out the what we help them with, which is, you know, I help people with fun and health and freedom, and to work wherever they want, and to have a business model that's exciting and interesting.

And then I talk about how we help them. And that's again, we help them with these particular - we help them improve themselves, we help them build a team and find leverage with the right business model, and packaging and pricing and all of that. And then they can be successful and enjoy all the same sorts of things. So I'm going to attract people who want the same things that I've got.

So that's what I explain to them. I don't have a written mission statement.

The categories involved

But if I did, and if you do on your website, maybe we can go and have a look at it, virtualdoo.com/vision.

Lloyd: There you go, virtualdoo.com/vision, right there.

James: I know you so well, Lloyd, by now. What kind of categories are we going to have on that style of vision where it's all laid out in a vivid format?

Lloyd: Yeah. We're going to have to pause, I'm so sorry, there's a knock at the door, and the dogs just barked.

James: Go for it.

[Just put on some thinking music]

Gotta be funny if Lloyd gets locked out here.

Lloyd: Wow! [laughs]

James: What?

Lloyd: I was just being sold redemption at the door. So, you know? [laughs]

James: Oh, did Jesus come to visit?

Lloyd: He did. Yeah.

James: I almost got sold redemption on the beach when I was walking through the National Park. Couple of lovely chaps said, Hi. How are you going today? I'm like, Great, and just get walking.

Lloyd: Yeah. Well, I mean...

James: They had the distinct smell of Jesus around them.

Lloyd: Yeah, yeah, it's like, well, my first thing was, why is the security door not working? [laughs] Is there something broken with the security door? [laughs]

James: [laughs] We have to leave some of this in. Anyway.

So what am I going to see when I look at a vision that's all written out with all this dimensions? What are the sort of categories that I could expect to have to think about to share with my team?

Lloyd: Yeah. So I would think about all of the different teams or different areas of your business. So you will think, okay, you've got sales, what does sales look like? What does it feel like? What are the people - how are they working together? Then you're going to do the same for marketing, IT, operations, finance.

James: What if we got two people in our business? I mean, this sounds so enterprise-y, like, can we make it relevant for a small operation with five people?

Lloyd: Okay. Yeah. So then think about, like, you might have events that you're running. How are they running? Who are the customers that you're serving? What does the good look like? Why are you doing what you're doing? How do your team feel? Have you got a motivated team, they enjoy coming in, they've got processes where they're sharing knowledge each other, and that's working well, and they're pioneers in what they do?

So you can put in your culture and your values in that document as well. And the more complete this picture is like, the more - I mean, just imagine this, and it doesn't have to be such a hard and fast rule about this document, but what you want to do is paint the most clear picture in a document of what it looks and feels like to be in your business in three years. You know, what things would be true? How does it feel? What would you be happy to see? And all of your interactions with your business. What are your vendors like? Do your clients align with you?

Getting everyone to buy in

James: How do you communicate this with your team in a way that doesn't make them feel like, well, great, you've got your vision for what this company, it's just not what I thought it was, or I'm not fully invested in it. Like, is there a way to make this inclusive or to get shareholding in this?

Lloyd: This is quite a polarizing question, actually, because on one hand, you know...

James: Good. [laughs]

Lloyd: [laughs] So just a side story, I was only talking with my brother yesterday, and my brother's big in the education space, goes to school, and does this kind of like, helps bring together the vision and the mission and all of these things. These are really interesting. And he very much likes the consultative approach, talking to everyone in the team, surveying all of the customers, hearing what they're saying.



And then bringing that together to the founders, or the owners, or the directors. So they then put together a document. And so, I really like this approach. But there's one big important thing here. If it's you, if it's your business, your vision is your vision, and no one else's.

James: That's what I was going to say. Like, a vision by a committee, it's going to be disastrous for anyone who's strong-minded or, like, pretty much the opposite of a school. School is like a - I could see it's trying to get everyone together and reminds me of that video you sent me once about the farmer who separated out all his high-performance chickens, and they pecked themselves to death over six generations.

The school is like, just leave it alone, you know, you've got your crappy teachers, your high-performing teachers, it's like a community thing, and often run by a government, which is going to be - it just - there's no clear, strong leader in that scenario. But we're talking about micro businesses with a power broker leader, in most cases. These visionaries are so strong-willed, they even come up with terms like reality distortion for them. How do they get their reality distortion to be accepted by the people? That's the question.

Lloyd: I think it's fine to take inputs from the team. But that vision is - the one most important role of the visionary is to create the vision, that's their job.

James: It's like, you had one thing to do, you had one thing to do.

Lloyd: Just do this. It's your job.

James: And, you know, it would behoove them to share it with the team, like if you could just let us in on your grand vision that would be great. And I imagine some people who worked for Steve Jobs at Apple would have been really excited about creating this amazing new technology and like - imagine when the iPod came out and the people in the team, they would have just been like, coursing with adrenaline, like, yes, this is amazing. They'd be so pumped about it.

Why repelling is also important

Lloyd: And attract is definitely one side of it. But I really want to draw attention to the other side, which is just as important. Repel. Like, you want that vision to be nowhere in between. It's either like, people like this, they go with it, they want it. People who read this in your business want it.

But if they don't, if they don't like it, you want to repel, and you want to know who's repelled by it. Because they're not going to work in your business, you want to get them out. Use this to attract the people you want, the clients you want to work with, the people you want to work with. And you want to repel others. And that's okay if they don't like it.

James: Like that social media guy screaming at people, if you don't have a six pack, you're not working in my company. In fact, I'm not sure that's even legal, and I certainly don't agree with it. But he's certainly sharing his vision.

Lloyd: Yeah, right. Well, the legal side's definitely interesting there. But yeah.

James: Oh, and in his clip, he says, What's that? You want to sue me? Because I'm not talking to you. I'm only talking to the one percenters. Right. [laughs]

Lloyd: I haven't seen it. But I'm looking forward to it.

James: Oh, I'll have to share it with you. This guy needs some mental therapy. Really quickly. Like, he's already mid 40s and carrying on like a teenager. It's disgraceful. [laughs] But he's got a half a million followers.

Lloyd: Right.

James: And there's a market for this. Yeah.

Lloyd: Well, you know, he's found his tribe, perhaps. And that's it. That's the power of the social media, right? It's just reinforcing him.

James: It actually speaks to your point about repel. Like, he would have his advocates who will endorse and advocate for him vehemently. And then there'll be people like me who are just put off by that sort of. I watch it because it's a train wreck, not because I want to subscribe to that philosophy for my own business.

I don't think it would go down that well if in my weekly team meetings, I ask all the girls to show me their six pack abs, right? That's not going to happen. That's not realistic. And I would never ask them, like, we don't even do cameras in my business, because I'm respectful that that's not their preference. Right?

Does your team know your goals?

So I think one of the tests for me would be if you, Lloyd, were to speak with my team, when I'm not there. If you said, What's this business all about, jameschramko.com? Like, who do you help? How do you help them? And what does success look like? I would hope they'd be able to give you some answers that somehow resemble what I had in my mind for what I'm trying to do. Is that one of the tests?

Lloyd: Yeah, and I mean, that's definitely one of them, they should be able to tell you, certainly with goals and values, which you can bring into one of these larger vision documents.

James: And when you say goals, do you mean financial goals or other goals?

Lloyd: Ah, okay.

James: Because I get this asked all the time, you know, how much do you share with your team about the numbers?

Lloyd: Yeah, probably not so much on the financial. Like some things, if it was like, sales numbers, sure. But maybe not, you know, the costs of everything, or how much you're personally taking home, or how much everyone else is getting paid. You know, that's really up to you in discretion. In terms of a vision, this is more enough for people to be able to whos in your business, to work out how they're going to get there, and reverse engineer what they're going to do to implement your dream.

And from that, they could put together numbers that are relevant at the time. So for this year, or for this quarter, they could go, Now, knowing that this is where we want to get in three years, then they could create a number and a goal that's measurable in sales, marketing, IT, operation, yada, yada, yada. But for the actual vision document, it's more about what it looks and it feels like, who the clients are, what your events are. All of those things, rather than the actual measurables.

What Lloyd does to fix things

James: I like that. So what does it look like from your perspective? Let's say, someone contacts you, they say, Lloyd, I've got a business. I'm getting a bit frustrated. My team can't read my mind. For some reason, they haven't automatically done everything that I had in my head as the visionary. What do you do? Literally go in and say, Well, can you share your vision with me? Or do you have a vision? Is that part of your diagnostic?

Lloyd: That's like the very beginning. Yeah, the first thing is, is like, Well, tell me what would good look like for you? Like, what is it? Paint a picture of what good would look like. And then okay, what's it like now? Like, what's your pain? Tell me what challenges you're having. And then later on, we can get into a more detailed assessment and then we can identify, well okay, do your team know your pains? Are these in a priority list somewhere? Because they're not psychic.

James: Well, how often does that happen? I'm guessing, almost never.

Lloyd: Yeah, more often than not, they're not aware of it. Or the classic thing that I do is I'll ask, not just the founder, what the challenges and the pains are. I'll ask the team members, and I'll go around and I'll survey the team, and I'll say, Okay, well, what's working well here? And that's not just a fun, let's start with a happy place.

I actually want to know what's working well, because if you find that half of the team are like, This is working well, then why mess with that, like if that's working well, and there's a good reason why it's working well, don't mess with that. But then if you ask about the pain, and you find that a number that is normally at least one pain that a number of the team share, that is something that should be fixed.

And you'd be surprised how often that the founder doesn't even know about that. It's like, wow, this was a great opportunity to get the team on board. And it's something that can help the business owner get to where they want to go as well.

James: Do you do that as a one-off, or as an ongoing situation?

Lloyd: So normally, when we start with a business, the nice place to start is with an assessment. And typically, we take about a month to do that. And we're talking to the business owner about what their vision is, and what their challenges are. But then we go and interview all the team and have a look at their processes and get an understanding.

And after, for every week that we're doing this, we normally just play back, by the ways, interim findings with the business owner and say, Hey, look, this is what we're seeing so far. But then when we get to the end, that's when we say, Look, okay, so let's just bring it all together, this is what we've seen, here's a roadmap of what you could do if you wanted to fix it. And by the way, if you want us to do it, this is what it would look like.



And we have a priority list. So we'll say, This is what we think is going to give you the most value, right? You know, based on what the impact is, and you know, what the effort is. So if it's low effort, high impact, then, you know, that's got to be priority number one, right? So we'll give that information to them.

But it's all based on starting off where they are, where they want to be, and what their pain is. And, I mean, we've come in to do something that would have been ideal if they had already done that with their team. But for whatever reason, it's not obvious.

James: Well, it's because you're an outsider, it's easy to see the contents of the jar from the outside of the bottle, right? It's harder when you're in.

Lloyd: That's a great quote. Yeah.

James: Yeah, I like this one, I'm sort of leaning on it a bit because it explains how I help people too. When you come with outside perspective, it's like, it's so obvious when you see it, but it's not. And I had someone who's helping me, Isaac, my friend helping me with YouTube thumbnails, and he just looks at ours, he goes, Why don't you know this? I'm like, I don't know. I don't know why we don't know it. But you know it. So that's all that matters. Teach us your ways, master, right?

Lloyd: We've all got strong suits. I mean, I was working with someone recently, I audited their business. And for me, I saw some things like, oh, okay, well, here's a quick win over here. And they're like, Really? Wow, you know, we didn't even think about this is a small change that we can make a huge impact, get the business owner way more time.

But then I look at what they do. And they've got really nuanced copy, they send emails, email campaigns, My copy is not great. You know, if I needed to put together some really nice copy, I'm going to get someone else's help for that. And this is what they do really well. So that's their strong suit. It's not mine.

James: Well, the reason you go well is because you have good product.

Has Lloyd ever failed to help?

Have you ever had someone where you've done an assessment, and you weren't able to find ideas for them or help them?

Lloyd: Nah, never, there's always something.

James: Just doesn't happen. And what would happen if the client has their own vision or mission statement, or one of those chiseled out plaques, and you feel like it's maybe not that effective? Would you tell them?

Lloyd: Oh, absolutely, of course. And I've seen this happen a few times. It's normally not so much with the vision statement, because I'm lucky if it's there. Or if it is, like I said, it's old, it's quite often the values. And I think the values and the vision should be together in one place, which is why I like that vivid vision document. So it is in one place. I like that approach. But quite often, I see they've just put something in there for the sake of it. It's like, oh, we need to have a vision and a mission statement. So let's just do it.

James: Ah, so they're just phoning it in.

Lloyd: Just, tick! And it's like, well, really, does that really resonate with all of you? And then the values, quite often, they're just lofty things that no one's really bought into. And they've got too many of them. Like they might have 10 values. And if I went to the founder, I'm like, Well, what are your 10 values? They're going to be, Oh, hang on. So good luck having the rest of the team to come up to know all of your values.

And so normally, I'm like, Well, let's just do three to five max, that really, really matter to you, that encompass your business and how you feel and how you do it, like, what are they? And here's a great hack that I found the other day to make it more memorable, is if you've really worked out what those values are, and you've described it all in its entirety, if your business name happens to be between three to five letters, or as a part of it, that is that, you can use ChatGPT to help you come up with an acronym so that you can sort of blend - you're still going to have all the text of your values, that's the most important bit, but you might be able to say, you know, if part of mine was virtual, which is more than five letters, then I could tie each first letter to a part of my value and use that to make it more memorable for the team.

James: So for James Schramko, it would be jovial, agile, meaningful, energetic...

Lloyd: Stick to James. [laughs]

James: We got a lot, right?

Lloyd: If you want the text to go with it, you know, James would be good. [laughs]

James: S for surfer.

The ultimate takeaways...

So all right, let's wrap this up. So I think what you're saying is that it's probably a really good idea for the visionary to do their one main job is to be really strong on vision, and to share it in a way that the team receives it and is invested in the outcome on behalf of that visionary so they can - the whos can figure out the hows, right?

This is a [Dean Jacksonism](#) that was adopted by Dan Sullivan, I think. It's such a powerful phrase. Okay. And given that you're helping people do assessments, if they're not getting the results they want, they can look you up, [virtualdoo.com](#). I'm speaking with [Lloyd Thompson](#), this is episode 1029.

What's your parting words of wisdom, Lloyd, for someone who really wants to dial this out? Is it to go and look at your vision, to see what you've come up with as a sample? Could they rip and deploy your sample?

Lloyd: Yeah. They'd be very welcome to rip and deploy that, yeah, if you just - [virtualdoo.com/vision](#), by all means, rip and deploy what I've put, put in your own. I recommend if you're going to share your own vision externally, have a copywriter have a look at it. And yeah, I'd love to see what you've come up with. And if someone does put together something like that, I'd love them to contact me and share it with me, and I'd love to critique what they've done.

James: Nice. There you go. Chatting to Lloyd there. Appreciate it very much. Also, thanks to Cameron Herold. That framework is a good one, of all the ones that are out there. I think he has a book by the same name. But I feel like - I think we're done. I think I'm going to go and share my vision with the team again, just to make sure I've done it right. Thanks, mate.

Lloyd: Thanks a lot, James.

JAMES SCHRAMKO

A modern, minimalist desk setup. The desk is light-colored with a white frame. On the desk, there is a large computer monitor displaying a social media interface, a white keyboard, a white mouse, a black mousepad, a small white mousepad, a white lamp with a grey shade, a notebook, and a small potted plant. The background is a plain white wall.

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