



SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
AND MANAGEMENT
Lund University

From Elevator Pitch to Organizational Vision

How does the personal idea become an outspoken organizational vision?

Lund University

School of Economics and Management
FEK591 Master Thesis
Spring 2007

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Acknowledgements

June 2007

This Master thesis is the product of ten weeks of work and four years of preparation, and we are now about to finish our university studies. We would like to thank everyone that has made these four years memorable.

Further, we would like to thank our respondents at “Biotech” and Biotech’s founder for their participation, if it would not have been for them, none of this would have been possible.

Finally, we would like to thank our advisor Christer Kedström for his valuable comments and advice.

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Abstract

- Title:** From Elevator Pitch to Organizational Vision – How does the personal idea become an outspoken organizational vision?
- Seminar date:** 2007-06-08
- Course:** FEK 591, Master thesis in Business Administration, Strategic Management, 10 Swedish credits (15 ECTS).
- Authors:** Jenny Dahlén, Patrik Gustavsson & Gustav Öhrvik
- Advisor:** Christer Kedström
- Five key words:** vision, development, entrepreneurship, management, communication
- Purpose:** The purpose of this dissertation is to create an understanding of how a personal idea in the mind of an entrepreneur becomes an outspoken vision in one biotech company. More specifically, for what purpose the vision is used at different stages, how it is communicated, its content and what impact previous visions have on future vision work.
- Methodology:** In order to reach a deeper understanding of how vision develops over time and how it is used we have employed a qualitative approach based on a case study.
- Theoretical perspectives:** The theoretical framework starts with the concept of vision and related concepts. Furthermore, the entrepreneur's and manager's usage of vision is examined. Moreover, vision in complexity theory is explored to describe one of vision's purposes. Grunig's PR models are used to explain vision communication and the transformation over time. Finally, factors influencing the perception of vision are presented
- Empirical foundation:** Empirical data was collected from interviews at a small biotech company with three respondents representing three different organizational levels. Further, the organization's founder was interviewed
- Conclusions:** Our conclusion is that the personal idea becomes an organizational vision through good *communication*; a *visionary leader*, *collectively created visions* and *explorative* vision content. Further, the purpose of the vision changes as well as the communication and formulation, from being collectively formulated and an informally communicated motivating force, it has become the task of the manager, and is formally written down, mainly positioned towards external stakeholders. For future vision work we believe that Biotech has to respect their previous explorative vision content in order to be successful.

Sammanfattning

- Titel:** From Elevator Pitch to Organizational Vision – How does the personal idea become an outspoken organizational vision?
- Seminariedatum:** 2007-06-08
- Ämne/kurs:** FEK 591, Magisteruppsats, Företagsekonomi, Strategic Management, 10 poäng
- Författare:** Jenny Dahlén, Patrik Gustavsson & Gustav Öhrvik
- Handledare:** Christer Kedström
- Fem nyckelord:** vision, utveckling, entreprenörskap, management, kommunikation
- Syfte:** Uppsatsens syfte är att öka förståelsen kring hur en entreprenörs personliga idé utvecklas till en organisationsvision i ett bioteknikföretag. Mer exakt, undersöka visionens syfte i olika organisatoriska faser, hur den kommuniceras, dess innehåll samt tidigare visioners inverkan på framtida visioner.
- Metod:** För att inhämta djupare information kring visionsutveckling och visionsanvändning har vi valt att använda oss av ett kvalitativt angreppssätt med en fallstudieansats.
- Teoretiska perspektiv:** Studiens teoretiska ramverk inleds med visionsbegreppet och relaterade koncept. Vidare så behandlas entreprenörens och managerns användning av vision. Komplexitetsteorin applicerad på vision belyses för att beskriva visionens funktion. Grunigs PR modeller används för att förklara visionskommunikationen och dess förändring över tid. Slutligen behandlas faktorer som påverkar visionsuppfattning.
- Empiri:** Uppsatsens empiriska undersökning bygger på en fallstudie av ett mindre bioteknik företag där tre anställda på olika organisatoriska nivåer intervjuats. Vidare så intervjuades även företagets grundare.
- Slutsatser:** Våra slutsatser är att den personliga idén blir en organisationsvision genom god *kommunikation*, en *visionär ledare*, *kollektivt skapad vision* med ett visionsinnehåll som är *explorativt*. Vidare så har visionens syfte, dess kommunikation och formulering förändrats från att ha varit formulerad kollektivt och varit informell samt varit en motiverande kraft, till att bli managerns uppgift att formulera och formellt kommunicera den och dess syfte är främst att attrahera externa intressenter. För framtida visionsarbete så anser vi att Biotech måste respektera sitt tidigare explorativa visionsinnehåll för att bli framgångsrika.

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1. Introduction

The first chapter will introduce the reader to the background of this thesis, the problem discussion as well as the research questions. In addition an outline of the dissertation will be presented.

1.1 Background

Anyone that has been to a job interview is most likely familiar with the question “Where do you see yourself in five years time from now?” Regardless of the answer to the question the interesting part is to know why it matters to anyone else than yourself. Why does a company want to know about your personal vision, and what if you do not have one? And if you do, how do you communicate it?

The concept of vision has received plenty of attention in recent years. Nowadays both individuals and organizations talk about their vision; and almost every company that is listed on the stock exchange have an organizational vision neatly placed on the first page of their annual reports. Researchers like Normann (2001) states that *vision* is today a natural part of standard business language.

Researchers like Arvonen (1989) argue that visions should replace the old fashioned control and command management style, and focus on management of minds and soles. El-Namaki (1992) sees the usage of vision as a necessary response to the increased complexity of the business environment, where managers have to be one step ahead and formulate creative strategies, and be visionary. Others like Deetz et al. (2000) say that the vision helps contextualize the purpose of everything that gets done in an organization; the organizational workers will then have a frame of reference enabling them to find a greater purpose in their daily work. Furthermore, they argue that vision inspires, motivates, and creates a sense of purpose that the workers can buy into. Kotter (1996) is yet another researcher discussing the motivational aspect of vision, he argues that in order mobilize and change large organizations, managers should utilize visions in their work. In addition, he underlines the importance of communicating the managerial vision to the entire organization in order to motivate people and create action. Senge (1995) and Normann (1975; 2001) are two researches that have a systematic approach towards the concept of organizational vision. They both see vision as a driving force that could initiate organizational learning and growth. Normann (1975:128) says

that visions should be situated in the future time frame inspiring organizational actions. According to both Senge and Normann visions should continuously be revised and if not it should be seen as a sign of a slow learning and growth process. Further, this should be done through reassessing the organization's internal resources and its external setting. This multi-focus is also put forward by Roos et al. (1997) who argue that the organizational vision should both have a motivational function within the organization and a legitimizing function externally where the company's role in the larger context is depicted.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Most of the research conducted on organizational vision is mainly carried out in large established organizations and how these should use visions in their strategy work and how it best should be communicated. One of few contributions made in an entrepreneurial organizational setting is made by Eneroth (1997); she investigated how a small entrepreneurial firm have used visions, and she identified a relationship between organizational vision and the development of strategically important competence. Moreover, Eneroth discusses the concept of vision in terms of its relationship to its past, she argues that new visions have to be aligned with the organization's past or its memory in order to be trustworthy. Other researchers, like Collins and Porras (1989) also focus on the organization's linkage with its past, also known as the identity. They put forward the idea of the guiding philosophy which they identify as the genetic code of the organization, which is a result of the organisational founder's core values and believes. Moreover, this should later be incorporated into the organization's overall purpose and mission. This view gives a rather organic perspective on the concept of vision; that it is something that has to grow from within the organization. Interestingly, entrepreneurs and organizational founders are often described as being visionary (Leavitt, 1989) and that they have the ability to identify unexploited opportunities, and take advantage of them; this requires action through which the entrepreneur has to express and communicate his or her personal idea or vision in order to materialize the mental idea (Bird, 1989:46).

Based on the previous reasoning, it becomes clear that the organizational vision is something that deals with the future and is a systematic process through which an organization can grow and learn, and motivate its employees. However, managers have to be aware about the organizational past or identity created by the organizational founder in order to create a credible future vision with all its benefits. This leads us to wonder how the vision process

looks in reverse; instead of looking into the future, we want to understand the development of a simple idea in the mind of the entrepreneur and how it has developed into an outspoken organizational vision throughout time. More precisely, what was the initial idea and how was it transformed throughout its development to its present appearance.

1.3 Research Questions

The overarching question for this thesis is:

How does the personal idea become an outspoken organizational vision?

We will attempt to answer this question with the following sub-questions:

- *How does the vision content or focus change throughout time?*
- *What function or purpose does the vision have throughout time?*
- *How is the vision created and communicated throughout time?*
- *How is the organizational vision perceived today when the company is listed on the stock exchange compared to previous visions in the pre-establishment phase and early establishment phase?*

In order to answer our questions we will focus on one small firm and mainly investigate the transformation of the organizational vision from an internal perspective. However, since the vision also can have external effects we will take this aspect into consideration but we will not investigate any external parties' perception of the vision transformation.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to create an understanding how a personal idea in the mind of an entrepreneur becomes an outspoken vision in *one biotech company*. More specifically, for what purpose the vision is used at different stages, how it is communicated, its content and what impact previous visions have on future vision work.

1.5 Academic Contribution

There are plenty of academic contributions on the concept of vision. Most of them focus on how the vision best should be formulated and communicated in order to motivate people and make the organization grow; this has mainly dealt with larger organizations. Further, research suggests that vision should change over time, yet have a logical link to the organization's past and its founder. However, there are few contributions looking at vision transformation in hindsight, how the entrepreneur's personal vision develop over time. Therefore, we find that it would be of academic interest to explore this transformation in an entrepreneurial setting, and identify this development that could be of interest for future strategic work and vision formulation in growing firms. This especially since previous research suggest that it is important to respect the organizational past when formulating new visions.

1.6 Outline

Chapter 2

In this chapter our research approach, research strategy and research philosophy are discussed. The chapter will end with a summary of definitions that will be used throughout the thesis.

Chapter 3

The theoretical framework is presented in this third chapter. Relevant literature is discussed and described in order to introduce the reader to applicable theory.

Chapter 4

The empirical data is presented.

Chapter 5

The analysis of empirical data is made based on our theoretical framework and research questions.

Chapter 6

The inference of the dissertation is presented displaying our findings. In addition, suggestions for future research are made.

2. Methodology

In this chapter we describe how we conducted our research to fulfill the purpose of the thesis. Our scientific approach will also be described as well as our data collection procedure. Finally, definitions of important key words will be put forward.

2.1 Background

To start off with, we began our work with a thorough literature review, where we dug into the scattered concept of vision; it was then observed that most research focus on the importance of having a vision. Further, that vision should be well implemented within the organization in order to be successful (Senge, 1995; Kotter, 1996; Normann, 2001). Therefore, we wanted to observe how visions are communicated, which tools are used and how it is implemented within an organization. Based on this literature review, we early decided that we were going to focus on the Biotech industry; this since research suggests that it is easier to root visions in technologically intensive firms in expanding markets, due to their fundamental openness towards new ideas and point of views (Levenhagen et al., 1993: cited in Eneroth 2000:196). Further, to choose a Biotech company was especially convenient given that our university is situated in the heart of Medicon Valley, which includes biotech companies from Southern Sweden and Denmark. After some reading we decided to conduct a feasibility study to determine whether companies within the biotech sector employ organizational visions actively in their strategy work and if so how they communicated it. We decided to include companies found on the Medicon Valley's official web site. The feasibility study was carried out through telephone interviews, where eight answering biotech companies participated (see appendix 1 for interview guide used in the feasibility study). All companies answered in the same direction, that their vision was very important and that it influenced the whole organization as such. Furthermore, the vision communication was similar in all participating companies. Consequently, we felt that a biotech company was suitable for our study and the feasibility study gave us some new insights on what to expect from deeper interviews with one specific company. However, during the actual interviews at our chosen case study company we realized that the studied phenomena was far more dynamic and complex, which inspired us to modify the focus for this thesis. Therefore, our aim was adjusted and extended from simply focusing on the organization's usage of vision, communication tools employed and the organizational workers' perception of the vision, into how the vision has been employed and its purpose, and how it has been communicated and perceived over time. More

specifically we chose to focus at three stages in the development of the firm, namely, the pre-establishment phase, the early establishment phase, and the present phase seen from three organizational perspectives.

2.2 Research Philosophy

The process described in the previous paragraph indicates that we have used a hermeneutic research philosophy, as described by Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (2001:221ff), this since we aim to understand the development of a vision and its purpose, and the vision communication within an organization over time. In the hermeneutic view the purpose of research is to understand the intentions behind someone's actions, as in our case why visions are used. Moreover, the authors (ibid) state that by interpreting a series of events, an understanding of the studied object can be reached.

2.3 Research Approach

Saunders et al. (2007) discuss the inductive and deductive research approach. However, we felt that neither of these approaches suited our research, since we have adopted a compromise of the two. Instead we found that our approach has similarities with the abductive approach as described by Alvesson & Sköldberg (1994:42). During the research process, the use of theories were refined and adjusted as well as the empirical application possibilities. When the interviews were conducted, a more thorough understanding of the phenomena was established. Consequently, it made us apply more theory and thereafter a new interview was conducted, thus creating an even greater understanding.

2.4 Research Strategy

Since the concept of vision is a rather vague concept and deals with personal interpretations and emotions it becomes difficult to quantify and study from a distance. In order to create a greater understanding how a personal vision has developed into an organizational vision we found that a case study would be the most suitable method for our purpose. Given that the studied phenomenon reaches over a longer time period, we decided to include only one biotech company. Saunders et al. (2007) stipulate that the usage of a case study might be a good way to explore or challenge existing theory although it might sound "unscientific". However, one of the benefits with a case study is that it allows the researchers to explore a certain phenomenon in-depth. Furthermore, this strategy is suitable if you are looking for answers to questions such as why, what and how as we intended.

2.5 Choice of Case Study Company

As mentioned in the background of this chapter we chose a biotech firm and more specifically a Swedish one based on the industry characteristics and due to convenience. In order to find a company that suited this framework we browsed through the list of Medicon Valley companies and the final choice fell on the company that we from now on will refer to as Biotech. Our criteria for the chosen company were that it should have an outspoken vision, i.e. a vision published on the company's official website or in an official annual report and the number of employees should range from 15 to 30; this since we wanted to look at a relatively small company, because most of the academic research has focused on larger establishments. Further, we believe that vision might work somewhat different in larger companies with more employees since they tend to have a more formalized structure, which might have an impact on vision work and communication, whereas smaller entrepreneurial organizations are argued to be more conducive to executive communication and interaction (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Furthermore, it should be possible to collect data about how the vision was employed in earlier phases of the company. (for detailed company presentation see paragraph 4.2)

2.6 Presentation of the Respondents

The case study was based on interviews with employees from three organizational levels within Biotech; this since we wanted to understand both how the vision is used, communicated and perceived from different organizational angles. Further, we also interviewed the organizational founder. Within the company the following persons were interviewed: the vice president who has worked at Biotech for six years, the market assistant with short time in the company and a researcher/producer that has been part of the organization from its very start. We will here explain why the respondents were chosen and give a short presentation of each respondent. The interviewees will be ranged after the year they first started to work for the company. Further, fictive names are given from A-D, where Adam is the founder and the person that has been a part of the company from its very start.

2.6.1 Adam – *The Founder of the Company*

Adam began his career as an employee at a bank office and thereafter he has been working at different positions in a large transportation and logistics group. In the early 1980's he left his job as vice president at the transportation company and shifted focus toward new areas. Together with some researchers, Adam founded several new knowledge intensive companies, such as our case company Biotech. Adam is today retired.

2.6.2 Bruce – An Employee at the Development and Production Department

Bruce has worked within the company since it first was established. Before Bruce started to work at Biotech, he worked with different research and production projects within several biotech companies. Today Bruce mainly works with production of new bacteria within Biotech and has done so from the start-up. Bruce was chosen as a respondent due to his long employment in the company and because he represents the production unit. Given that he has worked for the company since its early years of establishment, he was seen as one of the key people that have experienced the development of the organizational vision throughout the years.

2.6.3 Carl – The Vice President/Manager

Carl has worked at Biotech for the last six years and prior to this he has worked for a pharmaceutical company, a beverage packaging company and within the financial sector. Today, Carl is CFO and vice president of the company and is responsible for the daily operations and is in charge of the strategic work. Carl was chosen as a respondent based on his role as a manager and that he is involved in the company's strategy work, and has got a good overview of the company.

2.6.4 Denise - An Employee at the Market Department

Denise has been working for the company approximately ten months. She works at the market department and conduct different tasks such as updating the webpage and assists in various selling processes. Denise was chosen as a respondent based on her short employment within the company; this in order to understand how the vision is communicated and used at the present. Moreover, the short employment would ensure us that she had no real experience of previous organizational vision, enabling us to evaluate the effectiveness of the vision communication and its current usage and focus.

2.7 Interviews

2.7.1 Interview Procedure #1

When it comes to the interviews, Saunders et al. (2007) and Andersen (1991) categorize them into different types. These authors discuss structured, semi-structured and unstructured or in-depth interviews. We found that semi-structured interviews would be the most suitable in our case since we wanted to observe the phenomenon on a deeper basis. Moreover, since we had relatively few respondents, it would not be a great effort to transcribe and make use of the data in the dissertation although the data was extensively exhaustive and not of simple yes or

no character. We chose to have face-to-face interviews with the employees at Biotech since this enables us to see the respondents' reactions and body language, which could give valuable information. Interview guides were formed and used as a basis while conducting the interviews. (See appendix 2 and 3 for interview guides).

In order to get an as accurate overview of the studied object as possible, we did not reveal the subject that should be investigated to the employees nor did we send out the interview guides. Our hope was to find a more unprepared and truthful version of their usage of vision. However, this could have caused negative effects on our case study, if Biotech would not have used visions actively. Nevertheless, the company had an explicit vision published on its webpage and since we conducted a feasibility study where all respondents answered in the same direction when it concerned the use of vision, similar answers could be anticipated from Biotech. Therefore, we told our contact person that we wanted to investigate the corporate governance and management and how it might affect the employees.

The interviews were conducted at Biotech in order to make the respondents more comfortable with the situation. Moreover, face-to-face interviews enable us to both give and share written information directly. In addition, we were able to ask spontaneous follow-up questions, which enabled us to get more information that otherwise could have been missed. Furthermore, this interview situation enabled us to ask more in depth questions, something that is of most utter importance in our study.

During the interviews at Biotech all three group members were attending. One was managing the interview by asking the questions based upon the interview guide. The other two kept notes about what was said and tried to notice any changes in tone of voice and other visible actions. In addition, the interviews were taped, thus making us able to transcribe the interviews later and to have something to go back to in case of doubtful memories. We spoke approximately one hour with Carl, 15 minutes with Denise and approximately half an hour with Bruce.

Since we interviewed employees from different departments and levels within the organization, extensive valuable information became evident and we realized that the studied phenomenon was more extensive than first anticipated. It was at this point that our aim was

adjusted and extended to cover more variables such as to see how the usage and communication of vision changed throughout time.

2.7.2 Interview Procedure #2

Due to the extended focus we were in need of a new key person in order to study the evolvement of the company and the usage of vision and to triangulate received data during earlier interviews. Therefore, we contacted the entrepreneur/founder of the company to investigate how the vision was used in the pre-establishment phase and the early establishment phase. The interview was performed by telephone due to convenience matters since it was easier for the respondent to participate in a telephone interview. An interview guide was also used in this case and can be found in appendix 4. The interview took approximately 45 minutes and was conducted by only one of the group members but the conversation was taped and then transcribed so that all members of the group could take part of the information

2.7.3 Criticism of the Interview Procedures

When conducting interviews, as we did, there is always a risk that the participants will influence each other while interacting; this could have negative effects on the research. In order to reduce this effect, all three of us attended the interviews, where two of us acted as observers taking notes and recorded any negative effects that might have occurred. However, during the telephone interview only one of us conducted the interview, but since it was taped we were able to analyze the respondent's voice and reactions afterwards. However, there was no possibility to examine the respondents' body language in this case, but we believe that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages since the interview might not have been conducted at all if the involved parties had to meet in person. More drawbacks exist. According to Andersen (1998), there is the risk of that one might affect the interviewee in an almost unnoticeable way by leading the interviewee or by asking leading questions. This could happen for instance by just nodding on the head in a certain way. There is also that the possibility that the respondents actually do not feel comfortable with an interview at their work place.

The common rule is to never use a tape recorder since this could make people reluctant to answer truthfully. Nevertheless, benefits exist as well. Firstly, it enables the researchers to transcribe the complete interview. Secondly, it is possible to listen to the interview again in order to detect any signs of change in tone of voice. To summarize, it enables the researchers

to go back to the interview in case of bad memory. Therefore, we feel that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and during the interviews we felt that the respondents answered truthfully. Concerning the telephone interview, it would almost be impossible to share the information without a taped conversation, thus justifying this measure.

Since we partly studied the vision in its early phase, we had to rely on the participants' memories, which sometimes can be doubtful. If additional respondents had been included, this problem might have been avoided. Nevertheless, the founder has written a book about the early years of the company and we therefore assume that he is rather well aware of the start up phase of his own company, and the book was used as reference.

Yet another criticism might be that we set the criteria for the respondents but the manager picked out suitable interviewees from these criteria. Therefore, it is difficult to know if the respondents participated voluntarily or were forced by the manager. However, since we had no insight in the company we believe that this was the most suitable way to proceed.

We assured all the respondents full anonymity. Even though this ought to make the respondents answer truthfully the company is relatively small so that the respondent might fear to be identified by co-workers. Consequently, they might be inclined to answer in a socially desirable manner and avoid to openly criticizing anything.

2.7.4 The Authors' Biases

It is of utter importance that you are without any preconceived notions before you enter an interview according to Gordon (1978:17). Moreover, there is a need for flexibility, curiosity, endurance in the work and the aim should be to collect as much information as possible, not just to an extent that you believe is necessary from the beginning. Gordon continues and states that is also important that you are critical towards own thoughts and assumptions. Furthermore, it is not just the verbal communication that should be observed but the body language, the choice of words and other observations.

When conducting the interviews, we were aware of these pitfalls and that our own opinions might have affected the way we interpret the results from the interviews. However, since these pitfalls were taken into consideration, we could discuss and examine our points of views after the interviews had been conducted. It was rather obvious that we had different

understandings of what result some of the interviews had given us. However, after the interviews we sat down together and discussed the interview and listen to it yet again, and we found a mutual, adjusted understanding of the process.

2.8 Choice of Theoretical Framework

Given that our overarching question for this thesis is how a personal idea becomes an organizational vision we decided to apply theories that deal with the relationship between personal ideas, business ideas and visions in order to understand their interrelatedness. Further, theory dealing with vision in complexity theory served two purposes, namely to illustrate the process view of organizational vision, and to illustrate the application areas of vision where it is said that it should create a purpose and motivate people; This since one of our sub question is what purpose the vision serves at different stages. Moreover, a theoretical definition between entrepreneurialism and managerialism is made in order to understand the spectra in which a company can be administrated, and the cognitive differences in focus, namely explorative and exploitative. This is followed by theories dealing with how entrepreneurs and managers use vision, respectively, according to theory. Furthermore, communication theories are used to examine how visions can be communicated internally and externally in an organization, including the leader's role in vision communication. Finally, theory concerning factors influencing vision acceptance is described.

2.8.1 Critical Review of Used Theories

Given that there are many researchers that treat the concept of vision, we have chosen to utilize theories that ranges from Normann's first contributions from 1975 to more recent ones Senge (1995), Deetz et al (2000), Eneroth and Malm (2000), and Heide et al. (2005). In order to give a varied picture of the concept of vision and believe that they together complement each other, and where there are no real incongruence. Moreover, these mentioned theories include both American and Swedish contributions in order to reduce the possibility of cultural bias. Theories dealing with entrepreneur and managers have been collected from Landström (2005), Hjorth and Johannisson (1998), and Bird (1989), which gives a varied but yet a good overview. Kotter's (1996) vision communication theories are one of the most cited researchers within the domain of organizational change and vision work and communication. Finally, Grunig's PR models are some of the most renowned models on PR and are frequently used as the basis for other researchers' work on PR. Therefore, we felt that Grunig's theories ought to be applicable to our study, due to the previous support.

2.9 Generalizability

Since we have utilized a case study with only a few respondents it can be hard to generalize the findings to a larger population. (Saunders et al. 2007). However, we believe that a case study was most the suitable method to employ when investigating how a personal vision becomes an outspoken organizational vision; this since the studied phenomenon reaches over a longer time span and deals with a process, thus making it important to investigate how people have utilized and communicated visions throughout the different organizational phases. Further, this is justified since previous research have suggested that the work with organizational vision is dependent on previous vision, yet there is no real attempt to investigate how one specific vision has developed throughout time. In addition, most research has focused on vision work in larger organizational setting, thus making it interesting to create a larger understanding how a smaller entrepreneurial firm has utilized vision while growing. We hope that our insights and findings from our case study can be the foundation for a larger study that potentially could enable a generalization of our findings.

2.10 Validity

Saunders et al. (2007) further states that there are several risks for the validity of the collected data. In our case we are dependent on the memories of the organizational members in order to compare how it was earlier with how it is today. It might be that bad memories last longer but to reduce this risk we have tried to triangulate the data as much as possible. Further, there might be a risk that the respondents answer in the way they think the management wants. We have seen some tendencies towards this in some interviews and this has been taken into consideration when analyzing the data. Furthermore, when studying a certain phenomenon there is always a question of ambiguity and the casual direction, what affects what? Since we interviewed several people in one organization and focused on vision development we think we have been able to see what factors influenced this process, and they are congruent with previous findings, yet we are aware that there might be other factors or relationships influencing the work with vision. Moreover, since the first interview guide was created in order to find answers concerning the communication processes and the tools used, this could have affected the interviews in a negative way. However, since the interviews were semi-structured, information was retrieved that made us extend the aim of this dissertation and therefore could be considered to be valid.

2.11 Summary of data collection

To summarize the process of data collection we will illustrate the procedure in the model below.



Figure 2.1 A summary of the data collection process

2.12 Definitions

Since many of the word we use through out this thesis might have several connotations, we here describe and define our definitions and how we have used them in our work.

Elevator Pitch

To attract investors or give a brief overview of a business idea, entrepreneurs could use an elevator pitch. The term refers to that the business idea should be delivered in a very short period of time, for example in an elevator. The elevator pitch places itself in between the entrepreneur's observed business opportunity and business idea since it works as an attractor of investments, ultimately transforming the opportunity into reality as a business idea. The elevator pitch is therefore considered crucial since it can make the difference between an identified opportunity and something real (Businessknowhow, 2007).

Manager

The word management is used in this thesis and refers to when a company has established itself and a management has been implemented along with the company. In early years, at least in the pre-organizational phase, there might be no traditional management in an organization. However, when companies grow the need for management arises and a management team becomes implemented in the organization. Depending on the size of the company, the management might also include a board of directors.

Entrepreneur vs. Manager

The main distinction between the entrepreneur and the manager is that the entrepreneur is seen as creator and an explorer of opportunities and ideas, whereas the manager is exploitive and moreover an organizer and a person that implements activities. However, in reality the

definitions are not mutually exclusive, which means that an entrepreneur can also be exploitive as well as the manager can be explorative. Nevertheless, we believe that our definition is suitable when investigating an organization's growth process and how the governance might change between these two extreme ends of a spectrum. Hjorth and Johannisson (1998) use a similar definition when contrasting entrepreneurialism and managerialism.

Vision

When used in the text, the word vision refers to a possible future desirable state for the company. It describes where the organization is heading and what it should achieve (Skärvad & Olsson, 2006). Further, the vision should create importance and meaning to the everyday work but also to create "*individual and collective action in human beings*" (Normann 2001:277). Conversely, since vision is a rather vague and subjective concept, we let the respondent during the interviews interpret the concept of vision themselves. We also asked the respondents to define or answer what they believed were the organizational vision and how they perceive this vision. The reason for acting in this way was to see how an idea is transformed into an outspoken vision, which makes it impossible to only rely on the strict theoretical definition of the word throughout the whole thesis.

2.13 Summary

Initially, we wanted to explore how the vision was communicated, which tools were used and how it was implemented within an organization. Since vision is a rather vague concept, it is not easy to quantify and we therefore chose to conduct a case study at a company in the biotech sector. The respondents were chosen based on their positions in the company to get an overall view of the situation. Moreover, the length of employment should vary between the respondents. However, during the research process it was found that the studied phenomenon was more extensive which made us extend our aim. This resulted in application of new theory and a new interview was conducted which indicates that we have used a hermeneutic research philosophy and an abductive research approach. Moreover, we chose to use a case study in order to get a deeper understanding of how a vision transform over time in one specific company, which could be the basis for future research.

3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be explored, firstly, the scope of the framework is presented; secondly, the concept of vision and related concepts are explored. Thirdly, a distinction between entrepreneurial and management focus and usage of vision is made. Finally, communication and vision communication theories will be discussed as well as factors influencing vision perception.

3.1 Introduction-The Scope of the Thesis

Given that the overarching purpose for this thesis is to investigate how a personal idea becomes an organizational vision, the studied phenomenon stretches over time. Therefore, we will start our theoretical framework with an illustration of the scope of the thesis.

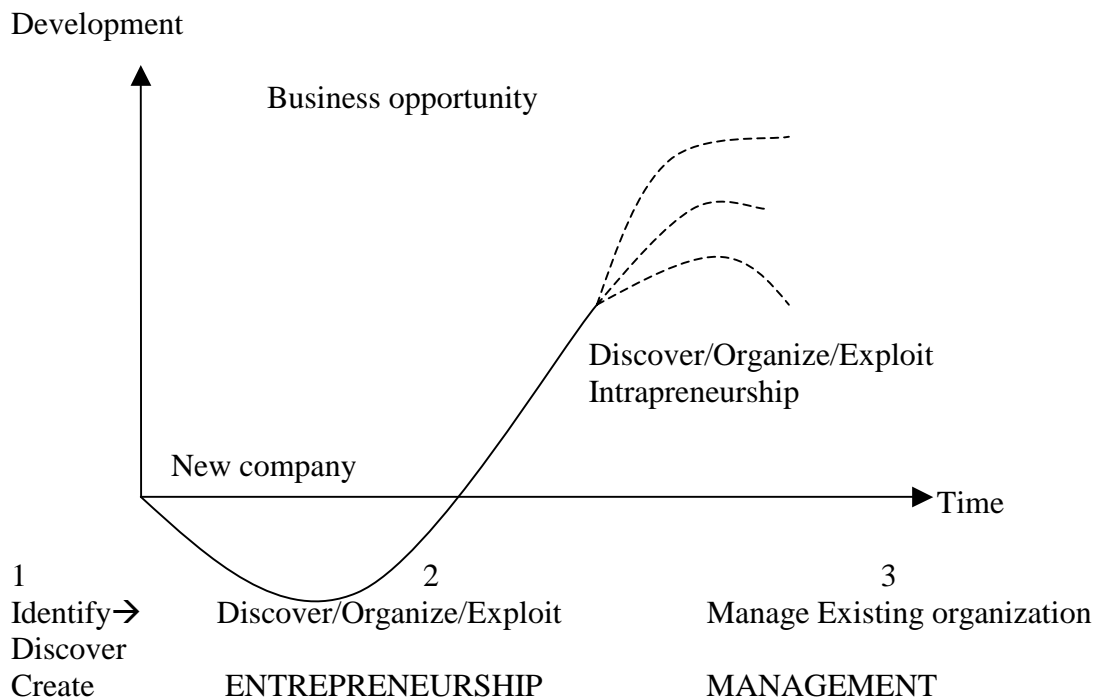


Figure 3.1 The scope of the thesis. Inspired by Landström 2005:21

Our scope starts in the pre-establishment phase (phase 1) which is the time when there is yet no established company. This is followed by the early-establishment phase (phase 2) and later the present operational phase (phase 3). The main distinction between phase 2 and 3 will be made in terms of ownership, where phase 2 is characterized by the founder being the main owner of the company, and the transition to phase 3 is made when the company is floated on

the stock market. Consequently, financial stakeholders are in phase 3 mainly external partners. The fracture point illustrates the possible future directions for the company.

The first part of the theoretical framework will focus on the overall transition of the personal idea into a business opportunity taking place in the pre-establishment phase (phase 1), followed by a definition of vision and related concepts normally used in established firms (phase 2 & 3). This will be followed by an overarching concept where the purpose of vision is seen as an attractor, affecting the growth of the organization. Further, a distinction between the entrepreneur (phase 1 & 2) and the manager (phase 3) is made in terms of focus. Further, theories on how the entrepreneur and manager employ vision in their work are presented. Moreover, communication theories will be explored in order to understand vision communication both internally and externally. Finally, theories on vision formulation and factors influencing vision perception are presented.

3.2 Personal Vision/Idea-Pre-Establishment Phase

A business opportunity that is exploited is initially a simple idea or a mental vision held in the mind of a single person. Klofsten (2005; cited in Landström, 2005:66) makes a distinction between personal idea, business opportunity and business idea. A personal idea can only become a business opportunity when an entrepreneur is willing to pursue the idea with real actions. Further, the business opportunity becomes refined into a business idea when the person is communicating and interacting with different actors in order to attract partners and financial means. Moreover, when a business opportunity is developed the person can be said to have developed an establishment platform, but it is not until there is a business platform an actual business idea can be developed, defining the unique offering. Consequently, if seen from a time perspective the business opportunity or vision of a business opportunity is situated prior to the establishment of the firm, whereas the business idea is a result of a more organized setting. To further link the concepts one has to look at the establishment phase (phase 2 & 3) that normally includes business idea, vision and goals.

3.3 Business Idea, Vision, Goals- A part of the Established Organization's Strategy Work

The concept of vision has together with the concepts of business idea and goals become a big part of companies' strategy work. The relationship between the three concepts is treated

differently depending on the author. One typical arrangement is the one where the concepts are ranged in a hierarchical matter with the organizational vision at the apex, followed, by the business idea, leaving the goals at the bottom of the hierarchy (Roos et al., 1997).

3.3.1 Business Idea

According to the person that gave a deeper meaning to the concept of business idea, Richard Normann (1975:40, 2001:148), a business idea should entail and explain the company's basis for dominance or as Rehnman puts it the "way to make money" (Rehnman cited in Normann, 2001). Further, Normann states that there has to be a fit between the company's external environment and its needs, the company offering and the internal factors such as organizational structure, values, systems and leadership. He continues with underlining that the concept has a deeper meaning and some of its elements are related to intangibles such as strategy communication. This becomes the foundation of the organizations "dominating ideas" that with time has to be reevaluated in order to maintain the "fit" as both the external and internal components of the organizations change.

3.3.2 Vision

The concept of vision can be related to the one of business idea; Normann (1975:126-130) argues that as the business idea develops and is continually revised, there is never a predetermined goal on how to grow or change, thus making it helpful to utilize a vision to give an idea what the company should strive for, but not necessarily achieve. Therefore, the vision is not a goal, but rather a source of inspiration and a possible challenge. Further, he stresses the progressive character of an organizational vision; the vision should always be a state in the future, and if it does not change it could be seen as a sign of weakness in the organizational learning process. He also argues that the concept of vision has the ability to surface gaps or incongruence between an organization's present state and desirable state. This can create a meaning or a purpose for organizational members to gather around, thus create collective action to reduce the surfaced gap. Roos et al. (1997) points out the vision's purpose more precisely when stating its three main functions: firstly it should have a legitimizing aspect, where the company's role is placed in a broader social perspective depicting how the company should operate with external partners. Secondly, the vision should represent the company's level of ambition and its focus, thus framing the organizations strategy formulation including ideas and goals. The business idea and goals are more tangible aspects

of the vision on how to operate towards the desired future state. Thirdly, the vision should facilitate workers identification with the organization and its strategy, and also increase workers' commitment and motivation. Senge (1995:214) stresses the importance of a process view of both the organization and the usage of vision. He argues that most companies fail to fully exploit the advantages with a collective vision, since management tends to have a linear view on its environment, underestimating their ability to influence its position and environment. Consequently, it reduces the real vision to a simple platitude without any real value.

3.3.3 Goals

The organizational goals are the operational side of both the vision and business idea; the goals are the short-term steps the organization attempts to achieve when aiming towards the business idea and the organizational vision. (Roos et al., 1997:51-60). However, this is often what strategic planning is mainly focusing on, the short-term goals and the problems at hand, thus forgetting about the broader picture and the future opportunities, making the company fairly passive to its environment (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989).

In the following paragraph the concept of vision will be examined from a complexity theory perspective in order to illustrate the purpose of vision and its link with organizational development.

3.4 Vision - in Complexity theory

Wheatley (1992; 1994: cited in Normann 2001:277-278) applies the thought of complexity theory to management, which in broad terms is the relationship between the simple and the complex; this implies that systems move from one state of complexity to a higher state of complexity as a part of evolution. In order to cope with the increased complexity the system has to reinvent its structure to let the new energies penetrate the system without destroying it. Further, the systems includes "attractors" that works like magnetic fields, which attracts energy from disparate elements together and make them move jointly in a new direction. This normally happens when the system reaches a "fracture point" where the system starts moving towards a different state of organization and structure. If seen from an organizational perspective, this indicates that a company has to proactively reinvent itself in order to cope with its changing external and internal world. In order to create the energy and commitment that is necessary to mobilize the organizations an "attractor" is required. Wheatley argues that in the social context the most important "attractor" is "meaning" which management can

create when using a powerful vision that can assemble the energy from the workers, investors and partners.

Given that an organization grows from being an opportunity into an established organization, the administration has to change somewhat in order to cope with the increased complexity. Therefore, we will in the following paragraph compare the entrepreneur with the manager and some basic differences in their organizational focus. Further, the entrepreneur's usage of vision as well as the manager's usage of vision is explored.

3.5 The Explorative Entrepreneur and the Exploitative Manager

The researcher March (1991) has distinguished two tasks that are involved when creating a new company and then running it. One is to *exploit* the opportunities in the current situation and the other is to *explore* to develop new opportunities. Hjorth and Johannisson (1998) have made a distinction between the two concepts, and argue that to explore is in the entrepreneur's mind frame, whereas the manager focuses on exploiting. Furthermore, the researchers argue that the entrepreneur's time frame is situated in the future, whilst the manager's time frame is about the present, and the things at hand.

3.6 The Entrepreneur/Founder

Many attempts have been made to characterize an entrepreneur and several definitions have emerged. From a macroeconomic perspective the entrepreneur is seen as a function on the market, others have focused on the individual and his/her personality traits and yet another definition is the one where entrepreneurship is seen as a process (Landström, 2005). Some cognitive differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs are said to be their ability to operate within a zone of future time perspective (Bird, 1988:20) and sensor, and screen their environment for new opportunities to exploit (Landström, 2005:16). Leavitt described entrepreneurs as being visionary, dreamers, innovators and creators (1989). Given the many definitions of the concept it is necessary to clarify our operating definition of entrepreneurship and the scope of inquiry. We aim to focus more on the entrepreneurial activity, and more specifically on the entrepreneur's usage of vision and communication of it. Based on Gartner's (1990: cited by Hall & Levenhagen, 1995) proposed dimensions of entrepreneurship the distinguishing characteristics of entrepreneurial activity in this discussion are: (1) a focus on innovation and innovative activity, (2) an emphasis on growth by the entrepreneur and/or the organization and, (3) an emphasis on the creation of something

unique. Drucker (1985; *ibid.*) made a similar definition of entrepreneurs, they: “*create something new, something different; they change or transmute values*”. The specific activity under consideration is the process by which entrepreneurial visions are developed, used and then communicated to others during the pre-establishment phase, during the early establishment and in the present phase.

3.6.1 The Entrepreneur’s Usage of Vision

All visions originate from a personal vision and, if articulated properly, can become shared visions, thus inspiring collective action and create a sense of meaning (Senge, 1995:192). A new entrepreneurial venture starts with one persons’ vision or idea, or a limited number of people having a vision, of an unexploited opportunity to capitalize on. In order to exploit this idea it has to be communicated in order to attract the right kind of people and financial means to grasp the opportunity. This is in line with Normann’s concept of business idea, where he makes the distinction between an idea and business idea; the idea has only the potential to become a business idea when it is target to concrete actions in the real world, and not only kept in a person’s imaginary world (Normann, 1975:40), thus implying the need for communication. Further, it is said that an entrepreneur with a clear and articulated vision is more likely to succeed when more people are allowed to join the venture process. According to Rockey, (1986, cited in Bird, 1988:330) entrepreneurs employ vision for several purposes such as preparing business plans, deal with emotions, find means to save money, and indoctrinate and socialize employees. According to Filion (1991:95), the entrepreneur’s vision is the guiding star for him or her and makes the entrepreneur prone to exploit both resources and people that are willing to accept and align themselves with the vision. Therefore, the alignment with the vision becomes a criterion for employment. Further, Bird (1989) underlines the importance of communicating the entrepreneurial vision to venture teams in order to attract financial means and resources to establish an organization.

3.7 The Manager

3.7.1 The Manager’s Usage of Vision

In the vision literature there has been a great emphasis on how management can utilize the concept of vision in their strategy work. Arvonen wrote in 1989 that the American researchers Barnard’s, Selznick’s, and McGregor’s “softer” approach towards management had finally got a real break through in the strategic management work in the Scandinavian setting

(Arvonen, 1989). Until this day, researchers and practitioners alike show great interest in the implementation of organizational vision (Gratton, 1996; Heide, 2005). One of the main differences between management with visions compared to traditional goal oriented management is that the latter approach has more of a short term orientation. In addition, this goal achievement does not have the same emotional appeal since it is more mechanical (Arvonen, 1989:136). According to Deetz et al. (2000:51-63) the vision concept can be seen as a shift from management and control of tangible resources, to the management of thoughts, attitudes and soles; ultimately management of the organizational culture; This as a response to an increasingly more volatile and changing environment and intensified competition, creating the need for a more proactive and original way of formulating strategies (El-Namaki, 1992). The usage of vision has also increased due to the many failures to implement the management's strategic plans. Therefore, the intention with the usage of vision is to make the strategy documents more than simple platitudes (Fairhurst, et al, 1997). Senge (1995) sees the usage of vision as a new means of control for management, where the vision should have the ability to gather the entire organization around one collective vision for the company and its future. Moreover, Senge argues that a collective vision can facilitate the otherwise difficult and time consuming growth process; this since a collective vision can create strong commitment among the workers when they feel like they are a part of the vision, and it is no longer perceived as the vision of the shareholders and board members. Consequently, a collective vision can make it easier to motivate people and increase their commitment, which is beneficial for the entire organization. Other researchers like Roos et al, (1997), underline that the corporate vision has a dual purpose, namely an internal purpose as well as an external purpose. Internally the vision should energize the employees and gather them around a common purpose; externally it is aimed for depicting the organization's role and purpose in the larger context (Roos et al., 1997). The formulation and implementation of vision is today a part of most top-manager's strategy work (Senge, 1995:197), and it has become increasingly more popular to hire external consultants for additional help to formulate the organizational vision.

3.8 Communication

As can be seen in the previous paragraphs the concept of vision has great potential to attract and motivate both internal and external stakeholders. Despite the researchers many definitions

and application areas for the concept of vision, there is one thing that they all stress and that is the importance of *communication*. Kotter argues:

“A great vision can serve a useful purpose even if it is understood by just a few key people. But the real power of a vision is unleashed only when most of those involved in an enterprise or activity have a common understanding of its goals and direction”

(Kotter, 1996: 85)

3.9 Organizational Communication

The importance of communication does not only apply to the concept of vision but can also be seen as the foundation of organizations. Some researcher goes so far to say that organizations *are* communication. Stohl (1995:23) states “*communication constitutes organizations; it is the essence of organized activity*”. Put in other words, organizational communication should be founded on the insight that companies are tools by which people do what they cannot do themselves (Lawrence-Heath, 1994:2). Organizational communication can be divided into internal and external communication, and further subdivided into formal and informal communication as can be seen in the figure here below.

Internal	External	
Goals and Policy Rules and Norms Reproducing information (Meetings and information material)	Produced information Public relations Inter organizational contact Press contact	Formal
Conversations and discussions Spontaneous group meetings Stories Rumors	Informal contracts Spontaneous meetings with external parties Informal contacts with media	Informal

Figure 3.2 Overview of formal and informal communication in relation to external and internal communication.
Source: Larsson 2001:67

It can sometimes be difficult to draw an accurate line between internal and external communication. According to Strid (1999, cited in Larsson, 2001) the line between the two becomes increasingly more blurred as the organization grows, this means that the internal work is becoming more important for external purposes and vice versa. One phenomenon that illustrated this well is the upsurge of internal marketing (Grönroos, 1991). Normally,

marketing is seen as an activity carried out in the external world, however, the focus have been redirected and today also includes the internal organization.

There are plenty of models on communication, and in order to understand how organizations and entrepreneurs communicate with their external and internal world models for public relations will be examined. Public relations refer to the relationship aspect of communication and the planned communication; however, it should not be confused with the common usage of PR as a means to influence media (Larsson, 2001:27). One of many definitions of PR is:

PR is a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals.

(Long & Hazleton 1987:6: cited in Larsson, 2001:28)

Consequently, the American connotation of the word means communication in the organizational setting, including incoming communication, outgoing communication, between organizations and within the own organization (Larsson, 2001: 13).

Given the nature of the concept of vision and its internal and external scope, and our focus on different stages in the organization's development we found it useful to explore PR models further since it gives an overview of organizational communication in large and includes variables that are important to both internal and external communication. Grunig' PR models are some of the most renowned models within PR, and are based on system theory. Their models are based on two pairs of variables, one and two way communication, and symmetrical and asymmetrical communication, where the former focuses on communicational direction and the latter on power balance between communicating parties. Before describing the models, the variable pairs will be described in more detail.

3.9.1 One Way and Two Way Communication

One way communication is the traditional approach towards communication and was first developed in the late 1940 (Larsson, 2001:3), and is also called the process view. The model is based on three elements a (1) sender sending a (2) message to a (3) receiver (Bakka et al. 2001:158).

Firstly, the sender should formulate the message he wants to send to the receiver. However, this might not be that easy since the sender has to choose a way of formulating the message so that the receiver will understand it. Moreover, when the message has been encoded, a suitable channel for communicating has to be chosen. According to Bakka et al. (2001) it is important to choose the right channel in order to get desired effect of the receiver. When the message has been sent it shall be decoded and interpreted by the receiver. If all phases have been well considered the message hopefully is understood as the sender intended it to be. This one-way approach to communication is common in larger organizations (Ibid). However, the problem is that the sender cannot be certain that the message has been interpreted as intended by the sender. This problem is also enhanced depending on how many links there is in the transmission chain. In order to improve the process, feedback should be used and it reduces the risk of misinterpretations and lead to communication in two directions, thus creating two-way communication. Nevertheless, the process with feedback also suffers of weaknesses when there is still an uncertainty of how the received message was interpreted.

3.9.2 Asymmetrical and Symmetrical Communication

The symmetry in communication depends mainly on the power balance between the parties communicating (Larsson, 2005:47). In the asymmetrical approach the sender of the message is superior to the receiving party, whereas in the symmetrical model there is more of a balanced relationship between the communicating parties. This will influence the quality of the communication. As opposed to the process view of communication, the semiotic approach places its focus on transfer of meaning. Fiske (1998:2) defines semiotics as “*the science of signs and meanings*”. The semiotic school does not focus on the communication process in itself, but instead the text and what it means for the reader. In the semiotic approach a message has to be put together by signs. Moreover, the sender and the receiver should possess the same frame of reference in terms of language so that they interpret the message the same way. The more similar set of signs the sender and receiver possess, the more probable it is that they see the message in the same way. One example to explain the language frames is color coding. In the bathroom, faucets are colored differently depending on the temperature of the water. Mostly, it is assumed that the faucet with the blue color contains cold water while the red one contains hot water and this is the normal interpretation in Swedish circumstances. However, in other countries this might not be the case and the colors are used vice versa and this can cause confusion. This shows the importance of having the same frame of reference or

at least to have an understanding of the receiving person's frame of reference when sending a message. In an organizational perspective management should try to place itself in the position of the receiver of the message when formulating it, in case of differing frame of references (Heide, 2005:30).

3.10 Grunig's four PR-models (abbreviated version)

Characteristics	Publicity model	Information Model	Asymmetrical two way communication	Symmetrical Two way communication
Purpose	Propaganda	Diffusion of Information	Scientific convincing	Mutual Understanding
Communication type	One way, no need for truthfulness	One way, truthfulness important	Two way, unbalanced	Two way balanced
Communication model	Sender ↓ Receiver	Sender ↓ Receiver	Sender ↓↑ Receiver	Group ↔ Group

Table 3.1 Key Characteristics in Grunig's four PR models, an abbreviated version. *Source: Larsson, 2001:47*

In the publicity model an organization or an entrepreneur tries to catch partners' attention with all means available, and there are no real emphasize placed on the truthfulness of the message sent. Further there is a one-way communication creating limited feedback and dialogue. The information model is similar to the first with the only exception of an increased focus on valid and truthful information and the communication is used to ameliorate the organization's position. The asymmetrical two-way communication model includes one stronger party using scientific knowledge to convince the weaker party. However, there is a dialogue between the parties which enables feedback and some learning can occur. Finally, the symmetrical two-way communication model is a more balanced view on the communicating parties that can have an open dialogue and come to mutual agreements. Grunig defines this latter model as the ideal one, and argues that the organizational prerequisites for this model to apply are; a holistic approach, openness, decentralization, personal integrity, a spirit of conflict solving and interest group liberalism (Larsson, 2001:48). Moreover, he argues that the publicity model is the least desirable, and the models can be seen as a spectrum of different communications styles.

3.11 Internal Communication

The PR models described in the previous paragraph gives an overview on how an organization can communicate both internally and externally. However, there are some specific attributes that can be seen as exclusive to the internal communication and should be dealt with here. Erikson (1998:cited in Larsson, 2001:70) states that good internal communication should give the workers a good overview, unify the workers, improve decision-making, increase motivation and the we-feeling among many other things. In order to make the communication effective the information has to be concrete, clear, consistent, congruent and available.

3.11.1 Formal and Informal Communication

As the word reveals formal communication is the type of communication that is formally planned by the management of an organization. This as opposed to the informal communication taking place between the workers while interacting. The two types complement each other, if the formal communication is lacking more emphasize will be placed on the informal communication (Kreps, 1990).

3.11.2 Verbal and Non Verbal Communication

All communication that is not communicated with words can be seen as non-verbal communication. Harris (1993) argues that the non verbal communication is essential to organizational behavior. This type of communication is taking place constantly and is more direct and intuitive, and can undermine the trustworthiness of the verbal communication if it is not congruent with the non-verbal communication (Larsson, 2001: 69).

3.11.3 Internal Communication Paths

Katz and Kahn (1978) states that internal communication can flow in different directions, namely: downwards, upwards, horizontally and crisscross. The downwards communication can be seen as the one-way communication explained earlier and is typical in formally structured organizations. The upwards communication is a prerequisite for two way communication to take place as a response to the downwards communication and is normally between parties at different organizational levels. The crisscross communication is not bound by any organizational structures and can be seen in larger organizations utilizing ad hoc

groups (Larsson, 2001:73). However, the horizontal communication is normally the most frequent direction where workers at the same organizational level interact.

3.12 Vision Formulation and Communication

The academia mainly focuses on how established organizations should create and communicate their organizational vision internally in order to create commitment and motivate people. This will briefly be examined in this following paragraph.

3.12.1 Vision Formulation

Senge (1995:199) argues that the most important thing to remember when formulating a vision is that visions originate from personal visions. Consequently, when top-managers formulate the organizational vision they should remember that the vision they have formulated is *their own personal* vision and does not automatically become the organizational vision. In order to create a collective vision there has to be a continuous dialogue between organizational members so everyone can share their personal visions that then can be combined (ibid.). According to Arvonen (1989:137) the development of an organizational vision should be seen as a process, a dialogue and interaction between people. This view is supported by Deetz et al. (2000:60) when they argue that the vision has to be formulated collectively and be “owned” by the organizational members. In addition, the vision must be realistic or trustworthy to the organization’s past in order to be successful (Eneroth & Malm, 2000). A similar thought is put forward by Deetz et al. (2000:55) that the vision must have a plausible link to the organizational culture which is a result of its past.

3.12.2 Vision Communication

One thing that vision researchers all agree on is that the implementation and communication of vision cannot be made in the same routine fashion as the majority of the management information is done (Schein, 1995; Heide, 2005) and should be more than simple rhetoric (Fairhurst et al, 1993; Normann, 2001). Kotter (1996:90) is one of many discussing the importance of proper vision communication. In addition to traditional channels of communication the manager must make the vision visible in the day-to-day work. Further, the author brings out different ways to communicate the vision to co-workers; these are summarized into 7 key elements that are crucial for effective communication of vision. These 7 key elements are here adapted.

- **Simplicity:** All jargon and technobabble must be eliminated.
- **Metaphor, analogy, and example:** A verbal picture is worth a thousand words.
- **Multiple forums:** Big meetings and small, memos and newspapers, formal and informal interaction-all are effective for spreading the word.
- **Repetition:** Ideas sink in deeply only after they have been heard many times.
- **Leadership by example:** Behavior from important people that is inconsistent with the vision overwhelms other forms of communication
- **Explanation of seeming inconsistencies:** Unaddressed inconsistencies undermine the credibility of all communication.
- **Give-and-take:** Two-way communication is always more powerful than one-way communication

3.12.3 Leader's Role in Vision Communication

Linked with the concept of vision is the concept of visionary leadership. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, two renowned leadership researchers, argue that the real power behind successful companies comes from leadership. Further, they argue that vital and successful organizations can only emerge if it has got a strong leader with visions that can mobilize the employees towards this vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). However, they argue that the formulation of the vision can be made by the leader and s/he can legitimize it, but they underline the importance of an organic growth of the vision, sprung from the collective needs of the company, and should be “defended” or “owned” by the employees. According to them, the energizing aspects of vision come from its scope, as big dreams, especially when they are collectively shared. Furthermore, they found that effective leaders are good communicators and provide meaning while communicating with the rest of the organization. In both their talk and their behavior, effective leaders communicate core values and create an organizational culture. Westley and Mintzberg (1989) describe visionary leadership as a means to communicate the vision. However, they underlines the interactive aspect of leadership, which means that the personal vision of the leader is not a vision if it is solely a mental image, but it has to be

represented and communicated. They compare leadership with vision, a person is not a leader without followers, and they argue that the same thing holds for strategic visions: a strategic vision cannot exist without being recognized by followers (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). According to Deetz et al. (2000:49) a vision is one of the key aspects that distinguish leadership from management.

3.13 Factors Influencing the Acceptance of Organizational Vision

Some of the factors that are said to influence the acceptance of the collective visions are according to Fairhurst et al (1997) related to the level of confidence the workers have towards their superior managers and the organizational communication system. Other factors are said to be connected with the overall satisfaction with the individual's work task, and the organizational commitment (Haas et al., 1992, cited in Heide et al., 2005:129). Organizational position can also have an impact on vision acceptance, people who are organizationally close to the top-management are said to be more positive towards the visions formulated by the top-management (Heide, 2005;129). Length of employment can also have an impact; organizational members get personally invested in the organizational routines and if a vision threatens their position, resistance might occur (Deetz et al. 2000:55). Some argue that the size of the organization have an impact on the acceptance and implementation of vision. Greenwood and Higgins (1988) distinguished two patterns of visions, one belonging to large corporations and the other to small. The smaller entrepreneurial organizations are argued to be more conducive to executive communication and interaction (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). There is a counterview to that the size of the organization matters when communicating the organizational vision. Senge (1990:231-232) argues that is related to the perceived ability to change things, whether it is possible to actually change the system or not. Therefore, large companies might have large systems to overcome but has decided to break the organizations into units, whereas smaller organizations do not have the same need to divide it into smaller units. Consequently, the narrow control structure might lead to the perception that it is hard to change. Therefore, the actual size of the organization is less important than how the organization is perceived.

3.14 Summary of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will be displayed in the following model.

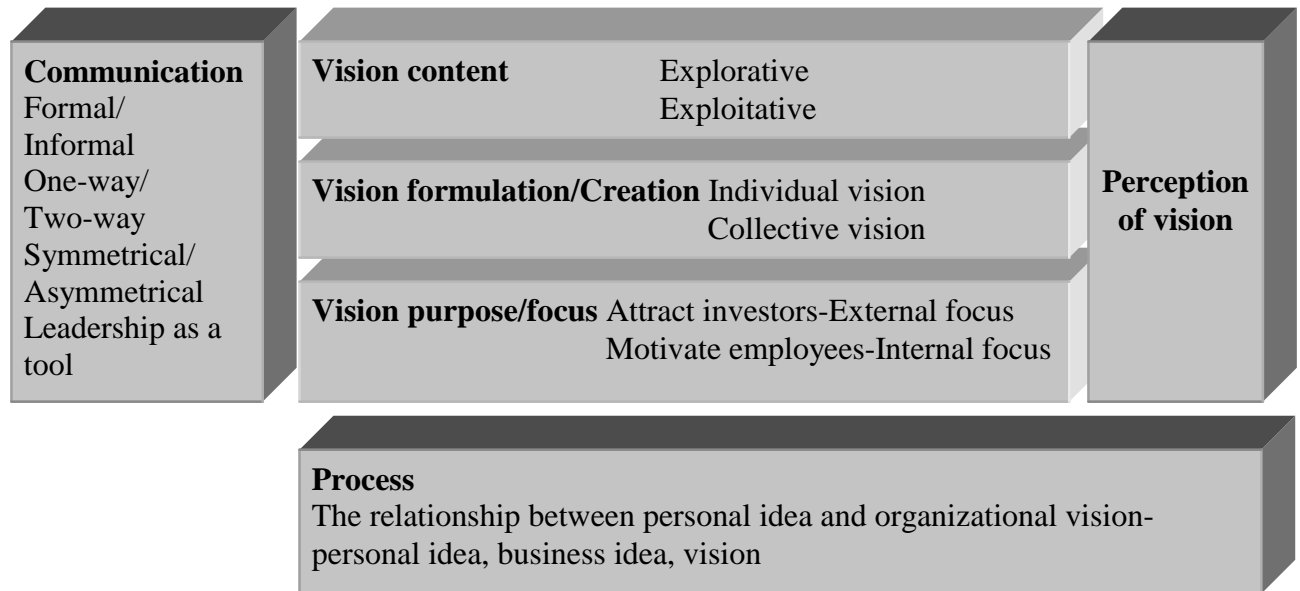


Figure 3.3 Summary of theoretical framework

Given that the studied phenomenon spans over time, from an initial idea to an organizational vision, we have utilized theories depicting the relationship between the concepts. Further, in order to understand how the purpose/focus, formulation/creation, and content of the vision transform over time we have chosen to apply a communication perspective which is seen as the tool enabling the usage of vision. Finally, based on the combined factors the vision perception is examined.

4. Empirical data

In this chapter our case study company is introduced and the results found during our empirical studies are presented.

4.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with a presentation of the chosen case study company, followed by a short summary of the respondents. Further, the empirical data will be presented. The disposition of the empirical data will firstly be based on the overall transformation of the personal idea into an organizational vision. Secondly, the employees' personal view of the vision transformation is exposed. Thirdly, the vision communication and formulation will be presented from the pre-establishment phase to the current phase. Lastly, the respondents' perception of the vision and how they value it is displayed.

4.2 Presentation of Biotech

Biotech is a company in the biotech industry and is situated at Ideon in Lund and conducts research to find new suitable bacteria that could be used in certain situations and products. The story began in the mid 80's when four scientists through their research discovered a particular bacterium, which turned out to have certain health benefits. Not long after, the researchers teamed up with an entrepreneur in order to commercialize their finding. In the early 1990's the company Biotech was established and five employees were hired. The company has grown over time and was listed on the stock exchange in the late 1990's. Today there are about twenty employees working at Biotech. Its bacteria are used in products that are sold and used world-wide. Since the company first was founded the company has had four different CEO's, where the three latter ones has been appointed after the quotation on the stock market, and the most recent one is a temporary CEO. Financially, the company has showed negative results for the last couple of years.

4.3 Presentation of the respondents

We will here give a short recapitulation of the respondents. (For more extensive presentation see paragraph 2.6)

4.3.1 Adam – The Founder of the Company

Adam is the founder of Biotech and resigned as the company's CEO when he retired a couple of years after the company was quoted on the stock market.

4.3.2 Bruce – An Employee at the Development and Production Department

Bruce started working for Biotech when it first was established and is still employed within the company's production unit.

4.3.3 Carl – The Vice President

Carl was hired after Biotech was floated on the stock market and is today the CFO, and temporary vice president.

4.3.4 Denise - An Employee at the Market Department

Denise has been working for the company approximately ten months and works at the market department.

4.4 The Vision Transformation-From a Single Idea into an Outspoken Vision-The Process

In this paragraph the transformation of the personal idea to the present organizational vision is presented. The collected data will be presented in chronological order and the interviewees responses will be displayed along this timeline. Quotations will be made; however, since the interviews were conducted in Swedish we here freely translate the quotations into English. Nevertheless, we aim to translate them as accurately as possible. Further, the quotations in original language will be found as footnotes.

The initial idea originated from collaboration between Adam and a research team that had developed a new bacterium. Adam states:

The research results originated from the research group, and my role was to transform these research findings into a commercial product. Figure out what market needs the bacteria could correspond to¹

He continues with explaining that his role was to translate the researchers' language, to a more comprehensible market language that potential partners and clients could understand. There were two alternative options available, either the bacteria could be profiled as medication or as food. Given the partners' wish to maintain the ownership as long as possible, it was not feasible to choose the medication alternative since it would have required large investments. However, it was after Adam tried to convince a potential partner about the

benefits of the bacteria, and got the response that it was “uneatable” that a new path opened up for Adam and his partners; they realized that the new vision was to see their product as a healthy constituent to already existing products on the market. This resulted in the vision:

To make a product with the same health benefits as medication available for everyone, but at the price of traditional food²

When Adam and his partners had finally found partners to realize their initial vision, and the contract started to generate money new visions were formulated. They started to look at new application areas and new possibilities to apply the same concept as they had done so far. For example they looked at food for children and even animal food to complement the assortment they were providing at that time. So the new vision became

Find new application areas and suitable bacteria for the already existing bacteria concept³

Bruce remembers that the owners’ initial vision was about:

Generating profits and reinvesting it into new bacteria research, in order to continue with the research and discover new products so that the company could grow further⁴

However, Adam points out that the work with the organizational vision became more formalized and more restricted when the company was quoted on stock market.

Our vision thinking was partly hampered when we were floated on the stock market⁵

Carl talks about the visions from the past six years and refers to the written statements in old annual reports starting with the older version.

¹”Forskningsresultatet kom från forskarna men sedan gäller det att omforma dessa forskningsresultat till en kommersiell produkt, och det var min roll. Vilket behov det kan motsvara på marknaden”.

²”Vi ville att människor skulle kunna ta del av vår bakteries hälsofrämjande effekter, som likaväl skulle kunna finnas som medicin på ett apotek, och istället sälja det till priset av ett livsmedel i en livsmedelsbutik.”

³”Vi letade och försökte hitta nya områden att gå in på som skulle kunna komplettera våra existerande produkter.”

⁴”Vi skulle gå med vinst för att sedan återföra vinsten i företaget för att forska vidare och hitta nya produkter så att företaget kunde växa”

⁵”Vi hämmades något i vårt visionstänkande vid börsintroduktionen.”

Biotech shall with competitive research create products that are beneficial to people's health that makes them feel better, stay healthy and live longer⁶

Carl continues with the most recent annual report and finds to his surprise that it is changed:

Biotech shall with its research become the most attractive partner and supplier of the probiotic concept to leading producers of probiotic products⁷

According to Carl the old vision is now seen as a mission for the company, and the shift should be seen as a result of the company's increased commercial orientation.

When I wrote the previous vision it was mainly about making the employees understand that regardless of new venture capitalist the company is still about improving people's health⁸

Carl continues with saying that:

If we would have told the researchers back then that it was all about making money and that we were aiming at becoming the most attractive partner the organization would not have been mature for it. However, today they definitely are⁹

He concludes:

The real vision or goal is not to find new interesting solutions but rather commercialize the already existing ones¹⁰

⁶ "Biotech skall genom konkurrenskraftig forskning skapa hälsofrämjande produkter som gör att människor mår bättre, behåller sin hälsa och lever längre."

⁷ "Biotech. skall genom sin forskning bli den mest attraktiva samarbetspartnern och leverantören av probiotikakoncept till ledande producenter av probiotika produkter."

⁸ "Jag skrev det för att för att få de anställda att förstå att även om det kommer in riskkapitalpengar så handlar det fortfarande om att förbättra människors hälsa."

⁹ "Hade vi då sagt till forskarna att vi ska tjäna en massa pengar, vi ska bli den mest attraktiva samarbetspartnern, hade organisationen inte varit mogen för det. Men det är de definitivt idag."

¹⁰ "Egentligen är ju den verkliga visionen eller målet inte att ta fram intressanta lösningar utan att kommersialisera de redan existerande. "

4.5 Employees view of the vision development

In this paragraph a short presentation of how some of the employees perceive the overall vision transformation throughout the years will be presented.

When we asked about Carl's perception of the vision development he states:

*I wouldn't say that you change the vision but rather that you continuously refine it as times goes by and the company moves.*¹¹

When asking Bruce the same question he says:

*I would say that the vision moves, when I first started here I was very involved in the vision, but it always moves forward. Now the marketers are in charge of the vision. It moves outward.*¹²

4.6 Vision communication from the beginning to the present

In this paragraph the manners in which the visions have been communicated and formulated will be presented.

When Adam was asked about his interaction and communication with his partners he says:

*We met constantly, that's the way it is, you meet each other all the time to discuss your vision and elaborate it*¹³

We had our idea about this concept that we wanted to create so we talked to absolutely everyone we met about our idea. My role was to translate the researchers' language to one that the market wanted to hear. I made it popular in way, but I was always supported by the researchers and they gave me real scientific data of their findings. That is the thing that makes me different from the researchers; they focus on the specific details, whereas I focus

¹¹ "Jag skulle inte säga att man ändrar visionerna utan snarare att man hela tiden förädlar den över tid allt eftersom företaget rör sig."

¹² "Jag skulle säga att visionen flyttat. När jag kom hit var jag mycket involverad i visionen men det flyttas ju framåt hela tiden. Nu är det marknadsförarna som tar hand om den. Den flyttas utåt."

¹³ "Vi träffades ständigt, det blir ju så. Man umgås hela tiden och diskuterar och utvecklar sina visioner."

more on what the person I talk to wants to hear. Therefore, I focus more on the message rather on the small details.¹⁴

After a couple of years when Adam and his colleagues had found some contracting partners more people was hired that could conduct more clinical tests, bacteria analysis and also for production. When asked if the communication remained as intense as in the early years, Adam responds:

It wasn't quite as intensive as in the beginning. However, we all met up several times a week, and if something important happened we had extra meetings, but there were no formal board meetings.¹⁵

When Adam was asked how new vision's were formulated he claims that when new people were hired they brought in new visions.

Even though the visions weren't mine from the start, we accepted them and treated them in the same way as our own initial visions¹⁶

At that point in time, Adam and the others had started to formulate business ideas around all their ideas. This was done after some market research that they sometimes conducted themselves and at other times was made with help from external consultants. Moreover, Adam explains that the organization maintained its simple structure, even when there were about 15 employees.

It was a small company, everyone took care of everything. For example, I was often in charge of the coffee making, even if I was the CEO/.../I used to say that we all are CEO:s of this company¹⁷

¹⁴ "Vi hade den här idén som vi ville förverkliga, så vi pratade om vår idé med absolut alla som vi mötte. Min roll var att översätta forskarnas språk till ett som marknaden ville höra. Jag gjorde det populärt på ett sätt, men forskarna stod alltid bakom mig och supportade mig med faktauppgifter kring deras forskning. Det är det som skiljer mig ifrån forskarna, de fokuserar mer på specifika detaljer, medan jag försöker fokusera på det personen som jag pratar med vill höra. På så sätt skalar jag av alla detaljer och kör på budskapet."

¹⁵ "Det var inte riktigt lika intensivt som i början. Men vi träffades flera gånger i veckan och om det hände något så kallade vi på alla. Vi hade ju inga formella styrelsemöten."

¹⁶ "Även att det inte var mina egna visioner, så anammade vi dem på samma sätt som vi gjorde med våra egna "

¹⁷ "Det var ett litet företag, alla gör allt. När det skulle kokas kaffe fick VD dvs. jag ofta göra det/.../Jag brukade säga att vi alla var verkställande direktörer i det här bolaget."

On the question how he communicated his vision to the workers he says:

*You have to create commitment.*¹⁸

When asked how one creates commitment, Adam replies:

*I guess you as person has to be good at it, and I guess I'm.*¹⁹

When Bruce talks about the early vision work and Adam he states:

*There was really an entrepreneurial feeling when Adam was in charge. He was really the kind of person that would fill people with enthusiasm and was always present. He had visions.*²⁰

When asked about the information climate and the communication Adam says:

*Everyone was included; information was shared freely without any restrictions. There were no secrets. Everyone contributes to the creativity and it would be impossible to isolate anyone.*²¹

He continues:

*We discussed a lot, but no one ever doubted our idea and vision. Everyone was convinced of the great product we had.*²²

Things changed according to Adam when the company was floated on the stock exchange, everything became more formalized, and administrative personnel were hired due to the new demands from external stakeholders.

¹⁸ "Man måste skapa engagemang."

¹⁹ "Jag antar att man som person måste vara bra på att skapa engagemang, och jag antar att jag är bra på det."

²⁰ "Det var verkligen en entreprenoriell anda på Adams tid. Han var en entusiasmerande person och fanns i rummet. Han hade visioner."

²¹ "Alla var med, information fanns tillgänglig för alla. Det fanns inga hemligheter alls. Alla är ju en kreativ del i det hela. Det går inte isolera någon."

*We could no longer inform everyone about everything then they would have become insiders, which is such a pity.*²³

Bruce's answer to whether the vision communication has changed over the years is as follows:

*In the beginning the CEO will have coffee with you and tell you if a new deal went through. But that relationship changes, as soon as you hire the marketers, the CEO will consult them. All information you get is from the monthly meeting. But, if you are lucky you might find someone else to discuss your ideas with.*²⁴

He continues:

*As long as you don't have the marketers the organization is dependent on its existing staff. They become very important for the growth of the company. But as soon as the marketer is hired the coffee table feeling disappears.*²⁵

When asked if he thinks it would be possible to regain the same feeling as before, he says that he does not think so. The marketers and CEO travels a lot and meet clients, and partners and loose touch with the production units.

*There is nothing you can do, the laboratory and the production unit is just supposed to be there and work.*²⁶

When Carl gets asked how the vision is communicated inside and outside of the organization, he mentions that the vision can be found in the annual report and the company's web site. Moreover, he mentions the company's change of logotype as being a part of the vision work;

²² "Vi diskuterade mycket, men vi tvivlade aldrig på vår idé och vår vision. Alla var ju övertygade om hur bra vår produkt var."

²³ "Vi kunde inte längre gå ut och tala om och ha med alla på allting, för då blir ju alla insiders, vilket är jättetröst."

²⁴ "I början kommer VD och fikar och berättar om det senaste kontraktet som nyss slutits. Men relationen förändras, så snart de anställer marknadsförare pratar VD bara med dem. Du får nöja dig med månadsmötena. Om man har tur kan man bolla sina idéer med någon annan."

²⁵ "Så länge du inte har marknadsförare så är man beroende av den personal man har. Då är ju de oerhört viktiga och är de som ska få företaget att växa. Men då marknadsföraren kommer in så försvinner all fikarumskontakt."

²⁶ "Det är inget man kan göra, labbet och produktionen ska bara finnas och fungera."

this in order to position the company differently in the minds of their workers and external stakeholders. The new logotype is inspired by an “Intel-inside thinking”, which should be suitable on the partner’s final products. He says that the vision is more indirectly communicated through manager’s action and based on how rewards are distributed.

We have lately signed important contracts and we have paid a lot of attention to it. And when we released our quarterly report that showed good results we focused on that. In order to celebrate we bought bottles of champagne for the employees.²⁷

He continues by saying that they communicate the same financial figures to the external partners as to the employees.

We communicate in the same way with the employees as we do with the external partners, but I’m not sure that is the way the employees perceive it.²⁸

Carl further explains his view on organizational communication:

Many employees think that the management should inform them about everything. But I believe that the employees have to understand that that it is their own obligation to actively gain the needed information and should share it with there co-workers.²⁹

Carl explains that the strategy and vision documents are formulated by him together with the board members. When the company changed its logotype they hired external consultants that made extensive analysis of the organizations internal and external situation. Twenty “value worlds” were presented to the employees in order to understand their perception of the organization and what they believed was the most important values. Carl says that the board identified the six most important for them, and then made attempts to align the rest of the workers with these words.

²⁷ ”Vi har på senare tid skrivit många viktiga avtal och det har det ju blivit mycket fokus kring. Och när vi släppte vår kvartalsrapport som var väldigt bra så fokuserade vi på det. Så då köpte vi champagne till de anställda för att fira.”

²⁸ ”Vi gör samma sak med personalen egentligen men det är inte säkert de uppfattar det så.”

²⁹ ”Många tror att företagsledningen ska informera dem om allt. Men jag har egentligen alltid tyckt att de anställda har ett ännu större ansvar att söka information och dela med sig till sina medarbetare.”

*At the end of the day, it is the board members that decide what the main values should be, it is not a democracy*³⁰

Carl admits that the vision could be anchored better in the company, and wish that it would be more vivid and collectively owned. When asked whether there is any feed-back on how well the employees have understood the meaning of the vision he says that there is no such feed-back available. When Bruce gets asked how he knows about the organizational vision and what communications tools that have been used he answers:

*You don't need to communicate the vision; it is more of a feeling within the company. The only time someone mentions it would be in some information meeting. And when there has been a change of CEO, then they start talking about it a bit more.*³¹

He continues with saying that he believes that the vision is more important for the marketers.

*The marketers are meeting customers and screen the market. Therefore, they work more with visions than we do here at the laboratory.*³²

In terms of overall communication in the organization, Bruce says that nowadays he gets the most information about new contracts and partners from press-releases. On the question if Bruce would voice his opinion in case he thought the organizational vision was unsuitable he argues that he has done so at some occasion in the past. But he believes that even though the manager listens, noting change anyways. When Denise gets asked how she has been introduced to the organizational vision she says that she read it when she first started working for the company. However, no one officially introduced it to her. She has seen it in the annual reports and online. She states:

*I guess it could have been good if someone talked about the vision when I first started, at least to know in what direction we are heading because I don't think that many of us actively decides to explore the vision on our own.*³³

³⁰ "När allt kommer omkring är det ju ledningen som bestämmer, det är ingen demokrati."

³¹ "Man behöver inte kommunicera visionen, det är känslan i företaget. De få gånger man möjligen pratar om den är vi något informationsmöte. Och om det har varit VD byte, då diskuterar man det lite mer."

³² "Marknadsförarna är mer ute och känner av och träffar kunder. Så de jobbar mer med visioner än vi gör här på labbet."

When asked whether she believes that the vision could be communicated better and if she would like to have a better understanding of it she says.

*No I'm satisfied; I don't need it since I think it is natural for me to always wanting to be better, with or without a vision.*³⁴

On the question if Denise would voice her opinion in case she thought the organizational vision unsuitable she argues that she would discuss it with her manager Carl. She also believes they could have an open dialogue about it and that Carl would listen to her opinions.

4.7 The value and perception of vision

In this paragraph the employees' perception of the current vision is explored and what they believe is the purpose or value of the vision.

When the respondents were asked about their interpretation and opinion about vision they answered as follows:

Adam refers directly to the CEO replacing him when he retired and explains how his successor refused to keep his previous documentation as he refers to as the "company's history" in her room. He states:

*She had no visions. That is dangerous /... /the same thing holds for large established companies, they have visions but they focus on short-term goals to please shareholders, there is absolutely no creative thinking in these companies, it is more about improving production and things one can do tomorrow.*³⁵

³³ "Jag antar att man skulle kunna berätta om visionen när man börjar jobba, så att man vet var det bär hän. Jag tror inte att det är många som tar tag i det själva att ta reda på visionen."

³⁴ "Nej är nöjd, det behövs inte jag tänker ju naturligt på att jag alltid vill göra bättre ifrån mig, med eller utan visioner."

³⁵ "Hon hade inga visioner, det är farligt/... /Samma sak gäller större etablerade företag, deras visioner är mer fokuserade på kortsiktiga mål, allt för att behaga aktieägare. Det handlar mer om att förbättra produktionen och saker man kan göra i morgon."

Carl:

I think a good vision should be appealing for both internal and external partners. The workers must feel like they are a part of the larger vision. However, I believe that it is important that there is a balance; the vision has to be positioned in the middle. It should create value for the external stakeholders and be motivating for the internal parties.³⁶

He continues with saying that the investigation of the workers' perception of the most important value words and the formulated vision is a useful and important document when the company change CEO or recruit new people giving them a quick overview of the company.

The money we spent on external consultants to help us with the vision is a good platform for any successor to base future vision work on.³⁷

Bruce:

He sees visions as goals, and he sees himself as being a small part contributing to the overall goal, where he mainly focuses on the task or problem at hand; whereas, he sees visions as something used more directly when the vision is communicated to the external world. When asked about the present organizational vision he says:

The vision is to get new contracts and make money³⁸

Denise is more critical towards organizational visions and thinks that no one really cares about them.

Almost every company seems to have similar visions. Everyone wants to be the best at what they are doing. I guess our vision is to become the best company on probiotic solutions, with the best research and development within probiotics.³⁹

³⁶ "Jag tror en bra vision ska vara tilltalande för både interna och externa parter. Personalen måste känna att de är en delaktiga. Man måste positionera sig mittemellan. Värdeskapande för de externa och engagerande för de interna."

³⁷ "Pengarna vi spenderade på att sätta ihop ett visionsdokument tillsammans med de externa konsulterna är bra som plattform för efterträdande VD att utgå ifrån."

³⁸ "Visionen är att få till affärer och tjäna pengar."

³⁹ "Det verkar som alla företag har samma vision. Att bli bäst på vad de gör. Jag antar att visionen är att vi vill det bästa företaget på att ta fram probiotika produkter och ha den bästa forskningen och utvecklingen inom probiotika."

5. Analysis

We start this analysis with the overall vision process and its content. Further, we will look at the vision communication, vision purpose and formulation during the different phases.

Finally, we will analyze the employees' perception of Biotech's vision and link it with the development of the vision.

5.1 Introduction

The analysis will mainly follow the time line illustrated in the figure below. Phase 1-the *pre-establishment phase*- is the time where there is yet no established company, but ideas are explored. The second phase-the *early establishment phase*- is when the initial idea has turned into an established company. Finally, the third phase-the *present phase*-starts when the company is listed on the stock exchange. The fracture point illustrates the yet unknown future.

Development

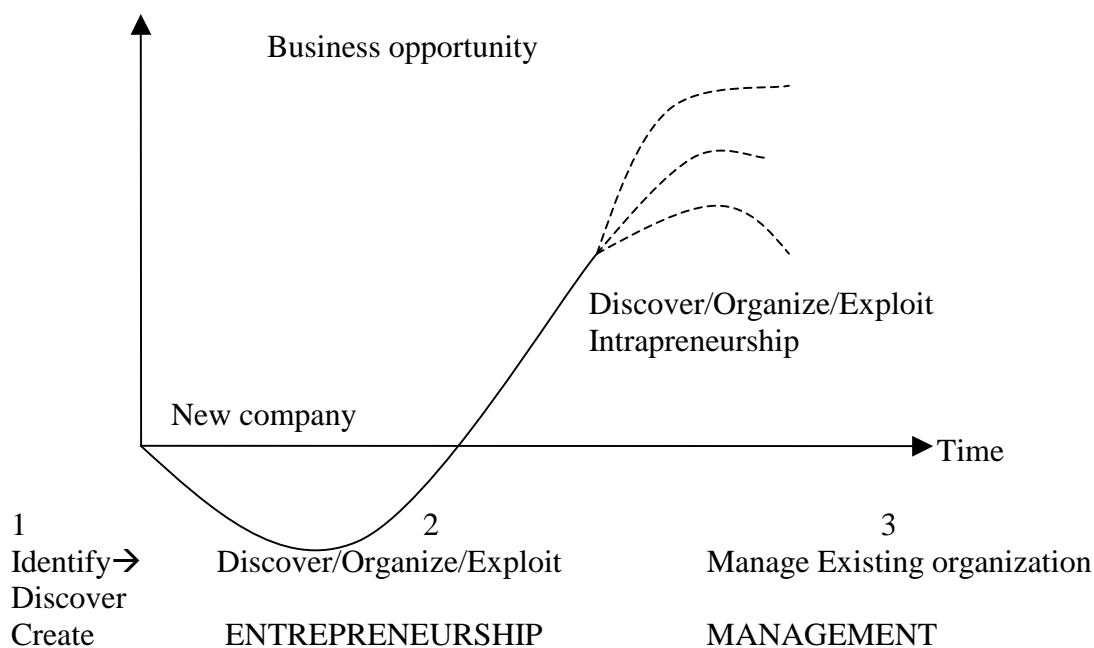


Figure 5.1 Timeline used in the analysis. Inspired by Landström (2005)

5.2 The Vision Process and its Content

In this paragraph we will focus on the overall transformation of the personal idea into an organizational vision and the factors influencing the creation of new visions. Further, the content of the visions, whether they are *explorative* or *exploitative* will be analyzed.

5.2.1 Phase 1-The Pre-Establishment Phase-The Idea

In our theoretical framework we describe the transition from personal idea to business idea. A personal idea can only become a business opportunity when real actions are taken in order to pursue the idea. Further, when the business opportunity is identified, the entrepreneur can be said to have gained an establishment platform (Klofsten, 2005). However, interactions with others are necessary in order to fully develop the business opportunity and transform it into a business idea to define the unique offering the entrepreneur wants to exploit. Normann (1975; 2001) defines the business idea as the company's basis for dominance and should include the external environments need the offering attempts to meet, the actual offering and the internal resources that can support the operations. When looking at Biotech's development it started with a *research group that found a bacteria* that was proven to have health benefits. When teamed up with Adam the idea became to commercialize their findings. Therefore, Adam took the role as the link between the researchers and the market to screen the market of potential opportunities and unmet needs that the "new" bacteria could fulfill. At this point the idea was more than a mental image in the minds of the researchers and Adam, whom decided to act to pursue their idea. The bacterium was sprung out of medical research to improve people's health with probiotic bacteria; two possible paths were identified, either to profile the bacteria as a medication or as food. The latter option was chosen partly since it was something unique, to present a product with medical characteristics as food, and also because it would be possible for the creators to maintain the ownership. If the medication path would have been chosen it would have required far more investments limiting the possibility to keep the ownership. The research team and Adam formulated their own vision;

To make a product with the same health benefits as medication available for everyone, but at the price of traditional food

However, when the first sample of the product was introduced to a potential client it was dismissed and referred to as being "uneatable"; this gave Adam and his partners new insights which lead to the final solution, namely to present the product as a constituent to other food products. This insight can be seen as the foundation to Biotech's unique offering and business idea, where they had the ability to create and produce bacteria that would be the basis for a new product, which could cater an unmet need in the marketplace namely food with the same health benefits as medication, but at the same price as traditional food. Drucker's definition of the entrepreneurial activity suits well here, according to him entrepreneurs "*create something*

different; they change or transmute values”. If looking at the vision content, the vision was to do something completely new. Consequently, making the vision content *explorative* in nature. This process from an initial idea to an outspoken business idea took more than a year and the company was established four years after the initial idea.

5.2.2 Phase 2-The Early Establishment Phase-Partner Hunting

As Biotech found a significant contracting *partner and money* was generated, new visions were formulated. This can be interpreted as if Biotech had more resources at their disposal, thus enabling them to change their vision. The theoretical explanation to this could be that visions should be situated in the future time domain and almost be unreachable, but should not be too unrealistic in relation to the company’s resources and abilities. Consequently, with more financial means the organizational vision changed in Biotech. The new visions that followed were focused on increasing the scope of their bacteria:

Find new application areas and suitable bacteria for the already existing bacteria concept

Their new vision had thus both *exploitative* and *explorative* traits, were they tried to renew their initial vision and find new bacteria’s that for example could be suitable for horses. The generated money was reinvested in order to create new solutions and make the company grow further. This can be seen as a combination of both the entrepreneurial explorative focus, and the more managerial exploitive focus.

5.2.3 Phase 3-Present Phase-Attempt to be Profitable and Grow

When Biotech was listed on the stock market the organizational structure became more formalized, which also had an impact on the vision formulation. Adam states:

Our vision thinking was partly hampered when we were floated on the stock market.

When floated on the *stock market* more financial means became available. However, this new cash flow did not have the same effect on the vision creativity as it had had previously when the company was first established. Consequently, one can see that the increase in financial means is not the only factor that effects creation of new visions. Furthermore, the vision work

was more formalized and became a part of the yearly strategy work and published in the company's annual reports. One of the previous visions is:

Biotech shall with competitive research create products that are beneficial to people's health that makes them feel better, stay healthy and live longer

Whereas the most recent vision looks as the following:

Biotech shall with its research become the most attractive partner and supplier of the probiotic concept to leading producers of probiotic products

Carl who is the one in charge of the vision formulation argues that this change mainly have been done based on the employees' and organization's maturity level, underlining that the employees would not have been ready until now to have a vision that focused on generating money and becoming the best partner. Carl also says that:

The real vision or goal is not to find new interesting solutions but rather commercialize the already existing ones

This latest vision content is more *exploitative*, since the main focus is to exploit the resources at hand. If comparing this vision with the visions in the early establishment phase that also focus on generating more money, there is a crucial difference; In early establishment phase the company focused on both exploiting their existing offerings and made efforts to explore new solutions, when reinvesting money into more research, whereas the latest one only focus on generating more money.

5.2.4 Summary of Vision Process and Content

If looking at the overall transformation from the initial idea to formalized vision one can detect the following factors influencing the vision formulation, the researchers' findings and the unmet market need spurred the creativity and vision to commercialize the bacteria. Secondly, when they finally found a partner more money was generated and new visions were formulated. Thirdly, when the company was floated on the stock market, the vision work was

restricted. The three factors are here listed in the table below and their individual impact on the vision formulation.

Organizational phase	Factors influencing vision work	Effects on vision work
Pre-establishment phase (1)	Identified opportunity	Positive
Early establishment phase (2)	New partners/Investors	Positive
Present phase (3)	Quotation on the stock market	Negative

Table 5.1 Identified factors influencing vision formulation and their impact

In terms of vision content one can see that in the pre-establishment phase, the vision was explorative when the researchers and Adam tried to cater an entirely new market need. This was followed by new visions that were both about exploiting the existing products and reinvesting money to explore new opportunities. Lastly, the present vision is about exploiting the already existing bacteria concept. Therefore, one can see that there is a shift in vision content from purely explorative to purely exploitative. The shift can be seen in the table here below.

Vision Content	Explorative	Exploitative
Org. phase		
Pre-estab. (1)	x	
Early estab. (2)	x	x
Present phase (3)		x

Table 5.2 Shift in vision content-Explorative/Exploitative

5.3 Vision Communication-Purpose/Focus and Vision Formulation

As mentioned in our summary of our theoretical framework we see communication as being the tool through which vision is formulated and serve a purpose. Therefore, this paragraph is an analysis of how the vision is communicated both internally and externally, since the vision can have two purposes; namely, have a motivating effect internally and an attracting effect externally; this in order to identify the vision's purpose/focus in the different phases. Furthermore, the vision formulation process is also influenced by the organizational communication climate, and is also analyzed together with the purpose/focus of the vision.

In order to analyze vision communication and its purpose during the different phases of Biotech we will compare the internal and the external communication of the vision. Grunig's four PR models will here be used as a frame of reference where the main emphasize will be placed on the two variables pair, symmetrical and asymmetrical information, and one-way and two-way communication. According to Grunig the Symmetrical/two-way communication model should be seen as the ideal situation. If looking at his models as a spectrum with this model as being the ideal model, one could range the models according to level of desirability. Starting with the Publicity model being the least favorable one (1), followed by the information model (2), asymmetrical/two way model (3) and symmetrical/two-way model (4). The four models can be seen in the table below.

Characteristics	Publicity model	Information Model	Asymmetrical two way communication	Symmetrical Two way communication
Purpose	Propaganda	Diffusion of Information	Scientific convincing	Mutual Understanding
Communication type	One way, no need for truthfulness	One way, truthfulness important	Two way, unbalanced	Two way balanced
Communication model	Sender ↓ Receiver	Sender ↓ Receiver	Sender ↓↑ Receiver	Group ↔ Group
Grade	1	2	3	4

Table 5.3 Grunig's four PR models used as a basis for analysis

5.3.1 Phase 1-The Pre-Establishment Phase-Talk to Everyone!

5.3.1.1 Phase 1 - Internal Communication

Adam and the researchers met on a daily basis, discussing their idea and vision about their bacteria.

We met constantly, that's the way it is, you meet each other all the time to discuss your vision and elaborate it.

Most of these meeting were very informal since there was yet no established company. Their discussions were long dialogues with mutual understanding, which indicates a two-way communication, where everyone was listening and giving feedback to each other. All involved parties had a clear collective vision to turn the bacteria into something commercially sellable. Everyone was on equal footing and there was no disclosure of information between the parties, which could be seen as symmetrical sharing of information. Consequently, if applying Grunig's models to the internal situation in the organization one could apply the Symmetrical/Two-way communication model which is the most desirable communication situation for an organization according to him. Hypothetically one could give the organizational vision communication a grade 4 based on his spectra.

Symmetrical Two way communication	Phase 1 Internal Communication
Mutual Understanding	Long dialogues
Two way balanced	Dialogue Feedback
Group ↔ Group	Everyone equal no disclosure of information
4	4

5.3.1.2 Phase 1 - External Communication

Initially the communication with external parties was intense. Adam says:

We had our idea about this concept that we wanted to create so we talked to absolutely everyone we met about our idea.

This statement could be interpreted as plenty of information was spread about the initial idea. Adam also underlines how he made sure to translate the researches language to a more comprehensible language when explaining the benefits of the discovered bacteria, making sure that the listener would understand. This can be seen as an adaptation of the semiotic view of sharing of information. Instead of simply communicating the information in a straight

forward manner, Adam made sure he adapted his message to the receiver. In addition, one can tell that the group accepted input from external parties when acknowledging that their product was uneatable. Moreover, the communication was mostly conveyed personally, face-to-face, since there was yet no established company that possessed any other formal communication channels. If seen from Grunig’s variables, there are some signs of a two-way communication, with some feedback from its external world. Further, the information symmetry is not the same as in the internal organization, when everyone is included and everything is shared. Moreover, Adam and the researcher possess a stronger position than any external partners about the vision and their idea, also indicating a more asymmetrical communication. In terms of communication models this fits best into the asymmetrical/two-way model, which Grunig refers to as scientific convincing. Hypothetically this could be seen as a grade 3 out of 4 possible.

Asymmetrical two way communication	Phase 1 External Communication
Scientific convincing	Well documented scientific support was communicated
Two way, unbalanced	Received input from external parties
Sender ↓↑ Receiver	Unbalanced communication since more information was held internally
3	3

5.3.1.3 Phase 1-Contrast Vision Communication-Focus/Purpose and Formulation

If comparing the internal and external usage and communication of vision in phase one, the vision is more actively communicated and used internally, thus slightly more positioned internally. *Internally it clearly motivated* all the involved parties to collectively explore the initial idea further, but there was yet no formalized vision on paper. However, the vision is used *externally too, to attract partner’s* and financial means, which is in line with Bird’s (1989) description of the entrepreneur’s usage of the vision, that could be seen as an exploitive action on the behalf of the entrepreneur. If employing Wheatley’s (1992; 1994) complexity theory perspective on the usage of vision, the initial idea and outspoken vision becomes an attractor, so as to gather resources and employees to materialize the envisioned product. Regarding the *vision formulation* it can be seen that the vision seem to be constructed *collectively* among the researchers and Adam. The above-mentioned is here summarized in a table.

Pre-establishment phase	
Vision focus	Slightly higher internal focus 4 vs. 3
Vision purpose	Motivate employees and attract partners
Vision creation	Collectively formulated- <i>Informal</i>

Table 5.4 Vision focus, purpose and creation in the pre-establishment phase

5.3.2 Phase 2-The Early Establishment Phase-Everyone is CEO

5.3.2.1 Phase 2 – Internal Communication

Phase two is when Biotech became an established company and the number of employees increased. The level of communication between the employees was still frequent, but they did not meet on a daily basis as in the pre-establishment phase. Compared to the previous years the business idea became formally written down. However, the dialogue around the organizational future and vision continued to be a collective activity. Everyone's visions were considered and some new were adopted.

Even though the visions weren't mine from the start, we accepted them and treated them in the same way as our own initial visions

This indicates that there was an open dialogue between the parties with feed-back, where everyone was invited to take part of the vision development. Such an action ought to stimulate the vision understanding since they are more organically constructed and "collectively owned", this is supported by Bruce's statement:

When I first started here I was very involved in the vision

Concerning the power balance or symmetry in the organization one can tell that everyone was on equal footing; Adam illustrates the situation well when saying:

I used to say that we all are CEO:s of this company

The availability of information can be seen as abundant, and there were no restrictions everyone knew everything. Feed-back about new contract was immediate and communicated personally.

In the beginning the CEO will have coffee with you and tell you if a new deal went through.

This type of direct communication leaves little room for speculations among the employees.

To summarize the communication internally, it remained symmetrical, and included plenty of two-way communication between the employees, resulting in a similar ideal communication situation as in the pre-establishment phase; a symmetrical/two-way communication, which means that the grading on the communication is still the same; 4.

Symmetrical Two way communication	Phase 2 Internal Communication
Mutual Understanding	collective vision formulation
Two way balanced	Open dialogue “Everyone is CEO”
Group ↔ Group	Information abundant Shared freely
4	4

5.3.2.2 Phase 2 – External Communication

From the way the respondent talk about the vision and the external communication of it, there is little said about in the second phase. It seems like their initial contract spurred the internal activity. Bruce mentions that the vision in the establishment phase was:

Generating profits and reinvesting it into new bacteria research, in order to continue with the research and discover new products so that the company could grow further

There was obviously an external focus when wishing to exploit the existing products in new markets, but this was mainly to improve the internal capacity to explore and develop new bacteria. Since the vision was yet not formalized it is difficult to talk about any explicit communication of it. Adam as a person could probably be seen as a spokesperson of the concept to potential partners, thus leading to an implicit communication of the organizational vision. However, it does not seem as if the vision was actively used to attract new clients in the same fashion as it was done in the pre-establishment phase. Seen in terms of communication direction, there does not appear to be the same two-way communication with external partners. In addition, due to the establishment the power balance switched, making Biotech the stronger party since it possessed the most information both about the products and the organizational visions. In terms of truthfulness in the communicated message, Biotech employed more people that took care of the bacteria analysis and documentation in order to receive stronger scientific support for the bacteria’s health benefits. This could be taken into consideration when looking at the external communication, since the scientific data was something they talked about with both existing and potential new partners. In terms of Grunig’s PR models, this phase suits best in the Information model, with asymmetrical and

one-way communication, resulting with a grade 2 which means that the vision communication with the external world decreased in the second phase.

Information Model	Phase 2 Externally
Diffusion of Information	No explicit vision, Adam personifies the vision
One way, truthfulness important	Low level of input from external parties
Sender ↓ Receiver	Information is mainly held within the company
2	2

5.3.2.3 Phase 2 – Contrast Vision Communication-Focus/Purpose and Formulation

If comparing the internal and external usage of vision in phase 2, there is a *clear internal focus*. The vision seems mainly to have been a *motivating force internally* and not actively used to attract external parties. The internal usage remained the same, whereas the *external usage and communication* seem to have *declined* compared to the initial phase. Seen from a complexity theory perspective, the system or organization has become more complex compared to the pre-establishment phase, since it is now an official establishment with routines and real activities. In this context the initial idea about commercializing the discovered bacteria could be seen as the “attractor” attracting people’s energy to organize them and work toward the materialization of this idea, resulting in a more complex system or a higher level of organized activity. Initially the vision was a shared vision between the founders, in this second phase new visions were *formulated with help* from more people within the organization. When looking back at this time, Bruce specifically points out Adam as a driving force:

There was really an entrepreneurial feeling when Adam was in charge. He was really the kind of person that would fill people with enthusiasm and was always present. He had visions.

If isolating this phase one can confirm that the leader plays an important role both in stimulating vision formulation and communication (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Westley & Mintzberg, 1989) and this is also in line with Leavitt ‘s (1989) description of the entrepreneur as being visionary. The vision focus, purpose and its formulation in the early establishment phase can be seen here below.

Early establishment phase	
Vision focus	Internal focus 4 vs. 2
Vision purpose	Motivate employees
Vision creation	Collectively formulated- <i>Informal</i>

Table 5.5 Vision focus, purpose and creation in the early establishment phase

5.3.3 Phase –Present Phase-“It is not a Democracy”

5.3.3.1 Phase 3 – Internal Communication

When Biotech is floated on the stock market, there is an evident change in the vision formulation and communication. Adam admits that the external stakeholders had a negative impact on the internal organizational visions. In terms of internal communication it was reduced drastically and made things less exiting. Adam states:

We could no longer inform everyone about everything then they would have become insiders, which is such a pity

The vision formulation task became standardized and a task for management and the board members. This limited the collective input that previously had characterized the vision formulation in the previous phases. Carl argues that the hired consultants that helped Biotech with their logotype change and vision formulation but got some input from the employees when identifying “value words”. However, this seemingly open dialogue loses its strength when Carl declares:

At the end of the day, it is the board members that decide what the main values should be, it is not a democracy.

This is also supported by Bruce saying that if he has personal reflections on the vision, he thinks that his managers would listen to him, but not necessarily change their opinion. Even though the employees meet personally on a daily basis the communication is limited and feedback about new contract is mainly received from press-releases and monthly meetings. Bruce continues:

But as soon as the marketer is hired the coffee table feeling disappears.

So from having a very symmetrical information sharing, where everyone was treated the same, the situation has completely changed. It also becomes clear that no real effort is made to investigate how the vision is perceived among the members, which limits the two-way communication further. Yet, the vision is said to be an active part of the organization’s strategy work. If looking at the communication tools to communicate the organizational

vision, the vision can be found in the annual reports. However, both the employees and the manager argue that the vision is mainly communicated through actions and behavior and that no one really cares about the written statements.

You don't need to communicate the vision; it is more of a feeling within the company. The only time someone mentions it would be in some information meeting. And when there has been a change of CEO, then they start talking about it a bit more.(Bruce)

In terms of Grunig's models the symmetry and directions of communication of the vision communication has changed completely from previous phase. There is no longer the same collaboration when the manager is in charge of the vision formulation. Consequently, the information model that suits the best in this situation is the asymmetrical/two-way communication model, where there is a two-way communication, but there is a clear power imbalance between the parties; this means that the communication grade is lower compared to both previous phases, namely a 3.

Asymmetrical two way communication	Phase 3 Internal Communication
Scientific convincing	Vision formulated by the board members
Two way, unbalanced	Manager listens but no change
Sender ↓↑ Receiver	Asymmetrical information-"it is not a democracy"
3	3

5.3.3.2 Phase 3 - External Communication

It is in this phase the vision becomes explicit to the external world, with help of formal communication channels such as in annual reports. Further, there is an increased concern to adapt the organizational visions in accordance with the external stakeholders' wishes. Carl attempts to balance the interests of both the external parties and the employees when formulating the vision. However, he admits that the communication of it is probably better perceived from the external parties' perspective. This can be seen as an improvement from previous phase, the communication is more explicit and more input is taken from the external world. Yet there is an information asymmetry between Biotech and its stakeholder, resulting in a slightly higher grade than previous phase, namely a 3.

Asymmetrical two way communication	Phase 3 Externally
Scientific convincing	Explicit vision-annual report
Two way, unbalanced	Increased concern for external parties
Sender ↓↑ Receiver	Asymmetrical, most information held internally
3	3

If comparing the internal and external usage of vision one can detect a clear shift towards the external world. Carl speaks about the early vision and says:

When I wrote the previous vision it was mainly about making the employees understand that regardless of new venture capitalist the company is still about improving people's health

This shows that the intention with this previous vision was to guide and motivate the workers despite a changed situation, which could be comforting in a turbulent situation. However, Carl seems certain that these insecurities no longer exist and continues:

If we would have told the researchers back then that it was all about making money and that we were aiming at becoming the most attractive partner the organization would not have been mature for it. However, today they definitely are

This clearly illustrates that the manager used the vision for internal purposes initially but this has changed in favor for external purposes in order to attract external partners instead. Further, this shift is also confirmed when Bruce talk about the purpose of the organizational vision:

The marketers are meeting customers and screen the market. Therefore, they work more with visions than we do here at the laboratory.

5.3.3.3 Phase 3 – Contrast Vision Communication-Focus/Purpose and Formulation

If comparing the internal and external usage of vision in phase 3, there is a clear shift from the internal *focus to the external*, when more attention is paid to the external stakeholders. Further, it can be seen that the vision was initially to motivate and create a purpose for the workers when the company was first floated on the stock exchange; however, the purpose of the vision seem to have shifted towards *attracting investors* and external parties instead. The *vision formulation* is in this phase formalized and carried out *by the manager* and external consultant. There is an obvious difference between the development between the previous stages and the present one. Now the organization has become an even more complex system with both strong internal and external forces. However, the two most notable differences are that Adam who was said to be a visionary and that would stimulate action no longer works for the company, and that there is not really any new visions produced. As mentioned above the

visions in this phase have many similarities with the early visions. One interpretation could be that there are no new visions that can stimulate and energize the organization towards a higher complexity level from this point on, if no active efforts are made to reinvent the organizational visions. This is much in line with Normann’s and Senge’s line of thoughts, where they see the usage of vision as an important factor for organizational growth and learning. Wheatley has a similar view when talking about the need for attractors to energize people and mobilize them into a higher system of complexity. The vision focus, purpose and creation in the present phase are here presented.

Present phase	
Vision focus	Similar external and internal focus, 3 vs.3
Vision purpose	Attract investors
Vision creation	Individually formulated-Manager-Formal

Table 5.6 Vision focus, purpose and creation in the present phase

5.4 Summary of the Overall Process

Phase	Pre-establishment phase	Early establishment phase	Present phase
Vision focus	Internal	Internal	External
Vision purpose	Motivate employees/ Attract investors	Motivate employees	Attract investors
Vision creation	Collective-Informal	Collective-Informal	Individual-Formal

Table 5.7 Summary of the transformation of vision focus, purpose and creation

If starting to look at the transformation of the vision communication focus one can see that the communication mainly took place internally with an ideal communication situation, whereas the external was slightly more asymmetrical. In the second phase the internal focus maintained, whereas there was no real efforts made to explicitly share the vision externally, thus favoring the internal focus. Finally, in the third stage the ideal internal communication decreased, where the information sharing was more restricted. In addition, the external communication suddenly increased from previous stages, thus favoring the external focus.

If looking at the purpose of the vision, initially the small idea had the power to both motivate the involved researchers and Adam to pursue their idea, and attract external resources enabling the small idea to become an established company. However, in the early establishment phase the new vision mainly served a purpose internally, where it was a motivating factor for the employees which enabled the company to mobilize further. In the

final phase the purpose of the vision has once again shifted, but this time towards the external parties and mainly serves as an attractor for new investors.

Finally, the vision formulation has also changed throughout the phases, initially the vision was mainly a mental image shared among the founders, thus making it highly informal. In the early establishment phase when more people were hired the vision formulation maintained rather informal, yet some of the visions were written down but not in a structured manner. Further, the visions were mainly formulated collectively. In the third phase the vision formulation became highly formalized and a part of the annual strategy work, when publishing it in the annual report. In addition, the manager became the person in charge of the vision formulation and hired external consultants to do the job. Even though the consultants are hired to make sure that the vision is the suitable one and balances both the internal needs with the external needs, the vision formulation loses its organic and collective roots.

The vision development can obviously be perceived differently depending on the individual, this becomes clear when asking Carl and Bruce about their perception of the vision transformation.

I wouldn't say that you change the vision but rather that you continuously refine it as times goes by and the company moves. (Carl)

I would say that the vision moves, when I first started here I was very involved in the vision, but it always moves forward. Now the marketers are in charge of the vision. It moves outward.(Bruce)

Bruce has worked for the company since it was first established and has clearly a different frame of reference than Carl, who was hired as a manager after the company was listed on the stock exchange. Carl's interpretation shows that he sees it as the company's relationship to the external world, *outside* of the company, where he is the person in charge of the navigation. Bruce, on the other hand, perceives the development as something that moves internally *within* the company. This illustrates the perception of the transformation from a collective and organic vision when everyone participated in the vision making, compared to now, when it has become the domain of the manager and the marketers.

5.5 The workers' Perception of Vision

In this paragraph we analyze the workers' perception of the current organizational vision, and compare the current perception of it with previous visions used in the early phases; this in order to understand the impact previous visions have on current vision work.

If listening to both Bruce and Denise none of them knows the vision by heart, which might not be desirable, but Bruce gives a straight answer when saying:

The vision is to get new contracts and make money

Denise is a bit more hesitant but answers:

Almost every company seems to have similar visions. Everyone wants to be the best at what they are doing. I guess our vision is to become the best company on probiotic solutions, with the best research and development within probiotics

They both have a pretty good perception what their company is focusing on. However, it is questionable whether the vision has the desired motivating effects. Denise says that she does not need any real incentives to make a good job, since she feels this is something natural. Bruce, on the other hand, says that he understands the vision, which he sees as goals. Compared to early years in the organization he believes that his own goals were more in line with the organizational goals. Yet he underlines that he is aligned with the goals set today, but he now also have more personal goals. This can be interpreted as if the previous visions were more appealing and created more personal commitment, since the visions most of the times were collectively constructed. To create collectively owned visions is one thing that Senge (1995) underlines, people can accept the vision but it does not mean that it automatically generates commitment. Furthermore, it is said that the perception of the organizational vision might be influenced by the number of years in the organization, given that Bruce has worked for the company more than ten years, he might be more reluctant towards new visions (Deetz et al. 1995), this as opposed to Denise who has worked for the company less than a year. In addition, the organizational position can also have an impact, where Denise works in the economic department and has a position closer to the manager who formulates the vision, whereas Bruce works in the production unit. When asked if they think the manager would listen to them when formulating the organizational vision, Denise is sure there would be an

open dialogue whereas Bruce is more hesitant, saying that they listen, but do not really care. Further, when Bruce gets asked if he thinks that it would be possible to regain the same enthusiastic and creative feeling as he describes during his early years he answers:

There is nothing you can do, the laboratory and the production unit is just supposed to be there and work.

This pessimistic perception shows signs of resignation, and that there is a disbelief in having a inspiring work when the company is listed on the stock market. However, this is really the crucial point, where the underlying purpose with implementing organizational vision is to inspire and create a sense belongingness and enrich the workers' daily work, much as in the way it worked prior to the company was listed on the stock exchange.

When asking Carl about his view on visions he says:

I think a good vision should be appealing for both internal and external partners. The workers must feel like they are a part of the larger vision. However, I believe that it is important that there is a balance; the vision has to be positioned in the middle. It should create value for the external stakeholders and be motivating for the internal parties

When comparing the view of Carl and the perception of the reality according to Bruce it becomes clear that the present organizational vision does not measure up to the aspirations of Carl. It seems like the vision has become more positioned towards external stakeholders. If comparing with early years in the company and how visions were communicated there is a notable difference. All employees were talking to each other, information was shared, and discussions of new visions were a collective action. In addition, Adam is pointed out as a person being able to create commitment and energize people; all these things go well with Kotter's key factor on how to anchor a vision successfully. He talks about leadership by example, repetition, and two-way communication. However, there were no formal statements about the visions and they were not explicitly intended for any external partner. Today, on the other hand the communication of vision is more formalized both in its format and in its formulation leaving little room for two-way communication and a collectively created vision. Bruce says that the he still meets everyone at work, but "coffee table feeling" that existed when Adam was CEO is long gone. It seems like the previous vision work really served its

purpose and motivated people, whereas today it has become a routine leisure of the management that mainly formulates vision for the sake of external stakeholders. Further, it seems like Bruce perception of the current organizational vision is influenced by previous visions; this since he clearly underlines that the earlier visions and the vision work was more appealing than it is today.

5.6 Summary of Analysis

To conclude one can say that the visions have a crucial impact on the organization's development. It is the seed of thought that gives the initial fuse to generate new ideas and create an operating company. In the initial pre-establishment phase the vision of a new market opportunity created activity and lead to concrete actions when the founders interacted with their environment and it also inspired them to continue. As soon as the initial idea was supported and an actual company was established, new visions were formed, but they maintained informal and were collectively constructed. These visions inspired workers like Bruce in his daily work and resulted in organizational growth. The usage of vision reached a crucial point when the company was listed on the stock market. The prior internal focus reached a fracture point and shifted outwards. It is noted that the external focus got an impeding affect on the vision creation. Furthermore, the vision formulation became highly formalized and was no longer carried out collectively; the desired effect to continue inspire worker with a more formal vision work failed. Eneroth & Malm (2001) argues that new organizational visions have to be congruent with the organizations past or identity in order to be effective. It is noticeable that the organizational visions in Biotech have become formalized and more outspoken, yet if comparing the wording of the visions they are not very different from each other. Surely, Normann and Senge argue that the visions have to be changed proactively to create a fit between its external and internal world and inspire action. The essence is that the visions have not changed noticeably apart from their format, but the content of the vision has; initially, the vision was highly collective and explorative. Nowadays, however, the visions are similar, but the vision formulation and content has changed, information is no longer shared freely, the participation level is decreased as the administration is introduced, and the shareholders' value becomes the main concern. What it all boils down to it that the visions worked well with an explorative approach, but as soon as operations became exploitative the visions lost their power.

6. Inference

Based on our analysis we will in the inference connect our findings to our initial research questions. Furthermore, some suggestions for possible future research will be made.

6.1 The Inference

We will start the inference with recapitulating our research questions:

The overarching question was how the personal idea becomes an outspoken organizational vision. More specifically:

- *How does the vision content or focus change throughout time?*
- *What function or purpose does the vision have throughout time?*
- *How is the vision created and communicated throughout time?*
- *How is the organizational vision perceived today when the company is listed on the stock exchange compared to previous visions in the pre-establishment phase and early establishment phase?*

Based on our analysis we will now try to characterize and explain how the initial idea could become an outspoken organizational vision. We will first start with the individual sub-questions.

Vision content- The vision content has changed throughout time. Initially the vision content was explorative when the founders had identified a new opportunity and an unmet need in the market place. Secondly, when the company was first established the vision content became both explorative and exploitative, where Biotech continued commercialize their existing bacteria and tried to find new ones. Finally, at the present the organizational vision is entirely

exploitative, since the company's main focus is to commercialize the already existing bacteria.

Vision purpose-The vision's purpose has also changed since the initial vision. To start of with the vision worked both as a motivating force internally and an attracting force externally, enabling the establishment of Biotech. Later, when the company was established the vision mainly served a motivating purpose internally for the employees. Finally, at present the purpose of the vision has once again shifted and is today mainly used to attract external investors.

Vision creation and communication- There has been a shift in the vision formulation and vision communication. Initially, the vision was a collectively shared among the founders and was very informal. Further, when the company was established the vision formulation was made collectively including newly hired employees, yet the communication maintained highly informal. After the company was listed on the stock market the vision became formally communicated in the company's annual report and the vision formulation is today a task for management alone.

Vision perception-The workers are aware of the organizational vision but are not personally motivated by it in their daily work. The previous visions are referred to as being more motivating than the current one and there is a disbelief that the organization and visions could become as stimulating as they once were.

6.2 The Overall Process- Key Factors Enabling the Personal Idea to Transform into an Organizational Vision.

After analyzing Biotech's transformation we have identified four factors key factors enabling the transformation from a simple idea into a company listed on the stock exchange.

- Communication
- Visionary leader
- Collectively created and owned visions
- An explorative approach

Undeniably there has to be a vision about creating something new. However, the crucial difference between a relatively simple personal vision and the beginning of something greater lies in the ability to *communicate* the vision. In the case of Biotech the key success factor could most likely be attributable to Adam. He was the one with the ability to “translate” the researchers’ language into a more commercially suitable language. Furthermore, if it would not have been for his drive to pursue the initial idea despite rejection the question remains if there would be such a product available today, thus requiring *a visionary leader*. However, the good communication did not stop in the initial phase but continued into the establishment phase. The third crucial factor contributing to the development of the initial idea is the *collectively created and owned visions* in the establishment phase that stimulated actions further. Finally, the *explorative approach* resulted in the in proactive vision making, leading to organizational growth. The initial vision was the initiating power or “attractor” that mobilized the attention and the energy of people and resources resulting in the materialization of the vision, or put in other words, the mentally created “concept” became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The situation changed drastically as Biotech was floated on the stock market, and it is at this point the management of “minds and soles” (Arvonen, 1989), should be adopted. This is the fraction point of the system where the management should try to create a sense of meaning in the daily work with help of organizational visions, if this sense of meaning does not already exist. If contrasting the time after Biotech was listed on the stock market with the time prior to it we saw in our analysis that the “natural” attractors disappeared. The majority of the key factors that generated organizational growth and a committed work force vanished with the formalized organization. The communication within the organization was restricted due to the risk of insider effects, communication and creation of the organizational visions became highly formalized and Adam, the charismatic and visionary leader left the organization.

6.3 Our Findings Compared to Previous Research

These observations are well aligned with previous researchers’ findings, Senge (1995) underlined the importance of a collectively formulated and owned vision in order to unleash the true power of a vision, and this is what happened initially when the company was created but lost its power as the collective vision formulation became a part of the manager’s annual strategy work. Further, the vision communication is more formalized today but the necessary

two-way communication that Kotter (1996) believes is highly important when trying to create commitment with organizational visions does no longer exist. Moreover, Westley's and Mintzberg's (1989) interpretation of the visionary leader as being a tool for vision communication suits well, where Adam almost personified the organizational vision. However, when he retired no one replaced him as a new visionary leader. Finally, Normann (2001) states that visions are about the future and should constantly change to serve a real purpose; this was the case initially when the vision content was explorative and changed as the company grew. However, today the vision content is exploitative and focus on the resources at hand. Normann states "*vision definitely is in the time domain, about the future. It implies a gap between an imagined future state and the present state*" (2001:276). However, to exploit really means to use the sources at hand here and now, which makes visions about exploitation really meaningless, thus have no real power to inspire collective actions as vision potentially could do. This could be interpreted as if the explorative approach seen in the start-up company is more easily compatible with the concept of vision: they both refer to a future state that is yet to come. However, we will here below make our overall conclusion about our findings and what Biotech should think about for future vision work.

6.4 Look Back in Order to Look Forward- Biotech's Lesson for the Future

We believe that the crucial difference between the present vision and the early visions lies in their content. Namely, the previous ones have been *explorative*, attempting to discover something new, whereas the new one clearly is *exploitative* and is not creating any new activities. Clearly the present vision does not have the same appeal and does not motivate people in the same way they used to. Therefore, we believe that previous vision work have had an impact on how the present vision is perceived and its ability to create commitment. Consequently, it seems important to acknowledge the previous visions and their content when formulating new ones. Eneroth and Malm (2000) write about the necessity to respect a company's organizational memory when formulating new visions. Consequently, new visions can be formulated as long as the dominating logic is still intact. However, we would like to specify in what sense Biotech should respect its organizational memory. The company has throughout the years expanded its business and had initially an explorative vision content and mindset when generating new visions. Further, the visions have worked as "attractor" enabling the company to grow and reach a higher level of complexity much as in the way Wheatly describes what the organizational vision should be all about. However, today the

vision content is exploitative and is not as successful as the previous ones. Therefore our conclusion is, when formulating new organizational visions one should respect the organization's memory in the following way:

You have to *respect the way* things are done, but you have to *change* the things that *are* done in order to reach a higher level of complexity.

6.5 Future Research

During the research process we have found the following topics suitable for further research.

- Can a vision be collectively formulated/created with full employee participation, when the company is listed on the stock market?
- Compare an organization with an outspoken formal vision with an organization without one.
- Is it possible to let an outsider formulate a vision and still have the expected benefits of an organically grown one? Which is the most suitable process to create a vision?

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Appendices

1A. Interview guide – Feasibility study

Background questions

- Contact person, position
- Number of employees

- Do you use vision as a corporate governance or as a strategic management tool? If so, in what way?
- Is the vision important in the day to day work?
- How do you communicate the vision?
- Which tools are used?
- Do you conduct follow-up studies of the comprehension of the vision among the employees?

1B. Interview guide – Feasibility study - Swedish edition

Bakgrundsfrågor

- Antal anställda
- Kontaktperson, position

- Använder ni vision som styrrederkap eller strategiskt ledningsrederkap? Om ja, hur?
- Är visionen viktig i det dagliga arbetet?
- Hur kommunicerar ni visionen?
- Vilka verktyg används för att kommunicera visionen?
- Följer ni upp visionsförståelsen hos personalen?

2A. Interview guide – Management level

Background questions

- Work description
- Length of employment

- Do you use your [the company's] vision actively in the strategic work process? (Both externally as well as internally)
- Is the vision prioritized in comparison with other economical management tools?
- What do you believe characterize a successful vision?
- For how long have you had your current vision?
- How would you define your corporate vision?
- Who has been involved in the process of shaping the vision? (Has the employees been involved in the process or is it just the management/board)
- Do you consider that the vision affect you personally in the day to day work? If yes, how. If no, why not?
- What communication tools are used to communicate the vision? (Written sources/orally, “usual communication channels”, e-mail, personal meetings, personal development meetings, kick-offs, weekly meetings? Is the vision divided into sub goals?)
- What do you believe is necessary in order to have a successful communication process?
- Have you ever changed the way you communicate? If yes, why?
- Do you believe that better ways to communicate the vision exist? If yes, how and why are they not in use already?
- Do you think that the vision communication tools that you use are the most suitable for the receiving parties? (Do you adapt the tools according to the person?)
- Do you conduct any studies to see how well the vision is implemented/anchored within the organization? If yes, how is it conducted?
- Do you consider that your vision fulfills its purpose?

2B. Interview guide – Management level - Swedish edition

Bakgrundsfrågor

- Huvudsakliga arbetsuppgifter
- Hur länge har du arbetat för företaget?

- Använder ni er vision aktivt i ert strategiska arbete? (intern/extern)
- Ges visionen hög prioritet (gentemot annan ekonomisk styrning)?
- Vad tror du att en vision bör innehålla för att vara framgångsrik?
- Hur länge har ni haft er nuvarande vision?
- Hur skulle du definiera er företagsvision?
- Vem har utformat/skapat visionen? (Ledning enbart eller med åsikter från resten av organisationen?)
- Anser du att er vision påverkar dig personligen i ditt dagliga arbete? Om ja hur, om nej varför inte?
- Vilka kommunikationsverktyg använder ert företag för att kommunicera er vision? (Skriftligt/Muntligt, ”vanliga kommunikationskanaler”, e-mail, intranät, personliga möten, utvecklingssamtal, kick-offs, veckomöten? Nerbrytning i delmål?)
- Vad tror du krävs för att kommunikation ska vara framgångsrik?
- Har ni någon gång ändrat ert kommunikationssätt? I så fall varför?
- Tror du att det finns bättre sätt att kommunicera er vision? I så fall hur? Varför använder ni inte dessa i dags läget?
- Anser du att de verktyg som används är välanpassade till dem som är mottagare av visionen? (Dvs. väljer man medvetet kommunikationsverktyg baserat på vem som ska ta emot visionen?)
- Har ni någon typ av uppföljning till hur väl visionen är förankrad i organisationen? Om ja hur?
- Anser du att er vision uppfyller sitt syfte?

3A. Interview guide – Employee level

Background questions

- Work description

- Length of employment

- How would you define your corporate vision?
- What do you think characterize a successful vision?
- Do you consider that the vision is your guiding star in the day to day work? If yes, how. If no, why?
- Have you been apart of the vision formulation process or in the process of creating the vision?
- Do you consider yourself to have a good understanding of the vision?
- Do you consider the vision to be of importance in your day to day work? In what way?
- Would you like to have a greater understanding of the corporate vision? Why?
- How have you collected/received information concerning the vision?
- Which tools were used communicating it to you?
- Do you believe that these are the best tools in order for you to personally take full part of the vision?
- Do you believe that better ways exist when communicating the vision in order to make you understand it better?
- Have you had any dialogues with some of your superiors about the corporate vision, its content and what it means to you?

3B. Interview guide – Employee level - Swedish edition

Bakgrundsfrågor

- Huvudsakliga arbetsuppgifter
- Hur länge har du arbetat för företaget?

- Hur skulle du definiera er företagsvision?
- Vad tror du att en vision bör innehålla för att vara framgångsrik?
- Anser du att denna vision påverkar och leder dig i ditt dagliga arbete, om ja hur. Om inte, varför?
- Har du varit delaktig i visionsformuleringen? Eller framtagningsprocessen av den?
- Anser du att du har en god förståelse för visionen och vad den har för betydelse för dina arbetsuppgifter?
- Skulle du vilja ha en större förståelse för er företagsvision, varför?
- Hur har du tagit del av visionen? Hur har den kommunicerats till dig, med vilka medel?
- Vad tror du att en vision bör innehålla för att vara framgångsrik?
- Anser du att dessa är de bästa verktygen för att du personligen skall kunna ta till dig visionen till fullo?
- Tror du det finns bättre sätt att kommunicera visionen så att du själv skulle kunna förstå den bättre?
- Har du någonsin haft en öppen dialog med någon av dina överordnade om företagets vision om dess innehåll och betydelse?

4A. Interview guide – The founder of the company

- How did you become involved in Biotech?
- How many employees were there initially?
- How did you interact with the employees?
- What was your role?
- How was the relationship with the employees?
- How was the work divided amongst you?
- What was your business idea?
- What was the purpose or mission with Biotech? (Personally/Corporate view)
- What was your vision for the company? (Personal/Official/Spoken/Oral)
- Did the employees take part of your vision? (Who shaped it?)
- How was it communicated? (Written/Oral/Dialogue)
- Was there any studies to see how well the vision was understood?
- Was there any reward systems?
- What do you believe is of importance in order to communicate efficiently?
- Was there any possibilities to promotion? How would this happen?
- Which criteria should be fulfilled of a new employee? (Initially/Later)
- If you compare with other companies you have worked in, is there anything that distinguishes Biotech or makes it unique?
- Did a certain jargon exist?
- Did the vision develop over time? (Where they more outspoken/written/others?)
- Was the vision communicated differently over time? If yes, why?
- What characterizes a successful vision?

4B. Interview guide – The founder of the company - Swedish edition

- Hur blev du involverad i Biotech?
- Hur många anställda var ni initialt?
- Hur interagerade du med personalen?
- Vad hade du för roll?
- Hur var relationen till de anställda?
- Hur såg arbetsfördelningen ut?
- Vad var din affärsidé?
- Vad var syftet eller missionen med Biotech? (Personligen/företaget)
- Vad var din vision för företaget? (Personlig/Officiell/Uttalad/Nedskrivnen/Muntlig)
- Lät du de anställda ta del av din vision? (Vem formulerade den?)
- Hur kommunicerades denna? (Skriftligt/Muntligt/Dialog; Internt/Externt)
- Fanns det någon uppföljning av visionsförståelsen?
- Fanns några belöningssystem?
- Vad tror du är viktigt för att kommunicera effektivt?
- Fanns några möjligheter till befordring? Hur såg dessa processer ut?
- Vilka var de främsta kraven vid rekrytering? (Initialt/Senare)
- Om du jämför med andra företag du har jobbat med, är det något som särskiljer Biotech eller gör det unikt?
- Fanns någon särskild jargong?
- Hur förändrades visionerna över tid? (Mer uttalade, nedskrivna, andra sätt?)
- Kommunicerades visionerna på olika sätt över tid?
- Vad bör en bra vision innehålla för att vara framgångsrik?

5. Biotech's vision, mission and business concept

Biotech's vision according to their webpage

“Biotech shall with its research become the most attractive partner and supplier of the probiotic concept to leading producers of probiotic product”⁴⁰

Biotech's business concept according to their webpage

“Biotech shall be a leading research and development company that delivers commercially interesting product propositions based on probiotic concepts to industrial actors.”⁴¹

Biotech's mission according to their annual report 2006

“Biotech shall with competitive research create products that are beneficial to people's health that makes them feel better, stay healthy and live longer”⁴²

⁴⁰ “Biotech skall genom forskning bli den mest attraktiva samarbetspartnern och leverantören av bioteknikprodukter till ledande producenter av bioteknikprodukter.”

⁴¹ “Biotech skall vara ett leadande forsknings- och utvecklingsföretag som levererar kommersiellt intressanta produktförslag baserade på biotech koncept till industriella aktörer.”

⁴² “Biotech vill skapa hälsobefrämjande produktkoncept som gör att människan mår bättre, behåller sin goda hälsa och lever längre.”