

# **Anthropomorphizing Your Business**

## **A Field Guide to Making Vision Work for Humans**

For a long time, I knew vision mattered.

I had seen it work, and I had seen it fail. More importantly, I had watched smart, capable founders struggle to create a vision that actually helped other people coordinate with them. These were not unserious people. They cared deeply about what they were building, they were thoughtful, and they were willing to do the work. And yet, something fundamental still wasn't landing.

What bothered me wasn't that vision was hard. It was that people were clearly trying, often earnestly, and still missing something essential. Over time, I came to see that the issue wasn't effort or intelligence. It was perception.

## **We Don't Have Biology for Assessing Businesses**

Here's the simple truth that unlocked this for me: human beings do not have biological equipment for assessing businesses.

We don't have sensors for organizations, strategies, or operating models. Nothing in our evolutionary history prepared us to "feel into" a company the way we can feel into a person. There is no instinctive apparatus for directly perceiving a business as a thing.

What we *do* have, in abundance, is biology for assessing other human beings.

Within moments of meeting someone, our nervous system is already forming assessments. We are sensing what they stand for, whether they are coherent, whether they are trustworthy, where they seem to be going, what it might be like to work with them, and whether being around them would cost or give us energy. We don't consciously reason our way through these judgments. Our bodies do it for us.

And yet, when someone tells us about their business, we are suddenly asked to assess something we don't actually know how to perceive. So we default to abstraction. And abstraction is where clarity goes to die.

## **Vision Is a Translation Problem**

This realization changed how I think about vision entirely.

Vision is not primarily about inspiration, and it isn't even about alignment, at least not directly. Vision is about translation. A good vision translates a business into a form that human beings can biologically evaluate.

When that translation works, people don't have to work hard to understand you. They don't have to mentally "figure out" what you're about. They can simply sense it. When it doesn't work, no amount of eloquent language fixes the problem, because the issue is not how well you're speaking. It's what form the thing is taking in the listener's nervous system.

## **Anthropomorphizing the Business**

One of the most useful ways I've found to solve this translation problem is to intentionally anthropomorphize the business. Not as a metaphor, but as a discipline.

Instead of treating the business as an abstract entity, I treat it as a *someone*. If the business were a person entering into relationship with others, with employees, customers, and partners, what would people need to know in order to assess it?

This is where I began to see the Vision/Traction Organizer differently. Not as a planning tool, and not as a management system, but as a way of articulating the *self* of the business.

### **"Who" Is This Business?**

When people encounter a business, consciously or not, they are asking a very human question: *Who is this?* So I translate the VTO into questions of identity. Who am "I" really?

What do I stand for? That's what core values are answering.

What impact do I want to have in the world? That's purpose, cause, and passion.

What am I genuinely brilliant at? That's niche, not a résumé, but a real superpower.

What kind of life am I oriented toward? That's long-term ambition.

Who do I care about? Who am I committed to? Who do I cherish? That's target market.

What is it actually like to work with me? That's the proven process.

What is my word? What promise do I make? That's the guarantee.

When these are clear, something important happens. People don't just understand the business intellectually. They can assess it using the same biological tools they use to assess a person.

## **Direction Matters More Than Certainty**

Coherent beings have direction, not certainty. People listen for this instinctively.

So I ask another set of questions: where am I going, and how am I getting there?

What does an ideal future look like for me?

What does that look like nearer term?

What am I focused on right now?

This isn't about predicting the future. It's about being oriented toward one. I've found that people trust leaders who are oriented far more than leaders who claim certainty.

## **Naming What Could Pull You Off Course**

Another thing our biology is very good at detecting is pretense. No one trusts a being who claims to have no tension, no constraints, and no risk.

So I also ask: what could cause me to deviate from my course?

This includes known challenges, structural limits, unresolved issues, and emerging opportunities that could change direction. Naming these doesn't weaken trust. It strengthens it. It signals coherence rather than performance.

## **Why This Changes Vision Entirely**

When a business is specified this way, vision stops being something you explain. It becomes something people can *sense*.

Coordination gets easier. Commitment becomes cleaner. People self-select more accurately, not because you persuaded them, but because their biology could finally do what it's designed to do.

## **A Different Way to Use the VTO**

Seen this way, the VTO isn't a checklist. It's a translation device. It takes something humans don't know how to perceive, a business, and renders it in terms humans have always used to assess one another.

When founders adopt this lens, the work usually shifts. They stop trying to sound impressive. They start trying to be coherent. And coherence is what people actually respond to.

## **The Question That Tells You If It's Working**

After articulating your business this way, there's one question I always come back to: *How does this feel?*

Not emotionally, but biologically. Does it feel trustworthy? Does it feel grounded? Does it feel alive? Does it feel like something you'd want to coordinate with?

If it does, your vision is doing its real job. If it doesn't, the work isn't to "communicate better." It's to get clearer about who the business actually is.