

New decade, new opportunities to review, assess and modify for new and challenging conditions. Do you have a clear 2020 vision for your business?



CLEAR VISION FOR AN EMERGING DECADE

'Vision' has several definitions but the one that best suits us – "the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom". In business terms, "the organisation has created a vision and direction for the future". I really like the inclusion of the words imagination, creativity, inventiveness, innovation, intuition, perceptiveness, inspiration, foresight, insight, awareness and cleverness when it comes to the sign, print and graphic industries. Or as I like to call us the "creative professionals".

The theme of our Kiwi colleagues' annual conference, which has been postponed until June 2021 is "202 Vision shaping the future". I am very pleased to be presenting a seminar on 2020 Vision as a devotee to the belief that one of the only real constants is change.

The current NZSDA national President Paul Waters offers some prudent words: "Reflecting and learning from past successes and failures gives us strength and knowledge to make for a better and stronger future. Having the right knowledge gives you power to become more creative, innovative and sympathetic to our future environment and well-being. What has worked in the past won't necessarily be successful today or in the days ahead, therefore making

better choices and challenging our mind-sets to find the best business processes and outcomes will define our world and the way we live it. Simply by developing more sustainable differences that will engage and embrace new technologies will give staff power to be the best they can – same end goal – making a difference in your business and the industry".

This will be my 6th NZSDA conference over four decades and I still see it as a great investment in growing and sharing knowledge, skills and relationships with our closest like-minded cousins.

Let's drill down to establish your vision and develop what will work for you. Vision is different for everyone. That's not saying your people can't share and support your personal or company vision. It's how you tailor and implement your ideas, considering the wider picture than a narrow focus only on what suits your needs. That might mean separate personal and business visions to encourage others to get involved. This topic is endless, but VI Magazine as a page and word limit! So I'm bullet-pointing my ideas as a set of mind-mapped ideas. If any strike a chord with you, email me for more resources. Better still attend my NZ conference seminar!

Build YOUR 2020 Vision and reshape your future.

These ideas are presented so YOU can consider and arrange in your optimum priority order:-

1. People – First, foremost and always.

Think about the triangle of business – your client, your suppliers and you and your team. The simple you, them and us – an interdependent relationship. If nurtured, each of these groups grow, strengthen and thrive. Your people – they say good people are expensive, but how much are bad people costing you? Anyone can purchase a digital printer or signmaking equipment, but it's the skilled expert that optimises its use.

Your clients are worthy of respect, the best results and adhering to the critical triangle of service/quality/price. Put Price on top and it's supported by great quality and service. However, if low price is individually balancing service and quality, the mission is unsustainable. Great relationships with your suppliers are critical.

Remember the 2 rules – Rule 1. People first. Rule 2. See Rule 1.

2. Who and why – take a look at yourself

Mirror, mirror on the wall...you know how it

goes. Open your mind to how you look to your customers, staff and suppliers. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, how is your profile – showroom, uniforms, presentation, quote presentation, professional manner? How would you evaluate yourself? What is your scorecard? You're better targeting perfect than just a pass? Professionalism builds respect, trust and profits.

3. Creativeness – Never lose sight of why you are who you are.

Left brain creatives typically LOVE to come to work to make exciting designs and signs. They jump out of bed enthusiastic to make stuff happen! But the creeping mediocrity of the slow and gradual intrusion of what signmakers see as burdensome paperwork, safety, environmental requirements, process management and all the back office boredom overwhelms creativity. You started out loving your work. Now you employ people to do what you loved, while your work is the stuff you hate. If that's your daily grind, I suggest you've got it upside down and everyone will suffer, especially you!

4. Embrace – Process, technology and opportunities.

The timeline in our industry is accelerating. Looking at signwriting versus digital only. In around 4 decades a typical 3 square metres of sign output (2440x1220) has changed from:

- Mid 1980's around 5 – 10 hours to create a hand-rendered high-quality sign including some form of pictorial.
- 1990s conveyed outputs to less than one hour based on average machine outputs of only 6 square metres per hour.
- Early 2000's, output was averaging 35 square metres per hour
- By 2010 outputs again accelerated and depending on investments, 60–120 square metres per hour
- 2020: outputs are anywhere approaching 300 square metres per hour and beyond
- What's next Sherlock?

That's just digital printing. Running parallel are bandsaw versus router and laser or water jet. Most traditional techniques are under challenge. I'm not debating traditional versus future. Rather highlighting that there is a place for everything. I stress my view – your future successes will be based on ensuring your skills, processes and production are planned, developed and marketed. Your choice is to hand carve or create a sign by router or maybe large format 3D printer knowledgeably. Are you ready?

5. Environment – Immediate surroundings to global.

An old chestnut, or is it? Costs are always passed on. When you don't recycle or develop sound commercial practices including safety,

physical and mental health polices it does and will continue to increase your cost and erode your profit. FACT. Immediately, you can review your production waste and processes. We saved a medium-sized signmaker \$800 per month just reassessing how router table offcuts were being binned and improved safety and physical risk! Globally, earth is approaching a tipping point. Review your ordering. Example – ten sheets of ACM take the same to wrap as one sheet. Develop responsibility for your process and design sound intelligence into your supply and output lines.

6. Better Choices – It's your decision.

Are you in the business of making signs and prints? OR is your real business focused on the skilled and accomplished delivery of rendering your client's signage, branding and image in a professional, eye-catching and unforgettable manner to increase their customers and potential customers alike? Do you follow or lead?

7. Marketing – If you're not knocking on doors someone else is.

2020 business is still based on relationships and trust. The quantum shift in the dynamics of the who, when, where, how and why have all moved. Assess how you interface with your business versus modern marketing. Facebook and LinkedIn are both teenagers still at high school. Instagram is still in junior school at around 10 years old. Are these or other electronic platforms right for your business? Assess the next generation of potential customers and how you're going to gain their business? Market or perish.

8. Love Change – Open rather than close doors.

Burn to innovate I say! There has and always will be those who modestly earn a living and deliver great signs and print. They live hopefully happy lives and feel blessed. I'm good with that, no problem. I certainly have been an agent of change. Nevertheless, I'm not going to force my horse to drink water when it's not thirsty.

My mission is to open a door, ponder a thought or tap someone on the shoulder to see if they "burn for change". Those who have hit a wall or lost that magic. It has taken decades to understand I can't change everyone – I've been told many times. The air is rarefied where you find the 3-5 percent of business owners who don't just have passion 'making stuff' but also burn to 'manage stuff' to create a vastly better result.

9. Build Value – Is your business an asset or liability.

One of my favourites! Consider. One signmaker or printer works diligently for decades. Decides time has come to move on, tries to sell their

potentially largest asset and life's work and not a single taker? Here is a little secret – typically the vendor doesn't know the game. Only around 25% of businesses listed are sold! Why? Many reasons, however they have confused money, turnover and their ego with the reality of how buyers and their accountant rate the business. In the words of Warren Buffet – price is what you pay, value is what you get. The business must be prepared for sale.

10. Profit – Is not a dirty word.

I have written more on this subject than ANY other topic in the last 15 years. "How much is a sign worth?" Example, take a \$45 safety sign in one of the most ruthless marketplaces, like real estate or others, where price is controlled by the consumer. Turn your thinking around – how much is that sign worth if it saved one of your loved ones? I bet you would pay more than \$45? You need to think value not cost. If you don't set the price for your product – whose business are you running?

Now over to you. Get started to reshape your future and have some fun! Let me leave you with my all-time favourite saying from legendary artist Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) "I don't seek, I find".

And one for all those who question their signs' value and quoting pitch: this is a great story for professionals to share with anyone who attempts to negotiate a lower price for services. Obviously, there are a few versions –

"An American tourist happened to be eating lunch at a restaurant in Paris when she recognised Pablo Picasso at a neighbouring table. After a short period of soul searching, she got up the nerve to approach the table, introduced herself and asked Pablo if he would be so kind as to autograph her napkin.

Picasso smiled, took the napkin from her hand, drew a picture of a small bird on it and then signed it. When finished, he looked up and the woman, clearly excited, reached down to pick it up.

Picasso pulled the napkin aside and smiled once again. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves, my dear. That will be \$5,000."

The woman, taken aback, asserted that the price seemed rather high since what he had done had only taken a few seconds.

Picasso didn't disappoint. "No, madam. That took me 68 years."

We are offering a free 1-2 hour introductory consultancy in our office in Pymont to discuss your strategy for shaping your future or direction. Please take our self-assessment test or email me on john@controlzone.com.au with "2020 Vision" in the subject line for a return email.