



## Vision: Can Your Staff and Customers See Yours?

### 4 Keys to 20/20 Vision

Ari Weinzweig, co-owner and founding partner of the Zingerman's Community of Business in Ann Arbor, MI, and a strategic business training consultant, suggests that every clearly focused business vision should be:

#### 1. Inspiring.

Does it excite and motivate you as an owner or manager, and can it do the same for your staff?

#### 2. Strategically Sound.

Is it challenging but attainable?

#### 3. Documented.

Have you written it down?

#### 4. Communicated.

Are you clearly and regularly communicating the vision to employees, customers and to the community at large in both direct and indirect ways?

What's your vision for your operation, your department, or your menu? If you can't quickly produce a clear and convincing answer—and if your staff can't confidently answer the same question—chances are this important “big picture” element of your business needs attention. If you and your staff are blurry about the vision driving your business, it's a sure bet that customers can't see it, either.

Developing a clear vision for your business is an exercise in “seeing the forest through the trees.” It's one that should be a first step in any long-term strategic business planning, says Ari Weinzweig, co-owner and founding partner of the Zingerman's Community of Businesses in Ann Arbor, MI.

“If you don't have a clear business vision, you're operating without a roadmap,” says Weinzweig. “It's broader than a mission statement. You have to clearly define what you want your business to be, and how you want to grow. A lot of people think they're operating with a vision, and they may be in indirect ways, but if you don't take the time to really define it and use it to guide your business, it can easily get lost in the shuffle.”

To begin drafting a business vision, Weinzweig suggests first thinking back on the past year or two and making a list of all the things you're most proud of in one column next to those you're not so proud of in a second column. Then star or highlight the top three to five items in each column. Finally, put on your “visioning hat” and transport yourself five years into the future. “Imagine your company in five years and describe to yourself all of the things you've accomplished as an organization—with your business, in your community, with your customers, staff and products—that provide evidence of your success,” he suggests. “Those lists will go a long way in helping you to define your vision for your business.”

Once your vision is clearly defined, don't just file it away. Use it to guide your hiring, your training, your ongoing communications to staff and to customers, your incentive programs such as Foodservice Rewards, your menu and other merchandising tools, and the look and feel of your operation. In an increasingly competitive foodservice business environment, that type of clarity and focus goes a long way toward separating the extraordinary companies from the ordinary.