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## The Role of Farm Vision and Mission in Constructing Whole Farm Plans to Improve Water Quality

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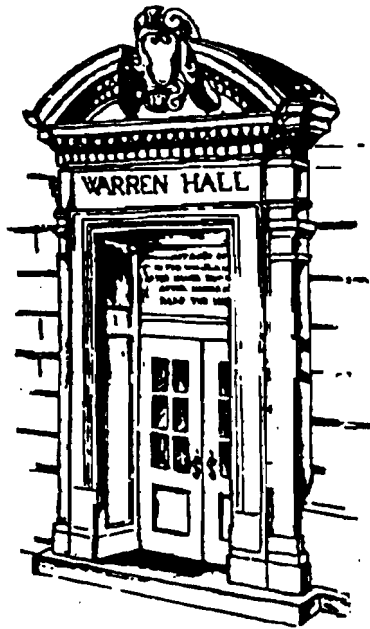
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# Staff Paper

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## **THE ROLE OF FARM VISION AND MISSION IN CONSTRUCTING WHOLE FARM PLANS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY\***

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## **Abstract**

**Water quality and other environmental issues are often viewed as threats by farm managers. Farm managers also pride themselves as good stewards of the land. Assisting managers in developing their mission statement including an environment component can reduce the conflict between farm managers and society over environmental issues.**

# **The Role of Farm Vision and Mission in Constructing Whole Farm Plans to Improve Water Quality**

The purpose of the Whole Farm Planning Process in the New York City Watershed Agricultural Program is to develop a whole farm plan that addresses the water quality problems on the farms in the watershed with minimal disruption to the farm's opportunity to fulfill its mission and objectives. The water from these farms drains into reservoirs that are the principle water source for New York City. Because of the importance of high quality water in these reservoirs, New York City has agreed to provide monies to compensate farm managers for projected loss in profitability.

The first step of an eleven step process designed to guide planning efforts in the program is: Interact with the farm manager to identify the farm mission and objectives for resource and business management, and to document the farm business plan. The emphasis on establishing the mission and objectives at the beginning of the planning process serves three functions. The first is to enable the development of a farm plan that minimizes disruptions to the noneconomic components of the mission and objectives during the selection of alternatives to solve water quality needs. If, for example, one farm has an objective of increasing land in forage and a second farm has an objective of reducing purchased concentrates, the recommendations might be quite different for similar water quality problems. Similarly, one farm with an objective of shifting to less intensive enterprises could have quite different recommendations from one with an objective of transferring a viable farm business to the next generation.

A second reason for the emphasis on farm mission and objective is to meet the goal that the plans be successfully implemented. The goal setting literature unequivocally concludes that goals are only met when the person responsible for goal attainment has ownership of the plan and its goals (Locke and Latham). Whole Farm

Planning team understanding of the farm's mission and objectives is crucial to the plan reflecting the farm's mission and objectives in order to increase the likelihood of farmer ownership of the plan and its goal. A third reason for emphasis on farm mission and objectives is that the discussion of the farm mission and objectives helps the farm owner/operator(s) crystallize their perception of the importance of the water quality and other environment issues to their farm mission. As the farm/owner/manager and the watershed planning staff apply the whole farm planning process, it is imperative that **they remember the farmer is the key to successful plan implementation.**

In this article we look at modern management to help us understand the role of vision, mission, and objectives in farm business and whole farm planning success. The initial discussion focuses on the lessons of modern management. We then practice what we teach by developing a personal mission statement (or refining one we already have). The final section focuses on assisting the farmer in articulating the farm mission.

### **The Role of the Mission Statement in the Farm Business and Whole Farm Planning**

Covey (1991, pp. 179-180) says:

**"People want to contribute to the accomplishment of worthwhile objectives. They want to be part of a mission and enterprise that transcends their individual tasks. They don't want to work in a job that has little meaning even though it may tap their mental capacities. They want purpose and principles that lift them, ennoble them, inspire them, empower them, and encourage them to be their best selves."**

This statement captures the underlying and central tenet of what is variously called modern management, total quality management, Japanese management and re-engineering. The statement is equally true for those involved in a small family business, like a dairy farm, and a large corporate giant.

Traditional approaches to management are based on supervisors effectively using power to control the actions of employees. This is control-oriented management. Modern management theories, in contrast, based on the above statement focus on commitment of all personnel and are referred to as commitment-oriented management.

Figure 1 contrasts control and commitment-oriented management. The reliance on direction and power in the control-oriented traditional style is evident in the emphasis on tasks and pleasing the supervisor. The freedom to excel embodied in the modern commitment-oriented management is reflected in exceeding expectations, emphasis on development, and high productivity. Commitment-oriented management is win-win for the business and for the individual whether in a farm business or an international corporation. The individual "wins" through development and job satisfaction; the business "wins" through high productivity.

The Covey statement quoted above starts with "People want to contribute to the accomplishment of worthwhile objectives. They want to be part of a mission and enterprise that transcends their individual tasks." The implementation of this noble philosophy requires that managers:

- 1) Commit themselves and others to an established vision and mission.
- 2) Provide mechanisms that support everyone in maximizing their personal contribution to the vision and mission.

The successful accomplishment of these two tasks requires a paradigm shift for most managers. A paradigm is a way of viewing the world; consequently, a paradigm shift is a change in the way the world is viewed. Managers must now view themselves as a delineators of the vision and supporters of everyone involved rather than controllers of all activity.

A key to this paradigm shift is an abundance mentality. Covey (1991, p 157) describes abundance mentality as: "a bone-deep belief that 'there are enough natural

and human resources to realize my dream' and that 'my success does not necessarily mean failure for others, just as their success does not preclude my own.'" This mentality enables managers to gain satisfaction from empowering others and from nurturing their success. The emphasis on production and on complaining in the agrarian culture has resulted in most producers maintaining more of a scarcity mentality.

**Figure 1 Management Styles: Control vs. Commitment**

	<b>Traditional Control Oriented</b>	<b>Deming Revolution Commitment-Oriented</b>
<b>Employee Roles</b>	<b>Take Orders Do your job</b>	<b>Ask Questions Critical part of a system</b>
<b>Mechanism for Achievement</b>	<b>Do the job "right"</b>	<b>Exceed expectation</b>
<b>Emphasis</b>	<b>Means/tasks</b>	<b>Ends/accomplishments</b>
<b>Development of people</b>	<b>Managers responsible for improvement  Little need for training</b>	<b>Everyone responsible for changes Training essential for continued success</b>
<b>Biggest fear</b>	<b>Upsetting the boss</b>	<b>Not meeting performance expectations</b>
<b>Structure</b>	<b>Bureaucratic inherently adversarial</b>	<b>Flat inherently team collegial</b>
<b>Employees' response</b>	<b>Demotivating</b>	<b>Motivating</b>
<b>Productivity</b>	<b>Average at best</b>	<b>Outstanding when successful</b>

The articulation of the vision and mission is the subject of the remainder of most of this article. The two tasks for which the manager is responsible in commitment-oriented management provide a context for discussing the subject. Regarding the first task of the manager, "Commit themselves and others to the established vision and mission," suffice it to say that four questions are addressed: (1). who is responsible? (2).



who should be involved? (3). how hard is this role? (4). what is the outcome? The responsibility of establishing and articulating the vision and mission lies with the owners of the business; in our case the farm family. In organizational structure terms this is a top down responsibility.

The question of who should be involved is controversial. Some argue that everyone should be involved; others argue that only the owners and key managers should be involved i.e. that establishing the mission is a right of ownership. The crucial point is that commitment to the mission is the objective. Involvement in defining the mission is one way to gain commitment. Employees and family members who are not owners or managers should be involved, when and only when, the owners are sincerely seeking their input.

Development of the vision and articulation of the mission statement are difficult, time-consuming but rewarding experience. The difficulty stems from the required personal insight concerning values, wants, needs, aspirations, and goals. Most of us find communication on these topics to be difficult. Much thought, talk, and time is required.

The outcome must be consensus on the vision and mission; all owners must completely agree. A personal story illustrates this point. Don Rogers, consultant for Farm Credit in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the author were speakers in a program for farm consultants. During a question period, a participant described a situation he was facing where a father and one son shared consensus on a vision of growth, excellence, and continuous improvement while a second son had no interest in change and was satisfied with mediocrity. His question was how to deal with the second son. After the author fumbled with the question for a minute or two, Don leaned over to the microphone and said "buy him out". Don was correct. If consensus cannot be reached

on the vision and mission, years of frustration and stress are often avoided by alternative arrangements. It is that important.

The second component of commitment-oriented management is for the manager to view his or her role as providing mechanisms that support employees and family members, so they can maximize their personal contribution to the vision and mission. Providing support instead of control requires everyone's commitment to the mission and also deepens that commitment. Being a coach and mentor instead of a boss and director is a dramatic change in our paradigm of the role of a supervisor. The result of a changed paradigm is a productive, developing satisfied team member.

The customer orientation central to total quality management requires the supervisor to be a coach. To explain this statement, recall the maxim of organizational structure that no one should report to two supervisors (or serve two masters). In TQM, the customer is to be served; the employee cannot serve both the customer and the supervisor. The solution is for the employer (or farmer or family member) to 'serve' the customer through the commitment to the mission and the supervisor provides support.

### **Developing a Personal Mission Statement**

We often hear of "practicing what you preach," "walking your talk" and real world experiences. When it comes to obtaining and helping farm owners develop a mission statement, having personal experience is crucial. To provide this experience, this section assists you in developing a personal mission statement. The discussion draws heavily on Covey (1989) and the material for the three day training based on the book (Covey, Leadership Center (1990)).

Everything we do is created twice: once in the planning stage; once in the implementation stage. Perhaps building a structure is the simplest illustration of the two

creations: the blueprints are the planning stage (first creation); construction is the implementation (second creation). The structure that is built is only as good as the blueprints. The blueprints, however, are only effective in portraying the structure the planner had in mind when they accurately portray an explicit visualization by that planner. When building a house, the blueprints are much more likely to result in a satisfied homeowner when they portray a family dream house than when they represent a house with little forethought or vision. The blueprint and the final structure are more likely to result in a satisfied homeowner when the family said "We want to build our dream house" than when they said "We want to build a house" (Figure 2).

**Figure 2 Visualization, Planning, and Implementation**

Visualization	Planning	Implementation
Dream Home	Blueprints	Construction
Personal Mission	Life's plan	Living life
Organizational Mission	Business planning	Operations

Covey argues that effectively completing the first plan means beginning with the "End in Mind." Examples of keeping the end in mind include the dream house, the athlete determined to participate in the Olympics, or local volunteer group committed to raising the money to fulfill their dream.

When it comes to our personal lives, the visualization is best represented by a personal mission statement. Development of this statement requires searching for ones principles and values. This mission statement must be based on what it is we want to

accomplish in our lives. The statement then becomes the basis of ones life plans and of living ones life (Figure 2)<sup>1</sup>.

## **Developing the Mission and Objectives for the Farm Business**

The development of whole farm plans to enable farm mangers to meet water quality objectives for the New York City Watershed Agricultural Program is a unique situation due to the magnitude of the resources available for planning and implementation. As mentioned earlier, the availability of the resources also may be a problem. A problem will result from a failure of the farmer to commit to the plans and their goals due to lack of involvement.

An important step in avoiding this problem is farmer involvement in the determining of the mission statement and objectives. Recall that the objectives of determining the farm mission and objectives (1) to involve the farmer in the process at its crucial inception to insure commitment, (2) to understand the farm's mission and objectives so the plan can be tailored to them to the extent possible, and (3) to provide an opportunity for the farmer to evaluate the role of environmental stewardship in the farm mission and to consider environmental objectives.

The first question to be addressed is who writes the mission and objectives statement -- the farmer or the Whole Farm Planning Team. Although the whole farm plan is being developed by the Whole Farm Planning Team, the vision and mission for the farm are so value-laden and personal, it is best for them to be developed and written by the farm owner, or owners, and their families. Certainly the Whole Farm Planning Team staff should serve as facilitators, supporters, and coaches. If the farmer asks for assistance, the Whole Farm Planning Team member could do some writing or revising,

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<sup>1</sup>In the material developed for whole farm planners, a series of three worksheets are presented to assist the reader in developing a personal mission statement. These would be included with a presented paper.

in certain instances, but it must be kept to a minimum. The greater the involvement; the greater the commitment and accuracy of the mission and objectives. Covey (1991, P. 165) argues: "Many organizations have a mission statement, but typically people aren't committed to it because they aren't involved in developing it; consequently, it's not part of the culture."

Thinking about the vision for the farm business and writing a mission statement and objectives are foreign topics to most farmers and, consequently, will often be threatening. This situation requires that each Whole Farm Planning Team develop a process that facilitates developing a mission statement and farm objectives in a non-threatening, helpful way. This process helps the farmer develop the thoughts and information needed instead of saying "now we are going to develop a mission statement." Workshop Activity 1 in the Appendix provides an example of the process and worksheets others have found useful in developing a farm mission statement.<sup>2</sup> They have been adapted to include the environmental stewardship focus. The members of the team need to study these examples and then develop their own procedure and continually refine it as they learn by doing.

Stephen Covey in his new book First Things First includes the following six items as characteristics of an empowering mission statement (Covey, Merrill, and Merrill, 1994; P.222). For each characteristic comments are added to tie it to whole farm planning:

- "focuses on contributions, or worthwhile purposes that create a collective deep burning 'Yes'." The statement should provide a focus to rally around. It is written to reflect peoples feelings and values; it is not a literary piece for others to read.
- "comes from the bowels of the organization, not from Mount Olympus." whether involved in the development or not, everyone involved in the farm operation must feel they are an important part of attaining the mission. A mission is not something that is inflicted upon people.

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<sup>2</sup>The example presented is one of several that would be included in presenting a selected paper.

- **“is based on timeless principles.”** The mission must be a **“compass”** that guides the organization through good times and bad.
- **“contains both vision and principle-based values.”** Elsewhere, Covey describes this as containing both ends and means with the vision focusing on the ends or outcomes. The mission then, also, contains means including the values (hard work, honesty, integrity, enjoyment, etc.) critical to reaching the ends.
- **“address the needs of all stakeholders.”** A stakeholder is anyone impacted by the success or failure of the organization. Traditional stakeholders for a farm would include owners and their families, employees, suppliers of inputs, and buyers of products. Today, we are recognizing neighbors, downstream inhabitants, residents of local communities, and society as stakeholders.
- **“addresses all four needs and capacities.”** The four needs and capacities are to live, to love, to learn, and to leave a legacy. They reflect the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our lives.

Planning teams should keep these characteristics in mind as they develop and implement their plans for working with farm managers concerning a farm manager's mission and objectives.

## **Conclusion**

Water quality and other environmental issues are often viewed as threats by farm managers. At the same time it is generally recognized that most farm managers pride themselves as being good stewards of the land. Assisting these managers with the development of their mission statement including an environment component has great potential to increase the likelihood that planning efforts will be successful in addressing agriculture's potential to adversely effect the environment while helping the farm to fulfill its mission. Further this process can reduce the conflict between farm owner/managers and society over environmental issues.

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## Workshop Activity 1 Mission Statement Development Directions

### Workshop Activity Objectives:

1. To give farm owners, family members and employees an improved understanding of what is needed in a farm vision and mission statement.
2. To give farm owners, family members and employees an improved understanding of the process of developing a farm vision and mission statement.
3. To provide farm owners, family members and employees an opportunity to develop their farm vision and mission statement.

### Workshop Activity Directions:

1. In the square in the middle of Worksheet Activity 1-4 have each participant write a phrase that describes the farm business from his or her perspective.
2. In the outer circles of Workshop Activity 1-4 have each participant jot down things that as a farm business are:
  - a. important to them
  - b. valued
  - c. their view of the future of the farm.
3. Ask each participant to use one or two remaining circles to jot down thoughts concerning water quality and environmental stewardship.
4. The member of the farm unit should now share their notes with each other. They can use some space on the next page to note similarities and differences. Make a strong point that in their discussions now and later they must be seeking a consensus.
5. They should now use remainder of the second page to begin writing the mission statement. They should continue to discuss and refine as they continue to reach consensus on their vision. Emphasize that this is not a simple process or one that can be hurried.



### Workshop Activity 1 Mission Statement Development

1. In the square, write a phrase which describes your farm business, the type of farm business you are in.
2. In the outer circles, jot down things that, as a farm business:
  - a) are important to you
  - b) are valued
  - c) indicate your future direction

The diagram consists of a central square with rounded corners, intended for writing a phrase that describes the farm business. Surrounding this central square are twelve empty circles, arranged in two vertical columns of six circles each. These circles are intended for jotting down things that are important, valued, or indicate future direction for the farm business.

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