


# Vision Deployment Matrix I: Shifting from a Reactive to a Generative Orientation

by Daniel H. Kim

Your workforce yawns when you talk about change. The gap between where you want your organization to be and where it is seems unbridgeable. No one is excited about your vision statement—including the committee that developed it. How do you get everyone from here to there? The Vision Deployment Matrix™ offers a guiding framework for bridging this all-too-common gap. You can use the matrix to paint a comprehensive picture of your organization's desired future and current reality at these five levels of perspective:

- **Vision** (essence or image of desired future)
- **Mental Models** (deeply held theories of how the world works)
- **Systemic Structures** (organizational charts, information systems, policies and procedures, and other kinds of infrastructure)
- **Patterns of Behavior** (trends or changes in things over time)
- **Events** (specifically identifiable occurrences, such as a late delivery of an order)

VISION DEPLOYMENT MATRIX							
	Level of Perspective (Action Mode)	Desired Future Reality	Current Reality	Gaps, Open Issues, and Questions	Action Steps	Indicators of Progress	Timeline
Increasing Leverage ↑	Vision (Generative)	Corporate Vision Statements					
	Mental Models (Reflective)						
	Systemic Structures (Creative)						
	Patterns (Adaptive)						
	Events (Reactive)			Daily Crises			

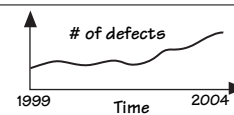
To use the matrix, you and your colleagues start with a blank grid such as the one shown above, and ask questions that help you clarify the organization's desired future reality, its current reality, and gaps between these two states. You then formulate action steps that will help you close those gaps, and establish progress indicators (with appropriate time frames) that will tell you when the gaps have been closed.

## DIAGNOSING CURRENT REALITY

Although it is arguably most effective to begin using the matrix by articulating one's desired future reality first, many people find it more natural to start by taking a closer look at their current reality. You can use the Current Reality column to diagnose (from all five perspectives) how your organization currently operates to address problems. Each level offers an appropriate high-leverage action mode—reactive, adaptive, creative, reflective, and generative. For example, if you find yourself in front of a runaway bus (event level), the highest leverage action you can take is to jump out of the way

## DIAGNOSING CURRENT REALITY (Cont'd.)

(reactive). It would be foolish to stand there and envision alternatives (generative) or wonder what else you could have done to avoid this situation (reflective)! As you move from taking action at the event level to taking action at the vision level, you progress from a reactive orientation to a generative orientation and gain increasing leverage for creating your desired future. To illustrate, let's look at the problem of defective parts through multiple levels of perspective, and identify the kinds of actions that can be taken at each level. Start reading at the Events level and move up.

LEVEL (Action Mode)	WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CURRENT REALITY	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
<b>Vision (Generative)</b> Imagine a compelling picture of the future that you deeply care about.	Espoused Vision: <i>Quality is Job 1.</i> Vision-in-Use: <i>Quantity is Job 1.</i>	
<b>Mental Models (Reflective)</b> Surface, suspend, and question the beliefs that underlie current systems.		
<b>Systemic Structures (Creative)</b> Redesign aspects of system that are causing undesirable patterns of behavior.		
<b>Patterns (Adaptive)</b> Notice patterns over time and adapt actions to anticipate and respond to them.		
<b>Events (Reactive)</b> Respond immediately to address the problematic event(s).	Defective products are identified at the end of the assembly process.	

When most managers work through this exercise with their own issues, they discover that 80% of their actions are highly reactive/adaptive (that's the bad news), which helps explain why problems never seem to really go away. The good news is that higher leverage action modes are available. This exercise lets you identify generative actions that focus on purpose and vision.

## ENGAGING THE WHOLE ORGANIZATION

New visions of the future are effective only if they are actualized in every aspect of organizational life, and for the Vision Deployment Matrix to work, it must be used by individuals at all levels. Top management can begin by using the matrix to share their vision for the organization, but they must then invite operating divisions to articulate what the vision means to them (not "roll out" the vision). Those managers, in turn, must share their own visions and invite others to articulate what the vision means to them, and so on. Only through such a process will visions become meaningful and compelling.

For more information and a comprehensive example of how to actually use the Vision Deployment Matrix, see the pocket guide *Vision Deployment Matrix II: Crossing the Chasm from Reality to Vision (PG18)*.

This material is drawn from "Vision Deployment Matrix™: A Framework for Large-Scale Change," by Daniel H. Kim, *The Systems Thinker*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (February 1995), and from Daniel H. Kim, *Introduction to Systems Thinking* (an Innovations in Management Series volume). © 2000 Pegasus Communications, Inc.

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