Is your vision achievable?

You may already have a vision of where you need to go as an organisation. But is it feasible?

Without wanting to put a dampener on your enthusiasm, there are visions and there are visions. To find out if yours has legs, it's worth spending time interrogating your idea.

1. Consider brand impact

Why do customers currently give you business? What does your brand mean to them? Range, quality, service, innovation, expertise, price, security? And how well do you deliver on your promise? Will your vision reinforce your brand, or is there a risk that entry into a different service line will damage your brand and reputation, with a negative impact on your core business? The higher the risk, the more arms-length you may choose a new venture to be.

Think about all the angles you need to cover if your vision is to be credible. Customers will expect you to meet their full set of quality expectations, not just exceed them in the one aspect which is your big idea. There are minimum standards you will need to meet: availability, reliability, on-time delivery and customer service pre- and post-sales.

2. Make it physical

Now think about physical operations. What will the customer experience look and feel like? What will you expect the customer physically to do? What will happen if they get it wrong? What will your staff need to do differently? What information will they need and how will they get it? What skills must they have? How many transactions will you need to process? What kind of response time will the customer expect? How scalable will the operation need to be? Make sure basic operational controls and fallback options are part of the picture too.

With high-level operational requirements understood, you're in a stronger position to assess feasibility. Are your current operational assets - team structures, call centres, systems, buildings, procedures - sufficiently scalable or flexible? Do they offer the necessary speed of response? Is the quality of customer or operational data consistently good enough?

Bridging the gap between what you have and what you need may require building from scratch, upgrading existing operations or a combination of both.

Upgrading or exploiting existing assets will probably minimise your capital expenditure and allow you to take advantage of existing skills. But remember, the design of the current set-up may not be appropriate and your demanding deadlines may have a negative impact on business as usual.

3. Build your case pragmatically

You now have a grounded sense of scale of effort involved and a sense of which aspects of your vision will be most complex to deliver.

Before finalising your investment case, look at the option of a reduced version or pilot of your vision. This could be brought to market quickly, allowing you to test the validity of your ideas without incurring too much effort and risk at the outset.

4. Be visionary throughout

Be actively involved with your project as it progresses through the development lifecycle. Take time to engage your project team with your vision so that the decisions they make are informed by a common understanding of where you want to take the business.

Be prepared to be patient. A programme is doing well if, in its first delivery, it gets 75% towards realising the vision. To ensure ultimate success, make sure your influence continues to be felt as learnings from early live operations are identified and measures are taken to truly unlock the benefits you envisioned.