The Graphic Turnaround of National Semiconductor

A Case Study in Strategic Visioning

By David Sibbet
President, The Grove Consultants International
NSC Background

• National Semiconductor, the creator of mass manufacturing of silicon in the 1970s, was nearly bankrupt by 1989.

• Gil Amelio, a brilliant technologist with dozens of patents, was brought in from having turned around Rockwell Semiconductor to turn around NSC.

• He created a vision and direction at 3 off sites with top 30 managers and a Harvard consultant.

• He mandated staff to bring the vision to the top 500.
NSC Change Team Challenge

- Gil’s 35 page “White Paper” was great content but unreadable by most employees.
- Communications sessions only reached a few hundred in Cupertino.
- Top management was not too charismatic—and was used to a top down approach.
And NSC Was Global

National employees work in every corner of the globe. And thanks to the International Date Line, roughly half of all employees live a day ahead of the other half. As of Q494, here's where the more than 22,000 employees are located (larger sites only).

- Israel 173
- Hong Kong 261
- Europe 425
- Arlington, TX 976
- Greenock 1,660
- Cebu 1,879
- Malacca (Malaysia) 3,473
- Murrysville, PA (DCI) 174
- Japan 274
- Salt Lake City, UT 492
- South Portland, ME 1,241
- Singapore 2,001
- Penang (Malaysia) 4,491*
- Santa Clara, CA 4,807

* Includes DCI employees  † Includes Asia Pacific HQ
The Change Team Needed Help

- Kevin Wheeler, head of National University, had been to a Grove Graphic Facilitation Workshop.
- He suggested calling in The Grove to help visualize the change.
- “Why don’t we develop a graphic picture of Gil’s vision to kick off the Leading Change Program” he suggested.
Why The Grove?

• We had 25 years of global organization consulting experience across all major industries, with strong experience in high tech.

• We pioneered graphic meeting facilitation, and knew how to lead workshops, team processes and organizational change projects with compelling visual language.

• We were known for turning over tools to clients and building internal capabilities.
Kevin’s Vision

• Open the week-long “Leading Change” workshops with the Vision, enrolling different key execs to tell the story each time.
• Give Execs a prop to support them telling the story in a compelling way.
• Bridge across cultures with graphic language.
First Attempt

A Grove associate met with Gil and drew this picture. She felt it wasn’t quite right and asked for help.
A Stronger Metaphor Was Needed

After researching 3 videos & the white paper — the Star Trek metaphor connected. The top team wanted to go from being a space barge to The Enterprise!
A 2.0 Draft Emerged
Change Team Response

• The Change Team was excited by the concept.

• Everyone made immediate suggestions, including a pivotal one—“Make it twice as long and put questions marks in the middle.”

• Thus was born The Grove’s first 16’ vision mural.
Version 3.0

The New Version Went to Top Mgmnt

Gil and his team saw this version at a Silverado Offsite and were very excited. Upgrade ideas flowed out!

Add History!  Keep the unclear journey  Agree on Vision
Version 4.1

…and The Drawing Evolved
NSC Vision 4.1 Story

Left Side Showed Current Realities

Key Management Messages

Environmental Factors

New Org

Core Competencies

Values

Critical Bus Issues
NSC Vision 4.1 Story

Right Side Showed Vision

Core Vision

Vision Elements
NSC Vision 4.1 Story
Middle Invited Involvement With How
Divisions Created Supporting Visions

Analog Division Redesign Framework
Current Realities Stayed on the Left

Current Organization
Vision Added Essential Behaviors

Olympic Metaphor

Essential Behaviors
Middle Set Framework for Redesign

Big Story

Seven “S” Model

Design Teams
Visioning Went Global at NSC

- All Change Team members learned graphic facilitation with templates.
- Grove consultants began leading visioning sessions throughout National.
- Common format and language empowered communication across boundaries.
A Journey Vision Template Emerged

VISION

- Mission
- Guiding Principles / Values
- Vision Elements
- History
- Critical Issues
- Organization
- Environment
- Core Competencies
- Future Challenges
Analog Division

Quality Assurance & Reliability

The journey template was used down into functions

Each had a unique metaphor And linked to the big vision
Communications & Computing Group

From marching band to studio orchestra
Human Resources Vision
An story of evolving services
Monitors Group Vision
Ecosystem metaphor
Version 5.0
The Big NSC Vision Evolved as Well
Leading Change workshops suggested updates

Ship Takes Off  New Management Messages  Tuned-up Vision

Redesign Territory is More Defined
The NSC Vision Evolved Once More

Vision now had 95% recognition globally

Now It's a Fleet  Slogan Emerges  More Refined Vision
1994
NSC Had Gone Visual

Visions

Graphic Agendas

Graphic Recording

Gameplans

Dodon Montesclaros from Cebu stands in front of the work of artist David Sibbet, who crafted the National Vision banner and was present to record the output of the meeting.
Grove Story Maps™ Were Created

Storymap posters with a new level of detail relating to each of the vision bubbles created a puzzle for teams to sort out, and in the process, understand the vision.
Corporate Communications Created an Animated Video of the Vision

• The roll-out program included four Storymaps and a video. After viewing one map called “Why Change?” that looked at the current realities, and the second one on the Vision (last page), then everyone watched the video.

• It panned over the graphic closeup, with key parts morphing into computer animated sections. Gil appeared in a video talk. The spaceship turned 3D and took off. The vision elements glowed and cut to real pictures of products and other aspects of NSC.

• After watching the video, small groups sorted key action cards in to a now—later, high risk—low risk matrix and picked actions they would commit to taking.
All Groups Had Strategic Visions

NSEP Penang Shows its Vision. Last December, five inspired Penang employees worked more than 14 hours to produce their site’s Vision. From left: Rofie Azizi, Ruslan Zakaria, JM Tan, Andrew Ng, and UP Cheah. Ernie D’Escoubet (Vice President of Operations), and Art Woodward (Managing Director), to Ernie’s right, joined the recognition event.
And Gameplans to Implement

Southeast Asia International Business Group, from left: Damian Lee, Singapore sales; David Sibbet from California; Hong Kong: Agnes Tse, May Leong, Kam Kong; and Edwin Lam, Singapore sales. Not shown: P.C. Ong.
The Grove’s Graphic Guides® Launched

Graphic Gameplan

- Tasks
- Team
- Challenges
- Success factors
- Target
The Turnaround Succeeded!

• As NSC began to break even and make profits again, Gil Amelio left NSC for Apple Computer.

• Ironically, the new CEO said “anything that looks like Amelio is out.” NSC change staff AND the graphics ended up leaving for other companies.

• Large scale visualization is now common in Silicon Valley.