

# Cascading Goals

Cascading goals is a method of ensuring alignment up, down, and across the organization. Developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton, the authors of *The Balanced Scorecard*, the cascading goals system provides an elegant method of connecting vision to goals throughout the organization.

The diagram to the right shows how cascading system works. It begins at the highest level: the vision.

**Vision** describes the future that IS&T wants to create. It is an audacious goal that will take 5 years to accomplish. The vision provides a vivid description of what it will be like when IS&T achieves this goal.

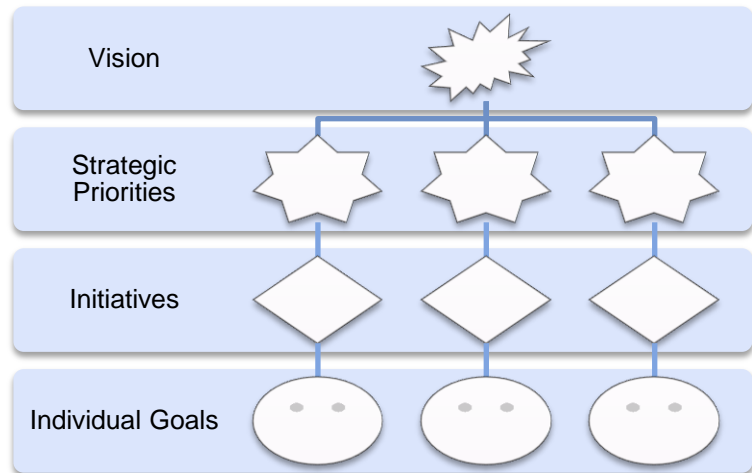
**Strategic priorities** flow from the vision. They are multi-year endeavors that represent IS&T's decisions about how to best achieve the vision and about what's most important to MIT. IS&T has 6 draft strategic priorities.

**Initiatives** describe the specific endeavors that IS&T will undertake in order to achieve the strategic priorities. Initiatives are owned by the LWG. They have charters and concrete deliverables. Initiatives should be completed in one year.

**Goals** are the specific achievements that individuals work to achieve in order to complete initiatives. Every individual in IS&T should be able to trace their own goals up to initiatives, to priorities, to strategies, and to the overarching vision for the future organization. Goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Two additional elements are an important part of the cascading goal system although they don't appear directly in the cascade: mission and values. **Mission** describes the organization's reason for being. The mission articulates the organization's essential nature and its work. An effective mission statement resonates with the people working in and for IS&T as well as with the different constituencies that IS&T hopes to affect. It expresses IS&T's purpose in a way that inspires commitment, innovation, and courage.

**Values** describe how people in the organization will behave as they work towards the vision. Authors of *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras explain that values are the organization's essential and enduring tenets—a small set of timeless guiding principles that require no external justification. They have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization. IS&T's values are **respect, responsibility, teamwork, and transparency**.



## Examples of Missions

- To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful (Google)
- To make people happy (Walt Disney)
- To transform lives through inspired learning (University of Texas)
- To preserve and improve human life (Merck)

## Examples of Visions

- Democratize the automobile (Ford, early 1900s)
- A PC on every desk and in every home (Microsoft, at founding)
- Become the Nike of the cycling industry (Giro Sport Design, 1986)
- Knock off RJR as the #1 tobacco company in the world (Philip Morris, 1950s)

## Examples of Strategic Priorities

- Manage profit levels of operations through effective expense management (Allmerica Life Companies)
- Motivate and energize employees (Allmerica Life Companies)

## Examples of Initiatives

- Understand expenses for operations & establish expense metrics (Allmerica Life Companies)
- Determine services & assess service standards (Allmerica Life Companies)
- Identify operational alternatives and opportunities (Allmerica Life Companies)

## Example of Cascading Goals: How Microsoft Might Have Cascaded Its Goals 20 Years Ago

