

The Leader's Vision II

Posted by admin

1. Developing the vision
2. Communicating to maintain the vision
3. Implementing the vision

Developing the vision

It is my belief that committees or boards don't develop vision. Vision generally comes from a visionary leader. I have not yet heard of a statue in a city park dedicated to a "committee." Admittedly, communicating and implementing the vision can and should be a joint effort. It is my sense, though, that God in the scriptures and in history usually births a vision in a leader's heart and that leader begins to speak about it finding others who share the vision. Leaders begin to get a dream from God when there is a deep dissatisfaction with what is and a deep desire for what could be. There is often a restlessness about living with the "status quo" (which someone has observed, is Latin for "the mess we are in"). The Salvation Army, The Navigators, The Calvary Chapel movement, Campus Crusade, Promise Keepers, (to name a few) all began when an individual got a glimpse of what could be. Time alone with God in solitude, reflection and looking into the future birthed and fueled that vision. What will this ministry look like as we reach the people in our area? The picture that begins to form in the mind and heart is the vision! It was Robert Kennedy who said, "Some see what is and ask why. Others see what could be and ask why not?"

Communicating to Maintain the Vision

One of the primary roles of an effective leader for the 21st century is that of vision caster. This would include crafting (birthing) a vision, then cultivating and clarifying the vision through creative communication. He or she doesn't do it alone, but should be the primary "point person" for it. I have yet to see it work to have the leader delegate the responsibility for the caretaking of the vision to a board or committee.

It is the leader's responsibility to keep the vision before the people. There are three things to beware of here. 1) Having no vision; 2) Having a vision that is not clear; 3) Not communicating the vision consistently and effectively. There are those that have

a vision but do not see the urgent need for keeping that vision alive and contagious in the hearts and minds of the followers. Bill Hybels has noted, “If there is anything I have learned over the years, it is not to underestimate how often I need to rekindle the vision.”

The vision needs to be repeated over and over again in creative ways. People have short memories and soon forget the “why” they are doing that is foundational to the “what” they are doing. It is the leader’s responsibility to stir emotion and engender and unleash excitement about the future. Creative and continual communication is the key to keeping the fire burning.

Implementing the Vision

It is, at this point the team effort really pays off. Both the communicating and the implementing of the vision is everybody’s responsibility. The visionary leader leads the way and builds a team of excited players who are marching into the future with enthusiasm and high expectation.

This is leadership at its best; a team effort. John P Kotter, author of “Force For Change” notes that there are three essential steps: 1) Establish the direction; 2) Communicate the vision and secure peoples commitment; 3) Energize people so they can overcome obstacles and see the vision come to pass.

Implementing the vision has to do with setting down a strategic plan that puts feet to the heart of the vision. It has to do with helping people find their “ministry nitch.” It is described by such words as mobilizing, energizing, delegating, affirming, encouraging, collaborating, evaluating. It is best done in the context of a team. Author George Cladis says, “The key is a leadership team that lives the vision, breathes it, models it, tells its story every chance it gets, sleeps it, eats it, and otherwise calls people together around it.” A vision is usually birthed in isolation, but communicated and implemented in community.

VISION IS OFTEN THE MAKER OR BREAKER

In his delightful little book, “The Everyday, Anytime Guide to Christian Leadership,” Walt Kallestad writes: “ A short time ago, I delivered four lectures at St. Nicholas Church in Strasbourg, France.

“In this church it is believed that John Calvin was a minister, Martin Luther preached, and Albert Schweitzer was the music minister. Wow—what a line up! There had been people of great vision in this church. But now, the church doors were locked. No one came any longer; only pigeons ever saw the inside. It happened because the vision or purpose for the church was lost.

“In 1992 the local bishop invited any pastor who was interested to submit a vision for this empty, historic church. One pastor was equal to the challenge. He stayed up all night writing down his vision. He submitted it to the bishop, who eventually granted permission for the pastor to carry out his vision. When I spoke later in that church, I was excited to see 300-400 people crammed into the building. Today that church has the largest attendance of any Lutheran church in France.”