

Leading Teams – How to Inspire, Motivate, Lead and Succeed!

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Chapter 6: Forging a Vision

Vision is central to leadership. It's what sets leaders apart from managers. Effective managers focus on what exists now: The status quo. They make sure that people, processes, and resources are deployed effectively and managed efficiently. Leaders focus on what doesn't exist yet: the future. Leaders have the ability to know when (and how) the status quo itself must be changed, discarded, replaced. They are driven by an energy to create a *new* status quo—a better status quo. This is the essence of vision: a preferred future state. Many leaders are instinctive about this drive to create a better future—they “see” the future intuitively in their thoughts and imagination. For them, it is a foregone conclusion—an assumption that is not subject to debate or analysis. Effective team leaders are able to express vision clearly and help their people develop ownership of a *team* vision that creates a dynamic focus for team direction, energy, and work. It is this vision—this potential for a better future—that inspires team members to join with the leader and work together to make the dream a reality; to see their combined efforts make a difference; to make the world a better place!

But there are two vital imperatives here: First, the team's vision must be in alignment with the vision and values of the organization—it must serve the purposes of the organization in which the team exists and works. Second, you must not simply impose your vision on your team—they must have an opportunity to forge this vision with you, otherwise they will lack ownership and have little personal commitment to the vision. So... where do you begin?

Begin with the vision and values of the organization. Start with a clear understanding of what is driving the organization you serve. It might be customer service, or quality manufacturing, or the health and safety of clients and customers, or market share, or industry recognition, or maybe just plain profitability. Whatever it is, your team vision must serve the organization's vision by contributing to it in a tangible way. So start with a statement of your organization's vision and then build your team vision statement around it. Here's what that might look like for various kinds of organizations and teams:

Heavy equipment manufacturing:

Organizational vision—to be recognized by customers as the preferred supplier in all markets we serve

Service division team vision—to service and repair our equipment better, faster, and safer than any other source available to our customers

Health services:

Organizational vision—to offer quality care that exceeds patients' expectations in a caring, convenient, cost-effective and accessible manner

Medical Records team vision—to maintain accurate, complete, and accessible records for our patients in a way that provides efficient, safe, and responsive service to physicians, patients, and insurance providers

Financial services:

Organizational vision—to be the most useful and ethical financial services firm in the world

IT Department team vision—provide timely and responsive IT support to every department and individual in our company, to enable high productivity and rapid, accurate customer service

Home construction:

Organizational vision—to offer quality housing, excellent value, and memorable service to all home buyers and prospective home buyers

Engineering team vision—provide timely, high quality engineering consulting services that save project time; lower costs; and reduce company and customer liability

Restaurant:

Organizational vision—provide patrons with the freshest, highest quality food available and present each meal with friendly service in a sparkling clean environment

Human Resources Department team vision—give every leader in the organization the tools they need to effectively manage, support, evaluate, and train their people—so as to raise productivity; lower turnover; increase employee satisfaction; and deliver superior friendly service to customers.

Up Close and Personal

In one of my seminars, I had a student who worked for the city where the workshop was located. Before the seminar actually began, I had a chance to talk with him about his work and his role. I wanted to know what he did for the city, so I asked him directly: *What is your focus there?* He could have answered any number of ways. He could have said, “I manage two shifts of a hundred workers with a fleet of trucks and a multi-million dollar budget” or something of that nature. Instead, he just smiled and said two words: *Clean streets*. That’s what I call “clear vision.”

Don’t make vision more complicated than it needs to be. Keep it as simple and as tangible as possible. But be specific. Don’t confuse your team with meaningless generalities—make sure they have a solid target for everything they do.

Action Step

Use these examples to help you and your team craft a clear team vision statement. You can also use and adapt the following basic “template” to guide your thinking and writing:

We are creating, designing, building...

[describe the PROCESS or PRODUCT you are offering through your team's work].

In such a way...

[describe your METHOD of delivering this process or product].

That...

[define the specific EFFECT or RESULTS you hope to achieve].

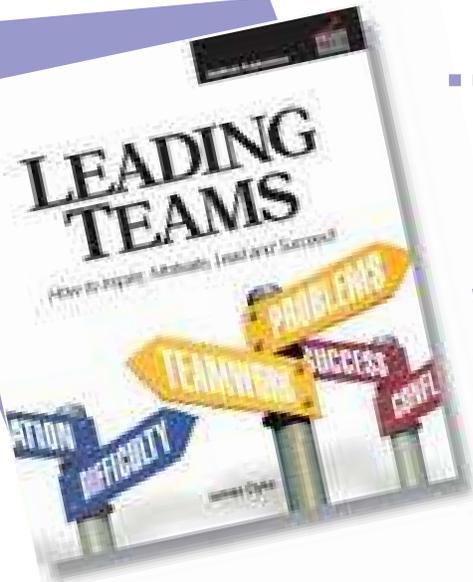
As measured by...

[describe the BENCHMARKS that will exist if you are successful].

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