

VISION ARTICULATION

Effective leaders don't just have vision. Effective leaders have a vision they can effectively share. There is nothing more demoralizing than a leader that can't articulate where we're going, and at times, articulate why we're going there. I'm not talking about being a great orator and giving speeches like Martin Luther King Jr. I'm speaking about the future as if it shall be. Articulating vision is about sharing a possibility, a desired outcome, a look forward in such a way that the listener becomes engaged in that potential future. The leader isn't just talking about the future, as in relaying information rather than sharing it. What's the difference? When vision is articulated well, the person sharing the vision is in the experience of that possible future.

So, if we aren't sharing a vision, what are we doing? We are talking about the present and the past while relaying facts, figures and information, and often we are discussing problems not solutions. We are most definitely in a known comfort zone. Articulating vision well is a vulnerable, risky act.

How you use this as a leader of change in your world is through little nuggets, simple questions and sound bites, not speeches.

When this is done well and repeatedly, people get inspired by their own involvement because they find their own vision inside of yours. It gives context and helps the people around you see the big picture. It gives meaning to all the little things we do. Then people start to share their own vision, it encourages them to reach, step up and create for themselves. Statements like, "I like the way you think - I see you being an Office Manager in the future." Or, there's an issue in the office and you say, "This will be easy." Or, "Next month, there will be funds for...". "Our company is moving in a positive direction. By 2022, we foresee full benefits and time off for all employees."

It's the job of leaders to say, "Here's what I see possible." This works beautifully with children, as well. Instead of, "Stop throwing your toys around!" you might articulate "I can see a time when I walk in this room and every single toy will be in the box!"

People around you start stepping into that future. Sometimes, it's just a matter of articulating the biggest and best vision of them. "I see a time when this weightlifting thing is easy and fun for you."

A well-articulated vision has these qualities:

- It is easily understood by others.
- It paints a visual picture of what it looks like when complete.
- It has a clearly set direction and purpose.
- The person articulating the vision is clearly in the experience of what it will be like when vision is realized. They are not just talking about it, they are in the experience of it. There is passion and enthusiasm present.
- It is clearly about the people not about the leader.



When done well and repeatedly, others will:

- Be inspired and care by participating.
- Inspire enthusiasm, belief, commitment and excitement in members of project.
- Believe that they are part of something bigger than themselves and their daily work.
- Start sharing the vision themselves.
- Feel challenged to outdo themselves, to stretch and reach. They find their vision in your vision.

We often articulate concepts – we assume other people understand our concepts. “What I see is a really successful team, and we all support each other, and are effective and efficient.” This is a great example of using concepts as opposed to painting a picture. Versus, “I see a team where every member of our team is has the money they need and want to take care of their families. We have more than enough business for all team members to achieve their individual money goals.” Remember, it’s not just the words but the emotional place of the speaker. When you are lit up with a future possibility, others catch that energy.

Simple Vision Questions

- Describe your vision on _____; what do you see?
- What does it look like when we are finished?
- If you were a fly on the wall looking at this business in three years what would we see?
- What is in it for our clients, employees and customers?
- How will it affect their lives?
- What is in it for our partners and suppliers?
- How will it affect our lives?
- When it is complete, how will you see it?
- When it is complete, how will the world see it?
- How will it all end? (Sold, passed to someone else?)
- What will the environment look like? It is three years from now, what four things have to happen for you to say this was the best three years of your life?
- What are the key components of your business that need to grow?
- How will you handle the areas that are weaknesses?
- How could you add structure to your vision i.e. model, spreadsheet, vision statement, strategic plan?

