

Strong leaders stay resolved and focus on their vision

Debbie Nicol

March 22, 2015 Updated: March 22, 2015 08:30 PM



Related

Quest for perfection is all relative

Flexibility comes with pop-up leadership

Make your personal workplace contribution a memorable one

Company veterans provide an invaluable legacy for future generations

Topics: [Management](#)

Leaders go where others fear to tread. In business terms, this can be seen when a leader forges a new direction or vision, changes the supply chain, forms partnerships with the competition, introduces variations of existing products, treats the team with refreshed priorities or even redesigns the customer service process.

Irrespective of the timing or methodology, a leader creates new conditions because of the perceived benefits that result. With this comes risk; often when a change is based on a perception or gut feeling, with no real tangible evidence, it will be enough to raise eyebrows and attract the wrath of naysayers near and far. Brené Brown, famed for her TEDTalk on The Power of Vulnerability, has attracted great interest once again with her suggestions on how leaders can face critics.

Ms Brown advocates that a leader with a new idea or concept is “in the arena” and says that most criticism comes from those “out of the arena” who have little to no understanding of neither the power it takes to stand alone, the effort it has taken to get to that point nor the feeling of true passion and drive. It is not uncommon for the misinformed to have the loudest criticising voice. However, it is still a reality, one that a leader must embrace. Should you be facing such a situation in your position of authority, the following steps may help you keep a strong resolve:

1. Don't buy into the critic's story

The critic's story belongs to the critic, and is charged by a different fuel. While yours is fuelled by insight, passion, intuition and vision, all considered to be factors of expansion, a critic's viewpoint is often fuelled by deceit, doubt, fear or even competition, all considered to be factors of limitation. When a leader buys into a limitation mindset, the confidence and passion can easily be replaced by equal self-criticism. Take, for example, the accountant who argues that data for comparative analysis does not exist, the purchaser who exclaims that required suppliers do not exist, the head of operations who believes the people to make this happen will need “superman” qualities and the board who question why a ship sitting well in the water should be rocked.

When a leader is a true leader, they will be operating from a space of responsibility and accountability and not entitlement. Would one such person aim to send a company into insolvency, set people up for failure and miss opportunities, existing and potential? Where would we be today had “some leader” not foreseen retail convenience stores at petrol pumps and had rather spent months or even years in justifying something that had never happened previously?

2. Be clear on your own story

A leader's story of “greater hope” is what people will buy into when it's something they believe in themselves. Even when data does not yet exist, processes are not yet designed and suppliers not yet contracted, a story can hold its own.

Just like a great novel with an eye-catching front cover, we don't know what will happen along the way, nor even the ending; however, we are compelled to read chapter after chapter. The characters have their own quirks, the twists have their own turns, the challenges flavour the story along the way, all creating further reason to read on.

When knowing the reasons for the change, a great leader can describe the future in terms of the audience. The story may be illustrated, imagined, yet most definitely "seen and felt".

3. Invite the critic into your story

Criticism is a form of resistance, often stemming from an ignorance or lack of access to reasons for the changing story and the consequences of the story not changing.

Inviting the critic into the story can provide a special place for that person. They are now a main character, and with that they are likely find that they need to know and understand more. With access to that information, and an expanding ambassador role, they can become your greatest asset, placing the story in the ranks of the bestsellers.

Facing critics is part and parcel of leadership; the unknown will always feel uncertain, especially to one whose natural space is compliance and loyalty to the way things are. With strength of conviction, creative storyteller abilities and persistence, a great leader will not only see and hear the critics, but also influence them to become co-creators of the remaining chapters.

Debbie Nicol, the managing director of Dubai-based business en motion, is a consultant working with strategic change, leadership and organisational development. Email her at debbie.nicol@businessenmotion.com for thoughts about your corporate change or leadership initiative.



[Add your comment](#) | [View all comments](#)

Related

Quest for perfection is all relative

Flexibility comes with pop-up leadership

Make your personal workplace contribution a memorable one

Company veterans provide an invaluable legacy for future generations

[More The Life](#)

MOST VIEWED

Strong leaders stay resolved and focus on their vision



Air France business class gets a makeover as it aims to match Gulf airlines



Blue Ocean Strategy pinpoints market spaces ripe to be exploited



InterContinental general manager books Dubai hotel launch

1. Workplace Doctor: Would-be boss seems full of himself

2. The model life in Abu Dhabi – in pictures

3. Arabtec shares plunge nearly 10 per cent in Dubai after profit dives

4. Full return of Iran's oil is just a matter of time

5. Three of the best UAE smartphone deals

6. Saudi oil official refutes conspiracy theory

7. UAE end of service gratuity and the pension conundrum

8. Profits for Burj Khalifa builder Arabtec drop 48% from 2013

9. Abu Dhabi Media to focus on developing Emirati talent and content on TV network

10. InterContinental general manager books Dubai hotel launch

[More Most Viewed](#)

EDITOR'S PICKS

Where Abu Dhabi rents have risen and fallen, Q4 2014 – in pictures



Where Dubai rents have risen and fallen, Q4 2014 – in pictures



Dubai's most

ambitious projects
– in pictures



Are you getting
paid enough? Find
out the going rates
for hundreds of
UAE jobs



FOLLOW US

Like us

Like 129k

Tweets

Follow

 **The National** 11m
@TheNationalUAE
UAE legal Q&As: Can I be punished for swearing in public?
news.ae/1LJUJXH
Show Summary

 **The National** 41m
@TheNationalUAE
Dubai manager accused of molesting employee
news.ae/1CJC9Jo
Show Summary

 **The National** 1h
@TheNationalUAE
Burnt mystery body found in Sharjah
news.ae/1CJC1K7
Show Summary

 **The National** 1h
@TheNationalUAE
A look inside UAE labour accommodation living conditions
news.ae/1EAIpQh pic.twitter.com/MdBNbee6A



Tweet to @TheNationalUAE

SPOTLIGHT



Special report: A look inside UAE labour accommodation living

conditions

Ivan Rakitic and Toni Kroos
unheralded keys in the middle – El
Clasico talking points