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THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Sixth Edition

How to Make *Extraordinary* Things
Happen in Organizations

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CHAPTER 6

Enlist Others

JAN PACAS, MANAGING DIRECTOR at Hilti Corporation, wanted to take his team to a place they'd never been before.¹ Jan had worked at various Hilti locations before, but when he arrived at the Australia operation, he found, in his words, a “very average company,” as measured against Hilti International benchmarks and industry peers in Australia. “It was time to create a clear direction,” he told us, “something that would hold the company together, something our people could believe in, and something that gave them the motivation to work together in one direction. We want to be constantly striving for something bigger and better.”

Jan knew that having strategic objectives wasn't enough. “I think very often people fail to translate the business rationale into something tangible and easy to understand for the wider workforce,” he explained. They needed to translate their strategy into something that every person could easily see and describe. “We're Painting Australia Red” is what they came up with. “If you walk on any job site,” he said, “you see an ocean of blue, yellow, green—all representing the colors of our competitors: Bosch, Makita, DeWalt, Hitachi, and so on. We painted the picture that we want to see a much bigger share of Hilti's signature red [color] on every job site.”

“Painting Australia Red” caught on very fast. When they won a huge contract with the second-largest tool hire company in Australia, all employees understood what that phrase meant, in very concrete terms: all 140 of the tool rental stores changed those blue, yellow, and green tools into 200 red ones. Every employee could see that “Painting Australia Red” meant Hilti’s brand would be found in houses and garages, trucks, and job sites for all their customers.

Leaders like Jan realize that for visions to be compelling, people at every level must understand what it means for them. Jan believes that unless everyone knows what the vision means to them in concrete, tangible terms, it’s worthless. He says:

You have to express it so that every manager and every employee can break it down into specific things that are relevant to them. The vision has to appeal to people’s head, heart, and hands. Head, meaning that they understand it logically. Heart, meaning that it’s emotionally compelling to them. And hands, meaning that it’s actionable, that they know what to do and they’re empowered to do it.

“Painting Australia Red” provided a rallying point that would get everyone excited to be part of the company and to play a role in its success. “There are lots of people who have no idea where their company is going,” asserts Jan, and consequently “they have no exciting future.” By envisioning exciting future possibilities, leaders get people to feel that they’re a part of something special. They are energized knowing that their organization is going places, and not just standing around doing what has always been done.

In the personal-best leadership cases we collected, people talked about the need to get everyone on board with a vision and to *Enlist Others* in a dream, just as Jan did. They talked about communicating and building support for a unified direction in which to take the organization. These leaders knew that to make extraordinary things happen, everyone had to both believe fervently in and commit to a common purpose.

Part of enlisting others is building common ground on which everyone can stand. Equally important is the emotion that leaders express for the vision. Our research shows that in addition to expecting leaders to be forward-looking, constituents expect their leaders to be *inspiring*. People need vast reserves of energy and excitement to sustain commitment to a distant dream. Leaders are an important source of that energy. People aren't going to follow someone who's only mildly enthusiastic about something. People actively support those leaders who are *wildly* enthusiastic about it.

Whether you're trying to mobilize thousands of people in the community or one person in the workplace, to *Enlist Others* you must act on these two essentials:

- ▶ ***Appeal to common ideals***
- ▶ ***Animate the vision***

Enlisting others is all about igniting passion for a purpose and moving people to persist against great odds. To make extraordinary things happen in organizations, you have to go beyond reason, engaging the hearts as well as the minds of your constituents. Start by understanding their strongest yearnings for something meaningful and significant.

Appeal to Common Ideals

In every personal-best leadership case, leaders talked about ideals. They expressed a desire to make dramatic changes in the business-as-usual environment. They reached for something grand, something magnificent, something never done before.

Visions are about hopes, dreams, and aspirations. They're about the strong desire to achieve something beyond good, something great and extraordinary. They're ambitious. They're expressions of optimism. Can you imagine a leader enlisting others in a cause by saying, "I'd like you to join me in doing the ordinary, doing what everyone else is doing"?

Not likely. Visions stretch people to imagine exciting possibilities, breakthrough technologies, and revolutionary social change.

Ideals reveal higher-order value preferences. They represent the paramount economic, technological, political, social, and aesthetic priorities. The ideals of world peace, freedom, justice, an exciting life, happiness, and self-respect, for example, are among the highest strivings of human existence. They're outcomes of the larger purpose that practical actions will enable people to attain over the long term. By focusing on ideals, people gain a sense of meaning and purpose from what they undertake.

When you communicate your vision of the future to your constituents, you need to talk about how they're going to make a difference in the world, how they're going to have a positive impact on people and events. You need to show them how they can realize their long-term interests by enlisting in a common vision. You need to speak to the higher meaning and purpose of work. You need to describe a compelling image of what the future could be like when people join in a common cause.²

Connect to What's Meaningful to Others Exemplary leaders don't impose their visions of the future on people; they liberate the vision that's already stirring in their constituents. They awaken dreams, breathe life into them, and arouse the belief that people can achieve something grand. When they communicate a shared vision, they bring these ideals into the conversation. What truly pulls people forward, especially in more challenging and volatile times, is the exciting possibility that what they are doing can make a profound difference in the lives of their families, friends, colleagues, customers, and communities. They want to know that what they do matters.³ Studies involving respondents from forty different countries (and sixteen different languages) found that connecting employees with purpose increased their levels of engagement and productivity.⁴

Faced with divisional objectives that were quite daunting, Trustmark Companies vice president for disability and long-term care benefits, Nancy Sullivan, felt that her team could pull through, but to do so, she

needed to connect her constituents to more than just the division's plan. She needed to paint a bigger picture of what they could accomplish together and why it made a difference.

Nancy drafted a four-page vision message and posted it where everyone congregated—in the office kitchen. She spoke in team meetings, division meetings, one-on-ones, and chats in the hallway, with genuine conviction about the meaning and purpose of their work and how that would help them see themselves as she saw them—as the best of the best. The message was not only about what they could achieve in business but also the significant role they played in the lives of all their constituents. Here is part of that message:

I dream of a place here in our office, where the sales team maintains respect and confidence in our decisions not just today but tomorrow and always; the constant challenges to our decisions just don't exist. Where our insureds trust our decisions and feel our genuine commitment to serving them well in their greatest time of need. Where our customers have confidence that your decision was contractual, yes, but more importantly ethically correct and sound. Where the only title that you can think of for introducing your co-worker is respected colleague and friend.

I dream of a place where growth and opportunities are massive because of the time and energy you invested with your commitments and therefore our opportunities and potential are endless. A place that no longer manages claims, but manages decisions on disability. A place that is no longer thought of as disability-claim experts, but disability experts. A place where our colleagues and government officials look for disability solutions. A place where Trustmark is the number-one company to serve as the assistance to all disability needs.

The Leadership Challenge

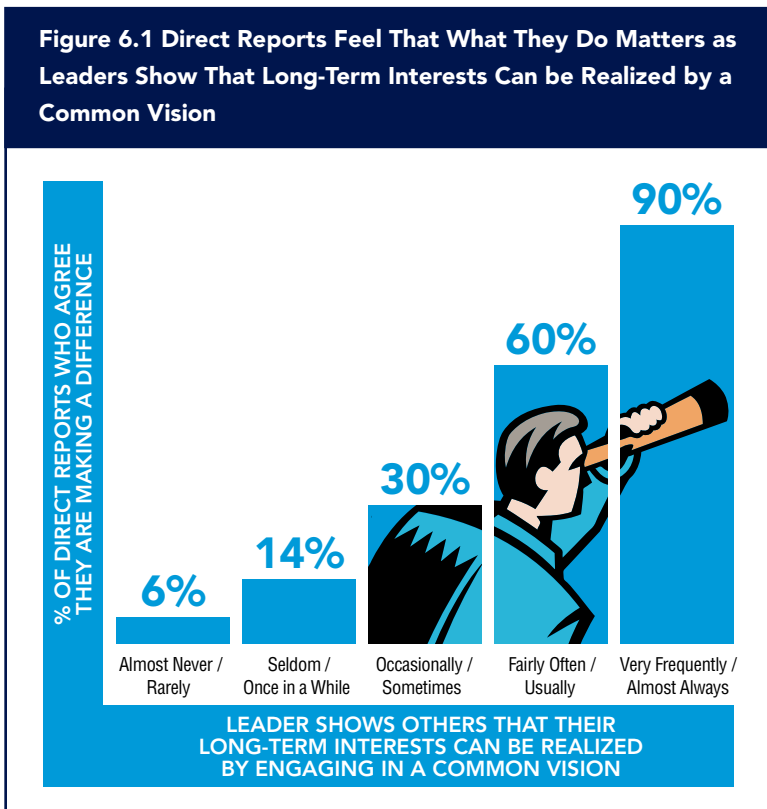
Day in and day out, Nancy stressed the exciting possibilities the future held. Nancy's message had lifted her staff up from the mechanics of disability claims and reminded them of the nobility of what they accomplish. Focusing on the purpose and meaning of the division's work engaged their spirits, and because of this vision, they were able to surpass their annual targets for the tenth year in a row.

The outcomes experienced by Nancy's staff are consistent with research findings on what occurs when people can connect the daily work that they do to a meaningful and transcendent purpose. For example, researchers followed the lives of nearly 400 individuals for one month. Over this time they completed a series of surveys about their activities, about how easy or hard life was, about attitudes toward money, relationships, time, and related variables. Study participants were also asked how meaningful and happy their lives were.⁵ What they found was that "when individuals adopt what we call a meaning mind-set—that is, they seek connections, give to others, and orient themselves to a larger purpose—clear benefits can result, including improved psychological well-being, more creativity, and enhanced work performance. Workers who find their jobs meaningful are more engaged and less likely to leave their current positions."⁶ When you can make clear to people that their work is making a difference—that is, they are helping others through their work—you strengthen their intrinsic motivation.

Similarly, our data reveals that leaders who are seen as very frequently or nearly always showing people how enlisting in a common vision can help them achieve their long-term interests are evaluated almost sixteen times more favorably by their direct reports than those leaders who engage in this same leadership behavior rarely, if at all. Researchers have shown that stressing the "why" to people, as in "Why are we doing this and why does this matter?" activates the brain's reward system and increases not only people's efforts but how they feel about what they are doing.⁷ For example, consider the difference for call center employees who are helping people solve problems versus those who are trying to get people off the phone as quickly as possible. The latter would only try to convince callers that the company was doing everything it could, while the former would eagerly search for ways the company could be of assistance.

Leaders help people see that what they are doing is bigger than they are and bigger, even, than the business. Their work can be something noble. When these people go to bed at night, they can sleep a little easier, knowing that others can live a better life because of what they did that day. As Figure 6.1 shows, the extent to which direct reports feel they are making a difference in their organization systematically increases on the basis that their leaders are showing people how to realize their long-term interests by enlisting in a common vision.

Take Pride in Being Unique Exemplary leaders, just like Jan and Nancy, also communicate what makes their constituents, work group, organization, product, or service singular and unequaled. Compelling



visions differentiate, setting “us” apart from “them” in ways that attract and retain employees, volunteers, customers, clients, donors, and investors. Market researcher Doug Hall has found that “dramatically different” levels of *distinctiveness* in a new product or service increase the probability of success by over 350 percent. The same is true for a vision. The more unique it is, the higher the probability of success in getting people to buy in.⁸

There’s no advantage in working for, buying from, or investing in an organization that does the same thing as the one across the street or down the hall. Saying, “Welcome to our company, and we’re just like everyone else” doesn’t exactly make the spine tingle with excitement. When people understand how they’re truly distinctive and how they stand out in the crowd, they’re much more eager to sign up and invest their energies.

Feeling unique fosters a sense of pride.⁹ It boosts the self-respect and self-esteem of everyone associated with the organization. When people are proud to work for their organization and serve its purpose, and when they feel that what they are doing is meaningful, they become enthusiastic ambassadors to the outside world. Likewise, when customers and clients are proud to own your products or use your services, they are more loyal and more likely to recruit and recommend their friends to do business with you. When members of the community are proud to have you as a neighbor, they’re going to do everything they can to make you feel welcome.

Azmeena Zaveri learned just how important it is for people to take pride in being unique when she led a team of volunteers in handling the sales and finances of a community bookstore in Karachi, Pakistan. The bookstore was an iconic, celebrated, and cherished institution where people loved to gather, to socialize and learn. When Azmeena agreed to take on the financial management role, however, the bookstore was in survival mode. It was no longer providing a high standard of service, there was a lack of conscientiousness in the management of the finances, and there was little motivation for the staff to go the extra mile. The reason for the decline, Azmeena told us, “was not because the team was incompetent or incapable of managing the tasks. A principal cause was

the lack of vision and direction for the team. My goal was to inspire the team to bring the bookstore back to being the place where people loved to go, not just because of the great collection of books, but also for the inviting vibe and sense of community.”

Azmeena coached the volunteers on ways to improve the bookkeeping process, talked about how to better use the store’s scarce resources, and told them how much the patrons relied on the bookstore as an important part of their lives. Throughout the process, she “emphasized how the institution was relying on them to survive and retain its significance to the community, and how they were in an honorable position to not just serve a bookstore, but be a community icon with an esteemed legacy.”

Focusing on uniqueness makes it possible for smaller units within large organizations, or individual neighborhoods within big cities, to have their visions and still serve a larger, collective vision. Although every unit within a corporation, public agency, religious institution, school, or volunteer association must align with the overall organizational vision, each can express its unique purpose within the larger whole and highlight its most distinguishing qualities. Each can be proud of its ideal image of its future as it works toward the collective future of the larger organization.

These days, though, with the latest and greatest available in a nano-second at the touch of a key or screen, differentiation is increasingly difficult. Everything begins to look and sound alike. It’s a sea of sameness out there. People become bored with things more quickly than ever before. Organizations, new and old, must work harder to distinguish themselves (and their products) from others around them. You need to be ever vigilant to ways in which you can be the beacon that cuts through the dense mist and steers people in the right direction.

Align Your Dream with the People’s Dream In learning how to appeal to people’s ideals, move their souls, and uplift their spirits—and your own—a classic example is the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Replayed on the national holiday in the United States marking his birthday, it reminds young and old alike of the power of a clear and uplifting vision of the future.¹⁰

The Leadership Challenge

Imagine that you are there on that hot and humid day—August 28, 1963—when on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., before a throng of 250,000, Martin Luther King, Jr., proclaimed his dream to the world. Imagine that you’re listening to Reverend King as thousands around you clap, applaud, and cry out. Pretend you’re a reporter trying to understand why this speech is so powerful and how King moves so many people.

We’ve asked thousands of people over the years to do just that; listen to his remarks and then tell us what they heard, how they felt, and why they thought this speech remains so moving even today.¹¹ Following is a sampling of their observations.

- ▶ “He appealed to common interests.”
- ▶ “He talked about traditional values of family, church, and country.”
- ▶ “He used a lot of images and word pictures that the audience could relate to. They were familiar.”
- ▶ “He mentioned things everyone could relate to, like family and children.”
- ▶ “His references were credible. It’s hard to argue against the Constitution or the Bible.”
- ▶ “It was personal. He mentioned his own children, as well as struggling.”
- ▶ “He included everybody: different parts of the country, all ages, both sexes, and major religions.”
- ▶ “He used a lot of repetition: for example, saying ‘I have a dream,’ and ‘Let freedom ring’ several times.”
- ▶ “He talked about the same ideas many times but in different ways.”
- ▶ “He was positive and hopeful.”
- ▶ “Although positive, he didn’t promise it would be easy.”

- ▶ “He shifted his focus from ‘I’ to ‘we.’”
- ▶ “He spoke with emotion and passion. It was something he genuinely felt.”

These reflections reveal the key to success in enlisting others. To get others excited about your dream, you need to speak about meaning and purpose. You have to *show them* how to realize *their* dreams. You have to connect your message to their values, their aspirations, their experiences, and their lives. You have to show them that it’s not about you, or even the organization, but about them and their needs. You have to make the connection between an inspiring vision of the future and the personal aspirations and passions of the people you are addressing.

Andrew Carton, professor at the University of Pennsylvania, underscores the importance of leaders using *image-based words* in communicating their visions.¹² This is exactly what Martin Luther King, Jr., did in describing people with well-defined attributes (such as children) and observable actions (such as sitting down at the table of brotherhood). As Drew notes:

Image-based words convey sensory information to paint a vivid picture of the future, one that employees can easily imagine witnessing. Along these lines, visions with image-based words are more consistent with the literal meaning of the word *vision*. When leaders include vivid images in their communications, they’re transporting employees to the future by telling snippets of a compelling story—a story that captures events that have yet to unfold.

His research has found that image-based words inspire people. For instance, teams were tasked with developing a toy prototype. A vision communicated with image-based words (“Our toys . . . will make wide-eyed kids laugh and proud parents smile”) triggered stronger performance than a vision with similar content but without visual wording

“Our toys . . . will be enjoyed by all of our customers”).¹³ You need to frame abstract aspirations in terms of what the result will look, feel, and sound like. With these images, people begin to generate their own passion and conviction about the vision that mirrors their leader’s.

Using image-based language and creating a connection between personal aspirations and a shared vision is not only for leaders of social movements or product development teams. It applies equally to teams in workplaces like yours. Kent Christensen found this out when he joined his first company after graduating from college. During his initial few months as part of supply chain operations at Cisco, he felt a bit lost. Managers were coming and going, and teams were rotating in and out very frequently. Kent knew his day-to-day responsibilities as a business analyst, but he didn’t see how his job fit into the larger scheme of things.

However, things changed when an internal candidate took over as vice president. He hosted a town hall meeting, introduced himself to everyone, and discussed the importance of the supply chain within the company. The new vice president then put up a slide that would change the way Kent felt about the organization and his role in it. It had four letters on it: V-S-E-M, which stood for Vision, Strategy, Execution, and Metrics. The vice president described how the vision for the supply chain would enable Cisco to optimize customer outcomes, empower everyone in the organization, and provide a blueprint for action. He stressed how everyone had a major role to play and needed to work collaboratively within and across organizations. As a result of this town hall meeting, things changed for Kent:

I had a completely different approach to the way I did my job. This shared vision resonated with me and showed me the light when there was only darkness before. Coming out of the all-hands meeting, the vibe around the office was different. There was a buzz around people as everyone started to feel like they belonged. It was possible that people were just happy that the changes had stopped, but it seemed much more than that. It looked as if

everyone had a purpose. Having a vision helped managers and their teams to become inspired and committed to a shared goal.

By showing others how their work connects to a larger purpose, and by aligning individual aspirations with organizational ones, you can get people to see how they belong and inspire them to work together toward a common goal.

Animate the Vision

Part of motivating others is appealing to their ideals. Another part, as demonstrated by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, is animating the vision and breathing life into it. To enlist others, you need to help them *see* and *feel* how their interests and aspirations align with the vision. You need to paint a compelling picture of the future, one that enables constituents to experience what it would be like to live and work in an exciting and uplifting future. That's the only way they'll become sufficiently motivated internally to commit their individual energies to the vision's realization.

You would not be the first person to think, "But I'm not like Martin Luther King. I can't possibly do what he did. Besides, he was a preacher, and I'm not. His constituents were on a protest march, and mine are here to get a job done." Many people don't see themselves as personally uplifting, and most certainly don't get much encouragement for behaving this way in organizations. Despite the acknowledged potency of clearly communicated and compelling visions, our research finds people more uncomfortable with inspiring a shared vision than with any of the other four leadership practices. Most of their discomfort comes from having to express their emotions. Many people find it hard to convey intense emotions, but don't be too quick to discount your capacity to do it.

People's perception of themselves as uninspiring is in sharp contrast to their performance when they talk about their Personal-Best Leadership Experiences or when they talk about their ideal futures. When relating extraordinary achievements or major successes, people are nearly always

emotionally expressive. When talking about intense desires for a better future, expressiveness tends to come naturally. And it doesn't matter what language people are speaking. When they feel passionate about something, they let their emotions show.

Most people attribute something mystical to the process of being inspirational. They seem to see it as supernatural, as a grace or charm bestowed on them—often referred to as charisma. This assumption inhibits people far more than any lack of natural talent for being inspirational. It's not necessary to be a charismatic person to inspire a shared vision. You have to *believe*, and you have to develop the skills to transmit your belief. Your passion is what brings the vision to life. If you're going to lead, you have to recognize that your enthusiasm and expressiveness are among your strongest allies in your efforts to generate commitment in others. Don't underestimate your talents.

Use Symbolic Language “This picture represents my vision for employee development,” Cheryl Johnson told us. Cheryl is the assistant director for human resources at Santa Clara University, and the picture she showed was a photograph of a produce market teeming with people eagerly shopping for their favorite varieties of fruits and vegetables. She went on to explain:

This market is a vibrant part of the community. The key to the long-term success of this market is being able to meet the needs of the community by offering products that people want, keeping items fresh, and always having a wide variety of items to choose from.

I see Employee Development as a team that offers a variety and selection of ever-changing items and offerings. Some of our customers will be in a hurry and will hardly notice what we offer. Others will linger to enjoy and utilize our offerings. In the longer term, we will create a marketplace that people will seek out for assistance, guidance, resources and learning.

Like any store, we must be ever vigilant of the wants and needs of our customers. We must be willing to be innovative, to try new and different things. We must also be willing to change out our selection of products as new offerings become available or in season. In addition, we must be willing to be constantly culling our outdated and underutilized offerings. Just as a market makes for a healthy community, we will provide nourishment for our campus. Our nourishment will be in the form of creative and fresh ideas for personal and professional growth opportunities that our clients and customers will choose to utilize.

Cheryl's marketplace metaphor is a vivid example of how to bring a vision to life through evocative language. Leaders like Cheryl embrace the power of symbolic language to communicate a shared identity and give life to visions. They use metaphors and analogies. They give examples, tell stories, and relate anecdotes. They draw word pictures, and they offer quotations and recite slogans. They enable constituents to picture the possibilities—to hear them, to sense them, to recognize them.

James Geary, deputy curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, and a leading expert on the use of metaphorical language, reports that people use a metaphor every ten to twenty-five words, or about six metaphors a minute.¹⁴ Metaphors are everywhere—there are art metaphors, game and sports metaphors, war metaphors, science fiction metaphors, machine metaphors, religious metaphors, and spiritual metaphors. They influence both what and how people think, what they imagine and invent, what they eat and drink, what they consume and purchase, and whom they vote for and rally behind. Learning to use these figures of speech greatly enhances your ability to enlist others in a common vision of the future.

Consider, for example, the intriguing impact of language on people in experiments in which researchers told participants they were playing either the Community Game or the Wall Street Game.¹⁵ In both

scenarios, people played the same game by the same rules. The *only* difference was that experimenters gave the same game two different names. Of those playing the Community Game, 70 percent started out playing cooperatively and continued to do so throughout. Of those told they were playing the Wall Street Game, just the opposite occurred: 70 percent did *not* cooperate, and the 30 percent who did cooperate, stopped when they saw that others weren't cooperating. Again, remember: the *name*, *not the game* was the only thing that was different!

This experiment powerfully demonstrates why you must pay close attention to the language you use. You can influence people's behavior simply by giving the task or the team a name that evokes the kind of behavior implied by the name. If you want people to act like a community, use language that evokes a feeling of community. If you want them to act like traders in the financial markets, use language that cues those images. The same goes for any other vision you might have for your organization.

Create Images of the Future Visions are images in the mind; they are impressions and representations. They become real as leaders express those images in concrete terms to their constituents. Just as architects make drawings and engineers build models, leaders find ways of giving expression to collective hopes for the future.

When talking about the future, people typically use terms such as *foresight*, *focus*, *forecasts*, *future scenarios*, *points of view*, and *perspectives*. What all these expressions have in common is that they are visual references. The word *vision* itself has at its root the verb "to see." Vision statements, then, are not statements at all. They are pictures—word pictures. They are images of the future. For people to share a vision, they have to be able to see it in the mind's eye.

In our workshops and classes, we often illustrate the power of images with this simple exercise. We ask people to shout out the first thing that comes to mind when they hear the words *Paris, France*. The replies that pop out—the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Arc de Triomphe, the Seine, Notre Dame, delicious food, wine, and romance—are all images of real places and real sensations. No one calls out the square kilometers,

population, or gross domestic product of Paris. Why? Because most of what we recall about memorable places or events are those things associated with our senses—sights, sounds, tastes, smells, tactile sensations, and feelings.¹⁶

So what does this mean for leaders? It means that to enlist others and inspire a shared vision, you must be able to draw on that very natural mental process of creating images. When you speak about the future, you need to create pictures with words so that others form a mental image of what things will be like when they are at the end of the journey. When talking about going places you've never been, you must be able to imagine what they'll look like. You have to picture the possibilities.

Debbie Sharp, a manager in Employee Learning and Organizational Development (ELOD) at Houston Community College, paints a very vivid image in the vision statement for her organization.¹⁷

More than any other institution of higher education the community college is in the business of changing lives. We meet our students where they are and help them define and achieve their goals. As they fulfill their potentials, we help them shine!

In days gone by, the lamplighter dutifully set about lighting the street lamps, as day faded to night. We in ELOD light the lamps of learning, chasing away the darkness of uncertainty and doubt for our customers.

When asked why he is so committed to this repetitive, mundane task, the lamplighter replies, "I do it for the light I leave behind."

As learning and development professionals, we too are lamplighters, creating conditions that nurture the spark of new ideas and perspectives. Through encouragement, thoughtful questioning, and provision of safe spaces for experimentation, we ignite innovative thinking and self-discovery in our learners.

The light we leave behind illuminates the paths of those we touch, enabling them to spread their light throughout the college.

Getting people to see a common future does not require special powers. Just like Debbie, you possess this ability. You do it every time you take a vacation and share the photos with your friends. If you doubt your ability to paint word pictures, try this exercise: sit down with a few close friends and tell them about one of your favorite vacations. Describe the people you met, the sights and sounds of the places you went, the smells and tastes of the food you ate. Show them the photos or videos if you have them. Observe their reactions—and your own. What do you and they experience? The answer is that people always report feeling energized and passionate. Those hearing about a place for the first time usually say something like, “After listening to you, I’d like to go there someday myself.” Isn’t that what you want your constituents to say when you describe your vision of the future?

Practice Positive Communication To foster team spirit, breed optimism, promote resilience, and renew faith and confidence, leaders look on the bright side. They keep hope alive. They strengthen their constituents’ belief that life’s struggles will produce a more promising future. Such faith results from an intimate and supportive relationship, a relationship based on mutual participation in the process of renewal.

Constituents look for leaders who demonstrate an enthusiastic, genuine belief in the capacity of others, who strengthen people’s will, who supply the means to achieve, and who express optimism for the future. Constituents want leaders who remain passionate despite obstacles and setbacks. In today’s uncertain times, desperately needed are leaders with a positive, confident, can-do approach to life and business. Naysayers only stop forward progress; they do not start it.

Consider how Ari Ashkenazi, financial analyst at Valin Corporation, had contrasting experiences with two supervisors. The first, he said, always tried to keep spirits up and to look on the bright side, regardless of

the situation. Even when a project was unsuccessful, Ari said, she would tell them that future projects would turn out better as long as they kept working hard as well as working smart.

This gave me a lot of faith in her, and helped me to keep from getting frustrated during my work when things didn't always go right. This also had the effect of making it easier for me to try new things as well as report negative news to her since I knew she wouldn't "shoot the messenger" when it came to giving her news.

The second supervisor Ari described would often get easily exasperated, and when she was annoyed or angry, she'd let people know it quite plainly. All she cared about were the numbers and results, and it felt as though she was looking down on you if things didn't go as she planned from the start. The outcome of her negative communications, Ari explained, "was to make me try to avoid her as much as possible and to hold back on giving her negative information that she needed to know, just because I feared the backlash she would give me."

Researchers working with neural networks find that when people feel rebuffed or left out, the brain activates a site for registering physical pain.¹⁸ When leaders threaten and demean people, use scare tactics, and focus exclusively on problems, they activate regions in the brains of their audience that make people want to avoid them. Moreover, people remember downbeat comments far more often, in more detail, and with more intensity than they do encouraging words. When negative remarks become a preoccupation, an employee's brain loses mental efficiency. In contrast, a positive approach to life broadens people's ideas about future possibilities, and these exciting options build on each other, according to Barbara Fredrickson, professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina. In her research, she finds that being positive opens people up, consequently seeing more options, making them more innovative. Individuals who enjoy more positivity are also better able to cope with adversity and are more resilient during times of high stress.¹⁹

Express Your Emotions In explaining why particular leaders have a magnetic effect, people often describe them as charismatic. However, *charisma* has become such an overused and misused term that it's almost useless as a descriptor of leaders. Being charismatic is neither a magical nor a spiritual quality. Like being "inspirational," it's mostly about how people behave.

Instead of defining charisma as a personality trait, some social scientists have investigated what people are doing when others say they are charismatic.²⁰ What they've found is that individuals who are perceived to be charismatic are simply more animated than people who are not. They smile more, speak faster, pronounce words more clearly, and move their heads and bodies more often. Being energetic and expressive are key descriptors of what it means to be charismatic. The old saying that enthusiasm is infectious is certainly true for leaders.

Arousing emotion has another benefit for leaders: emotions make things more memorable. By adding emotion to your words and behavior, you can increase the likelihood that people will remember what you say. James McGaugh, research professor of neurobiology at the University of California, Irvine, and a leading expert on the creation of memory, has shown that "emotionally significant events create stronger, longer-lasting memories."²¹ No doubt you've experienced this yourself when something emotionally significant has happened to you—a serious trauma, such as an accident, or a joyful surprise, such as winning a contest.

The events don't even have to be real to be memorable. They can simply be stories. For example, in one experiment, James showed subjects a series of twelve slides. Accompanying the slide presentation was a story, one line for each slide. For one group, the narrative was quite boring; for the other, the narrative was emotionally moving. Participants didn't know at the time they watched the slides that they would be tested, but two weeks later, they returned and took an assessment of how well they remembered the details of each slide. Although the subjects in the two groups didn't differ in their memory of the first few and last few slides, they did differ significantly in the recollection of the slides in the middle. "The subjects who had listened to the emotionally arousing narrative

remembered details in those particular slides better” than the group that listened to the neutral story.²²

Emotional arousal creates stronger memories, and you don’t need a complete narrative (or slides); just the words themselves can be equally effective. Researchers asked subjects to learn to associate pairs of words. Some paired-words were chosen because they elicited strong emotional responses (as indicated by changes in galvanic skin response). One week later, people remembered the emotionally arousing words better than they remembered the less arousing words.²³ Whether you hear a story or a word, you’re more likely to remember the key messages when attached to something that triggers an emotional response. People are hard-wired to pay more attention to stuff that excites them or scares them.

Furthermore, showing people a concrete example is better than telling them about an abstract principle, which still leaves them on the outside looking in. For example, studies showed that a story about a starving seven-year-old girl from Mali prompted people to donate more than twice as much money as the message that “food shortages in Malawi are affecting more than three million children in Zambia.”²⁴

Get people to experience what you are trying to explain, and they’ll understand in a deeper way. For example, trainers helping volunteers understand how people and their families in hospice care deal with loss will often use an exercise where they hand out packets of index cards, asking volunteers to write on each of their cards something they love and would be devastated to lose. The list often includes the names of family members (spouse, parents, children, siblings, pets), activities (walking, playing music, traveling), or experiences (reading, listening to music, enjoying gourmet dinners, watching sunsets). Then a trainer walks around the room and randomly takes cards from the volunteers. One person loses two of them. Another loses all of them. The person who lost two loses two more. The effect is dramatic. Volunteers clutch their cards and struggle not to let them go. When they release the cards, they are visibly upset; some even break down and cry.²⁵

This poignant exercise speaks volumes about how much more influential leaders can be when they tap into people’s emotions rather than only tell them what to do or how to feel. If the trainers had merely shared

facts, the volunteers might have been able to understand conceptually the losses that hospice residents were suffering, but not in a way that would have led to genuine empathy. Through this exercise, they could briefly experience the same type of losses in a way that they would never forget.

The dramatic increase in the use of electronic technology also has an impact on the way people deliver messages. More and more people are turning to their digital devices and social media—from podcasts to webcasts, Facebook to YouTube—for information and connection. Because people remember things that have high emotional content, social media has the potential for engaging people more than do emails, memos, and PowerPoint presentations. It's no longer enough to write a good script—you also have to put on a good show.

Keep in mind that the content alone doesn't make the message stick; key is how well you tap into people's emotions. To be willing to change, people have to feel something. Thinking isn't nearly enough to get things moving. Your job is to get them to feel motivated to change, and expressing emotions helps do that.²⁶

Speak Genuinely None of these suggestions about being more expressive will be of any value whatsoever if you don't believe in what you're saying. If the vision is someone else's and you don't own it, you'll have a tough time enlisting others in it. If you have trouble imagining yourself living the future described in the vision, you certainly will not be able to convince others that they ought to enlist in making it a reality. If you're not excited about the possibilities, you can't expect others to be. *The prerequisite to enlisting others in a shared vision is genuineness.*

Cathryn Meyer saw this kind of genuineness modeled when she squeezed into a small conference room with twenty other prospective volunteers for the mandatory two-hour orientation by the Peninsula Humane Society (PHS) Wildlife Rehabilitation Department. Patrick, the head of the Wildlife Department, and leader of the meeting, was “an unassuming and soft-spoken individual with piercings and tattoos offsetting his official PHS uniform,” Cathryn told us. Here's how she related the story:

Patrick started by explaining how he had come to work for the organization, and why he felt the work was meaningful. He talked about his history as an animal activist; how he had started his career as a vegan chef before making his way into Wildlife Rehabilitation. He talked about his deep-seated belief that it was possible to coexist with wild animals, even in a world where humans had destroyed much of their natural habitat. He shared that he felt he had a responsibility to give back to these animals that we have taken so much from. He also talked about the criticality of volunteers in the ability to treat and release so many animals back into the wild each year.

Even though Patrick was not overly animated, he spoke genuinely and with a thoughtfulness that conveyed his passion for his work. He painted a positive picture of the future where wildlife can thrive alongside humans, thanks to the work of the wildlife department and the volunteers who work there. He was able to solidify the meaning and impact of the work that each volunteer would be performing.

Cathryn also noted that she learned another very important lesson from her experience with Patrick. It was a lesson about charisma. “Previously I thought that extroversion and unbridled energy were prerequisites (or at least immensely helpful) for successful leadership. I know now that this is not necessarily the case. Quiet confidence works, too. Introverted individuals like Patrick and myself can be effective leaders. All that you need are conviction, sincerity, and passion.”²⁷

The most believable people are the ones, like Patrick, with a deep passion. There’s no one more fun to be around than someone who is openly excited about the magic that can happen. There’s no one more determined than someone who believes fervently in an ideal. Are you that someone?



TAKE ACTION

Enlist Others

Leaders appeal to common ideals. They connect others to what is most meaningful in the shared vision. They lift people to higher levels of motivation and morality, and continuously reinforce that they can make a difference in the world. Exemplary leaders speak to what is unique and singular about the organization, making others feel proud to be a part of something extraordinary. Exemplary leaders understand that it's not their personal view of the future that's important; it's embracing the aspirations of their constituents that matter most.

For visions to be sustainable, they must be compelling and memorable. Leaders must breathe life into visions, animating them so that others can experience what it would be like to live and work in that ideal and unique future. They use a variety of modes of expression to make their abstract visions concrete. Through skillful use of metaphors, symbols, word pictures, positive language, and personal energy, leaders generate enthusiasm and excitement for the common vision. Above all, leaders must be convinced of the value of the shared vision and communicate that genuine belief to others. They must believe in what they are saying. Authenticity is the acid test of conviction, and your constituents will willingly follow only when they believe that you believe.

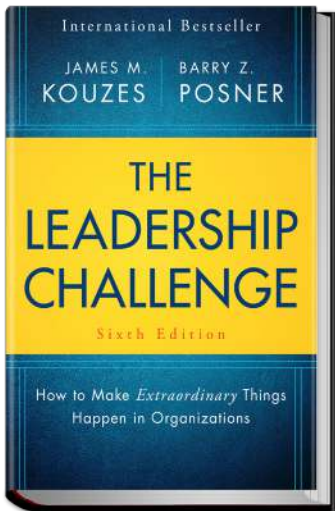
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To Inspire a Shared Vision, you must enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. This means you must:

1. Talk with your constituents and find out about their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future.
2. Make sure your constituents know what makes their products or services unique and special.
3. Show constituents how enlisting in a common vision serves their long-term interests.
4. Be positive, upbeat, and energetic when talking about the future of your organization, and make liberal use of metaphors, symbols, examples, and stories.
5. Acknowledge the emotions of others and validate them as important.
6. Let your passion show in a manner genuinely expressive of who you are.



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