

# Changing Culture through Visionary Leadership

## WHAT IS VISIONARY LEADERSHIP?

Vision gives team members in the organisation something to

believe in,

work towards,

and identify with.

Visionary leadership paints an inspiring picture of what an organisation can become.

A vision dramatises new directions that others might not buy into otherwise. It points towards a new future, a change in direction, and hence provides leadership. To inspire change, a vision needs to be concrete, not just motherhood statements.

Other influence tactics should also be deployed because people differ in terms of their receptivity to change. For example a vision alone may not encourage some team members to change behaviours if they do not see the senior leadership team matching their words with action.

It should point to what needs to be done by when and should differentiate you from competitors - otherwise you have provided a statement of values, not a vision. Wanting to provide the best customer service in the business is a value statement. Attaining a measurable lead on this value in your market in 3 years is a vision.

However, if you are just trying to be a bit better on several dimensions at what you are already doing, then this borders on being a managerial vision.

Managerial vision motivates performance improvement; this isn't leadership.

A true leadership vision advocates a more substantive change in direction.

It depends on your starting point - minor changes suggests a managerial challenge. If the organisation needs to take leaps forward not steps, then it's a leadership task....

Outstanding leaders articulate an ideological vision congruent with the deeply-held values of followers, a vision that describes a better future to which the followers have an alleged moral right.

Visionary leaders are the builders of a new dawn, working with imagination, insight, and boldness. They present a challenge that calls forth the best in people and brings them together around a shared sense of purpose. They work with the power of intentionality and alignment with a higher purpose. Their eyes are on the horizon, not just on the near at hand.

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## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP Adaptation of James MacGregor Burns' theory (1978)

Transformational leaders offer a purpose that transcends short-term goals and focuses on higher order intrinsic needs. This results in followers identifying with the needs of the leader. The four dimensions of transformational leadership are:

### ▪ **Charisma or Idealised influence:**

The degree to which the leader behaves in admirable ways that cause followers to identify with the leader. Charismatic leaders display convictions, take stands and appeal to followers on an emotional level. This is about the leader having a clear set of values and demonstrating them in every action, providing a role model for their followers.

- Connection at an emotional level
- Conviction
- Values
- Matching words with action

### ▪ **Inspirational motivation:**

The degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand. Followers need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to be motivated to act.

- Inspires
- Articulates
- Raises the bar
- Provides meaning & purpose
- Energy

Purpose and meaning provide the energy that drives a group forward. It is also important that this visionary aspect of leadership be supported by communication skills that allow the leader to articulate his or her vision with precision and power in a compelling and persuasive way.

### ▪ **Intellectual stimulation:**

The degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this trait stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers.

- Challenges the status quo
- Innovates

### ▪ **Individualized consideration or Individualized attention:**

The degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. This also encompasses the need to respect and celebrate the individual contribution that each follower can make to the team (it is the diversity of the team that gives it its true strength).

- Coaches
- Listens
- Consults
- Respects
- Celebrates
- Values diversity