

Building Winning Business Teams: Using the Power of a Vision

There are two types of teams. Teams with spirit and teams without spirit. Teams with spirit are winners. Teams without spirit are losers. That's just the way it is. Take a look at your favorite sports teams. Take a look at the teams in your organization that outperform others. And you will see that the reality is that teams with spirit make great things happen.

Teams with spirit are identified by several differentiating factors, one of these being that they are driven by an explicit and shared vision. The concept of vision as a powerful strategic tool is often poorly utilized by leaders who do not understand the psychological and business impact a vision has. The result is that the vision lives in a frame on the wall and is used for publication in the annual report but is not built into the operational fabric of the organization. This is a missed opportunity because vision can significantly impact the productivity and performance of business teams.

Here's my version of what a vision is. A corporate vision describes a dream that is emotionally inspiring and, at the same time, commercially relevant. This means that when employees read, or hear, or speak the vision statement, it produces a feeling of excitement because it brings an image to their mind that gives them hope for the future.

To be effective, the vision statement should describe a future that employees desire and are prepared to strive for and be committed to. No matter what you like to call it – a sense of purpose, a reason for being, or a guiding philosophy – a shared vision, well formulated and well communicated has the power to energize, unite, and align a workforce. It will inspire people to pull in the same direction and deliver extraordinary performance. Companies that have a stirring vision that is relevant to the leaders and employees alike, and that has been skillfully integrated into the company's DNA, continue to prosper even when others around them don't.

The 5 Steps for Successful Vision Implementation:

1. Leadership goes through a process designed to create a grand vision of a desired future state that will enable the organization to deliver sustained growth. The most effective vision exploration process is one that combines both left brain information and right brain imagination.
2. Once they have conceptualized what this dream is, it is then converted into a vision statement, expressed in simple language, using 8 words or less. The way the vision statement is framed should ignite the energy, enthusiasm and self-esteem of everyone in the company for the achievement of a goal that will bring enhanced profit and growth.

Avoid a vision statement that provokes the response, "So what?!" Set the sights high and have no time limit. A good example is Merck – "We are in the business of preserving

and improving human life.” Or, British Airways in the 90’s – a “To become the world’s favorite airline.”

3. Build a story around the vision. Stories are the most powerful form of communicating important information. Employees relate to, and remember, stories very easily. This company vision story has the power to pull business teams into the future and sustains them when the going gets tough.
4. Convey the vision and the vision story in a dramatic and energizing way. Avoid memos, PowerPoint slides and speeches. You cannot inspire and excite people’s imaginations and build strong business teams through uninspiring forms of communication. Remember, this is a dream you are communicating!
5. Design and implement a process for cascading and operationalizing the vision from boardroom to backroom. Be prepared to take the time to do this. Each leader and manager must be able to communicate the vision in a consistent way, speaking with one voice. They must each also be able explain how the corporate vision will be operationalized in their particular organization or department. When this is done effectively, each employee will then understand how their performance affects the achievement of the vision.
6. Keep the vision alive by constantly referring to it and using it in all decision-making. Teach business teams to ask themselves the question...“does this decision line up with our vision; does it take us a step closer to the vision?”

Good Luck! You are on your way to Success!

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