Leading Through Vision and Values

Keeping the organization’s vision and values at the forefront of associate decision making and action.

Key Actions

- **Communicates the importance of the vision and values**—Helps others understand the organization’s vision and values and their importance.

- **Moves others to action**—Translates the vision and values into day-to-day activities and behaviors; guides and motivates others to take actions that support the vision and values.

- **Models the vision and values**—Takes actions, makes decisions, and shapes team or group priorities to reflect the organization’s vision and values.

- **Rewards living the vision and values**—Recognizes and rewards associates whose actions support the organization’s vision and values.

Quick Tips

- Actively seek opportunities to help others understand how their actions support organizational success.

- Set performance expectations for associates that are consistent with the organization’s goals and values.

- Openly discuss discrepancies between the organization’s values and how things are done in your work group.

- Praise associates when their actions are consistent with the organization’s vision and values.

- Question associates whose actions are incompatible with the vision and values.

Developmental Activities

*Self-Directed*

- Whenever your organization announces a business decision or places special emphasis on an organizational goal, analyze how it fits into the overall business strategy and how it will affect your area. Make sure that decisions in your area mirror the decisions of your organization.
• Identify elements in existing systems (selection, training, compensation/rewards, communication, performance management, etc.) that support and inhibit the organizational vision. Prepare action strategies to address them appropriately. When addressing inhibitors or problems, make sure you are working with the sources of problems and not their symptoms.

• Identify a project in which the work procedures followed were not consistent with organizational systems. Compare this to a project where procedures and systems were consistent, analyzing the differences both in terms of commitment to the project and project outputs.

• Read documents and/or attend meetings concerning strategic plans, business plans, and annual reports for your organization. Point out to others how organizational vision and values apply to everyday contexts.

• Reinforce organizational, departmental, and team goals and business plans to your team by incorporating them into work expectations. Make sure that everyone’s key objectives reflect a contribution toward organizational goals.

• Review the latest business plan you wrote for your team or department. Did you include a section on how your plan ties into long-term major goals? Ask yourself how the plan could be improved and what you have to do as a leader to create a sense of direction for long-term goals.

• Keep your list of vision and values posted in a conspicuous place for all to see.

• Look through your planner or calendar. Do you have any long-term plans outlined that have clear links to vision and values? Or do you have activities noted that deal with short-term issues only? Try to avoid getting bogged down in unnecessary details and make sure everything you do works toward a greater purpose.

Partnerships

• Talk with people who have faced the challenge of meeting a long-term strategic goal in their department or team. Ask them how they went about encouraging and motivating others and how they reinforced the importance of meeting the goal. See if any of the systems or processes they found helpful could be incorporated into your team.

• Meet with your team members and ask them to provide feedback concerning how well you communicate and exemplify your organization’s values. What do you do to support or inhibit the vision? Ask team members what you can do to gain their enthusiasm and commitment to reaching organizational or department goals.

• Write down what you believe are the goals and objectives of your department. Ask your leader to review your list and then discuss how your goals can be better tied to organizational vision and values.
• Set up a trial run by deciding on one thing you and your team would like to accomplish by the end of the month (for example, high customer satisfaction ratings for the month). Communicate this “vision” to your team and make sure they have the resources to make it happen. Afterward, discuss the trial run with your team and look for ways to improve the goal-setting process and to make it ongoing.

• Seek feedback from others on what they perceive to be your department’s top priorities and short- and long-term goals. What are the differences in perception between their statements and your (or your organization’s) actual goals?

• Ask the people you work with if they know how their responsibilities affect and support the vision and values. If they do not know, help them understand the connection.

• Encourage discussions about discrepancies between vision and values and current organizational realities. Seek and appropriately share information to help resolve such gaps.

Targeted Assignments

• Identify an activity or process that does not align well with the organization’s vision and values. Formulate and implement a plan for realigning the process so that it no longer conflicts.

• Ask to observe or participate on a project team or task force that targets broader-range organizational issues (especially those that involve senior management participation). Use the experience as an opportunity to gain insight into establishing vision and values.

Workshops

Look for a workshop that addresses the following:

• Using visionary leadership skills.

• Motivating others to internalize organizational goals.

• Implementing systems to support the organizational vision.

• Setting goals and establishing procedures for attaining them.

• Planning organizational change.
Readings

Books


This guide provides step-by-step instructions on transforming vision into reality.


This second edition of a classic puts forth five leadership principles: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. Research based and broad in its principles, the book is valuable for the practical guidance and practical information it offers.


In this new edition of a business classic, the authors expand on how leaders must show enthusiasm and gain support for the vision, build trust, and empower people. The book covers the characteristics that enable leaders to identify and implement visions in the changing business world.


This book discusses the role of vision in organizational change and details how to create, evaluate, and communicate a sound vision so that it can be acted upon at every level.


The author combines personality theories with corporate alignment strategies to build a blueprint for creating and implementing a shared corporate vision. He addresses the barriers to achieving corporate goals that are the result of incompatible values and shows how much momentum can be built behind a vision when it reflects everyone’s values.

Articles


A great vision can founder even when wrapped in a stirring mission statement. The author describes five phases of change that companies must go through to get the mission off the ground and into motion. The five phases are Iteration, Awareness, Understanding, Commitment, and Action.

The author proposes that leaders influence people throughout the organization by personal example. The article poses questions a leader can ask to measure how well he or she lives the organization’s values.


This article details how to get buy-in from employees and make strategy take hold by adhering to values and principles.


The author discusses the difference between being a manager and being a leader. He lists the eight actions that strong leaders take to create, communicate, and model commitment to the vision.


Although focused on the pharmaceutical industry, this article addresses the role of all leaders as spokespersons for the corporate vision. It describes how leaders can mobilize employees to action around the vision and provides steps for implementing a strategy to communicate the vision.


The manner in which the corporate vision is communicated to workers affects whether and how it will be acted on. This article gives tips for communication techniques that foster employee buy-in and high productivity.