

PM401 MINISTERIAL ORGANIZATION INSPIRING A SHARED VISION ¹

Dr. Greg Waddell

I. VISUALIZE THE FUTURE

A. Why a Shared Vision is Important

1. The leaders of high-performing organizations who Kouzes and Posner interviewed for their research repeatedly said that improving life in the long-run was a key element of achieving extraordinary results (p. 145).
2. Not all of those interviewed used the word “vision” to describe their leadership practices. Some mentioned objectives, mission, legacy, dreams, goals, calling or personal agenda. Regardless of the term they used, the idea was the same: these leaders wanted to make a significant difference, to achieve things that nobody has yet achieved (p. 146-147).
3. Leaders develop this ability to visualize the future by exercising two essential leadership skills:
 - a. imagination and
 - b. intuition

B. High-Performance Leaders Imagine the Ideal.

1. This leadership skill includes:
 - a. The ability to see what others cannot see.
 - b. They have a future orientation.
 - c. A vision is an image, a mental picture of what could be. Visual metaphors play an important role in describing the strategic intent of an organization.
 - d. Vision implies a standard of excellence, an ideal. It implies the choosing of values.

¹ This outline is based in large part on Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (1995). *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- e. Vision also possesses the quality of originality. It signifies what makes something special (p. 95).
2. Defining the vision of your organization is similar to what a father does when he is making plans for a family vacation.
 3. Leaders feel dissatisfied with the way things are in their community, their church, or their organization, and they firmly believe that the situation can change (p. 149).
 4. Such leaders seek excellence.
 - a. Their visions have to do with possibilities and desired futures.
 - b. They go beyond simply thinking about probabilities and think instead about possibilities.
 - c. These ideals reveal our preferences with regard to values, priorities, technologies, politics, beauty, and society.
 5. Originality: the pride of being different
 - a. Visions communicate what makes us unique; they are distinguishes us from all the others (p. 153).
 - b. People will want to associate with us when they realize that we stand out in the crowd (p. 153).
 - c. To discover this originality in the vision of your congregation, you must begin by asking why the members of your community would want to attend your church or participate in your programs.
 - d. “We don’t sell flowers, we sell beauty” (Edward Goepner, of the Podesta Baldocchi, an international chain of florists, Cited on p. 154).
 6. A future orientation
 - a. Human memory is stored in images and sensations, not in numbers. We remember the images of the reality, not its abstractions (p. 157).
 - b. Visions are conceptualizations; they are mental images, impressions and representations. They are expressed in concrete terms (p. 158).

C. Sensing the Future

1. “Intuition is the fountain of vision” (p. 159).
2. To visualize and sense are not logical activities. It is extremely difficult to study, explain, or quantify (p. 160).
3. Experience is our best teacher.
 - a. When a problem presents itself that is strange and new, we resort to our past experiences to try to find something that might help us resolve it. We choose information, make comparisons and integrate our experience with the current situation. For the experienced leader, all of this happens in a matter of seconds (p. 161).
 - b. Intuition is the meeting of knowledge and experience to produce new internal perceptions (p. 161).
 - c. The human mind is like a central post office. When new data comes in—based on new experiences—the brain tries to incorporate it into its current mental model.
 - d. If it is not able to do this, the brain tries to amplify the model to include this new experience.
 - e. If the modification is too radical, the person will suffer a high degree of anxiety and will discard the new data and then continue as though it had never occurred.
4. Use past knowledge.
 - a. We discern the future by using a kind of extrapolation in which the past is the prelude and we gaze into the future by looking back.
 - b. Reflecting on the past can improve our ability to be progressive (p. 163).
 - c. The authors recommend that we allow our people to visit the past as they think about the future (p. 163).
 - d. Our memory is composed of stored images of our past experiences.

5. Exploit the present.
 - a. The past provides knowledge and experiences that we can access; the present offers the possibilities to apply these to concrete problems.
 - b. Leaders describe this process as “a moment of inspiration—a lightning bolt—and then action to put the new idea to test” (p. 165).
6. Apply the vision to the future.
 - a. Two leaders with identical experiences might apply have completely different visions for the future of their organization. The reason for this diversity is that we often operate under differing underlying assumptions.
 - b. In the life of an organization, the most important role of the vision is to concentrate the human energy into a singular focal point (p. 166).
 - c. Imagine trying to give a presentation when your projector is constantly out of focus. What would the observers think when they only see blurry and vague images on the screen? That is how the members of an organization or church feel when there is no clear vision.

II. Casting the Vision

- A. One of the core functions of leadership is to recruit others to the vision.
 1. You must sell the vision; i.e., generate support for it.
 2. This involves engaging people in conversations about their lives, their dreams, and their hopes. Remember that leadership is a dialog, not a monolog. It’s not about imposing the leader’s dream but about developing a common sense of destiny (p. 184).
 3. A vision includes the aspirations of the people; it is an ideal and original image of the future in search of the common good (p. 185).
 4. The leader must communicate the vision with enthusiasm. You must believe it and transmit that belief. This enthusiasm launches movements and generates energy for the organization (p. 186).

B. Discover the Common Purpose

1. To recruit others, the first task is to discover what their aspirations are (p. 191).
2. “If there is one special talent that leaders need, it is the ability to perceive the objectives of others” (p. 191).
3. To do this, you need to learn the art of listening.
4. Leaders develop a profound understanding of the collective longings of their people; they seek consensus formed among those whom they lead.
5. Leaders speak to the hearts of people. The collective vision is translated into a common interest (pp. 194-195).

C. Use Powerful Language.

1. Leaders take maximum advantage of the power of language to communicate the common identity and give life to the vision (p. 197).
2. What type of language?
 - a. Realistic words that deal with tangible and concrete objects.
 - b. Optimistic words that express hope and possibility.
 - c. Active verbs that communicate movement.
 - d. Words of conviction that express decisiveness.
 - e. Expressive words. Such leaders smile more, speak more rapidly, pronounce their words with clarity, and move their bodies and their heads with more frequency (p. 203).

III. VISION IN THE BIBLE

A. Hebrew

1. HAZON

- a. Almost always signifies a means of divine revelation. Primarily refers to the means by which the communication of the vision takes place. “The days are long and every vision fails’ (Ez 12:22).
- b. Sometimes the word represents the message that has been received through prophetic vision. “Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained” (Pr 29:18).
- c. Finally, it can also signify the entire message of the prophet. “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem” (Is 1:1).

2. HIZZAYON

This noun refers to the prophetic vision. “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joe 2:28).

3. HAZAH

- a. To see, perceive, and select as one’s own. It means to see in a general sense (Pr 22:29), and also to select for oneself (Ex 18:21).
- b. It appears 54 times and in each period of Hebrew history.

B. Greek

1. HORAMA:

- a. “What one has seen.” a spectacle (Mt 17:9; Acts 7:31)
- b. An appearance (Ac 9:10; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 12:9-10; 18:9).

2. HORASIS: sense of vision, often translated as “visions” (Ac 2:17; Rev 9:17).

3. OPTASIS: “the act of seeing,” OPTANO, “To see, to glimpse.” Denotes a visions in Lk 1:22; 24:23; Ac 26:19; 2Co 12:1).

C. CONCLUSION. Regardless of one's theological view of modern-day prophetic experiences, the need to anticipate the future is clearly supported by Scripture. Robert Greenleaf felt that this kind of foresight was an essential element of leadership. He wrote: "One does not, of course, ignore the great voices of the past. One does not awaken each morning with the compulsion to reinvent the wheel. But if one is servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making."² The identification of this vision from God, giving it form and substance through the use of concrete visual images, and helping others to see it are some of the most important responsibilities of leadership.

² Robert K. Greenleaf, "The Servant as Leader," In *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations*, ed. Robert P. Vecchio, 429-438 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), [Originally published 1977], 23.