

## **Vision vs. Current Reality**

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Do you know what you want to create in your organization? Has everyone in your organization “bought in” with intensity? Are they inspired such that they “own” the vision as intently as you do?

One of the most significant responsibilities of a leader is to establish the natural tension between the truth of today’s current reality and the imagination of what is achievable in the future.

Current reality is what your team members live in daily. For credibility, leaders must be completely honest about current circumstances. There are no advantages to denying “what is.” On the contrary, there is huge value in using words that clearly describe what is present--what everybody knows is there.

Why? Because a person who lies about something as obvious as what everybody can see--right now and right in front of us--will probably also lie about other stuff. Your employees don’t want a leader they think will stretch or avoid the truth!

Your credibility is on the line each time you talk about current reality. People look for how closely your description lines up with their experience. They are the experts on “what is,” because they live in it daily. It surrounds them, and if the conditions are difficult or unsafe or dehumanizing in any way, it grinds away at them. Coming to work each day may be tough. If you distort your description, they begin to sense hypocrisy in your words. A lack of trust in you will kill morale.

Your circumstances are probably not that grim. Still, no matter what the present circumstances, the vision for what is possible in the future offers hope. Describing a challenging future stimulates energy. Our human nature strives to make circumstances better. When you describe the potential of an improved scenario, people want to align themselves to that concept and help make it happen. They look forward to enjoying the benefits that go along with approaching that future state.

So why do you as a leader have to describe the vision repeatedly? Isn’t a one-time description sufficient?

No! People’s memories are short. They live with current reality every day, and the vision is just an imagination. It’s hard to imagine “what could be” when every day your life is stamped with a “what is” that is lacking in some way.

Further, many people have difficulty imagining “what could be.” They may have never experienced such a condition, or they may not see a path that could possibly take them from here to there. Yet if your credibility is high, they will anchor themselves in the vision of what is possible, creating a tension that will stimulate behaviors that will move the organization in that direction.

The tension between current reality and the vision will always try to resolve itself. In the absence of your repeated description of the future state, people become anchored instead in current reality. Whatever vision you may have once expressed will tend to disappear.

One of the burdens of leadership is to repeatedly remind folks of where the organization is headed. Though you may have described it dozens of times before, just keep inviting others to align their imaginations with “what could be.”

One of the joys of leadership, however, is affirming team members whose behaviors drive the organization toward that future that you’ve collaboratively defined!

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*The dynamic tension between current reality and your vision applies even in something small, like delegating a task. In sharing authority, your desired outcome needs to be communicated clearly. On Tuesday, February 7 at 1:30pm, come to Logan’s Roadhouse in Warner Robins to discover methods for “Better Delegating.”*