



Setting Our Vision – How This Helps Leaders

This is the fourth 'tool of the month' from the IHR Project's Workforce Development Team. Over the coming months we will be sharing our favourite concepts, models, hints and tips that resonate with us and really helped us out in all different work environments. Please come back each month to see what we are sharing. As with all concepts, models, hints and tips – these do not represent a fixed way of doing things, they are not hard and fast rules – if they resonate with you please make use of them – if they don't that's fine too!

This month we return to one of my favourite books 'Leadership Plain and Simple' by Steve Radcliffe (PEARSON, 2012). Radcliffe suggests a simple and practical approach to understanding effective leadership behaviours: 'Future, Engage, Deliver' (FED) – a step by step approach which can effectively be applied to all colleagues in numerous settings. The first step in FED is for you to understand and articulate your vision, here I share how we can understand our vision and use it in the work environment.

Firstly – what do we mean by vision? "The ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom"[1]. Our personal vision is based on our values, beliefs and circumstances.

Personal values

When we think about our ideal job, a job that helps us to get where we want to go, or a job that serves us for another reason, it is likely that our choice is **purposeful, meaningful and based on our current values**. It may be a job that calls to your spirit; a job to ensure that you or your family have enough income; or a job that contributes to a community.

It is considered helpful if our values are consistent with that of the purpose of our role and /or organisation. If we are able to achieve alignment of our values with that of our chosen role it helps to make our working lives more enjoyable.

These values often link to a vision, something that you want to achieve. Visions don't always have to relate to work – they can relate to activities or projects in wider environments – but for the purpose of this piece - we will focus on the work environment.

Vision

As an individual - having a firm picture or vision of what you want to achieve will make your working life easier, it will enable you to set personal objectives to navigate your course. Reminding yourself of this vision at intervals will help you maintain consistent progress, reflect on why you are doing what you are doing, and check if this vision is still right for you at this time.

As a member of staff or a formal leader your vision is crucial to not only your success but that of your colleagues too.



So, how can we do this?

Steve Radcliffe describes how we can understand our vision and how we can engage with others to share it and make it reality:

1) Understanding your vision

- Take some time out, sit down and start writing down your initial thoughts about what you care about (this could be in life, in work, or in your community). Consider how you feel about these thoughts, and if they feel right for you.
- Write down what you want to lead for (a cause/a goal). Be real, tangible and specific). What is it that you want to make happen in the future that you want?

Why is this?

A clear vision of the Future that is well articulated and well communicated enables you and your colleagues to work towards the same goal, with the same intention and at the same pace. Colleagues will feel the energy of your vision for the future. In his book *Leadership Plain and Simple* Steve Radcliffe states that:

*'Leaders who are in touch with a Future that matters to them allow it to guide what they think and **how they act** every day'.*

It is by enthusiastically working towards your vision that colleagues will have a greater understanding of both their role and desired behaviours.

- Considering the above points, and perhaps reflecting on your desired impact, desired outcome, desired reputation – write your leadership vision in one or two sentences. Your vision statement should include what you want to achieve and how you would like to do it.



Take time to do this exercise and re-visit a few days later – it can be quite demanding to reflect on issues that are so very important to us, but to which time is rarely given.

2) Engaging your colleagues

You now have a draft vision statement or ‘leadership vision’ – but how will you engage your colleagues? Simply ‘transmitting’ your vision to your colleagues is not sufficient for it to manifest, you must first establish a high trust or ‘Big Relationship’[2] with your colleagues to ensure that people feel listened to by you, that their opinion matters to you, that you want them to be involved and acknowledged by you. Key steps to engaging your colleagues in your vision may include:

- Sharing your vision with your colleagues and explain what great would look like.
- Ask ‘What we could do to get there?’
- Ask ‘What could be some next steps?’
- Ask ‘How we can work together?’

An opportune moment for this exercise might be when planning your team activities for the coming year, when creating a new team, or at a time of organisational change.

There is no doubt that both understanding and sharing your vision may be a brave step for an emerging leader. However, if it is not time for you to undertake all the steps in this process, you may want to do this as a personal exercise to help you identify your own direction of travel and make plans for your future at work, at home or in your community. Good luck with your journey!

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Sources:

[1] VISION English Definition and Meaning | Lexico.com

[2] P 59, ‘Leadership Plain and Simple’ by Steve Radcliffe (PEARSON, 2012) <http://f-e-d.com/>