

PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP

2: Vision

a. Identify the objectives and goals to be achieved

The job of a leader is to lead. In order for a leader to do her job, she must know where she is going and the reason(s) for going there.

A leader must establish clear, attainable and realistic goals, before making a commitment to begin the journey. To attain the ultimate goal may require that numerous objectives of lesser importance be accomplished along the way. It may also be necessary to consider the goals of the individual members of the group before the ultimate goal of the group can be achieved. All of this requires planning, planning, and more planning! Planning and control should be two of a leader's most overworked tools!

If you are in the process of creating a new organization, you and your peers need to establish and unanimously agree in clear unequivocal terms, in writing, what the primary purpose of the organization is. Then, determine what the other (incidental) purposes are. If you decide to plant trees along the highway, is the primary purpose to beautify the area? Is the primary purpose to get involved in the community? Is the primary purpose to develop the leadership and organizational skills of young people? Is the primary purpose to raise funds for a charity? Is the primary purpose to keep fit and lose weight?

Unless the objective(s) of the organization are clearly established, you will not know what form of organizational structure to adopt, or what type of training to give the people who will occupy positions of leadership in the organization. Additionally, you will not be able to make effective long-range plans for the organization.

b. Evaluate the results of success: Who will benefit?

In making the determination as to whether or not to proceed with your vision for your organization, you need to think through some general planning before committing yourself to the expected result(s). How much will you need to invest in manpower, financial resources, time, research, etc., to make the vision a reality?

The longer it takes to complete a project, the more chances that there will be unexpected delays, additional costs and a variation in the expected results. Although, the expected results may seem fantastic today, you need to estimate the value of them at the time when the project will be completed.

There is always the temptation to confuse vision with planning. This is due partly to the fact that both exercises are relating to future events and are generally performed by the same person, who happens to be the manager and or the leader of the organization. It may be that the vision is a thought process, while planning is a working process.

Each compliments the other. But, the decision whether or not to proceed must rest on the returns that are expected if the objective is achieved: What is the extent of the benefit and who will receive it? Will your organization be the primary beneficiary?

As leader, you are responsible for leading your people and your organization. The goals and objectives of your people and your organization take priority over the goals and objectives of any other group or individuals. If the vision you have for your organization will be more beneficial to others than it is to your organization, you need to reconsider your position.

In a profit corporation, the directors have a duty and are required to do whatever is lawful to make a profit for the shareholders of the corporation.

c. Determine the probability of success

What can a leader do to enhance the likelihood that a project will be successful?

In 1975, a group of young people undertook a project, which turned out to be several times larger and more complex than they had expected. The project was to organize and manage the Jaycees International Western Hemisphere Area Convention. In the last three days prior to the convention, more delegates registered for the convention than at any other time.

Before the group of young people knew it, hundreds of delegates were arriving at the convention hotel, some speaking English and others speaking Spanish. They all wanted to be checked into their rooms right away, and receive their convention kits with the schedule of events, rules of the convention, etc. The briefing and debriefing meetings with the Board of Directors, Committee Heads, Workshop Leaders, Translators, Secretariat, Public Relations and Press Release Officers, etc., were all held that same night at the hotel.

At 8:30 a.m., the next morning, the minutes of the meetings held the night before were all neatly laid out on the delegates' desks; the translators and their equipment were in place and ready to go. The recording secretaries were doodling on their note pads with their voice recording machines beside them, and all the workshops were fully set up.

When the chairperson and the delegates walked into the conference room, at 8:45 a.m., there was a distinct mark of surprise on their faces. Needless to say, with a start like that, the three-day convention was a total success.

Why was it such a success? All the organizers were fully trained to do their particular job(s). The group had been planning every detail for over six months; several alternative and contingency plans were on paper, rehearsed and ready to be implemented. There was a reserve of manpower in the event anyone became ill, extra rooms were on reserve for late registrations, there were standby guest speakers in case of no-shows, the executive committee became the “quick decisions committee” and remained in the meeting room throughout the convention, and each member gave 150% effort to ensure the comfort of every delegate, and the success of the convention.

Bottom line? **Always ask “what if?”**

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