

Inspirational Leadership

In the exercise files, I have included a handout to help you articulate your passion and vision. Use it to help you craft your message.

Here are some questions you can use as a catalyst in clarifying your vision. Let yourself respond off the top of your head. Don't worry about if it sounds feasible or silly or if you can see a connection to your current work/role.

What do you have a burning passion about?

What work do you find absorbing, involving, enthralling?

In what do you totally and absolutely believe?

What future would you invent for yourself and your organization/community?

How do you want to change the world for yourself and for your organization/community?

What is a dream for your life that excites you

What legacy do you want to leave behind?

“Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” —Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, Third Edition

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have interviewed thousands of leaders around the world to explore what distinguishes the best leaders from the rest. They discovered that strong leaders consistently utilize five practices, which they describe in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart.

Inspiring a Shared Vision

This practice is about how the leader looks to the future. Strong leaders dream about what could be and have a long-term vision for the development of the organization. Leaders are able to involve others in the organization in both creating the vision and bringing it into reality. This vision ultimately gives direction and purpose to all the members.

Leaders who utilize this practice envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. Jot down some thoughts or ideas you have.

How can you bring your vision alive? Consider how you might use the following (pick at least three and make some notes about how you might use them):

Images and word pictures

Metaphors

Examples

Stories

References to history

Emotions

Symbols

Data/statistics

Next, effective leaders enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.

How might you appeal to the group's common interests?

How might you expand that appeal to the interests of individuals?

How might you create a range of messaging that will appeal or interest different groups or types of people? Identify three possibilities for varying your message.

How can you connect your vision to the values, practices, and mission of the organization or subgroups/ functions within it?

How can you help people see how their day-to-day work will contribute to this larger vision?

As you review what you have written, identify some next steps. Again, I encourage you to read the following books:

The Leadership Challenge by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner

Leading at a Higher Level by Ken Blanchard

Remember, the world needs what you have to contribute!