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THE IMPACT OF A VISIONARY SPEECH

TO WHAT EXTENT DO SPEECHES ABOUT A VISION INSPIRE OTHERS TO ACTION?

The vision statement is a crucial part of successful change. Certainly, a good speech with a good story is important for aligning, inspiring and motivating employees around an organizational vision.

But, it is worthwhile putting speeches and stories into perspective. While important, they have limitations:

- A colleague of mine who is a successful healthcare CEO, estimates that her greatest speeches and stories motivate at best about 20 - 25% of managers and employees.
- I found a similar estimate--that about 20% of employees support a change from the start--in a Harvard Business Review publication.¹
- McKinsey&Company references data that also suggests only about 20% of a workforce will be engaged by what seem like compelling stories for change.²
- Everett Rogers' work on diffusion of innovations indicates about 16% of people will be readily responsive to a new idea.³

VISION IS A PROCESS.

The idea of a vision statement sounds static--as though it happens one time through one document or presentation. Vision becomes shared, inspiring and motivating only through a process of conversation and action.

- "The origin of the vision is less important than the process whereby it comes to be shared....visions that are truly shared take time to emerge." --from Peter Senge The Fifth Discipline, A Currency Book, Doubleday, 2006.⁴

LISTENING AND MUTUAL LEARNING ARE AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS TELLING.

My colleague in healthcare spends at least as much time, if not more, listening as she does speaking. She tries to find out what is important to others and how it connects to the vision.

She is not after *convincing* people as much as engaging them in testing new ideas--to create mutuality in achieving the vision--to learn together. She constantly asks: "Is this what we mean to produce based on our vision? Where do we need to adjust course?" She also seeks feedback, consultation or coaching as needed to adjust her own actions to align with the vision.

CREATE THE VISION EVERY DAY.

Making a vision come alive requires attention to what we say and do each moment, day to day, every day. While not as glamorous as a great speech, this requires considerable reflection, caring, daring, an orientation to action, and persistence in the face of difficult challenges.

REFERENCES

1. Managing Change and Transition. Harvard Business Press, 2003
2. Keller, Scott and Aiken, Carolyn The inconvenient truth about change management. May 2008, <http://www.mckinsey.com>
3. Rogers, Everett M. The Diffusion of Innovations. The Free Press, 1995
4. Senge, Peter The Fifth Discipline, A Currency Book, Doubleday, 2006.