

Bosler, Jerry

From: Michael C Piper [aj0386@wayne.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2003 6:45 PM
To: ebolling@walshcollege.edu; Bosler, Jerry; Phyllis Jose
Subject: DALNET vision statement group: 2/12/03 conference call. Background

Dear colleagues,

Thank you again for agreeing to help us revise the DALNET mission statement. We've got a tricky, demanding assignment - and we can handle it. In fact, I think we can even have fun with this.

Originally, I planned on sending a copy of our current vision, mission and values statements as background. But after thinking about this, I've concluded that if we truly want a vision that engages, even inspires our colleagues, we need to do much more than wordsmith the current version.

In his wonderful book, *THE HEART OF CHANGE*, John Kotter suggests that when it comes to writing effective vision statements, here's what works:

- * Trying to see - literally - possible futures.
- * Visions that are so clear they can be articulated in one minute or written up in one page.
- * Visions that are moving - such as a commitment to serving people.
- * Strategies that are bold enough to make bold visions a reality.
- * Paying careful attention to strategic questions of how quickly to introduce change.

For Kotter, an effective vision statement tells a story. J. R Lucas agrees. In *FATAL ILLUSIONS*, Lucas writes:

"Perhaps the most important aspect of an inspiring vision is its affinity for 'story telling.' Does our vision tell a story about who we are, what we believe, and what we value? Is it translatable into 'stories'? Do we have multiple organizational stories to illustrate each point of the vision statement?"

The reason great vision involves great stories is this: Stories move the heart. They can interest, involve, inspire, and change even the most sophisticated and complex personalities. The simpler the story, the wider the appeal and, often, the deeper the impact. Many people simply won't 'get it'—at least not at the level of their visceral, emotional drives and desires—unless the message is in story form.

To be effective, a vision has to embody a story, be illustrated and emphasized with stories, and be supported by an ongoing stream of stories. Rationally written vision statements have little power to stir an organization. When they're written to tell a story, nothing can stand in their way.

If a vision doesn't inspire us and our people to do or be something greater than we're already doing or being, then it isn't a vision, and we need to stop pretending. We need to ask our people to rate our vision statement—point by point—on a 1-5 scale of inspiration and passion.

- 5- I'd do anything possible to help this come to pass
- 4- This is very important and worthy of some sacrifice
- 3- I'm glad we want to do these things, but they don't hit me where I live.
- 2- I'm a little embarrassed about our vision, but I need a paycheck
- 1- This ship is in trouble, and I've got my eye on a lifeboat

Vision is a picture of a process, not a structure. It's something that can live, breathe, grow, adapt, and learn. At its best it is an ongoing,

participative, flexible, ever-evolving part of every organization's life."

Lucas says effective visions have these five components:

1) An ability to inspire. 'I simply dream dreams and see visions, and then I paint around those dreams and visions,' said the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael.

2) An invitation to share. 'We all need to believe in what we are doing,' said Allan D. Gilmour, executive vice president of Ford.

3) Clear and understandable detail. 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon your tables, that he may run who reads it,' recommended the ancient Hebrew prophet Habakkuk.

4) Achievability. 'I never gave an order that couldn't be obeyed,' American General Douglas MacArthur answered when asked about his key to success.

5) A sense of worthiness. 'The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it,' suggested the American psychologist and philosopher William James.

These will be our benchmarks as we craft our revised vision, mission and values statements. To get us started tomorrow, we'll borrow an exercise from THE HEART OF CHANGE.

Vision writing exercise (from THE HEART OF CHANGE, by John Kotter):

Our assignment: to write a piece about DALNET for LIBRARY JOURNAL, projecting five years into the future. As we develop our story, let's be as concrete as possible, incorporating quotes, numbers and clear descriptions of services. In the article, we'll discuss the following:

- * How DALNET is different five years hence from the way it is now.
- * What members say about DALNET.
- * What employees say about DALNET.
- * How DALNET is perceived in our region and statewide in Michigan.

Tomorrow, we'll capture ideas we want to include in the story. Then we'll ask someone to write a rough draft, to be sent out before our second meeting, when we make edits, additions, etc. Then we'll use our story as a basis for the revised vision. I look forward to our phone conversation tomorrow at 1 pm.

Here's a preliminary outline of our first meeting agenda:

- 1) Set upcoming meeting dates/times
- 2) Develop work plan for our committee
- 3) Review sections of retreat summary pertaining to vision statement (pages 2, 5, and 26-28)
- 4) Begin work on revising DALNET vision, mission and values statements

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