

ATTRACTING OTHERS TO YOUR VISION

How do you convince people to buy into your vision for the future? That's the question every leader must figure out how to answer if he or she hopes to have significant influence. Unfortunately, many well-intentioned leaders fail to find support for their vision because they start off on the wrong foot.

Communicate the Vision

Some leaders try to share their vision as if they were giving a classroom lecture. They present facts and figures that draw attention to a need, and they marshal statistics in support of their intended solution. Certainly, conducting research regarding a vision has merit. However, a purely informational approach does not effectively draw people to a vision.

Clarify the Vision

In an attempt to get others to sign on to the vision, some leaders play the role of a painter. They do not barrage people with information, but rather invite them to look at a picture. By giving shape to the vision, by making it colorful and distinct, they hope to give people a clear understanding of where they're headed. While clarity is essential to visionary leadership, a stunning picture, by itself, won't rally people around a vision.

Convince Others of the Vision's Importance

If information and clarification don't do the trick, perhaps persuasion is the missing element in recruiting others to sign up in support of a vision. Leaders who endorse this train of thought may take on the role of motivational speakers. They talk about the vision passionately and persuasively, attempting to inspire people to act. An emotional appeal may win a few converts, but this approach ultimately fails to gather sustained momentum behind a vision.

Connect to People on a Personal Level

Each of the strategies previously mentioned has merit in attracting people to a vision, but none is the proper place to start. Before making informational, conceptual, or emotional appeals, leaders ought to focus on relational development. As Abraham Lincoln once said, "If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend." People buy into the leader, then the vision.

When considering whether to follow a leader, people ask three main questions:

- Does she care for me?
- Can she help me?
- Can I trust her?

Leaders, then, must touch a heart before they ask for a hand. They must value people, and add value to them, before expecting anything in return. Finally, leaders must align their words and deeds, displaying consistency over time, before they can earn the authority to be followed.

By themselves, relationships don't magically turn into results. Leaders still must present an informed, clear, and compelling vision in order to influence others to act. However, *relationships* always pave the way for a vision to catch on and take flight.



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