

How Clear is your Vision?

There is a big difference between management and leadership . . . and it revolves around the concept of vision. Managers make sure everything is working according to plan. They ensure standards are met and goals are attained. Good management is essential for the success of every organization.

Leadership has more to do with vision -- having a clear understanding of your organization's full potential -- what it can accomplish under ideal circumstances and what it can become. It isn't about being better than your competition or creating best practices. Those will happen, but they're not the focus. The focus is on understanding what you would accomplish and how you would operate when everything works well and is done right. It's about attaining your full potential.

This vision is very specific and personal to your organization. It's what your market, your customers and your other stakeholders need, want and expect. It's inspirational. It can capture the hearts and minds of your employees. It's about being the best at what you do.

It's not about making money or increasing shareholder value. It's not about being better than your competition. Those results will most likely occur, but they are not the focus. The focus is more specific, more personal, higher, and more important. It doesn't change from year to year because attaining your vision is a long term journey.

You'll know when you have the right vision because it will so clearly be the right thing to do that you will wonder why you ever did things differently.

Creating and maintaining this vision is not easy. It takes work. It must be specific and quantified enough to be useful in leading everyone in the right direction. This requires creating success measures and benchmarks that let everyone know the results that must be attained to fulfill this vision. Without this step, your vision will be disconnected from the practical realities of day-to-day management. The gap between where you need to be and where you are now determines the level of change and the amount of work needed to attain your vision.

Having a good long term vision for your company is fundamental. Keeping it current and vital is critical and difficult. Contrary to what many people think, it requires constant attention. It requires an open mind and frequent questioning of your major stakeholders. It requires constant reevaluation, fine-tuning and confirmation.

This doesn't mean you should change your strategic direction every time a new consideration or concern becomes apparent. On the contrary, you need to communicate appropriately to each part of your organization. This means providing a consistent and clear vision that most employees can easily understand and use in their daily work. But there are others in the company that need a more detailed understanding of even minor changes. For these people, the vitality of this fine-tuning is critical.

In our management consulting practice we help companies identify and attain their full potential. This is our vision. It is why we were created and what we do. Please visit our website (McDonaldConsultingGroup.com) if you want to learn more about our firm.