Kotter International

STEP 3: Developing a Change Vision

Clarify how the future will be different from the past

A clear vision serves three important purposes. First, it simplifies hundreds or thousands of more detailed decisions. Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction even if the first steps are painful. Third, it helps to coordinate the actions of different people in a remarkably fast and efficient way. A clear and powerful vision will do far more than an authoritarian decree or micromanagement can ever hope to accomplish.

Many visions are deceptively mundane. Often the vision is part of a larger system that includes strategies, plans and budgets. However, the vision is the glue that holds these things together and makes sense of them both for the mind and the heart. A good vision can demand sacrifices in order to create a better future for all of the enterprise's stakeholders.

Such visions must be seen as strategically feasible. To be effective, a vision must take into account the current realities of the enterprise, but also set forth goals that are truly ambitious. Great leaders know how to make these ambitious goals look doable. When a vision is undergirded with a strong, credible strategy, it becomes evident to the stakeholders that the vision is not a pipe dream.

A vision must provide real guidance. It must be focused, flexible and easy to communicate. It must both inspire action and guide that action. It should be a touchstone for making relevant decisions, but not be so constricting as to reduce the possibility of empowering action. Finally, it must be communicable. If it cannot be explained quickly in a way that makes intuitive sense, it becomes useless.

Thus, effective visions have six key characteristics. They are:

- **Imaginable**: They convey a clear picture of what the future will look like.
- **Desirable**: They appeal to the long-term interest of those who have a stake in the enterprise.
- **Feasible**: They contain realistic and attainable goals.
- **Focused**: They are clear enough to provide guidance in decision making.
- **Flexible**: They allow individual initiative and alternative responses in light of changing conditions.
- **Communicable**: They are easy to communicate and can be explained quickly