

The "Vision Thing": How to Find It, Frame It, and Live It

By Roxanne Emmerich

In the absence of a great dream, pettiness prevails.—Peter Senge

At some point in his or her career, every politician gets tarred with a catch phrase—and usually not a flattering one.

George Bush, Sr. is stuck with two. There was "Read my lips, no new taxes," of course. But only slightly less unfortunate was his dismissal of what he called, "The 'vision thing.'"

He was trying at the time to shake the impression that he was a competent day-to-day manager but lacked any grander vision of where he wanted to lead the country. His choice of words and tone of voice didn't exactly help.

John F. Kennedy had a vision: "A man on the moon before the end of the decade." And it inspired the seemingly impossible. We had about 15 percent of the needed know-how when he made that declaration.

Bill Gates had a vision that there would be a computer on every desk in America. And this was back when most people didn't even know what a computer was!

Why vision matters

I once had a CEO look me straight in the eye and say he didn't really "go for" visions. "I put my energy into training," he said. "Training, training, training."

But training for *what*? I wondered. You do training without a vision, you're all gas pedal and no windshield.

A study at the Sloan School of Management showed that leaders who create, communicate, and implement successful organizational visions were shown to be more successful in EVERY measure of a business than those who did not.

Three elements of a truly GREAT vision

Powerful, effective, propelling visions all have three things in common:

- 1. Short, simple and strong.** Shorter is *stronger*. Take a given sentence and ask which words are pulling their weight and which can take a hike. Change vague expressions like "high-quality" and "world-class" into specific, powerful language that reflects your values. Simpler is also better. Use words that a fourth grader could understand.

2. Visual. There's a reason it's called a VISION. A statement that doesn't create a powerful visual image of the future isn't a vision. It doesn't give people anything to keep in their mind's eye while they work. You need a landmark on the horizon or you're driving blind.

3. Of service to others. Make sure your vision statement reflects an intense, focused drive to serve the needs of your customers, not just to "satisfy."

The human spirit will not invest in mediocrity. That's why a vision always starts with a bold and audacious idea. A vision statement is nothing less than an invitation for others to invest in your dreams and a promise to do the same in return. By following these simple rules, you can create the kind of vision that has been proven to power companies beyond what was ever thought possible.

Roxanne Emmerich is renowned for her ability to transform “ho-hum” workplaces into massive results-oriented “bring-it-on” environments. To discover how you can ignite the passion of your employees, catapult performance to new levels, and boost the morale of your company subscribe to the Thank God It's Monday[™] e-zine at www.ThankGoditsMonday.com.