

# DECLARE THE DIRECTION

## **WHO NEEDS A VISION ANYWAY? YOU DO!** **WHY DECLARING A DIRECTION IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER**

In today's world of always-on media, we have gone from relief at the democratization of information to feeling overwhelmed at the continual deluge of slogans, thoughts and experts sharing the next big breakthrough. It is not possible to keep up with it all, and so many of us have adopted an expert and become followers of their doctrine. The leadership world seems to have split into distinct camps, with those who follow different schools of thought left feeling as if they have very little to say to or learn from one another.

Having said this, you may be thinking that the last thing the world needs right now is *another* model of effective leadership. But this model is different; it is a simple, clear and comprehensive framework for leadership success. It speaks to both the "what" and the "how" of leadership. It does not focus on any one big thing because successful leadership is always more than one big thing. Instead, we have taken our research, our experience advising and coaching leaders across diverse organizations and our own personal experiences with leadership to distill the four deliverables and five behaviors that successful leaders have in common.

I said our model is simple - 4 deliverables and 5 core behaviors – but simple does not mean easy. Each deliverable results from a series of actions that must be taken, and each behavior listed is meant not as a one size fits all prescription but rather a reference to be personalized according to your own capabilities and strengths.

**Declare, build, confront** ...each is a clear action verb chosen deliberately to emphasize that leadership is about action and the leader must be an action figure. **Ensure**, while still requiring action, connotes that it must be accomplished with and through others in the organizational system. What follows is an introduction to one of the individual pieces of this framework.

### **Declare the Direction**

Much has already been written on the importance of a well-crafted vision and mission for organizations, and there is no need here to replicate that work. Clearly, knowing what we are here to accomplish and why it is important plants the seeds from which motivation and commitment can grow. Clear values add the behavioral dimension and thus begin to define the desired environment for the journey. By establishing the overarching strategic pillars, leadership identifies the organization's areas of greatest impact that in turn serve to guide resource allocations and decision-making.

The best leaders have always realized that they serve as the authors and interpreters of the ideals, values and intent of their organization to the outside world. Today's most effective leaders realize that they also must give life to the meaning of their organization internally, to their employees and partners. The importance of these actions has been increasing, first as the economy shifted from the family farm to the manufacturing plant, and then again as the



demands of work in a 24/7, highly competitive caused the workplace to become the primary social system for many workers. Time that had been reserved for family and community was given over to longer workweeks with longer travel times. This shift in how our time was spent caused a second important shift to occur, as we transferred the nourishment of self that had come from involvement with diverse activities and community groups to the workplace, our primary waking activity.

Added on top of this already important shift, the pace of change in today's flattened, connected and wireless world of virtual workplaces has heightened the need for organizations to deliver both meaning and connection to its employees and partners. While technology has enabled organizations to disburse and work across time zones, today's leaders are challenged with how to do this well. Virtual workplaces and distributed networks of temporary colleagues require new and different ways to create and connect with a collective community. It is more important than ever that leaders deliver common, compelling meaning, create a sense of the collective and greater good, and keep stakeholders energized. Leaders for the future will need to excel at collaboration, networking, synthesizing, story-telling, and managing transitions. This leadership development is essential at all levels to reduce the isolation of leaders and, therefore, help them better confront reality. This in turn will help organizations achieve and sustain success.

Declaring the direction has always provided organizational identity to external stakeholders. However, it also provides the essential foundation from which leaders can grow employee association and engagement, and it has never been more important.

We at TMT Associates have worked with leaders of organizations of all sizes and across diverse sectors to meet this challenge in engaging, creative ways. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our services with you and your team. Contact us by e-mail at [mail@tmtassociates.com](mailto:mail@tmtassociates.com) or phone 804-379-1861.

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