LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: CLARITY OF VISION

One of my favorite quotes is from James O’Toole, author of *Leadership from A to Z*: “The task of leadership is to communicate clearly and repeatedly the organization’s vision...all with the intent of helping every person involved understand what work needs to be done and why, and what part the individual plays in the overall effort.”

We agree with the many leadership gurus who believe that the “stand-out” organizations are those with leaders who articulate a compelling vision, “clearly and repeatedly.”

Our research at EXCN shows that these key factors can enhance a leader’s ability to get people to enthusiastically embrace (or even comprehend) an organization’s vision.

1. Perceptions of the leader’s credibility are positive.
2. The leader creates a culture of candor.
3. The leader demonstrates the ability to coach others.
4. The leader’s words and actions align.
5. The leader ensures other senior leaders’ behaviors are consistent with the vision.

When thinking about leaders in history who had a compelling vision and a huge talent to communicate it, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. comes to mind immediately.

1. Dr. King walked a high road and people trusted him. There was no doubt about what he wanted to achieve or his level of commitment to it.
2. He was a role model for saying what needed to be said to those who needed to hear it—no matter the cost.
3. People learned from being in proximity to Dr. King and many of them followed in his footsteps and went on to be leaders themselves.
4. He followed his words with action. He was focused and consistent.
5. He was not afraid to take an unpopular stand. He was not afraid to hold others accountable.

Dr. King was a great orator and that helped him get his message across — people wanted to follow him and his vision. He saw the big picture and he was an incomparable communicator.

That is not all though. If you look at the five items that typified his leadership (there are too many to mention here), you will see a lesson that can help any leader get across a clear and compelling vision that people are passionate about following.

*What is standing in the way of people in your organization following its vision? What has to change for people to find the vision persuasive and powerful?*