

Learning from Sorbas

„Vision“ is a candidate for being the most maltreated concept in management. A decent company has it's vision, doesn't it? „Vision, Mission, Strategy“ is part of every self-respecting management program, right?

If only they were not so dull! „We want to be the best!“ That's an honorable ambition, but that's not a vision, for god's sake. If that's the way you go on the starting line, you won't have a chance a priori. That sounds as if the author would much more have liked to write „we don't have a vision. And we don't want one. Visions suck. It's always a mess...“

And yes, one can't deny that in most of the organisations talking about the vision leads to instant fits of fatigue, sudden hearing loss, or preventative waving off. If the vision doesn't have power, you can just as well keep out of it. It's challenging enough for leadership teams to credibly keep a vision present and use it's inspiring force.

It would be worthwhile, though. There are not many things with such a transformative potential as a powerful vision. And yet, all too often we just don't handle it to use this potential.

Why is that? Why are visions so flabby so often? One factor may be the following: the spectrum of the possible is narrower than the spectrum of the dreamable, and the spectrum of the realistic is narrower than the spectrum of the possible. Thus pure realists will have great difficulty in developing powerful visions, and that will be the major part of managers in a profession that socialises it's members to rely strictly on a foundation of rationality, data, and facts.

That's not a problem per se: self-control, analytical skills, readiness of mind, all this is useful to have as a manager. The risk and the potential problem is that this might bury parts of a personality that in the world of management are still being kept in quarantine: reverie, idealism, crazyness, openness for (alleged) nonsense. Here we have something to add or to catch up.

Without these ingredients there will be no powerful vision, we have known this for a long time, since at least Saint-Exupéry's „If you want to build a ship, then waken people's craving for the sea.“ A admit that this quotation is so threadbare that many people can't hear it anymore. But it doesn't deserve this image, because it is still true: a powerful vision has something to do with a craving that moves you from your deepest ground.

And – yes, you can't get around it – a vision is an emotional thing. You can only find access to this dimension if you foster your capability to be touched and your capability to express how you are touched. What is your dream? Can you utter it in a way that makes you quake inside, in the moment when you say it? Does it have the power to move you and other people?

Alexis Sorbas got to the heart of it in a short dialogue with Basil: „I like you too much not to say it: you've got everything except one thing: madness! A man needs a little madness, or else...“ „Or else?“ „...he never dares cut the rope and be free.“

Transformational Leadership might not always be needed, but it will be more and more. Your ticket to this league is your access to your emotional qualities and the quality of dreams. Follow Sorbas, and who knows, you might get to feel like dancing with your employees. This is when doors will open.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NRFpUiGHzs>