

Foresight First

BY JAMES J. MAPES

A specialist was hired to develop and present a series of half-day training seminars on empowerment and teamwork for the managers of a large international oil company. Fifteen minutes into the first presentation, he took a headlong plunge into the trap of assumption. With great intent, he laid the groundwork for what he considered the heart of empowerment – team-building, family, and community. He praised the need for energy, commitment, and passion for production.

At what he thought was the appropriate time, he asked the group of 40 managers the simple question on which he was to ground his entire talk: “What is the vision of your company?”

No one raised a hand.

The speaker thought they might be shy, so he gently encouraged them. The room grew deadly silent. Everyone was looking at everyone else, and he had a sinking sensation in his stomach. “Your company does have a vision, doesn’t it?” he asked.

A few people shrugged, and a few shook their heads.

He was dumbfounded. How could any group or individual strive toward greatness and mastery without a vision?

That’s exactly the point. They can’t. They can maintain, they can survive; but they can’t expect to achieve greatness.

Many organizations not only lack a vision, but they are unaware of the power that a vision produces. And not so surprisingly, many individuals haven’t thought about their lifetime purpose; they don’t have a vision, either.

Corporations make the common mistake of equating a mission statement with a vision, and individuals often believe that setting a goal is the same as defining a vision.

But so what? Is vision really that important?

A vision exceeds importance. It is vital. We either create our destiny, or we live out someone else’s creation. That’s the choice.

A vision is like a lighthouse which illuminates rather than limits, gives direction rather than destination. Almost all successful individuals and organizations have one thing in common: the power and depth of their vision. A positive, meaningful vision of the future supported by compelling goals provides purpose and direction in the present.

A vision is not something that happens by accident. It is purposefully created. Meaning flows from the act of any creation, and passion comes into our lives when we act congruently with our vision.

What exactly is a vision?

First of all, a vision is greater than ourselves. A vision may be eliminating world hunger, cleaning up the environment, or serving others. Vision is always about greatness. A vision expresses our values and what we hope to contribute. Vision is about creating an organization that expresses our deepest values about work, family, achievement, or community.

Vision transforms momentary strategies into a way of life. Vision engenders change. Vision is creating an ideal, preferred future with a grand purpose of greatness.

It plays a core role in many activities ranging from career choices to family vacations to changing organizations.

Creating the Vision

The first step in creating a vision is to know what a vision is not. It is a common misunderstanding to equate a mission statement with a vision statement. In fact, one of the most often-heard com-

It's a common mistake to equate an organizational vision with a mission statement. The truth is the difference is... vast.

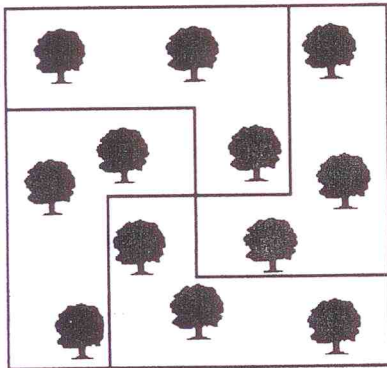
MIND MATTERS

ANSWERS From page 92

1. Study, Regress, Teacher, Computer, Compass, Chalk, Reading, Crayon, Dictionary, Eraser: Schooldays.

2. Peter Brady, artist, Dan Paine, salesman, and Jim Hall, chemist. The deputation of two was Peter Brady and Jim Hall.

3.



ANSWERS TO TRIVIA CORNER

1. h; 2. k; 3. o; 4. a; 5. m; 6. b; 7. r; 8. s; 9. c; 10. d; 11. e; 12. f; 13. i; 14. p; 15. q; 16. g; 17. l; 18. n; 19. j.

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE

From Page 94

T	A	L	O	N	R	E	A	P	S	T	A	B	
O	L	I	V	E	C	A	R	A	K	I	L	O	
P	O	N	E	S	A	R	M	S	A	B	L	I	
S	P	O	R	T	S	N	O	T	A	T	I	O	N
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R	E	W	A	R	D	E	D	R	O	D			
A	M	A	S	S	P	O	L	A	R	P	O	D	
S	I	R	S	S	E	P	A	L	D	U	N	E	
P	L	Y	R	U	L	E	S	D	A	N	C	E	
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G	R	O	U	N	D	S	R	A	R	E			
R	E	S	T	O	R	E	S	S	E	T	T	L	E
A	N	K	A	I	R	K	S	C	R	E	E	L	
S	T	A	T	E	R	I	A	T	E	N	T	S	
P	A	R	E	S	A	M	P	S	E	N	S	E	

In the empowered organization, it is the challenge of leadership to make sure each and every employee is involved in creating the vision.

ments is: "But we already have a mission statement."

The difference is vast. A mission statement comes from the head; a vision comes from the heart. A mission statement is a statement of what the business is, its goals, its ranking, return on equity and net assets, increased profitability. But a vision cannot be expressed in numbers. Numbers are only a manifestation or consequence of a vision yet to be defined.

A vision is a consciously created fantasy of what we would ideally like the organization to be, a waking dream, and this idea is not new to many organizations. A vision statement is often another name for "guiding principles" or "core values." What is new is that in the empowered organization, it is the challenge of leadership to make sure each and every employee is involved in creating the vision. The task of each employee is to create his own grand vision.

Goals Versus Vision

The second most common mistake is to confuse goals with vision. A goal is a baby step toward a vision. A goal may be short-term or long-term; it has a beginning and an end. But a vision is an ongoing process.

A goal is task-oriented; a vision is process-oriented. A goal is limiting; a vision is open-ended. A goal is often boring, mundane, noninspirational, but a vision provides the energy, power, and passion to achieve goals.

In order to construct a grand vision – a vision of greatness – you have to be aware of its two parts.

Vision is About Others

Once again, we challenge the short-term, quick-result, "me, me, me" way of thinking. A vision of greatness must focus on service, on adding value to and empowering others. The long-term success of any organization represents more

than market share or profit. Long-term success reflects making a contribution to others.

A vision of greatness is about what we offer each other. It is an act of service. The greatness of a vision statement inspires commitment because it is worth pursuing for its own sake.

Tom Peters brought Stew Leonard's in Norwalk, Connecticut to prominence in his best-selling book *In Search of Excellence*.

To call Stew's store a dairy store is like calling an ocean a big lake. Stew Leonard's carries a carefully selected and purposefully limited number of products ranging from fresh produce and dairy products – they have their own bakery and dairy – to fresh meat, coffee, soda, juices, paper products, and laundry detergents.

Walking into Stew Leonard's is like walking into an edible Disneyland, with fresh fudge and popcorn, ice-cream cones, a singing band of animated animals, a children's petting zoo... and many, many smiles.

In front of this massive store sits a six-ton rock, and carved into this rock is the Stew Leonard company policy:

Rule #1: The customer is always right!

Rule #2: If the customer is ever wrong, reread Rule #1.

What a vision statement. There are others with similar rules, but what they usually mean is that the customer is right when it's convenient to have the customer be right. Not so with Stew Leonard's. The customer is *always* right, even when it's extremely inconvenient. And it is that vision that empowers employees to do whatever it takes to make the customer happy, even if it might mean a short-term loss.

The first part of grand vision is to remember that it is all about others.

Vision is Idealistic

A vision of greatness is an expression

