



VISION

It makes all the difference

Judith-Leary Joyce looks at the key role played by having a guiding – and shared – vision for your organization

VISION GIVES PEOPLE SOMETHING TO get out of bed for in the morning. Without it, life is what we do when we have finished work. As ever with great company philosophy, this isn't new. What is new is the action that follows the words. No good talking about a vision once, then carrying on as usual. When vision is a real guiding force, it provides a yardstick for decisions and a stimulus for ideas.

Asda is 'passionate about bringing down the cost of living', something colleagues believe is worth doing. It puts the decision to join forces with Walmart into context – it gives them access to bulk buying and allows them to offer high quality clothing at Asda prices. It makes people proud to say they work there.

In a great company, employees take responsibility for the wellbeing of the business. It is unacceptable to blame others or complain from afar. If it is going to continue being a great place, everyone has to play their part and contribute. However, without a guiding vision, this is a recipe for disaster. When people care, they want to do the right thing, but without a guiding vision it is like firecrackers going off at random. Vision sets the direction; values set the style. They provide a framework in which people can detour, take side roads and rest along the way, bringing their individual talents to bear. The end result is dynamic output for the business.

So what do you do to embed the vision in the working day?

Make vision the context for everyday tasks

Managers must take time to align work to the vision. It is so easy to get involved in a task and do it for its own sake, rather than as a contribution to the whole. But when each person sees how they fit into the total

business process, there is an increased sense of belonging and commitment.

Mark Davies at Honda spent time with a couple of employees who were responsible for allocation and delivery of cars to dealers before the final August registration push. They worked really hard, but clearly weren't seeing just how important their work was. Through a coaching discussion Mark enabled them to see that unless they were successful at their job, there would be no cars at the dealerships to sell! Not only did this make a difference to their self-esteem, they also become more involved in the company long term and have come up with a number of useful suggestions since then that have added value.

Let vision provide a framework for creativity

A job becomes much more interesting when people are given responsibility and expected to 'go for it'. The ideas that emerge from this attitude are numerous – some will work and some will fail miserably, but mostly they are worth a try and companies such as Timpson's encourage everyone to share their success. Making the vision clear gives people an effective yardstick by which to measure ideas to see if they are worth trying.

Build a company mindset about the vision

Mindsets determine what we see and hear. Think about it – you focus on the new car you want to buy and suddenly everyone is driving it. They always were, you just weren't programmed to spot them. Vision works in the same way – it sensitizes the mind to look for appropriate opportunities. Once people have a clear mental image of where the company wants to go they suddenly begin to see ways of making it work.

So keep painting that picture!

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