

“Where are We Going?": Introduction to Creating a Shared Vision

Overview: Good leaders challenge the system, empower their followers to act on their own, model acceptable behavior and decision-making, and encourage their followers through good times and bad. The most important element in leadership, however, is to create a vision for an organization and to inspire members to rally behind that vision for the betterment of the group. In this workshop, students will learn the importance of having a vision, the intricacies of working with a diverse group, and how to differentiate a vision from goals, objectives, and benchmarks.

Category: Planning, Organization, Communication

Level: Explore

Learning Goals:

- To understand the necessity of a vision
- To define a vision, goal, objective, and benchmark
- To perform an exercise in group dynamics in relation to vision

Materials:

- Paper clips
- Pencils
- Paper lunch bags
- Pipe cleaners
- Rubber bands
- Dry erase board or newsprint
- Markers
- Paper
- Pens

How to Prepare:

- Materials should be placed in bags before the session

How to Do/ Brief Outline:

The outline has the following parts:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Project in a Bag | suggested time 25 minutes |
| 2. Defining Vision | suggested time 35 minutes |

Part 1) Project in a Bag

Suggested time: 25 minutes

1. Assign students to groups of 4 or 5
2. Distribute one paper bag to each group
3. Instruct groups to take one minute to look at contents of the bag and plan on something to build (they can build anything that they wish)
4. Give groups 1 minute to plan
5. Give groups 5 minutes to build
6. Walk around the room and take notes on students' interactions with each other and leadership styles
 - a. Are there any students who are monopolizing discussion/construction?
 - b. Are there any students who are withdrawing from the group/not participating in discussion or construction?
7. Instruct each group to present their creation
 - a. What is their creation?
 - b. Whose idea was it to build that particular creation?
8. Discussion
 - a. Which group has the best creation (allow students to take a vote)
 - b. Which groups had a plan to begin with (after planning period)? Did you stick to that plan or was it revised or replaced along the way?
 - c. Did everyone feel like they were listened to?
 - d. Did one person dominate discussion?
 - e. Did anyone feel excluded from the group?
 - f. Did anyone withdraw from the group? Why?
 - g. Can we tell which group(s) had a vision and kept with that vision?
 - i. Facilitator should address the specific findings from the walk around the room and use those for each appropriate question above

Part 2) Defining Vision

Suggested time: 35 minutes

1. Ask opening questions:
 - a. What is a vision?
 - i. Write answers on board
 - ii. Open brainstorming to whole group
 - iii. Which of these definitions do you agree/disagree with?
 - iv. Begin to cross off definitions that the majority of the group disagree with
 - b. What are the differences between a vision and a goal?
 - i. Continue to write answers on board
 - ii. Begin to cross off definitions that the majority of the group disagree with
 - c. What is an objective?
 - i. Follow same instructions as above
 - d. What is a benchmark?
 - i. Follow same instructions as above

2. Give an example and create a vision, goal, objective, and benchmark for it
 - a. EXAMPLE – George Washington Carver
 - i. Vision: To make peanut butter
 - ii. Goal: To grow the peanuts to make peanut butter
 - iii. Objective: To grow 3,000 peanuts for the peanut butter
 - iv. Benchmark: 1,500 peanuts in 6 months
3. Define each term officially
 - a. Vision: The act of seeing or the ability to see (forsight); an ideal future state of the organization
 - i. i.e., “All citizens in the United States over the age of 18 vote in the year 2024”
 - b. Goal: A broad general endpoint
 - i. i.e., “To increase voting of all citizens over 18 by 50%”
 - c. Objective: A specific, measurable, time-oriented step toward reaching a goal
 - i. i.e., “To register all 18-year-olds in schools by September 30”
4. Draw a flowchart on the board for students to understand the progression of a vision
 - a. Vision -> Goals -> Objective -> Benchmark
 - b. These, after being established, will create:
 - i. Credible leadership
 - ii. Followership -> Commitment -> Accomplishment
5. Ask students to get into pairs, giving each pair a piece of paper and a pen
6. Instruct students to think about a project that they are or will be working on in the next year
 - a. Create vision statement for the project
 - b. Must have at least two goals
 - c. Each goal must have at least one objective
 - d. Each objective must have at least one benchmark
7. When students are finished creating vision and plan, have pairs get together with other pairs and discuss
 - a. What was difficult about the exercise?
 - b. What questions do they still have about visions and goals
 - c. Did they create something that was manageable?

Credits:

1. Based on “Creating a Shared Vision” by Steve Janowiak, 1999.