

# IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

## A T R U S T W O R T H Y S A Y I N G

NO. 15

Peter Drucker said, "Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately deteriorate into hard work." Once a vision has been well defined and 'sold' to the followers, the hard work of implementation begins.

Three simple yet essential steps are required to move a vision toward completion: 1) the work must be divided into smaller, manageable tasks, 2) the tasks must be sequenced and 3) the work must be assigned to the right people.

### **Divide the work into manageable tasks**

High capacity leaders are not overwhelmed or paralyzed by the magnitude of the work ahead. They may scratch their heads for a while, and they may feel inadequate for the challenge, but eventually they figure out what to do and how to approach the tasks. I use the plural *tasks* because leaders understand that large, complex challenges must be divided into smaller, manageable pieces. When Jesus fed the 5,000 (have you ever cooked for 50?), He had His disciples divide the people into groups of 50s and 100s. When Nehemiah rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem he assigned various people small sections that were challenging but achievable projects. When Moses led the construction of the tabernacle, the work was divided into many smaller tasks.

Smaller tasks provide the workers with the hope that the job will eventually be finished. An overwhelming challenge needs milestones and progress points so that accomplishments can be celebrated and movement toward the end can be noted. The completion of smaller tasks keeps hope alive as workers strive toward the big prize down the road.

Smaller tasks give ownership and significance to the workers' contribution toward the larger vision. Each follower can point to the part that he or she played to achieve the desired result. A story is told of former Washington Redskin's football coach, George Allen. Walking down the hall (in the pre-email era) he encountered a mail clerk delivering the interoffice mail. Allen stopped him and asked, "What are you doing?" The young man replied, "I'm delivering the mail." To which Allen responded with an animated rant, "You are not delivering the mail! You are helping the Washington Redskins win a Super Bowl. The only reason you deliver mail is so that we can win the Super Bowl. That's the only reason any of us are here is to win the Super Bowl!" All the little tasks must be aligned to accomplish a big objective and to achieve the desired end.

### **Sequence the work**

Once the task has been dissected into manageable parts, the leaders must sequence the events so that dominoes fall in the proper order. Funding must be available, materials need to

be in place, early steps must be completed in time to ensure the smooth flow of activity and that waiting, down time, and delays are minimized. PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) charts, flowcharts, critical paths, and numerous computer programs help organize and sequence the work. Essentially, competent leaders figure out what little tasks need to be done to achieve the desired result and then determine the sequence in which those tasks need to be accomplished.

Leaders sequence activity and coordinate followers to enhance each one's input and to help each follower feel a sense of satisfaction with their contribution to the accomplishment of the bigger goal. Leaders need to help their followers understand that their participation is critical to the team's overall success.

### **Assigning tasks to the right people**

Eventually someone has to do the work. Assigning the right people to do the right tasks is essential for successful implementation. Leaders can't do it all and they shouldn't. Actually, for a leader to be a leader he or she must determine what needs to be done and then find the right followers to do the work. Ultimately, leaders are measured by what gets done not by what they do. Therefore, leaders have to ask the critical question, "what is it that only I can do?"

Once the essential leadership tasks are determined, everything else is assigned. The Old Testament is filled with many passages listing the workers who supported the efforts of great leaders like Moses, David and Nehemiah. Finding qualified people to do the work is critical for the success of the project. A good plan needs good followers for successful implementation.

Selection must be based on both the follower's skills and character. Each person must have the ability, knowledge, skills and experience needed to do the required tasks. But that person must also be trustworthy. They must have the character and personal skills to function in an environment of trust and cooperation.

Job descriptions explain the specific role each follower will play and what is expected. Organizational charts describe the flow of information and the lines of authority. Everyone should understand how their work fits into the big picture and how they are contributing to the overall success of the vision.

For a vision to be implemented, work must be done. Leaders must ensure that the right tasks are accomplished to achieve the vision. To see the vision on to completion, implementation requires dividing the work into manageable parts, sequencing the tasks into a logical progression, and assigning the work to people who have the skill and character to do accomplish the tasks.

*This lesson written by Dan Bolin is a part of a larger series on leadership called "A Trustworthy Saying." Find more teaching/lessons available for download for free at: [www.refuelinginflight.com/trustworthysaying](http://www.refuelinginflight.com/trustworthysaying)*