

# CEO's Speak on Leadership: Vision and Passion

by Marie J. Kane

Our organizations demand effective, heartfelt, committed leadership. Leadership is more art than science. Being a good leader is more about who you are and how you manifest that than what you know. Consider vision. What is vision as an attribute of leadership? Vision is the dream of what can be within the context of the greater purpose and values of an organization. It is a quest for that envisioned future. Vision is allowing yourself and those you lead to fully grasp the juicy possible future and commit to reaching for it. As Peter Senge said "If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create." Some of the CEO's interviewed had this to say about vision.

## **Ulf Petersson, President, Megadoor, Inc., Peachtree City**

*Manufacturer and installer of overhead doors for civilian and military aviation, mining, aerospace and others with similar needs.*

"Vision is about what you want to be. It can't be something that doesn't have strong contours or is a mirage. A vision has got to be clear. You can see it out there. But I think before you show people where to go, you've got to show them where they are and where they've been. I think you need to start working on history within your company and find out what you started with, what you've come through, what kind of culture you've bred into the company, what your learning process has been and where you stand today. I think you have to teach this to employees. You're going to bring people with you and I think you can create vision in the company in this way. Employees also have to understand the economic realities of the corporation. I think until you accept those realities it's very hard to create a good vision for the future."

## **L. B. "Bud" Mingledorff, President, Mingledorff's Inc., Norcross**

*Carrier HVAC distributor for the state of Georgia since 1939 and one of the largest Carrier distributors in the country.*

"One of the challenges is developing a transferable vision. You don't lead people by pushing them. All great leaders seem to have a teachable vision. You've got to have a vision you can communicate. Then you have to communicate it. And that's how you get buy in. You want people to instinctively know how to act in the context of the vision. I honestly believe that when people buy in to that core idea, that bedrock that the company anchors itself against, then so much else becomes easier."

## **Dave Schmit, Senior Vice President, Morrison Homes**

*Major builders of homes.*

"You walk the talk. That's where being a leader comes to pass. When we talk about vision, that means taking the time out to express your vision in every moment, at every turn. I tell all our managers to picture themselves as being on stage at all times. That is their opportunity to know that when they're doing something, saying something, body language, eye contact, every little thing has an effect. People are watching and they're watching to learn and understand what is the message you're sending. If it is consistent and if it reinforces what you want and if it reinforces your vision, then people start to fall in behind it. I think the key for showing leadership is articulating that vision at every appropriate circumstance, whether in a group or one-on-one."

**Here are several questions that have been of use to clients in determining their vision. Test or create your company Vision with these questions.**

Do you have a clear, well-articulated and communicated vision in your company?

What is our greater purpose?

How is that manifest now?

How could it manifest in the future?

How do we want it to manifest in the future?

To what do we aspire?

Does this picture of the future excite us?

How is this congruent with our values?

What would the future look like if we fully realized this vision?

What would it feel like to be a part of that?

How can our vision be communicated to everyone who needs to know? (Consider not only employees, but also strategic partners, vendors and others involved.)

How do we enroll all the players in this vision?

As human beings living life fully our vision for our own life carries us forward and provides the focus and motivation to be the leaders our organizations so clearly

need.

Let us now turn our attention to Passion as an attribute of leaders. Passion is an intense emotion that compels action. When we feel passionate about our vision for the future it provides us with an unequalled source of energy. It enables us to survive setbacks and to persevere in the face of challenges and uncertainties. In passion we know ourselves to be fully alive and are profoundly grateful for it. Effective leaders are passionate about their vision. Individual communication styles vary, but what they all have in common is the power to move people. Passion is communicated through clarity, intensity, commitment and authenticity, regardless of style. The same CEO's as above had this to say about Passion.

### **Dave Schmit**

"Passion comes through whatever your medium of communication. Passion drives a long way because that's where the energy starts to take over. You are so in love with something, you are so behind something that the energy just free flows right out of you and the passion is clear to everyone."

### **Ulf Petersson**

"I can hardly think of any successful company that hasn't been started with a tremendous amount of passion. I think the entrepreneurial drive requires passion, but as an organization changes you have to be careful with entrepreneurial passion. I think passion has to play an important role in your company."

### **Bud Mingledorff**

"I really love the concept of passion as a piece of leadership because I don't think that anybody can lead anything if they have no passion about it. Leadership has so much to do with pulling people along rather than pushing them along. To pull you have to be able to shake their opinions. It's very difficult to shake people's opinions about things that you have no passion about yourself. Passion relates to energy and energy relates to really being able to get control of your life. When people think that someone else is in control of them then they don't have much passion. You have to teach people that their jobs are how they perceive it. They teach you in kung fu that competition is within you. What you're doing is you're competing with your inner self to become your very best. And if you can become passionate about that then how can you not be passionate about your job because it is you. The other thing is that people can get passionate around a new idea. There needs to be something new from time to time, a central idea that people can then take and go out and develop within their own teams. I think that to be a rip roaring success you have to have ability. I don't think you can go further than your ability goes. I can have tremendous passion around tennis, but I don't have the ability of Jimmy Connors. I will never be as good as Jimmy Connors. Now Jimmy Connors could never be as

good as he is if he didn't have passion around being a tennis player. To be world class takes both passion and ability."

David Whyte in *The Heart Aroused* said, "Being in touch with fire and passion seems to be an essential need for the soul of a human being."

**Ask yourself these questions.**

Do I communicate my passion and enthusiasm for the company's vision and for my job?

Do I connect often enough and directly enough with those who need to see my passion?

Are my actions each day congruent with what I say is important? Do I walk my talk?

If any of the above are answered no, what obstacles are in the way of communicating and sharing my passion for the vision, the company and my job?

What can I do to positively address these obstacles? Will I commit to taking action?

**As effective, positive leaders we are focused by vision and fueled by passion. We must engender the same in those who look to us as leaders.**

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**Marie J. Kane is President of Executive Evolution; A corporate coaching and consulting firm established in 1981 that specializes in Executive Coaching, Leadership and Management Development; Strategic Thinking; Team Effectiveness; Employee Selection/Retention and Relationship Improvement. [Info@ExecutiveEvolution.com](mailto:Info@ExecutiveEvolution.com) 770-461-3820**