

Leadership Barometer 204 Leaders as Artists

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP



For the last 50 years of his life, my father was an artist. He painted thousands of pictures from all over the world and died just short of 102. For the last five years of his life, he was too feeble to travel and was totally blind. He had to experience scenes and paint them vicariously. That condition did not dim his enthusiasm for the thrill of painting.

Two days before he died, he told me he would paint me pictures from heaven. Whenever I look at a beautiful sunset or a special tree, I can see his handiwork.

I learned many skills from my father over the years. I did not learn to paint myself, but I did realize a valuable lesson about leadership. In my first book, I make the following statement about leaders. [Leaders become the artists who carefully paint the picture of a better future on the canvas of today's paradigm \(pg 119\)](#)

Artists paint pictures to impact organizations

By painting a picture of an improved organization, leaders create optimism and enthusiasm. People can see for themselves how the world they will experience is better than the one they have. That realization creates a sense of excitement that helps the organization reach its vision.

Values and Vision are the most important

There are all kinds of statements in a typical strategic plan for an organization. Here is a listing of the statements I try to include in any strategic document.

- Values
- Vision
- Mission
- Purpose
- Behaviors
- SWOT
- Required changes

- Strategies
- Tactics
- Measures
- Goals

That is a lot of information, but I believe the first two items are the most fundamental.

Values form the foundation for everything that happens in an organization. Leaders always need to model the values and insist that everyone else in the organization do the same. The values do you the most good when they are difficult to follow.

Vision is what gives the organization direction and a glimpse of where they are going. Without a good vision, an organization is like a ship without a rudder. More importantly, the vision provides the means to engage everyone in the organization. Leaders who provide a clear vision are like artists who paint the path forward.

Summary

In summary, a good vision provides purpose, alignment, motivation, strategic direction, effective communication, and adaptability to an organization. It serves as a unifying force, driving collective efforts and inspiring individuals to achieve shared goals. Make sure the leaders of your organization see their role as the artists of the future.

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