THE CHALLENGES OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

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Abstract
Vision is a mental mode of a desired future state of a person, a group or an organization. A visionary leader must therefore have a cognitive image of the future which is positive enough to members of his organization so as to be inspiring, motivating and elaborate enough to provide direction for future planning and goal setting for his organization. Visionary leader must also possess the qualities of integrity and internal consistency within an organization to enable the visionary leader to cope with the challenges confronting him in the accomplishment of his set goals for his organization. This paper explores some of the challenges confronting a visionary leader.

Introduction
Leadership qualities are rear commodities which largely define success in business. A visionary leader is an icon and a genius that can lift a company from the ordinary or even obscurity to an enviable height and accomplish his company’s goals beyond set targets and corporate expectations. His leadership style makes him a friend of people who report to him. This is accomplished by developing warm and supportive relationships with his employees. However, he must avoid creating situation by which some of his employees become tempted to take advantage of his relationships as some would see him as being too friendly. He must therefore strike a balance between being a friend and being a boss.

Goal setting
According to a renounced authority on leadership, Thomas Greenberge, quality vision should be well defined and shared by stakeholders. This is critical to goal settings for an organization. To accomplish this, the leader must be a role model in the vision implementation. He should endeavor to empower stake holders in a critical condition of successful implementation while ensuring that his vision exudes integrity and internal consistency. This will encourage others to be unique and creative.

Solutions to problems solving
1. Leadership qualities are rear commodities an highly define success in business. A visionary leader, as stated earlier, is an icon and a genius that lifts a company from the ordinary, or even obscuring to an enviable height and accomplish the company’s goals
beyond set targets and corporate expectations. His leadership style makes him a friend with people who report to him by developing warm and supportive relationships with his employees. However, he must avoid the situation by which some of his employees become tempted to take advantage of his relationship if he is perceived to be too friendly. He must therefore strike a balance right between being a friend and being a boss.

2. This paper will in the next chapter elaborate the challenges of a visionary leader especially in the areas of decision making, risk taking and the nature of mistake that confronts him.

3. Group decision making
A visionary leader must be a team leader. Hence he must engage in group decision making. This has its advantages and disadvantages. Argument for group decision making include among others:
1. Ability to obtain more information and expertise relevant to the decision through
2. Sharing with others diversity of experience and perfections that could enhance productivity through alternative methods

Making mistakes
A visionary leader, being human and inclining to be innovative and risk-taking, must guard against mistakes leaders make. They are
1. Being too hands off
2. Putting paper works before people
3. Failing to give clear feedbacks
4. Resisting new ideas
5. Dictatorial in decision-making
6. Hurrying recruitment
7. Not treating all employees equally
8. Failing to provide clear direction
9. Failing to react quickly to problems
10. Trying to be friends with direct reports

To elaborate when a leader becomes too “hands off” there is the tendency that a manager could complete an important project wrongly because he misunderstood the project specification, and that the leader kept aloof from him. He could be engrossed with paper work and pay less attention to the work force. Such a leader feels his employees bother him which he regards as interruption and would prefer to be alone to get his work done.

Lack of feedback
According to 14,000 executive polled by the Ken Blanchard researchers, failing to provide feedback is the most common mistake leaders make. When you don’t provide feedback to your workers you are depriving them of the opportunity to improve their performance. It is a hallmark of visionary leadership, for CEOs to see their employees as their greatest resource for ideas that will make them and their employees successful. They should give their employees space to make decisions and let those who are responsible for projects or assignments decide how the job will be done.

Staff matters
A visionary leader must give adequate attention to staff problems. A leader must not ignore unacceptable behaviors in such that (a) no one else will notice (b) it will correct self and/or go
away. He must not make the mistake of saving up a laundry list of occurrence in the hope that when added together, they will justify penalty.

Among staff problems are arguments over their future in the company, malicious gossips, bad language, excessive tardiness or absenteeism, gross misconduct, incompetence, inefficiency, insubordination and high error rate. These factors when allowed to linger too long without appropriate management human responses could lead to condoning enemies within the organization with adverse consequences.

Just as it is presumed that employees are often a company’s biggest resource so is it equally true that they are the biggest liability. As reported by Schumpeler’s article, ‘The Enemy Within’ in the Economist of July 25th 2015, scarcely a week goes by in the United States without a company falling victim to employees-turned-enemies or embarrassments. The most familiar type of enemy from within is the fraudster. The Economist Intelligence Unit, a sister organization of the Economist published in London, conducts a regular poll of senior executives on the subject of frauds committed by insiders. In 2013 the poll discovered that 70% of companies had suffered from at least one instance of fraud. Some frauds can be very harmful such as selling stolen company’s technology and operations secrets to rival companies. Even more dangerous than fraudster is the vandal. Fraudsters are mostly thieves who have a rational motive. But vandals are driven by a desire for revenge that can know no limits. A company that specializes in corporate investigations, in the United Kingdom, David Robertson Intelligence Inc, told the story of a British manufacturing company that was undergoing restructuring under a new capable visionary leadership. A member of the company’s information technology department discovered that his name was on the list of those whose service would no longer be required. He built a “back-door” into the company’s IT system from his home computer and set about wreaking damage by deleting files, publishing the Chief Executives E-mails and distribution pornographic pictures to undermine the company’s integrity. One of the most effective ways for outsiders to damage a company is to strike a relationship with an insider. This can sometimes be fairly crude such as bribing a cleaner to replace a keyboard with a carefully modified look-alike or swapping a USB stick for virus-laden doppelganger.

What can companies do to reduce the threat from wolves in sheep clothes within their workers? Much will depend on the leadership style. A visionary leader must bear in mind three precepts. The first is that firms need to focus on the people who have the greatest capacity to do harm especially those who control money and information. The second is that of human touch by mounting surveillance around suspected staff. But the best way to fight enemy from within is to treat your employees with respect. And this third principle is where most companies fail. A visionary leader must therefore explore this principle in order to achieve his companies vision and goals.

**Strategic Leadership**

Strategic leadership is demonstrated when a visionary leader as the Chief Executive of a company mobilizes his top managers to convey a compelling vision of what they want the organization to achieve to their subordinates. He must carry everyone along. If subordinates buy into the vision, and model their behaviors on the leader, they develop willingness to undertake the hard, stressful work that is necessary for creative, risk-taking and strategy making. Though the company’s goals should be challenging, they should also be realistic so as to give managers at all levels the impetus to look for ways to enhance organizational performance. A goal that is unrealistic or unattainable soon kills managers incentive and create the urge to give up after a
reasonable period. They therefore inject a sense of urgency into goal attainment and act as a motivator.

**SWOT Analysis**

In formulating this strategy for achievement of his goal, a visionary leader must need to adopt SWOT analysis. By definition SWOT analysis is a planning exercise by which managers identify irrational organization strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) and external environmental opportunities (O) and threats (T). Based on a SWOT analysis, managers at the different levels of the organization select the corporate business and functional level strategies to best position the organization to achieve the mission and goals (Jones/George).

The first step in SWOT analysis is to identify an organization strengths and weaknesses (such as quality skills in marketing and in research and development) and weaknesses (such as rising manufacturing costs and outdated technology). The task facing the visionary leader is to identify the strengths and weaknesses that characterize his organization and others around him. Based on these, resulting strategy he applies will ultimately guide him to overcome possible obstacles and attain the company’s goal.

Visionary leadership requires further articulating a clear vision and energizing and enabling organization members understand the part they play in achieving organizational goals, which is one of the principal tasks of management. Leadership involves making managers use their power, personality, persuasion and communication skill to coordinate their supervisors and workers under them so as to achieve the organizational vision and goals. Leadership in this regard revolves around encouraging all employees to perform at a high level to help the Leader achieve his organizational vision and goals. Another outcome of leadership is the cultivation of a highly motivated, hardworking and committed workforce which must trust their leader to achieve the desired goal. General Stanley McChrystam, one of the most visionary and accomplished Generals in American Armed Forces, observed on 31th August 2015, on CNN Public Affairs programme, that if “You will win the trust of people, you must unleash their initiatives,” this accounted for his success in leading American soldiers in the Middle East Wars.

**NORMS AND VALUES**

Norms and values of an organization’s culture are very hard to change; the older and the bigger the organization the more difficult it is to change the mindset of the top managers of the company. This mindset arises from the natural tendency of top managers to protect their ego and their positions in the company. Overtime they become more and more defensive and concerned to defend their fiefdoms or empire especially when their organization face problems of poor performances and dwindling returns in the face of competitor.

An example is the Ford Company in USA. The company recorded a record loss of $13.3 billion in 2006, after which, William Ford III, who had been CEO for the last five years, decided he was not the right person to turn around the company’s fortunes. In fact, he was a part of the problem because it turned out that over the years, Ford had developed a corporate culture based on empire-building, in which top managers had emulated them; They strove to build their own empires, and to protect those empires, they would never admit that mistake had occurred. Finally, Ford’s Board of Directors realized they needed an outsider, a visionary leader, to change Ford’s culture. They recruited Alan Mullally in 2006 to become Ford’s new CEO. Mullally had earlier been recruited by Boeing to lead the turnaround of the company’s unethical culture.

After several interactions with top and middle level staff of Ford, Mullally soon discovered that over the years Ford had developed a tall hierarchy composed of managers whose main goal was to protect their turf and avoid any direct blame in its plunging car sales. So when asked why car
sales were falling, they did not admit to bad design and poor quality issues in their divisions instead they hid the details. Mullally later realized that the problem was values and norms in Ford’s culture that had created a situation in which Heads of divisions and functionaries thought that the best way to maintain their jobs and salaries, was to hoard information and not share it. Thus, values and norms of secrecy and ambiguity and of emphasizing status and ranks to protect information, had developed. Mulally then issued orders that managers of every division should share with every other division a detailed statement of cost they incurred to build each of its vehicles. By this he broke down the self protective culture and initiated a control mechanism in outputs, behavior and clan that altered the way the organization operates. These measures helped immensely for the turn-around of Fords Company fortunes. It is obvious by the example, that the mindset of managers and employees which determines how they control employees goes a long way to determine a company’s future success.

A byproduct of organization control must be of concern to a visionary leader or CEO on how to harness his top management team to help his organization achieve its mission and goals. Top management teams should be made to be responsible for developing the strategies that result in organizational competitive advantages. In forming his top management team, the visionary Leader/CEO should ensure diversity in experience, skill and knowledge.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNANCE

Visionary leadership is also necessary in governance and economic development of a country. Examples abound. In USA visionary leaders like George Washington led America to independence while Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr. Abolished slavery and ensured liberation of African-American from the shackles of racial bondage respectively. The vision of Martin Luther King Jr. was exemplified in his famous slogan ‘I have a dream’ which he pursued relentlessly and paid supreme sacrifice that today made it possible for an African-American, Barack Obama, to emerge as the President of the United States, He was immortalized by the American Government for his Visionary leadership quality by declaring his birthday as a national public holiday. Obama himself won the presidency in 2008 with a vision ‘‘YES WE CAN’’ that inspired the depressed Nation in an economic recess to turn around the economy. This he did and got a new mandate to accomplish more for America. For this, he was awarded the prestigious Noble Peace Prize.

There was Mahatma Gandhi, whose visionary leadership by mobilizing his Countrymen on civil disobedience against the British colonialists, won independence for India. Other great visionary leaders included Nelson Mandela whose visionary leadership through mass mobilization and resistance against apartheid eventually led to political emancipation of Africans in South Africa. In Nigeria, General Murutala Muhammad who overthrew the corrupt government of General Gowon and laid a foundation for sanitizing the public service before he was assassinated. But his vision lives on as President Muhammad Buhari who once waged war against indiscipline in Nigeria has been returned into office to prosecute his avowed war against corruption and general indiscipline in the public service in Nigeria. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was one great African Visionary Leader who threw his writings and persuasive politics encouraged other African leader to struggle for the liberation of their countries from colonial domination.

Some Other Visionary Leaders In Modern History include, President John Kennedy, who was one of the youngest president America ever had in the early 1960’s. In his presidential inaugural speech he inspired America to rise to a greater achievement by saying ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, Ask what you can do for your country’’ Before he could deliver on his
vision to launch man to the Moon, he was assassinated but his vision was realized few years later.

Sir Winston Churchill of United Kingdom, became one of the greatest war prime ministers by his visionary leadership of his country facing defeat by the German forces in the 2nd world war. When the morale was very low and hope was fading away he inspired his countrymen not to give up but to fight in the air, in the sea and on the land- and to offer nothing but sweat and blood to ensure victory He eventually led his country to victory.

In Business, there are visionary leaders and entrepreneurs like Bill Gates whose creativity and innovation of Microsoft transformed the computer world. Mark Zuckerberg, a young entrepreneur who’s ideology and vision brought about online marketing and social networking like Facebook and Twitter. Aliko Dangote, by any means, is a phenomenon with the impact he has made in the industrial landscape of Nigeria and in a number of African countries. The Nigerian billionaire, owns the Dangote group, which has interests in commodities spanning Nigeria and other African countries. As of January 2015, he had an estimated net worth of US$18.6 billion. Dangote is ranked by Forbes magazine as the 67th richest person in the world and the richest in Africa.

In religion, Pope John Paul was outstanding as a visionary leader who systematically brought rapprochement between Christian religious sects and between Christianity and Islamism. He played an outstanding role in the difficult task of brokering a lasting peace in the Middle-East between Israelis and Palestinians.

CONCLUSION
A Visionary Leader, whether spiritual or temporal, must never allow sentiments to dilute his strength. He must never let sociability make him to sacrifice supreme interests under the cover and pretext of a false usage of St Paul’s words about becoming ‘all things to all men’ Leadership absolutely demands the characteristics of dependableness. As observed by T. Austin-Sparks, an authority on Christian Leadership, leadership may adjust on points and be open to progressive light, but as to the ultimate divine vision, He will die or resign rather than betray or recant. He is no time server or opportunist, He cannot be bought off. He is going on or he is going out. He has seen, and he can never unseen, He says ‘Here I am, I can do no other, My God help me or…………this one thing I do’ Such is faithfulness and undeviating committal to a leader’s vision towards the accomplishment of his goals.

Finally, It is to be observed that the range of problems that a visionary leader faces, is enormous. He must frequently deal with many problems simultaneously, often must make snap decisions and many times, must rely on intuition and experience gained throughout his career, and never losing focus of his vision to achieve organizational goals.

References

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