



Facet: Vision

Bringing Vision into Focus: Five Tips to Tackle Leaders' Weakest Link

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Jun 6, 2017

Creating and communicating the vision effectively to engage and inspire the organization is essential to leadership success. In their research on [Ascending to the C-Suite](#), McKinsey found that this is the most important factor for a successful transition into a new C-suite role: 88% of the 1000+ executives they interviewed said it was very or extremely important to create a shared vision and alignment around their strategic direction across the organization. This is also among the most difficult things for leaders to carry out: just 30 percent of all respondents (and 39 percent of those reporting successful transitions) say it was easy to create a shared vision in their new role.

This finding comes as no surprise to us. In our [Bates Executive Presence Index \(or Bates ExPI™\)](#), of the 15 different facets that we measure that collectively comprise executive presence, the one that gets rated dead last is Vision. The consistency of this finding across the 1,000+ leaders who have taken this assessment is striking and calls out the critical need to address the vision challenge for any leader looking to make an impact.

Understanding the Vision Challenge

In the Bates model, Vision is equal parts strategic thinking and inspiration. Some leaders get high or low ratings on both elements, while some receive more mixed reviews—relatively high on items related to strategic thinking but much lower on inspiration, for example.

Predictably, this topic of vision comes up very frequently when we conduct ExPI insights conversations with the leaders who take the assessment. So why is Vision the lowest-rated facet? Here are four observations we have made in working with leaders to understand their feedback and their behaviors.



- Leaders may confuse a quantitative goal with an inspiring vision... and most people aren't inspired by, say, reducing cost of goods sold by 5%.
- Leaders may believe that articulating a vision is not really a part of their job description unless they're in the C-suite.
- Leaders get the idea that they need to be the source of the inspiring vision... and they don't know how to come up with one.
- Some leaders do have a good vision but believe that being emotionally inspirational is just not in their DNA.

Tips to Tackle the Vision Challenge

How can we as leaders overcome these obstacles? Here are five tips for amplifying the facet of vision and connecting more effectively to inspire, steer, and motivate others:

- Go on a "Vision Listening Tour" to get others' ideas about what an inspiring vision might look like—then synthesize and share what you learned, giving credit where it's due.
- Be sure to talk about a powerful purpose or mission regarding where you're going and why as an organization, function, or team—not just quantitative goals.
- Share success stories to help make your vision feel more realistic, exciting, and attainable.
- Remember that you can be inspiring without going against the grain of your authentic voice and style: You can share your vision quietly and calmly if that's who you are.
- Remember that articulating a vision is a job for every leader at all levels... and set aside time for creating and communicating it on your calendar.

If articulating a vivid and compelling vision is difficult for you, take some comfort in the fact that you're in good company! On the Bates ExPI, leaders who get high scores in the facet of Vision are definitely in the minority. To flip that around, though, imagine how much you'll stand out among other leaders if you can turn this quality from a development theme into a strength! When you bring Vision into focus, your stakeholders will be ready to set their sights on a future that feels like the possible dream.



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