

The Starting Point for Discovering Vision and Values

Personal convictions are the seedbed for forging a compelling vision and shaping core values. These convictions must never be generated out of thin air or influenced simply by the latest leadership fad or trend. Somewhere deep down in the gut you will discover some things you believe in – some things that are non-negotiable about life, work, love, faith, relationships, leadership and the world. That is where you will find your Vision & Values.

So here are a series of questions first for Vision discovery and clarification.

- 1) **What does the future look like when things are working extremely well?** Not perfectly...that's idealism. You need a vision that can be rooted in reality. So describe the future when the vision is now a fact. What has changed? What problem have you solved?
- 2) **What does it feel like to be there?** You probably have some sense of what it feels like as you imagine your dream coming true. Yes, what are your emotions? What wells up inside you as you see the vision becoming reality – joy, satisfaction, relief, hope, exhilaration, power, or freedom?
- 3) **Who benefits most from the vision becoming reality?** Imagine the people your team is serving or helping or providing a quality service to. Will it be children in poverty, adults without meaningful work, people with disabilities, a company without quality management, a non-profit that lacks solid leadership? What is happening in these people and among them? What new world opens up for them because of the vision becoming reality?
- 4) **What change is taking place inside you?** How are YOU different because the vision is a reality? What character changes are happening? How are you approaching your work? Have your priorities changed?

KEY VISION RESOURCE: Chapters 5 & 6 of [The Leadership Challenge](#) by Kouzes & Posner are worth the price of the book – and more – on the process of creating a shared vision.

Now for questions to help shape your core Values

- 1) **What is true for you?** This means, deep down inside you, there are things that do not waver – core beliefs that define how you see the world. These may be the result of experiences, values handed down by parents or mentors, religious convictions, or simply things you just know to be true (treating others with respect is the right thing to do.)
- 2) **What makes you sad?** This is a way of discovering values by looking through a different lens. When you view the world or work or your organization, what makes you sad? What do you wish would change? This is probably related to a value or belief you hold dear. For example, in a team meeting you see a weaker person get belittled by another member of the team. The strong personality of the culprit crushes the weak spirit of the team member, who does not respond in the moment but feels shame or intimidation. The anger you feel is tied to something

you believe about justice, fairness, or perhaps kindness.

3) What brings you joy? Now we flip the coin and look at those events or activities that make you smile. You see a need met, a new product developed, a person helped, an obstacle overcome, a friendship grow or a goal achieved. You smile because something feels good at your core.

4) What gives you energy? Though similar to “what brings you joy?” above, this is a bit different. Yes, energy can be derived from people or events that bring me joy. But energy comes from other sources – adverse circumstances, a challenge, a loss, a unique opportunity, a new friendship, a family event, a kind of work, a new mission. What gives you a “rush” and makes you productive, excited about your work in the world, and gives purpose to your life?

KEY VALUES RESOURCE: Here is a short [Forbes article on values-focused leadership by Jansen Kraemer](#) that highlights four core principles leaders can use to lead from a values standpoint.

Answer these questions and record them in your journal. It will help you identify what’s in your gut, what makes you tick. Your personal Vision & Values will get clearer which will also allow you to sharpen the focus of your work and leadership.

Read more from Bill [here](#).