

The Value of Vision, Part 2: Focusing on the Future Sets Leaders Apart

The capacity to imagine and articulate exciting future possibilities is the defining competence of leaders.

For over thirty years authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner (The Leadership Challenge) been asking people what they most look for and admire in a leader, someone they would *willingly* follow.

Their research has consistently found that the quality of being forward-looking is second only to honesty as the most admired leader characteristic.

Unfortunately, it's something that too few fully appreciate, and too many devote almost no time to developing.

And how does a new leader develop the capacity to be forward-looking?

The answer is deceptively simple: *spend more time in the future*. You have to carve out more time each week to peer into the distance and imagining what might be out there. You have to take the time today in order to have the time tomorrow.

Because focusing on the future is the differentiating leadership quality, you need to spend more time reading about, thinking about, and talking about the long-term view. Here are a few ideas that Kouzes and Posner recommend:

- Set up a futures research committee to study potential changes and developments in areas affecting your organization.
- Put together a team to continually track fifty or sixty publications that represent new thoughts on trends in your domain. Ask them to prepare abstracts of articles they think have relevance. A smaller team can then pull the abstracts into reports for use in planning and decision-making.
- Have all the people in your organization regularly clip articles from newspapers, magazines, and Web sites.

Circulate the ideas generated and discuss the impact of trends on your products, services, technologies, and constituents. Use these discussions to help you and your organization develop the ability to think long-term.

It's your job as a leader to lift people's sights and lift people's spirits.

You must remind others that there is a larger purpose to all this doing. You and they are working hard in order to build something different, to make something new, to create a better future.

Invest the time today in tomorrow's future.

Read their entire article [here](#).