

# Consistent communication

## HOW TO SET A VISION FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES

BY MATT McCLELLAN

**A**s chairman and president of Broadcore Inc., a 70-employee telecommunications firm, you'd expect Monty Ferdowski to be fixated on communication.

And although Ferdowski says his fixation is not only because Broadcore is in the communications business but also because he believes that communication is the cornerstone to making sure his employees know what to do and how he expects them to do it.

"A leader should continually share the passion and energy with his or her employees and execute on their day-to-day tasks to help reach their goals and the vision," he says.

*Smart Business* spoke with Ferdowski about how to articulate your vision for maximum buy-in and how to make sure no one loses sight of the big picture.

### Q. How do you develop a vision?

An effective leader must provide a clear vision of the future for the company and get strong buy-in from all the employees on the value of the products and services the company is providing.

But the vision does not just come. It begins to articulate a direction where the company should move to by understanding what customers and clients value. That gets reverse-engineered into what people value, understanding the technology that leads to the products and what those products have value on.

(You should) have articulated that well in advance so that becomes the vision of a leader in the company. The products and services that people value reverse-engineer into what

needs to be done in today's time to be able to have the company move forward.

A great leader articulates the vision and will continuously have that vision in his mind and will continuously do things that will lead to the success of the vision, definitely not thinking short term, to personal interests or doing things that are easy and fun. Instead, leaders must continuously think about the long-term vision. If the leaders can continue to keep that vision clear in their heads, it's easy to not do fun or easy things short term that get in the way of getting into those pitfalls.

### Q. How can a leader share the vision with employees?

By communicating the vision continuously so the employees get the message. The vision may be crystal clear for the leader. He may say it once, and the employees may say, 'OK, I've got it.' But then they go home and they have a burger and forget about it.

So the passion that a leader has for that vision has to be continuously communicated. There must be continuous reinforcement.

A lot of companies with good products have a great vision, but they articulate it once, put it on their Web site, and it's gone. People forget about it. And if employees forget about it, eventually everybody forgets about the vision. The leaders who have articulated it understand the vision much better than anybody else, so they have to continuously communicate that to the rest of the team.

### Q. How do you reinforce your message?

In the form of meetings: group meetings, staff meetings, leadership/management meetings. It is communication in different forms. Most of it has to come in the form of face to face. But some of it can be collateral that we've built, like when we go to the customer and say, 'Hey, look at this great brochure and our great services.'

But at the company level,



**"If employees forget about it, eventually everybody forgets about the vision."**

you can't just create a brochure and give it to folks here. It has to be one on one so they feel

the message, and it has to be continuous so they won't forget about it.

### Q. What are the keys to making sure your communications are successful?

The short, one-word answer to your question is 'listening.' First, hear out your clients to hear what they really want. Then, listen to your employees to hear what they learn from clients and also to find out what they want from the organization and understand their point of view. They are the most important stakeholder in the success of the organization: clients and employees. Continuously listening to them is a better form of successful communications than continuously telling them.

Executing on what's important is rather easy, but if you tell people and they don't execute and they don't understand, it can be difficult.

### Q. How do you get employees to understand and buy in to the vision?

By developing a culture that is focused on customer first and providing a valuable product and service. Tell them, 'You've got a truly valuable product and service that customers value, and if you provide that service, we're going to be successful.'

The culture has to be customers come in first, and we have to have valuable product that customers would want. ... By developing a culture that is customer-first, then additionally providing a valuable product and service, the buy-in from employees is rather easy. <<

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