

MOTIVATION - EMBODIMENT

A T R U S T W O R T H Y S A Y I N G

NO. 18

I'm not much of a scientist, but as I understand the theory of vaccinations, the goal is to give a person a weak, small or dead sample of an illness to keep them from getting a powerful, full-blown or even deadly form of the disease. Leadership can be like this. Leaders too often vaccinate people around them against their cause and do not "infect" them with the authentic challenge of change and achievement.

Why is this? Because the leader does not have the real "disease." If an ineffective leader is not a carrier of the vision or values of the organization, then he or she is just a spokesperson. I have been in conversations and meetings where people have "sneezed" their vision all over me. They have infected me with a powerful and incurable passion to join them in their cause. The reason they impact me is because they have the real disease.

Infecting another person means the leader must carry the live virus.

Aligning a person's behaviors and attitudes with the vision and values they espouse creates a powerful and persuasive force. But this demands that the leader's life embody the things he or she says. It means congruency between word and deed. It means walking the walk as well as talking the talk.

A leader must embody the vision if he or she hopes to inspire and motive others to follow. A leader's behavior, attitudes and espoused values must be congruent with the vision that he or she is pursuing. A leader must live what he or she wants others to become. The shared values of the institution or group must be embraced as personal values. The corporate mission must align with the leader's personal mission. Without compromising the leader's objectivity or having his or her identity intertwined with the institution in an unhealthy way, there must be congruency of purpose, values and behavior between the leader and the institution. No one wants to hire an obese fitness instructor. Questions swirl around the bankrupt financial advisor. And a cardiologist who smokes has little credibility encouraging patients to quit.

Leaders must recognize the importance of embodying the values and vision of their organization. They must live out the things they say are true. A core value of integrity must move from a plaque on the wall to a life that is genuine and authentic. A core value of respecting individuals must lead to honest, encouraging and personal interactions.

One of my seminary professors could never remember my name so he always called me "Pine Cove." He had spoken at the camp several times and attended the annual faculty retreat, so he

associated me with the ministry where I served on summer staff while in college and for two years between college and seminary. But it bothered me that when I passed him on campus he would say, "Hello Pine Cove" and not "Hello Dan." I was miffed that my identity – as far as he was concerned – was all wrapped up in my work and ministry. Reflecting back, more than three decades removed, I feel better. Now I'm satisfied that, at least for him, I embodied the ministry that I represented. I would have liked for him to learn my name but I'm honored that, at least in his mind, my life embodied the vision and values of the camp.

We smile at the old saying, "Never trust a skinny chef." But more powerful than the positive impact of congruency is the negative impact of incongruence. A life that is lived contrary to one's stated beliefs leave incalculable damage. De-motivating followers through inconsistent behavior and attitudes is easier than inspiring them to action through a sincere life. Consistently living out your vision and values is important but the flipside is devastating. Constancy builds trust, but lack of fidelity to the cause destroys the trust that bonds leaders and followers.

No one is perfect. We all make mistakes and we all need forgiveness. For the most part, people are willing to show grace and forgive if errors are admitted and mistakes are owned. Sometimes admitting mistakes and confessing errors creates a stronger bond and motivates followers even more than a leader's perfect-image management.

Live out the values you state and truly chase the vision you preach. Effective leaders align their personal lives with their corporate commitments. People are motivated by a life that is committed to a cause.

This lesson written by Dan Bolin is a part of a larger series on leadership called "A Trustworthy Saying." Find more teaching/lessons available for download for free at: [www.refuelinginflight.com/trustworthysaying](http://www.refuelinginfllight.com/trustworthysaying)