

Leadership instalments

Inspire Others With Possibilities

By Dan Gaynor

WHEN WE THINK OF VISION, MISSION AND PURPOSE COME to mind most often. While these are important, there is another facet of vision that can really help catapult your team forward: a vision for the individuals you lead.

Think back to someone who inspired you to be your best – maybe a boss, a coach or teacher – someone who showed you what you could become. Don't just read past this. I want you to really pause to think about someone from your past or present – someone who really believed in you and showed you possibilities. How did that person make you feel about your work and the team you were a part of? Become this person for the people you lead. Show them what they can achieve then help them get there, and they will follow you anywhere.

As a teenager, I had a lacrosse coach who understood this – his name was Don Hovis. Although we lost touch many years ago, I can still remember the first day we came together as a team. We sat spellbound as he told us that we could be champions. He described what it would feel like. It was clear that he believed it, and when he finished talking, we believed it. He understood the power of vision. He told us that if we gave him the very best we had, worked hard and followed him, we would taste champagne that season. While he showed us what we could do as a team, he didn't stop there. He took time to get to know each of us, and in his way, he inspired us with personal possibilities – individual goals to reach for. As I write, now years later, I remember the affect he had on me.

He showed us what we could achieve as a team, and he did the same thing for each one of us throughout the season. He showed each of us what we were capable of and then helped us get there. I have never forgotten him. His blend of inspiration and guidance propelled me to one of my best summers as a teenager.

He did a few things that were critical. First, he set realistic goals. He knew we *could* win. He didn't ask for the impossible – he just inspired us to do more. He also rolled up his sleeves to help us get there. He pushed us when we needed it, patted our backs when we deserved it, and worked tirelessly on our skills. He reminded us of our vision constantly. Each time we took a successful step forward he pointed it out. He challenged

us to be our best – he was a tough taskmaster who made real demands but we knew he cared about us. He was demanding *and* caring. Each time I see a leader inspire someone with possibilities, I think of that coach. Become that coach to the men and women you lead.

You will meet some people who are rightly sceptical of vision – it's taken a bad rap in recent years. Too many vision statements went nowhere or leaders got lost in talking about them and didn't do anything to move them forward. Some change visions like seasonal fashions. The vision my coach presented throughout that summer bore no resemblance to those superficial and transient

ones. He described it and we did it.

He inspired better performance by helping the team and each member on it see what was possible. Are you and the members of your leadership team doing this for the people you lead?

For more on how to develop the fullest potential of your leadership team call us for a workshop.

