Just-in-time vision: Vision content and context

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Abstract

For many scholars and practiioners, vision is essential to leadership. The news that vision is a hallmark of effective leadership would be cause for celebration if there were agreement on what it actually is. Just-in time vision brings context to bear upon the problem and posits that there are actually three different types of vision.

Introduction

Whether it takes the shape of a solution to a problem, a goal, or dealing with things that need to be done, leadership is about direction (Heifetz, 1994, p. 26; Northouse, 2001, p. 3; Prentice, 1961, p. 143; Yukl, 2002, p. 7). As Burns so succinctly puts it, "All leadership is goal-oriented. The failure to set goals is a sign of faltering leadership" (Burns, 1978, p. 455).

For many writers in the popular literature, this direction-giving aspect of leadership is called vision and it is essential to leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1997, p. 17; Collins & Porras, 1991, p. 30; Covey, 1989, p. 101; De Pree, 1989, p. 9; Kotter, 1990, p. 5; Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 95; Senge, 1990, p. 206). Many scholars give an equally strong vote of confidence to the importance of vision (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001, p. 54; Conger, 1989, p. 29; J. W. Gardner, 1990, p. 130; Sashkin, 1995, p. 403; Tichy & Devanna, 1986, p. 28). Even though not everyone is enamored with the idea - Bass (1990) barely makes note of it is his 1,182 page book - it is

generally accepted that the "single defining quality of leaders is the capacity to create and realize a vision" (Bennis, 1989, p. 194). In other words, "leadership behavior that is not infused with vision is not truly leadership" (Vaill, 2002, p. 18).

Does vision deserve all this glowing press? Is vision truly "a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power" (Senge, 1990, p. 206)? Is it the "essential *leadership* act" (Vaill, 2002, p. 28 italics as written)?

Seeing Visions

Awamleh and Gardner (1999, p. 359) showed that an "idealized vision can help leaders to enhance their image." A longitudinal study of entrepreneurial firms found that "vision significantly effects organizational-level performance, and vision affects performance directly as well as indirectly through vision communication" (Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998, p. 52). Kotter (1990) places underestimation of the power of vision in his top three reasons for why transformation efforts fail. For Mintzberg (1994, p. 293), "vision - expressed even in imagery, or metaphorically - may prove a greater incentive to action than a plan that is formally detailed, simply because it may be more attractive and less constraining."

Leaders are listening. In 1989, 1,500 leaders from 20 different counties including 860 CEOs agreed that vision was crucial to success (Korn, 1989, p. 157). Popular writers picked up and amplified the importance of vision (Kotter, 1996; Nanus, 1992) and by the mid 90s, all top executives had visions of one sort or another (Larwood, Falbe, Miesing, & Kriger, 1995).

The position that vision is essential has not abated in the new century (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Vision is a top-three management tool used by 84 percent of the respondents from a survey of 708 companies on five continents (Rigby, 2003). If we adopt the viewpoint of Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer (1993) that strategic planning is synonymous with vision, it is the number one "compass-setting tool" used by 89 percent of the respondents (Rigby, 2003).

Not everyone is convinced of the power of vision. A study of 1,400 Australian public sector employees indicated that "articulating a vision does not always have a positive influence on followers" (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004, p. 348). Another study in the Israeli Defense Forces showed that a leader's vision was "not positively related to subordinate identification and trust, self-efficacy, and motivation and willingness to sacrifice" (Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998, p. 400).

The news that vision is a hallmark of effective leadership would be cause for celebration if there were agreement on what it actually is. Vision is "a term used with many different meanings, and there is widespread confusion about it" (Yukl, 2002, p. 283). One study of vision content showed that visions are not necessarily homogeneous and range from the imprecise to the specific (Larwood et al., 1995) and another study of innovative leaders found that all of them had a vision, but the visions varied widely from vague to concrete (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). Though Strange and Mumford (2002, p. 344) concur with these assessments, they found that the common theme in the definitions they reviewed implied "that vision may be conceived of a set of beliefs about how people should act, and interact, to attain some idealized future state."

For some highly regarded practioners, vision is specific enough to have a direct impact the day-to-day efforts in the workplace:

> "A vision gives you a focal point . . . It tells people what's expected of them." Frederick Smith, Chairman, President and CEO, FedEx Corporation

> "A vision provides a framework through which you view everything that goes on in the company and in the external environment." Raymond Gilmartin, President and CEO, Merck & Co ("All in a day's work," 2001, p. 58)

The vision referred to by these deans of corporate America is "valuable because an organization needs to know where it wants to be in order to act in a reasonably efficient manner to get there" (Tichy & Cohen, 1997, p. 173). It is defined by its drive to yield specific results (Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Crosby, 1979, p. 66; Kotter, 2000; Tichy & Cohen, 1997, p. 173; Wheatley, 1999, p. 95). This includes Heifetz's (1994) adaptive work where "a vision must rack the contours of reality; it is has to have accuracy, and not simply imagination and appeal" (p. 24). These visions have an operational texture to them similar to formal planning, which "seems better suited to the tranquilities of peacetime than the disruptiveness of war, especially unforeseen war" (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 115). The visions that yield practical results are the type that Paul Valery refers to when he said, "The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up" ("BrainyQuote," 2001-2003).

Another kind of vision is the type that elevates and takes the organization to someplace new (Conger, 1989, p. 38; Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 119; Senge, 1990, p. 208). It is "a new story, one not known to most individuals before" (H. Gardner & Laskin, 1995, p. 11). Defined by idealism, these visions are "transcendent in the sense that they are ideological rather than pragmatic, and are laden with moral overtones (House & Shamir, 1993, p. 97). These are the kind of visions that Walt Disney refers to in his often-repeated quote, "If you can dream it, you can do it" ("BrainyQuote," 2001-2003).

That there are differences in the definitions of vision is hardly news (Larwood et al., 1995; Yukl, 2002, p. 283). Though vision has been the subject of much discussion, "there has been little definition of content. No one has described how to develop vision that has broad-based commitment. Equally important, there has been little written on how to communicate vision, how to renew it, and how to sustain it over long periods of time" (Quigley, 1993, p. xiii). In all of this confusion, however, patterns begin to emerge. What follows is a list of desirable vision characteristics culled by Yukl (2002) from Bennis, Devanna, Kotter, Kouzes, Nanus, Posner, and Tichy:

> simple and idealistic; a picture of a desirable future; not a complex plan with quantitative objectives and detailed action steps; appeals to values, hopes, and ideals; emphasizes distant ideological objectives; challenging, but realistic; not wishful fantasy; an attainable future grounded in the present reality; addresses basic assumptions about what is important for the organization; focused enough to guide decisions and actions; general

enough to allow initiative and creativity; simple enough to be communicated clearly in five minutes or less (Yukl, 2002, p. 283)

There are contradictions within this list that cannot be easily resolved. For example, how can a vision emphasize distant ideological objectives while also being focused enough to guide decisions? Grouping these desirable characteristics around common themes resolves many of the inconsistencies and it becomes clear that there are not one, but three types of vision as shown in Table 1:

Table 1
Vision Taxonomy

Vision Characteristics from Yukl (2002)	Vision Content
simple and idealistic; simple enough to be communicated clearly in five minutes or less; a picture of a desirable future; not a complex plan with quantitative objectives and detailed action steps; appeals to values, hopes, and ideals; emphasizes distant ideological objectives;	Transforming
challenging, but realistic; not wishful fantasy; an attainable future grounded in the present reality	Organizing
addresses basic assumptions about what is important for the organization; focused enough to guide decisions and actions; general enough to allow initiative and creativity	Stabilizing

Contexts and Leadership

We study effective leaders and successful organizations because we want to learn their secrets so that we can be like them (Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Collins & Porras, 1994; H. Gardner & Laskin, 1995). Regrettably, in the search for a perfect leadership theory, the role of context has been neglected (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). Conger (1999, p. 168) says that it is "clear that from the limited research to date that the leader and their context are intertwined in a complex and intimate fashion." Osborne et al (2002, p. 799) say that one "cannot separate the leader(s) from the context any more than one can separate the flavor from a food." Thus, "context should be explicitly considered when formulating theories" (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003, p. 284).

The recognition that context is important is a not new idea by any means. Over 50 years ago, Lewin (1951, pp. 239-240 italics as written) argued that "behavior (B) is a function (F) of the person (P) and of his environment (E) . . . to understand or to predict behavior, the person and his environment have to be considered as *one* constellation of interdependent factors." Blake and Mouton (1964, p. 260) called this the culture of the organization and made an essential factor for organizational development:

> Accordingly, a condition for organization development involves the situation as a whole, that is the *culture* of the organization, with all that the world *culture* implies. Anything less is likely to be ineffective or piecemeal, or may even stimulate active resistance.

> Thus, a first answer for the question, 'What is the unit of development?' is *the whole situation*.

Common sense dictates that context matters, that "our inner states are the result of our outer circumstances" (Gladwell, 2000, p. 152). Indeed, the "corporate world is filled with stories of leaders who failed to achieve greatness because they failed to understand the content" (Bennis, 2004, p. 52). Even so, traditional leadership approaches rarely consider it (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Yukl, 2002). They "usually start by discussing individuals and what they do" (Osborn et al., 2002, p. 799), a practice that has persisted into the era of new leadership approaches like transformational and visionary leadership (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001).

Some of the neglect is due to the intricacy of context itself and the difficulties with building, testing, and using contingency models (Osborn et al., 2002; Yukl, 2002). Gladwell (2000, p. 160) attributes the neglect of context to the Fundamental Attribution Error in which "human beings invariably make the mistake of overestimating the importance of fundamental character traits and underestimating the importance of the situation and context [because the] FAE makes the world a much simpler and more understandable place."

Yukl (2002) identifies five situational influences: level of management, size of organizational unit, lateral interdependence, crisis situations, and stage in the organizational life cycle. Khandwalla (1976/77) discusses six contexts: size, turbulence, hostility, diversity, restrictiveness, technical complexity. Conger (1999, p. 165) argues that there are essentially two contexts: "the outer being the environment beyond the organization and the inner including the organization's culture, structure, power distribution, and so on." Gibbons (1992) uses information complexity and resource scarcity to characterize contexts.

Most people are familiar with the idea of context because they understand the reality of the passage of time, a context "missing for too long from our management theories and practices" (Greiner, 1998, p. 63). The idea is taught in schools and in churches and many couples start their marriages with the recognition of context through Ecclesiastes: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Barker & Burdick, 1985, p. 994). As Gardner and Laskin (1995) observe, a vision is "not just a headline or snapshot, but a drama that unfolds over time" (H. Gardner & Laskin, 1995, p. 14).

Just-in-time Vision

Manufacturing concerns certainly understand time. Just-in-time manufacturing is a technique now widely used. In simple terms, it means that "a manufacturing system should produce goods in response to customer demand - the 'pull' - rather than producing goods and then trying to sell them, - the 'push'" (Lareau, 1991, p. 250). Just-in-time manufacturing is a contingency theory in that the firm does not manufacture the product internally until the customer has ordered it externally, which depends upon the customer's situation at the time.

Like just-in-time manufacturing, just-in-time visions change with the context of the organization. If the circumstances call for a vision that is transforming, one is given. If an organization is in a period of stability, a stabilizing vision is used. In the just-in-time vision concept, it is the degree

of stability for the organization internally and externally that has the greatest bearing on what type of vision to use (Tushman, Newman, & Romanelli, 1986; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). This is the fundamental principle of the punctuated equilibrium model (Boyne & Gould-Williams, 2003; Tushman et al., 1986; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985).

In the punctuated equilibrium model, "organizations evolve through convergent periods punctuated by reorientations (or recreations) which demark and set bearing for the next convergent period" (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985, p. 171). While Tushman & Romanelli put a name to the concept, it is not a new idea. Greiner (1998, p. 56) introduced his evolution-revolution model in 1972 arguing that organizational life advances from "a period of evolution, with steady growth and stability, and ends with a revolutionary period of substantial organizational turmoil and change."

Whether called punctuated equilibrium, evolution/revolution, or Frantz's (1998) ground travel/space travel, the concept is the counterpoint to "Darwin's model of evolution as a slow stream of small mutations, gradually shaped by environmental selection into novel forms" (Gersick, 1991, p. 10). In the punctuated equilibrium model, reorientations are "relatively short periods of discontinuous change where strategy, power, structure and controls are fundamentally transformed towards a new coalignment [and convergent periods are] relatively long time spans of incremental change and adaptation" (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985, p. 171).

The idea that organizations move through "relatively long periods of incremental change punctuated by discontinuous systemwide change" (Tushman, Newman, & Nadler, 1988, p. 103) is not specific to organizational life. Gersick (1991) found compelling evidence of the model in six theories: individual adult development, group development, organizational evolution, history of science, evolutionary biology, and self-organizing systems. Wheatley (1999, p. 172) describes new science where "no rebirth is possible without moving through a dark passage. Dark times are normal to life; there's nothing wrong with us when we periodically plunge into the abyss." In writing about adult development, Levinson (1986, p. 9) observes that "a phase of building and maintaining a structure is followed by a phase of transformation or transition, which leads to the formation of a qualitatively different structure." Even the stories that we pass down through the ages reflect this model given that "narrative in all its forms is a dialectic between what was expected and what came to pass. For there to be a story, something unforeseen must happen" (Bruner, 2002, p. 15).

Not all punctuated equilibrium models are a two-stage approach. Hurst's (1995) describes a three-stage ecocyle model with emergent action, rational action, and constrained action. Tichy and Devanna (1986) note three phases of transformational leadership for organizations: Act I containing trigger events and felt need for change, Act II consisting of creating a vision and mobilizing commitment, and Act III for the institutionalizing of change.

I use just-in-time vision to demarcate three primary contexts that leaders experience: transforming vision, organizing vision, and stabilizing vision. The need for a particular kind of vision is dependent upon the place and time of the organization with the tipping point being the place where the organization changes dramatically from stabilizing vision to transforming vision. The tipping point is the "name given to that one dramatic moment in an epidemic when

everything can change all at once" (Gladwell, 2000). Figure 1 shows the Just-in Time Vision concept with its three visions.

Figure 1
Just-in-time Vision

Stabilizing Vision	Transforming Vision	Organizing Vision
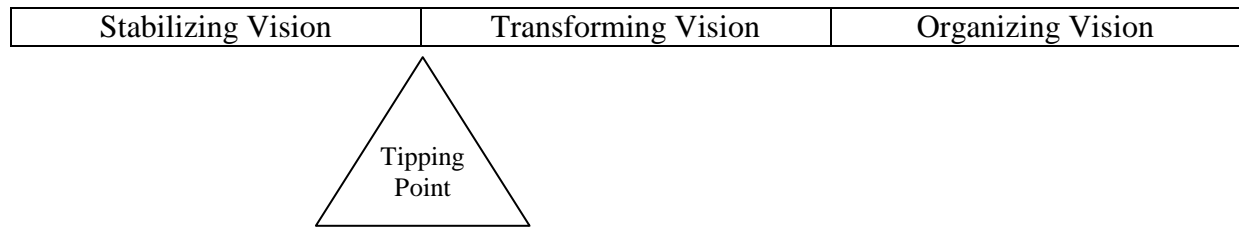
Tipping Point

The tipping point is language borrowed from epidemiologists to describe the point at which an ordinary, run-of-the-mill cold outbreak in a classroom inflects the entire school system and shuts it down. It is the "moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point . . . where the unexpected becomes expected, where radical change is more than possibility. It is - contrary to all our expectations - a certainty" (Gladwell, 2000, pp. 12-14).

Crisis often triggers tipping points. In *Poetics*, Aristotle introduces the term peripeteia, which is "a sudden reversal in circumstances [that] swiftly turns a routine sequence of events into a story" (Bruner, 2002, p. 5). It is but one legitimate definition of in the crisis lexicon that includes the following:

> 1a. A crucial or decisive point or situation; a turning point. b. An unstable condition, as in political, social, or economic affairs, involving an impending abrupt or decisive change. 2. A sudden change in the course of a disease or fever, toward either improvement or deterioration. 3. An emotionally stressful event or traumatic change in a person's life. 4. A point in a story or drama when a conflict reaches its highest tension and must be resolved. ("The American heritage dictionary of the English language," 2000)

Bryson (1981, p. 181) notes that a crisis "occurs when a system is required or expected to handle a situation for which existing resources, procedures, laws, structures, and/or mechanisms, and so forth, are inadequate." Hurst (Hurst, 1995, p. 101) defines the term as "far-from-equilibrium conditions." Intel's Grove (1996, p. 3) calls it a strategic inflection point, which is "a time in the life of a business when its fundamentals are about to change".

For some, these definitions don't go far enough. Gersick (1991, p. 20) says a crisis must be strong enough to cause a substantial reversal in circumstances so that the "system's deep structure comes apart, leaving it in disarray until the period ends." Wheatley (1999, p. 88) borrows from new science to describe crisis as a bifurcation point, which is "known as a moment of great fear, tinged, perhaps, with sense of expectation." Tushman and Romanelli (1985, p. 179) refer to these crises as punctuations that "involve a series of rapid and discontinuous change in

the organization which fundamentally alters its character and fabric." Weick (2003, p. 88) calls this sort of event a cosmology episode where "people suddenly feel that the universe is no longer a rational, orderly system [and a] person feels like he has never been here before, has no idea of where he is, and has no idea of who can help him."

Crisis isn't the only that brings on a tipping point. Just ask, Bob Gilbert, the maker of Laughing Cow cheese, who woke up one morning to find that after years of struggling, an endorsement in *The South Beach Diet* caused demand for his cheese to soar. Trouble was, he couldn't make the cheese fast enough to keep up: "I fought and clawed for every pound I could get in this business and it breaks my heart that we aren't able to ship more" (Imrie, 2004). The experience was completely unexpected, but as Gilbert noted, "I would rather be lucky than smart" (Imrie, 2004).

Executive succession is sometimes a sign of a tipping point in the making or already finished. Tushman and Romanelli (1985, p. 180) say that the circumstances that push an organization to a tipping point will "occur most frequently after a sustained performance decline and will be most frequently initiated by outside successors." Puffer and Weintrop's (1995, p. 60) study of 240 firms that found "poor performance was associated with an external successor to CEOs who were less than retirement age."

The causes for sustained performance decline are numerous and can arise from "problems in achieving internal consistencies, from changes in the external environment, which rend prior patters of consistency no longer successful, or from changes in the internal environment which re-define current performance and/or strategic orientation as no longer appropriate" (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985, p. 197). Shen and Cannella (2002, p. 730) argue that "overly long and overly short CEO tenures are harmful" and suggest that the decline begins at 14 years.

Innovations can bring on tipping points. A longitudinal study by Anderson and Tushman (2001) investigated industry exit in the American cement industry and concluded that "the winds of innovation not only overturn existing industry structures, they create uncertainty that scythes down some of those firms that were able to make a living under an older technological regime" (Anderson & Tushman, 2001, p. 704). According to Christensen and Overdorf (2000), there are two kinds of innovations. Sustaining innovations are "innovations that make a product or service perform better in ways that customers in the mainstream market already value" (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000, p. 68). The innovations that bring crisis to the organization are disruptive innovations that "occur so intermittently that no company has a routine process for handling them" (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000, p. 73).

Tipping points also originate in the environment itself and are frequently out of the control of leaders. Tichy and Devanna (1986) call these trigger events. Greiner (1998, p. 58) suggests that "each evolutionary period is characterized by the dominant management style used to achieve growth; each revolutionary period is characterized by the dominant problem that must be solved before growth can continue." Put another way and in a broad sense, whatever it is that makes the organization successful today will be the cause of its crisis tomorrow.

Sometimes very small things lead to tipping points (Wheatley, 1999, p. 87). This is the essence of the butterfly effect wherein "a small alteration in the initial conditions can amplify into wide-

ranging effects throughout the system [like] the flap of a butterfly's wings in Beijing triggering a hurricane in Florida" (Kelly, 1994, p. 140).

The period leading up to a tipping point varies. It can be short, as was the case for Marsh & McLennan's CEO Jeffrey Greenberg who resigned his post just 11 days after New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer accused the firm of rigging bids in the fall of 2004. It can be much longer, as was the experience of the senior team at Dayton Power & Light Company who stepped down after early two years following the announcement of a significant loss related to dealings in Latin America.

Transforming Vision

The organization during times of transforming vision is focused not on doing work better, but doing different work altogether; it's "like the difference between changing the game of basketball by moving the hoops higher and changing it by taking the hoops away" (Gersick, 1991, p. 19). While very unsettling, this dramatic time of change can renew and recharge the organization and its members. Quick adaptation replaces formal planning because "the environment can become so turbulent that even the very best planning techniques are of no use because of the impossibility of predicting the kind of stability that will eventually emerge" (Mintzberg, 1978, p. 943).

Transforming visions arise after a tipping point, which means these visions are crisis-responsive (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Such transforming visions "start with actions (to deal with the crisis) and then move to new interpretive schemes or theories of action to support or justify the actions" (Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999, p. 425). These transforming visions are typically means oriented and have a survival point of reference. Leaders who depend upon this approach must be "validated by repeated successes in solving crisis" (Pillai & Meindl, 1998, p. 664).

Transforming visions that are crisis responsive will be "short-lived unless the leader remains in a key position and can relate the handling of the crisis to a new phenomenological world with which the followers can continue to identify" (Hunt et al., 1999, p. 425). The leader must segue to a true transforming vision, which will have an ends orientation to it. These transforming visions frequently have a theme to become the best of class in the core mission.

Organizing Vision

Crises abate and people must get to work picking up the pieces and bringing life and organization to the transforming vision. Transforming vision is about survival; organizing vision is about sorting things out. It is time for "know why" leaders to bring up a bit of their managerial know how (Bennis & Nanus, 1997, p. 38). Transforming vision is often about surviving for a better day; organizing vision is about sorting things about.

During periods of organizing vision, people are ready for more structure, formal planning begins to come back in favor, finances are starting to become more important, and conflict is abating. Simply put, the organization is getting itself together, bureaucracy is looming just over the horizon, and people are catching their breath. The approach to decision-making is likely

consultative with the executive director sharing more authority as the organization moves to a time of stabilizing vision (Mulder, Koppelaar, Jong, & Verhage, 1986).

Stabilizing Vision

Much of the time, organizations are in periods of stabilizing vision leaders are "more likely to be averse to risk and to have routinized their operations to the point where rules and standard procedures, rather than leadership, and the primary means of managing" (Conger, 1989, p. 174). Staff turnover will be moderate, finances reasonably in balance, and conflict will be relatively inconsequential. These reinforcement stages can last for years and even decades, but they usually do not last forever. In essence, the organization is reinforcing itself: Infrastructure is building up, legends perpetuate, and human resource concerns are more important. Decision-making is generally participative in texture (Mulder et al., 1986).

If organizing vision is about sorting things out, stabilizing vision is about succeeding. Leaders during times of stabilizing vision intuitively understand that success and steadiness often go hand in hand, that "highly inertial organizations with appropriate strategic orientations will out perform those organizations with shorter and/or more turbulent convergent periods" (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985, p. 195). In essence, stabilizing vision is a time when leaders may find management the byword of the day given that "management is concerned with creating order and stability, while leadership is about adaptation and constructive change" (Northouse, 2001, 12).

In stabilizing visions, the work of leaders is "mostly managing stability, not change [and] getting on with making their organizations as effective as possible in pursuing the strategies they already have" (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 73). Thus, change during periods of stabilizing vision is largely incremental and includes fine-tuning in response to the environment where "well-run companies seek better ways of exploiting (and defending) their mission [with] small changes that do not make too many waves" (Tushman et al., 1988, pp. 110-111).

Organizational life in periods of stabilizing vision varies from "the happy situations romanticized by Peters and Waterman"(Tushman et al., 1988, p. 111) to the world of permanent white water where matters are "only very partially under control, yet the effective navigator of the rapids is not behaving randomly or aimlessly" (Vaill, 1989, p. 2). Turbulence, however, is not revolution as "almost any organization can tolerate a 10 percent change" (Tushman et al., 1988, p. 111).

The focus of leadership during periods of stabilizing vision is on execution where strategies are fine, but the implementation is not (Bossidy, Charan, & Burck, 2002). During these times, the role of leadership is "to reemphasize mission and core values and to delegate incremental decisions to middle-level managers" (Tushman et al., 1988, p. 111). Thus, leadership "concentrates on symbolic actions and behavior" (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985, p. 209).

Times of stabilizing vision are "usually marked by bureaucratic controls, little personal autonomy, and limited room for innovation - a far less attractive environment for individuals with the skills and temperament of a charismatic leader" (Conger, 1989, p. 174). This is the time of the "ordinary leader, by definition the most common one, [who] simply relates the traditional story of his or her group as effectively as possible" (H. Gardner & Laskin, 1995, p. 10). This is

the opposite of times of transforming vision, when a "group or organization is in serious trouble, there is ambiguity about what must be done to ensure survival and prosperity, and there is considerable anxiety or even panic among the members" (Yukl, 2002, p. 246).

Discussion

This paper began with the question of whether vision was deserving of its glowing press. Given the who's who list of its advocates, we must by default assume that it is indeed the "powerful force in people's hearts" (Senge, 1990, p. 206) even if we cannot quite understand how it works or what exactly it is. Perhaps we try too hard to make sense of something with such profound intuitive validity. As we struggle to force ideas like vision "to lie down and behave, to render them properly scientific . . . they seem to lose their emotional resonance, no longer expressing the reality that practioners originally tried to capture" (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989, p. 17). That said, the ideas presented at least arguably resolve some of the confusion around the multiple definitions of vision by introducing context into the discussion. Though just-in-time vision has intuitive appeal, we now need empirically sound research to confirm its validity.

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