Creating a Vision

INTRODUCTION

An effective leader creates compelling visions that guide people’s behavior. In the context of leadership, a vision is a mental model of an ideal future state. It offers a picture of what could be. Visions imply change and can challenge people to reach a higher standard of excellence. At the same time, visions are like a guiding philosophy that provides people with meaning and purpose.

In developing a vision, a leader is able to visualize positive outcomes in the future and communicate these to others. Ideally, the leader and the members of a group or an organization share the vision. Although this picture of a possible future may not always be crystal clear, the vision itself plays a major role in how the leader influences others and how others react to his or her leadership.

For the past 25 years, vision has been a major topic in writings on leadership. Vision plays a prominent role in training and development literature. For example, Covey (1991) suggested that vision is one of seven habits of highly
he argued that effective people “begin with the end in mind” (p. 42), that they have a deep understanding of their goals, values, and mission in life, and that this understanding is the basis for everything they do. Similarly, Loehr and Schwartz (2001), in their full-engagement training program, stressed that people are a mission-specific species, and their goal in life should be to mobilize their sources of energy to accomplish their intended mission. Kouzes and Posner (2003), whose Leadership Practices Inventory is a widely used leadership assessment instrument, identified vision as one of the five practices of exemplary leadership. Clearly, vision has been an important aspect of leadership training and development in recent years.

Vision also plays a central role in many of the common theories of leadership (Zaccaro & Banks, 2001). For example, in transformational leadership theory, vision is identified as one of the four major factors that account for extraordinary leadership performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In charismatic leadership theories, vision is highlighted as a key to organizational change (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, 1977). Charismatic leaders create change by linking their vision and its values to the self-concept of followers. For example, through her charisma Mother Teresa linked her vision of serving the poor and disenfranchised to her followers’ beliefs of personal commitment and self-sacrifice. Some theories are actually titled visionary leadership theories (see Nanus, 1992; Sashkin, 1988, 2004) because vision is their defining characteristic of leadership.

To better understand the role of vision in effective leadership, this chapter will address the following questions: “What are the characteristics of a vision?” “How is a vision articulated?” and “How is a vision implemented?” In our discussion of these questions, we will focus on how you can develop a workable vision for whatever context you find yourself in as a leader.

**VISION EXPLAINED**

Given that it is essential for a leader to have a vision, how are visions formed? What are the main characteristics of a vision? Research on visionary leadership suggests that visions have five characteristics: a picture, a change, values, a map, and a challenge (Nanus, 1992; Zaccaro & Banks, 2001).

**A Picture**

A vision creates a picture of a future that is better than the status quo. It is an idea about the future that requires an act of faith by followers. Visions
paint an ideal image of where a group or an organization should be going. It may be an image of a situation that is more exciting, more affirming, or more inspiring. As a rule, these mental images are of a time and place where people are working productively to achieve a common goal. Although it is easier for followers to comprehend a detailed vision, a leader’s vision is not always fully developed. Sometimes a leader’s vision provides only a general direction to followers or gives limited guidance to them. At other times, a leader may have only a bare-bones notion of where he or she is leading others; the final picture may not emerge for a number of years. Nevertheless, when a leader is able to paint a picture of the future that is attractive and inspiring, it can have significant impact on his or her ability to lead others effectively.

A Change

Another characteristic of a vision is that it represents a change in the status quo, and moves an organization or a system toward something more positive in the future. Visions point the way to new ways of doing things that are better than how things were done in the past. They take the best features of a prior system and strengthen them in the pursuit of a new goal.

Changes can occur in many forms: rules, procedures, goals, values, or rituals, to name a few. Because visions imply change, it is not uncommon for a leader to experience resistance to the articulated vision. Some leaders are even accused of “stirring the pot” when promoting visionary changes. Usually, though, visions are compelling and inspire others to set aside old ways of doing things and to become part of the positive changes suggested by a leader’s vision.

Values

A third characteristic of a vision is that it is about values, or the ideas, beliefs, and modes of action that people find worthwhile or desirable. To advocate change within a group or an organization requires an understanding of one’s own values, the values of others, and the values of the organization. Visions are about changes in those values. For example, if a leader creates a vision that emphasizes that everyone in the company is important, the dominant value being expressed is human dignity. Similarly, if a leader develops a vision that suggests that everyone in the company is equal, the dominant value being expressed is fairness and justice. Visions are grounded in values. They advocate a positive change and movement toward some new set of ideals. In so doing, they must address values.
Leadership Snapshot
Rosalie Giffoniello, Cofounder, Empower the Children

When New Jersey schoolteacher Rosalie Giffoniello decided to travel to India in the summer of 1999, she had no idea that one trip would propel her into a life dedicated to educating India’s impoverished children.

In India, Giffoniello volunteered for a summer at Daya Dan, Mother Teresa’s orphanage for children with disabilities in Kolkata. Using her special education background, she taught some children to feed themselves and walk for the first time. It was then that she made a life-changing decision. “When I went home, I took early retirement from my job, gave away my possessions and returned to Kolkata for good,” Giffoniello says (O’Neil, 2004).

She returned to Daya Dan and spent two years working with the Missionaries of Charity to implement programs in language and teaching the children to feed, dress, and bathe themselves.

The next year, she and a friend, Janet Grosshandler, cofounded Empower the Children (ETC), a Jackson, New Jersey–based nonprofit, to raise funds for Daya Dan. At first Giffoniello’s work and ETC’s funds were channeled toward a number of efforts including an orphanage for boys, a school for the disadvantaged, a home for young adults with mental disabilities, and a tutorial center for teenage girls.

However, when Giffoniello observed that the children with disabilities in the Kolkata orphanages were fed each day and clothed while the homeless “street” children often went without food and the most basic necessities, she decided to broaden ETC’s and her own efforts to address the city’s poorest and most vulnerable citizens (Empower the Children, 2004).

She began working with Reena Das, a local woman who was educating homeless street urchins during her lunch hour on the steps of a nearby office building. Das provided her students with a healthy snack and introduction to the Bengali and English alphabets (Weir, 2012).

In January 2006, under the auspices of ETC, Giffoniello and Das opened their first school in a single-room slum building, which they named Preyrona, the Bengali word for inspiration. Four years later, they moved the school to a two-story building and incorporated vocational education including sewing instruction for teenage girls and neighborhood women.

Two years after Preyrona 1 opened, they opened a second school, Preyrona 2 School,
in a one-room building with a leaky roof and no windows. For the 90 students who attended it, however, it was better than no school at all (Weir, 2012).

Within three years, they opened a third school, this time in a clean three-story building they were able to buy. Housed in this multistoried building, Preyrona 3 opened its doors in January 2009 and provides three separate educational programs for 60 children while also providing vocational programs for older students and their mothers.

Giffoniello teaches at the Preyrona schools, where she has instilled her teaching methodology of self-empowerment and love. In a nation where educators still discipline with a switch, her philosophy was a challenge for some teachers.

“I tell them ‘If you love the children, then they’ll work for you. They’ll want to please you and make you proud. It’s our responsibility to give them the right kind of attention,’” Giffoniello explains. “Happy children become smart children. That’s why we give the children only love” (Weir, 2012).

ETC’s work has attracted many volunteers from different countries and walks of life, who do everything from working on-site in Kolkata, to helping develop curriculum, to raising money in their home countries.

Giffoniello returns to the United States for six months each year, speaking around the country and raising money for ETC. Now more than a decade old, the organization donates funds for teachers’ salaries, clothing and hot meals for children, and supplies, and sponsors cultural drama, dance, and art programs in more than a dozen different institutions, including some in the United States, Mexico, and Kenya.

The following example illustrates the centrality of values in visionary leadership. Chris Jones was a new football coach at a high school in a small rural community in the Midwest. When Jones started coaching, there were barely enough players to fill the roster. His vision was to have a strong football program that students liked and that instilled pride in the parents and school community. He valued good physical conditioning, self-discipline, skills in all aspects of the game, esprit de corps, and an element of fun throughout the process. In essence, he wanted a top-notch, high-quality football program.

Over a period of five years, the number of players coming out for football grew from 15 to 95. Parents wanted their kids to go out for football because Jones was such a good coach. Players said they liked the team because Coach Jones treated them as individuals. He was very fair with everyone. He was tough about discipline but also liked to have fun. Practices were always a challenge but seldom dull or monotonous. Because of his program, parents formed their own booster club to support team dinners and other special team activities.
Although Coach Jones’s teams did not always win, his players learned lessons in football that were meaningful and long lasting. Coach Jones was an effective coach whose vision promoted individual growth, competence, camaraderie, and community. He had a vision about developing a program around these strong values, and he was able to bring his vision to fruition.

**A Map**

A vision provides a **map**—a laid-out path to follow—that gives direction so followers know when they are on track and when they have slipped off course. People often feel a sense of certainty and calmness in knowing they are on the right course, and a vision provides this assurance. It is also comforting for people to know they have a map to direct them toward their short- and long-term goals.

At the same time, visions provide a guiding philosophy for people that gives them meaning and purpose. When people know the overarching goals, principles, and values of an organization, it is easier for them to establish an identity and know where they fit within the organization. Furthermore, seeing the larger purpose allows people to appreciate the value of their contributions to the organization and to something larger than their own interests. The value of a vision is that it shows others the meaningfulness of their work.

**A Challenge**

A final characteristic of a vision is that it **challenges** people to transcend the status quo to do something to benefit others. Visions challenge people to commit themselves to worthwhile causes. In his inaugural address in 1961, President John F. Kennedy challenged the American people by saying, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” This challenge was inspiring because it asked people to move beyond self-interest to work for the greater good of the country. Kennedy’s vision for America had a huge impact on the country.

An example of an organization that has a vision with a clear challenge component is the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team In Training program. The primary goal of this program is to raise funds for cancer research, public education, and patient aid programs. As a part of Team In Training, participants who sign up to run or walk a marathon (26.2 miles) are asked to raise money for cancer research in return for the personalized coaching and fitness training they receive from Team In Training staff. Since its inception in the late 1980s, the program has raised more than $600 million for cancer research. A recent participant said of Team In Training, “I was inspired to
find something I could do both to push myself a little harder and to accomplish something meaningful in the process.” When people are challenged to do something good for others, they often become inspired and committed to the task. Whether it is to improve their own group, organization, or community, people like to be challenged to help others.

To summarize, a vision has five main characteristics. First, it is a mental picture or image of a future that is better than the status quo. Second, it represents a change and points to new ways of doing things. Third, it is grounded in values. Fourth, it is a map that gives direction and provides meaning and purpose. Finally, it is a challenge to change things for the better.

**VISION IN PRACTICE**

It is one thing for a leader to have a vision for an organization. But making that vision a reality requires communication and action. In this section, we explore how a leader can articulate a vision to others and what specific actions a leader can take to make the vision clear, understandable, and a reality.

**Articulating a Vision**

Although it is very important for a leader to have a vision, it is equally important for a leader to be able to articulate—explain and describe—the vision to others. Although some are better than others at this, there are certain ways all leaders can improve the way they communicate their visions.

First, a leader must communicate the vision by adapting the vision to his or her audience. Psychologists tell us that most people have a drive for consistency and when confronted with the need to change will do so only if the required change is not too different from their present state (Festinger, 1957). A leader needs to articulate the vision to fit within others’ latitude of acceptance by adapting the vision to the audience (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). If the vision is too demanding and advocates too big a change, it will be rejected. If it is articulated in light of the status quo and does not demand too great a change, it will be accepted.

A leader also needs to highlight the values of the vision by emphasizing how the vision presents ideals worth pursuing. Presenting the values of the vision helps individuals and group members find their own work worthwhile. It also allows group members to identify with something larger than themselves, and to become connected to a larger community (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).
Articulating a vision also requires choosing the right language. A leader should use words and symbols that are motivating and inspiring (Sashkin, 2004; Zaccaro & Banks, 2001). Words that describe a vision need to be affirming, uplifting, and hopeful, and describe the vision in a way that underscores its worth. The inaugural speech by President John F. Kennedy (see edge.sagepub.com/northhouseintro4e) is an example of how a leader used inspiring language to articulate his vision.

Symbols are often adopted by leaders in an effort to articulate a vision and bring group cohesion. A good illustration of this is how, in 1997, the University of Michigan football team and coaching staff chose to use Jon Krakauer’s book *Into Thin Air* and “conquering Mount Everest” as a metaphor for what they wanted to accomplish. Krakauer provided a firsthand account of a team’s challenging journey up Mount Everest that was successful, although five climbers lost their lives in the process. One of the Michigan coaches said, “It’s amazing how many similarities there are between playing football and climbing a mountain. . . . The higher you get on a mountain, the tougher it gets. The longer you play during the season, the harder it gets to keep playing the way you want to play.” Throughout the season, the coaches frequently emphasized that achieving great feats required tremendous discipline, perseverance, strength, and teamwork. In the locker room, real climbing hooks and pitons were hung above the door to remind everyone who exited that the mission was to “conquer the mountain”—that is, to win the title. The imagery of mountain climbing in this example was a brilliant way to articulate the vision the coaches had for that season. This imagery proved to be well chosen: The team won the 1997 National Collegiate Athletic Association championship.

Visions also need to be described to others using inclusive language that links people to the vision and makes them part of the process. Words such as *we* and *our* are inclusive and better to use than words such as *they* or *them*. The goal of this type of language is to enlist participation of others and build community around a common goal. Inclusive language helps bring this about.

In general, to articulate a vision clearly requires that a leader adapt the content to the audience, emphasize the vision’s intrinsic value, select words and symbols that are uplifting, and use language that is inclusive. If a leader is able to do these things, he or she will increase the chances that the vision will be embraced and the goal achieved.

### Implementing a Vision

In addition to creating and articulating a vision, a leader needs to implement the vision. Perhaps the real test of a leader’s abilities occurs in the implementation phase of a vision. Implementing a vision requires a great deal of effort by a leader over an extended period. Although some leaders can “talk the talk,” leaders who implement the vision “walk the walk.” Most important,
in implementing a vision the leader must model to others the attitudes, values, and behaviors set forth in the vision. The leader is a living example of the ideals articulated in the vision. For example, if the vision is to promote a deeply humanistic organization, the leader needs to demonstrate qualities such as empathy and caring in every action. Similarly, if the vision is to promote community values, the leader needs to show interest in others and in the common good of the broader community. When a leader is seen acting out the vision, he or she builds credibility with others. This credibility inspires people to express the same kind of values.

Implementing a vision also requires a leader to set high performance expectations for others. Setting challenging goals motivates people to accomplish a mission. An example of setting high expectations and worthwhile goals is illustrated in the story of the Marathon of Hope (see Box 7.1). Terry Fox was

**BOX 7.1 Marathon of Hope**

Terry Fox was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and raised in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, a community near Vancouver on Canada’s west coast. An active teenager involved in many sports, Fox was only 18 years old when he was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma (bone cancer). In order to stop the spread of the cancer, doctors amputated his right leg 15 centimeters (6 inches) above the knee in 1977.

While in the hospital, Fox was so overcome by the suffering of other cancer patients—many of them young children—that he decided to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research. He called his journey the Marathon of Hope.

After 18 months and running more than 5,000 kilometers (3,107 miles) to prepare, Fox started his run in St. John’s, Newfoundland, on April 12, 1980, with little fanfare. Although it was difficult to garner attention in the beginning, enthusiasm soon grew, and the money collected along his route began to mount. He ran 42 kilometers (26 miles) a day through Canada’s Atlantic provinces, through Quebec, and through part of Ontario. It was a journey that Canadians never forgot.

On September 1, 1980, after 143 days and 5,373 kilometers (3,339 miles), Fox was forced to stop running outside Thunder Bay, Ontario, because cancer had appeared in his lungs. An entire nation was saddened when he passed away on June 28, 1981, at the age of 22.

The heroic Canadian was gone, but his legacy was just beginning. To date, more than $600 million has been raised worldwide for cancer research in his name through the annual Terry Fox Run, held in Canada and in countries around the world.
a cancer survivor and amputee who attempted to run across Canada to raise awareness and money for cancer research. Fox had a vision and established an extremely challenging goal for himself and others. He was courageous and determined. Unfortunately, he died before completing his journey, but his vision lives on. Today, the Terry Fox Foundation continues to thrive.

The process of carrying out a vision does not happen rapidly but takes continuous effort. It is a step-by-step process, and not one that occurs all at once. For this reason, it is imperative for a leader’s eyes to stay on the goal. By doing so, the leader encourages and supports others in the day-to-day efforts to reach the larger goal. A leader alone cannot implement a vision. The leader must work with others and empower them in the implementation process. It is essential that leaders share the work and collaborate with others to accomplish the goal.

**SUMMARY**

A competent leader will have a compelling vision that challenges people to work toward a higher standard of excellence. A vision is a mental model of an ideal future state. It provides a picture of a future that is better than the present, is grounded in values, and advocates change toward some new set of ideals. Visions function as a map to give people direction. Visions also challenge people to commit themselves to a greater common good.

First, an effective leader clearly articulates the vision to others. This requires the leader to adapt the vision to the attitudes and values of the audience. Second, the leader highlights the intrinsic values of the vision, emphasizing how the vision presents ideals worth pursuing. Third, a competent leader uses language that is motivating and uplifting to articulate the vision. Finally, the leader uses inclusive language that enlists participation from others and builds community.

A challenge for a leader is to carry out the difficult processes of implementing a vision. To implement a vision, the leader needs to be a living model of the ideals and values articulated in the vision. In addition, he or she must set high performance expectations for others, and encourage and empower others to reach their goals.
Chapter 7  Creating a Vision

GLOSSARY TERMS

challenge 146  status quo 142
change 143  value 143
map 146  vision 141
picture 142

SAGE edge™

Sharpen your skills with SAGE edge at edge.sagepub.com/northouseintro4e

SAGE edge for students provides a personalized approach to help you accomplish your coursework goals in an easy-to-use learning environment.
7.1 Case Study
A Clean Slate

Nick Gibbons was described by his classmates at Columbia University’s prestigious School of Journalism as a “hard-core newshound with ink running in his blood.” After working as a beat reporter for 10 years, Nick became city editor of a newspaper in a midsized Midwest town of about 100,000, overseeing a large staff of local reporters and writers.

So when the president of the large media group that owned his newspaper asked Nick to come to its headquarters for a meeting, he was excited. Until he heard what was said. The company was going to stop printing daily newspapers, instead publishing digital editions. Nick’s newspaper would only be printed three days a week; the other days the news would be delivered in an electronic edition. As a result, 75% of the newspaper’s workforce would lose their jobs. As the president witnessed Nick’s shock and dismay, he said, “Nick, we think you are the only editor at your newspaper that can make this happen.”

On the three-hour drive home, Nick realized that change at the newspaper was inevitable. Newspapers had been losing subscribers and revenue for a decade as readers turned to the Internet to get their news. Digital versions of newspapers were cheaper to produce and deliver. Although he did not like the idea of going digital, Nick knew in his heart that he still believed strongly in the importance of reporting the news and informing the community, no matter the format.

To succeed in taking the newspaper to a digital format, Nick was going to have to change an entrenched culture and belief system about newspapers, not only within his staff but among the public as well. To do this, he had to start from the ground up, creating something entirely new. This would require bringing aboard people who were energized about the future and not mourning the past.

His plan employed a three-prong approach. First, he informed the entire newspaper staff that they would lose their current jobs in three months and they would have to reapply for new jobs within the newspaper. The first required qualification was a willingness to “forge the future for local journalism and make a contribution to this movement.” If you can’t let go of the past, he told his coworkers, then you can’t move forward. In the end, almost 80% of the new positions were filled by former staffers whom Nick believed to be the “best and brightest” people the newspaper had.

Second, Nick moved the company’s offices out of the building it had been in for 120 years to a smaller, very public space on the first floor of a downtown building. The offices were located on a corner completely sided by windows, the inner workings of the newspaper on display to passersby. Nick wanted the newspaper’s operations to be very visible so that it didn’t seem like it had just “disappeared.”

Nick’s third approach was what he called a “high forgiveness factor.” What they were creating was new and untried, and he knew
there would be plenty of missteps along the way. He stressed to his new staffers that he didn’t expect perfection, just dedication and determination. For example, one of those missteps was the elimination of the newspaper’s exhaustive list of local events, which resulted in a huge community outcry. To correct this, staffers determined they could satisfy the community’s frustrations by creating a dedicated website for a local events calendar with event organizers submitting the information electronically. A staff member would oversee college interns in editing the submissions and updating the website.

When the newspaper announced its change to a digital format, the reaction was harsh: Readers canceled subscriptions, and advertisers dropped away like flies. It’s been four years since the change, and the newspaper is slowly gaining back readers and experiencing more visits to its website. The sales staff is starting to be successful teaching advertisers how to create digital ads that can reach the right audiences by using behavioral targeting and social media.

QUESTIONS

1. What is Nick Gibbons’s vision in this case study? How is it similar to or different from the vision of the owners of the paper? Discuss the unique challenges a leader faces when required to implement a vision of his or her superiors.

2. Why do you think Nick wanted to open the workings of the paper up to the public? How is this related to his vision?

3. Visions usually require changing people’s values. What desired changes in values are highlighted by this case study?

4. How well did Nick Gibbons articulate his vision for the paper? If you were in Nick’s shoes, how would you articulate your vision in this case?

5. Do you think the newspaper will thrive under Nick’s leadership? Why?
### 7.2 Leadership Vision Questionnaire

**Purpose**
1. To assess your ability to create a vision for a group or an organization
2. To help you understand how visions are formed

**Directions**
1. Think for a moment of a work, school, social, religious, musical, or athletic organization of which you are a member. Now, think what you would do if you were the leader and you had to create a vision for the group or organization. Keep this vision in mind as you complete the exercise.
2. Using the following scale, circle the number that indicates the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have a mental picture of what would make our group better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can imagine several changes that would improve our group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a vision for what would make our organization stronger.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I know how we could change the status quo to make things better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is clear to me what steps we need to take to improve our organization.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I have a clear picture of what needs to be done in our organization to achieve a higher standard of excellence.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have a clear picture in my mind of what this organization should look like in the future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is clear to me what core values, if emphasized, would improve our organization.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I can identify challenging goals that should be emphasized in my group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I can imagine several things that would inspire my group to perform better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visit [edge.sagepub.com/northhouseintro4e](edge.sagepub.com/northhouseintro4e) for a downloadable version of this questionnaire.

Copyright ©2018 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.
7.2 Leadership Vision Questionnaire

(Continued)

Scoring
Sum the numbers you circled on the questionnaire (visioning ability skill).

Total Scores
Visioning ability skill: _______

Scoring Interpretation
The Leadership Vision Questionnaire is designed to measure your ability to create a vision as a leader.

- If your score is 41–50, you are in the very high range.
- If your score is 31–40, you are in the high range.
- If your score is 21–30, you are in the moderate range.
- If your score is 10–20, you are in the low range.

Improve Your Leadership Skills
If you have the interactive eBook version of this text, log in to access the interactive leadership assessment. After completing this chapter’s questionnaire, you will receive individualized feedback and practical suggestions for further strengthening your leadership based on your responses in this questionnaire.
7.3 OBSERVATIONAL EXERCISE

Leadership Vision

Purpose
1. To understand the way visions are constructed by leaders in ongoing groups and organizations
2. To identify strategies that leaders employ to articulate and implement their visions

Directions
1. For this exercise, select two people in leadership positions to interview. They can be leaders in formal or informal positions at work, at school, or in society. The only criterion is that the leader influences others toward a goal.
2. Conduct a 30-minute interview with each leader, by phone or in person. Ask the leaders to describe the visions they have for their organizations. In addition, ask, “How do you articulate and implement your visions?”

Leader #1 (name) ________________________________________
Vision content
Vision articulation
Vision implementation

Leader #2 (name) ________________________________________
Vision content
Vision articulation
Vision implementation

Questions
1. What differences and similarities did you observe between the two leaders’ visions?

2. Did the leaders advocate specific values? If yes, what values?

3. Did the leaders use any unique symbols to promote their visions? If yes, what symbols?

4. In what ways did the leaders’ behaviors model their visions to others?
7.4 REFLECTION AND ACTION WORKSHEET

Leadership Vision

Reflection
1. Stephen Covey (1991) contended that effective leaders “begin with the end in mind.” These leaders have a deep understanding of their own goals and mission in life. How would you describe your own values and purpose in life? In what way is your leadership influenced by these values?

2. Creating a vision usually involves trying to change others by persuading them to accept different values and different ways of doing things. Are you comfortable influencing people in this way? Discuss.

3. As we discussed in this chapter, effective visions can be articulated with strong symbols. How do you view yourself as being able to do this? Are you effective at generating language and symbols that can enhance a vision and help make it successful?

Action
1. Based on your score on the Leadership Vision Questionnaire, how do you assess your ability to create a vision for a group? Identify specific ways you could improve your abilities to create and carry out visions with others.

2. Good leaders act out the vision. Describe what ideals and values you act out or could act out as a leader.

3. Take a few moments to think about and describe a group or an organization to which you belong presently or belonged in the past. Write a brief statement describing the vision you would utilize if you were the leader of this group or organization.

Visit edge.sagepub.com/northouseintro4e for a downloadable version of this worksheet.

Copyright ©2018 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.
REFERENCES


