

Article from **Policy Perspectives**

(http://www.imakenews.com/cppa/e_article000727801.cfm?x=b6Gdd3k,b30DNQvw,w)

January 10, 2007

Who Cares?

by Ken Embley, CPPA

The answer to the question "Who cares?" naturally begs another question—about what? In this case, the "about what" is—**who cares about your organization mission, vision and values?**

I know I am getting cynical in my old age but I must admit to my own frustration when I get a call from a well-intended manager who wants help writing or revising mission, vision and values statements because some higher-ranking manager is insisting. Faced with the managers plea for help, I usually say "yes" when what I really want to say is "Not only no but heck no!" The reason why my answer should be "no" is because writing statements for the sake of having statements leads me to believe that the real answer to the question "Who cares?" is—**nobody cares!**



Continuing with my cynical theme, some managers write these statements because it is a task to complete on an imagined task list that includes writing the statements, framing them on the wall, including them on the website, and announcing them in staff meeting. However, what is most important to the manager is completing these burdening tasks so he or she can get on with real work.

My point, this kind of manager should never write mission, vision and values statements because he or she does not understand the true worth of the statements. Furthermore, I propose that the writing of mission, vision and values statements is not the job of a manager but that of a leader.

You see, a leader is a person who asks questions like "What are we trying to do?"—and this is one of the easiest to ask and most difficult of questions to answer. A mark of a leader, an attribute that puts him or her in a position to show the way for others, is that the leader is better than most at pointing the direction. As long as the leader is leading, he or she always has a goal.

The word goal, as I use it here, is in the special sense of the overarching purpose, the big dream, the visionary concept, the ultimate consummation that one approaches in mission, vision and values statements. A leader always knows the goal and can articulate it for any who are unsure.

Achievement typically starts with a goal but not just any goal and not just anybody stating the goal. The one who states the goal must elicit trust, and a leader does not elicit trust unless followers have confidence in leader values and unless the leader has a sustaining spirit that will support the tenacious pursuit of goals.

Not much happens without a goal and for something great to happen, there must be a great goal. It requires much more than a goal to make it a reality (and that task belongs to a manager) but the clear articulation of a goal must be there first (and that task belongs to a leader).

Perhaps I am being a little too hard on all of us managers who see to the tasks and realities of

day-to-day business. Yet I cannot ignore the essential task of a leader and role of leadership in our organizations. So I persist, some managers seem to write goals to satisfy the requirement to do so but leaders develop goals with followers that give meaning to the reality of a day, an overreaching purpose, a visionary concept and values to sustain efforts.

Who cares about organization goals? If a leader works with followers to bring life to organization mission, vision and values, the answer to the question "Who cares?" is—***everyone cares!***

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