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Visioning- the pathway : A process model

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Visioning

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Abstract

This paper sets out to develop a visioning process management model and clarify the visionary/visioning leadership portfolio of skills.

By defining and examining visioning from a wide range of current and classic texts a series of key themes emerge. These are incorporated in, and indeed help make up, the Visioning Process Model, which not only outlines the make up of the positive Visioning Process, but also clearly shows the effect and pathway of its opposite – the Divisioning effect.

The two vertical pathways meet at the point of the leader's choice and it is demonstrated how this choice has a number of knock-on effects and creates residual causal loops of either a virtuous or vicious nature depending on the direction taken.

Introduction

Vision is important to leadership, strategy implementation and change (Larwood 1995) but whether it is a form of overall leadership in itself or just one of the critical tasks a leaders must perform to demonstrate their competence is unclear.

A pattern of organisational values may make up vision or there may exist a difference between vision itself in terms of its process and content and the whole role it plays in transformational leadership.

If vision is the projected image of the products, services and organisation that a business leader wishes to achieve (Bennis 1985) or “an ideal and unique image of the future” (Kouzes and Posner 1987), then vision as one of the business senses is perhaps less about actual sight than it is foresight. Vision can be divided from foresight where there are those who think foresight is a plural activity, yet a vision can stem from an individual with the sceptical thought that vision can originate from the ego of the CEO (Hamel and Prahalad, 1996).

Whether singular or plural, the term ‘visioning’ then appears to be more future led as it suggests the active occupation of looking ahead rather than merely looking at or analysing something. But is it that simple? By looking ahead, one can foresee events and indeed avoid catastrophes or even positively prepare for economic change, but such prediction is only a narrow part of any true visioning process. The full visioning

package must involve a full commitment to a whole strategic direction and subsequently the strategic planning processes that go with it. But more than predict and react to what is understood to be the future, true visioning creates that future and proactively shapes it. Much more than the ideal that represents and reflects the shared values to which the organisation should aspire (House and Shamir 1993). Complicated in make up, visioning may be more evolutionary in terms of its necessary components than revolutionary and include the company's executional capability (Hamel and Prahalad, 1996).

Such conviction to craft the future is one of the seven sides of the great leader. The six supporting sides being the strength to surface sentiments, a wisdom for pathways through paradox, a flair to engage through dialogue, a discipline to communicate, a passion for results and staying power (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 1999). With the first of these then – conviction to craft the future – or visioning - goes the responsibility for all that it takes to get there. So it is not as simple as creating a long-term strategic direction based on knowledge of the business and intellectual predictions. This is just the starting block and it is a race where the exact place of the finishing tape is the first decision followed by further decisions as to the route to get there, how to get there and who takes it there. The approach is top-down with the long-term goal isolated. The short term components and sub-components are then smaller goals to get there rather than fire-fighting tactics arrived at on a bottom-up basis.

Three core components of this journey can be isolated when reviewing charismatic leadership theories. It is suggested that these components are the communication of the vision, the possession of a charismatic personality style to gain the following and then the taking of the various necessary actions intended to actually implement the vision (Baum 1998).

Charismatic leadership is neither personality based nor contextually determined but more relational and perceptual: “it is not what the leader is but what people see the leader as that counts in generating charismatic relationship” (Willner 1984). This must be key in visioning and there must be a close link between any vision and the ability of the leader to actually communicate it as a “meaning maker” (Conger 1991). Conger supports Baum’s direction in the make up of visioning and his six guidelines also suggest that it is not only a natural process but one that can be manufactured and learned:

1. Frame your organisation’s mission around intrinsically appealing goals
2. Incorporate positive values with stories
3. Highlight key belief categories
4. Employ more analogies, metaphors etc. when speaking
5. When communicating try various rhetorical techniques
6. Allow own emotions to surface

So key themes emerge, the level of personal commitment to the cause or at least the ability to show it cosmetically, repeating the key values and ensuring it is communicated in the right way for the audience.

Vision without morality is nothing less than self interest. Ensuring the values are pivotal to the overall vision is important. Successful visionary leadership not only crafts the end future goal and how to get there but also the reasons for doing so and what that means not only to the company and its profits but also to the teams, and most importantly, to the individuals which make up those teams. There is a certain moral responsibility for ensuring each individual gets their own personal value out of the visioning journey in addition to buying in to the key values of that vision as being right and good for the company.

So “vision can be defined as an organised perception or phenomenon. It is an imagined or perceived pattern of communal possibilities to which others can be drawn, given the necessary enthusiasm and momentum on the part of the leader who is promulgating that vision” (Mordon 1997).

Vision becomes a future to be created rather than a forecast (Parikh 1993) and is an overarching concept under which a wide variety of other concepts are subsumed (Collins 1991).

Creative transformation is risky and this change process involves the use of emotional intelligence and emotional alchemy as well as a healthy and realistic attitude to inevitable bifurcation points (Cooper and Sawaf, 2000) in addition to the other skills mentioned to reduce the risk and increase the chances of success. This is not just about being in tune with one’s own emotional depth but that of the workforce and understanding the practical actions and motivations necessary to head towards the

overall desired outcome as well as use the unexpected collisions as a positive experience to improve.

One overall definition of visioning looks less and less likely and the necessary incorporation of these subsumations in any emerging management tool becomes something of an obligation.

If vision is direction the question also arises as to what exactly the mission of the business is – perhaps it is the purpose or meaning of that direction. These two partners are fashionably sported together. Most corporate literature of our age contains a very carefully worded vision and mission statement but there can be much confusion between the two and original meanings can be lost in the repetitive wheel out of new staff during robotic induction. Vision and mission are words whose power is overshadowed only by the confusion which surrounds them (Raynor 1998).

Direction and purpose must be worked together by the successful leader. Visioning could then be a blend of the two. The vision is future oriented, compelling, bold, aspiring, and inspiring, yet believable and achievable (Levin 2000) and the mission could provide the rationale for the action to achieve (Campbell 1991).

Whatever the confusion between mission and vision it does become clear that the leader must be participative to gain employee commitment to the cause (Brabet & Klemm 1994). Participating in a series of purposes helps affect the overall direction but only after that direction is defined where “vision is a part rational (the product of analysis) and part emotional (the product of imagination, hunches and values)” and

may bring us closer to a true definition of visioning. As a precursor to mission, strategic development, goals, values etc. and a proactive force which precedes them, visioning is the driving force. From “a coherent and powerful statement of what the business can and be (n) years hence” (Wilson, 1992), visioning combines many aspects of the strategic leadership process with organisational focus at all levels.

Discussion

In order to understand why visioning is so important a look at the potential consequences of the lack of it may reveal its necessity. Just what might happen to an organisation without a clear and specific vision? If all the business team members are not facing in the same long-term direction, just what would be the effects of a more chaotic and multidirectional short term approach? (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 1999).

Four steps backwards – without effective visioning

In their study of leadership capabilities Kakabadse and Kakabadse (1999) identified four reasons why some organisations fail to achieve their goals. These four reasons intertwine and evolve from and with each other.

1. Organisational chaos resulting from divisions in the ranks gives rise to a divided company and so
Organisational Division.
2. Paradoxical empowerment where the different agendas of the empowered ranks conflict and cause confusion.
The Paradox in Empowerment then divides the company further.

3. In-fighting which turns the corporate energy in on itself negatively. The **Internal War** then eats away at the company's competitive advantage.
4. Short-term orientation as a result of a survivalist internal environment. Such **Short-termism** becomes infectious and habitual so weakening the long-term ability of the company.

Organisational Division

With no one long –term direction clear to all, many directions evolve from within the organisation from different levels and from different individuals with many and different opinions. By law of probability it is not long before several of these conflict leading to divided purpose and internal combustion.

Much energy is then spent dealing with the dissension rather than externally promoting the business or fighting off competitors. The resulting contradiction is costly as the use of resources is not applied in the most effective way towards attaining results and indeed the duplication of effort drains the said supply more quickly.

Splits of vision through the ranks are problematic enough but can also occur within the senior team. It is one thing having no clear vision or purpose at all but yet another having several company songs to sing from competing members of the top ranks. If different views regarding the direction and purpose of the company in the future are evident from the leading ranks then the chaos is cascaded. This creates internal

competition that will result in poor management of the organisation, a declining performance from the business and massive issues of morale with employees who have less respect for the company.

So it is back to inefficient use of resources – this time the human ones- where it is inevitable unhappy staff will leave taking their talent and knowledge of the business with them and probably use it more effectively with and for the external competition.

Where top ranks are unable to deal with their frictions and leave the boardroom without democratically deciding on a single direction, the resulting tensions from the split approach become the focus for the subsequent ranks within the company. The strained relationships and divided loyalties lead to a lack of trust and resentment. Purpose and direction become caught up in a vicious and downward spiral and the corporate eye is distracted from and taken off dealing with the external environment so reducing its ability to cope with marketplace developments. Blades which should be on the outside of the chariot chopping at the legs of the competition are inside it chopping at their own. There develops paradox in the dissected empowerment as each member must think in survivalist manner.

Paradox in empowerment

This closely links to and can cause or derive from the organisational division above. As if different directions were not enough to cause damage to the company, an evolution occurs within the empowered ranks amidst the confusion. Without an overall vision to believe in and wholeheartedly work for, the different levels of management develop alternative agendas in addition to alternative directions so

convoluting the issue further. This increases the chance of contradiction and further conflict within the company as the internal surface area inflames. Even where the management levels of the organisation have not resigned, they have become resigned to a 'why bother' attitude. They find their input meaningless and so their output is more restricted and so then is that of their staff in turn. Also as some develop a personal agenda to work to, especially with a view to protecting themselves and their teams, there develops a paradox between individual and corporate aim.

The vicious spiral has wound down through the ranks. Without an overall corporate vision or rather the joint act of visioning from the leading quarter, autonomy rules at sectional/divisional level. Rather than one Strategic Business Unit made up of a number of Sharing Business Units working towards the one goal, the collection of Selfish Business Units bleed the corporate reserve for their own survival. As suggested above, it then continues its path to the front-line individual level and employee and corporation are simply not in tune. Each individual is more focused on fighting for their own survival than that of the company, simply because they haven't been given the direction to do so.

With such a survivalist approach at all levels, deriving from the organisational division or the paradox in empowerment, the resulting individual self interest not only steals valuable energy from the external fighting power of the company as a whole but also promotes a culture of in-fighting.

Internal war

So it comes down to the strong promotions of one's own views, not just in terms of differences of opinion but to support a cause or belief where none exists. Once latched onto a direction, any direction if there is no overall alternative, all power turns to that and of course the protection of it. Different opinions are now beyond respect and acceptance as the only way forward seems to be to fight for the belief and so to survive. Colleagues with valuable and energetic input for the company become the enemy and the energy is spent fighting to gain ground inch by inch from the bottom up. This is a slow process and for every inch forward there may be one back or sideways as the company is pulled north, south, east and west and progresses exactly nowhere.

Staff turnover is an inevitable outcome of the discontent and this is self-perpetuating. As new staff eagerly join the company and find themselves caught up in the politics, they too are more likely to leave without their talents having been used. The repeated loss of staff and re-training of new ones just to get back to point zero renders the company static at best and damages its future capacity to do the business in the market it was supposed to.

The working day and patterns become geared to getting through the next increment of time rather than forging forward on an agreed long-term route. The increments of time by nature are small as without future promise all are in need of ready recognition. True, this can be part of a long-term plan in successful companies and under successful leaders good tactics are borne of sound strategy but without a

direction the tactics turn in on themselves. Short-term orientation renders repetitive disadvantage rather than competitive advantage.

Short-termism

En route to survival in this corporate world without visioning there does develop the one common denominator among leaders of all levels – the achievement of quick results. Let's not be fooled. These results are not necessarily achieved with the company's good in mind and are more geared to internal competition and survival and can be achieved at any cost. In these circumstances leaders are not planning for the future but surviving for the present and will put all energies of the team into fast gain. The achieved results are those of their own little company within the original larger one and will not necessarily benefit the latter in the long-term. Indeed, it is quite possible that this approach weakens the long-term ability of the company by depleting its energy in the wrong way. Also, the repetitive nature of such short-term achievement month after month, by its very nature, goes nowhere as it is not refined by long-term purpose and direction. The short-term goal set is achieved and once so it is back to the original starting point for more of the same.

Short-term goals can be valuable and have their place in long-term direction but without that positioning and belonging they form a treadmill of fire-fighting tactics with no arrival point.

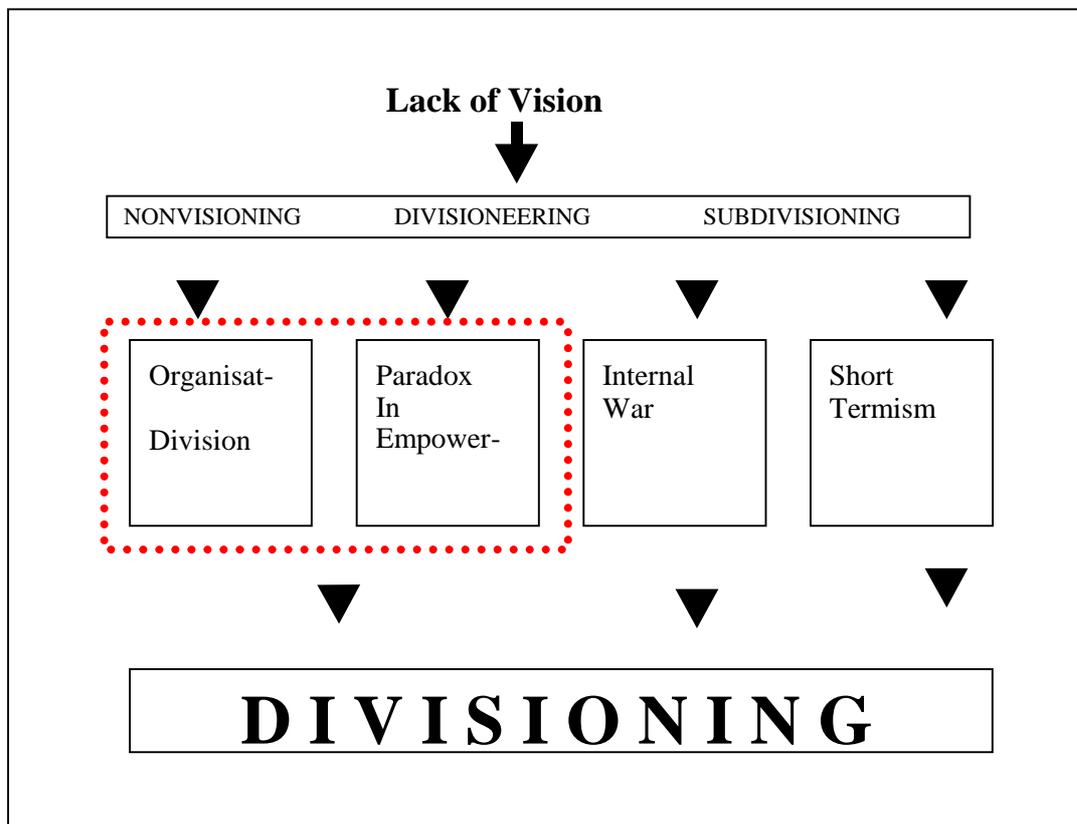
Hence there are four steps backwards where a shared vision is lacking. Each one leads to the other and each part of a causal and vicious spiral downwards in terms of the health of the business.

This lack of vision creates division then in three possible inter-linking ways which all in turn or simultaneously contribute to the four outcomes referred to above.

1. **Non visioning** where the future only evolves from the present and instant results are the main focus. This could be almost an accidental omission of visioning or a careless lack of planning.
2. **Divisioneering** where focus is on short-term individual or departmental performance with punitive measure. This is deliberate and selfish in nature.
3. **Sub-divisioning** where departments and individuals are then forced to work autonomously to survive for themselves rather than for the good of the whole company. This is reactive.

Figure 1 brings these elements together to illustrate the process.

Figure 1: Lack of Visioning



Source: Compiled by the authors

Whether lack of visioning is accidental – non visioning, deliberate- divisioneering or reactive- subdivisioning, it ultimately results in one, or subsequently all, of the four steps backwards illustrated and so towards ‘Divisioning’. The divided then fall if no unity is introduced in order to make a stand towards a shared goal.

It would be naïve to expect the complete eradication of these and that full agreement between leaders can be achieved at any one time. It should be expected that enthusiastic and talented senior management would hold very different personal views as to the future of an organisation they have great pride in. The different ideas should be healthy if well used. Perhaps the difference in successful companies with one vision is that there is a discipline from the senior team where corporate well-being is paramount and rather than fight over their differences they value, manage and respect them. The knowledge that any mismanagement of the internal negotiating process could seriously damage the fabric of the company over-rides potential disputes and indeed tempers any actual ones towards productive output.

Differences of vision need to be cleverly addressed at all levels from corporate to individual in a way which ensures the company is able to operate with its greatest strengths available to it rather than turned in on it. Managing this means mastering the jump from merely having a vision to actually visioning where the diversity is embraced as an integral element of the management of getting there.

Having looked at four elements of a vicious spiral downwards, it is considered that it would be positive and prudent to do the reverse.

Four steps forwards -towards effective visioning

Having had the ghost of fitness future haunt us with the horror of failure, it is not difficult to develop the reverse. The first step is undoubtedly the leader's personal conviction for the cause. This must be followed by securing the commitment and equal conviction of their senior team. As the team cascade the visionary message and break it down into management and motivational chunks, it is essential to have a fast feedback system in place so changes can be made quickly where necessary and any negativity or problems picked up on as soon as possible. Finally, just as negative short-termism is self-perpetuating, an opposite and upward spiral would be to create a visioning culture which perpetuates itself from within in the most positive way possible.

Personal Conviction for the Cause

This should go without saying and is perhaps the pivotal arm of the whole visioning process. Projecting and then directing into the future is an uncertain process so it follows that the intensity of conviction from the 'evangelist' is key. It becomes the personal ambition of the 'visioneer' to make the vision a corporate ambition while at the same time furnishing the practical processes which help the ultimate aim actually materialise. This conviction evolves from the initial dealings with the realities of influencing externalities which help form the vision in the first place through to the staying power needed when dealing with the internal dynamics and politics which inevitably form.

Commitment of the senior team

As previously seen mixed messages from the top will result in a mixed take up of the vision ethos. Visionary success must include the forming of a top team able to respect each other and act with and for each other. With enough room for each of their discretionary breadth, enough debate from differing quarters to form the best and most reasoned approach to issues and an agreed etiquette as to actual delivery, the top team should walk out of the board room door united and leaving their personal opinions behind.

In order to achieve such unity the leading visioneer may have assessments to make about who is actually on that team, not just in terms of discretionary power but in terms of personality. Decisions as to who would bring together a potentially disparate group or who would divide a potentially united group are difficult to reach. Allowing enough room for the most beneficial amount of diversity yet funnelling the energy towards more ready agreement provides plenty of room for visionary energies to be diverted.

Inheriting a potentially disparate team means finding a quality of communication to bind them together and an internal marketing mechanism which not only 'sells in' an idea but achieves 'buy in' through a channel of respect for each of their positions in the company. The top team is treated as such with differences noted, accommodated and highly rated with a pattern of behaviour emerging which ensures the team act as a whole by agreement. This avoids the inward destruction of malicious subordination (Garratt, 2003) borne of reluctant obedience which dissipates quickly and divides loyalties.

A firm respect for the input of the top team and a sound set of rules by which to approach the troops also helps each senior individual correctly apply their personal aims with those of the corporation. If they are able to feel they are part of the overall picture they will more easily differentiate between that which they desire and what is actually best for the organisation in terms of achieving the vision.

Fast feedback

Once the top team are established in this way, a focus on the channels of communication and involvement between them and the workforce is necessary. This has to be sound enough to accommodate the expression of the views driving the various agendas and allow for a continuous flow of opinions in all directions across the organisation.

The openness within the organisation discourages dysfunctional internal conflict and highlights potential issues/threats earlier than they may have been revealed in a more covert and resentful atmosphere.

It is not just a question of not overlooking the opinion of others, and this applies to all levels, but indeed courting their positive and negative feedback. Even more than that, the ability to accept constructive criticism without defensiveness is key in terms of ensuring voluntary and well meant approach on a continual basis. This ensures that valuable information reaches the top team to help them think more widely and to warn them of potential threats in good time. Such information is already there within the ranks of the company and an open and easy to access communication process

prevents it staying at the water cooler or over the coffee cup in the kitchen where it will do the company no good at all and indeed potentially harm it.

Key to the achievement of such a positive feedback culture is a degree of openness and robustness of relationships among managers in the organisation (Kakabadse and Kakabadse 1999). Patterns of behaviour which consistently promote good communication are important conduits towards getting the whole team to face in the same direction and follow the vision. From management visibility on the floor to social get togethers, a pattern of events will glue the teams together and make them more likely to work for the cause because they want to rather than because they have to. Once such activities are set in place each one and each member of staff validates the next and a positive causal effect ensues, a commonality of vision may emerge which incorporates the differences and diversity in the team in a synergistic way.

Such commonality of vision and more is apparent when analysing the leadership tactics of General Patton (Axelrod, 1999). His leadership sprang from a shower of verbal ballistics which cleverly ended in motivating the receiver by allowing them to make a vision of their own within the overall vision – thus giving each a personal stake in what is ahead. This is achieved with graphic references to the worst outcomes on the battlefield, metaphor, anecdote and extremely aggressive and rude language but then taking each individual to their dotage in front of a fireplace with their grandson on their knee – asking what they did in the war. Thus visualising their own homes, future and pride they each owned a part of the overall vision and commonality was achieved.

This is further cemented when the listening ethos of Patton is outlined as an empathic and active one (Axelrod, 1999). General Patton promoted an open door policy for good communication to promote good listening. He said “ If you cultivate an air of remoteness and unavailability, people will stop talking to you, and you will cheat yourself of the single most valuable commodity in any enterprise: information.”

Establishing a visioning culture

In addition to establishing and continuing an overall culture of communication with fast feedback, the visioneer must nurture and maintain a supportive context in order to evolve a visioning culture proper. This, in direct partnership with the fast feedback approaches above, will involve drilling down into the various processes of the company and inspiring the teams at different levels. Understanding the work nearer the frontline and encouraging feedback platforms will help release valuable opinion and knowledge which could be suffocated by a tighter less approachable hierarchy. Allowing an incorporation of influences and opinions into the visioning process from different levels will add towards a shared vision. Then, this shared vision itself could potentially enhance the interaction between team members in its turn, irrespective of whether or not a shared view for the future does actually emerge.

The overall cultural change will also need to be broken down into manageable parts. Manageable milestones are crucial in ensuring as many of the team as possible work together towards an achievable goal and experience a positive view of change in the process so furnishing a further enthusiasm for the next stage and so on. As well as the

evangelisation of the overall vision then, the visioneer must make 'sub-visions' as stepping stones towards it. Such staging highlights to the team their particular ability to do the task giving them greater confidence and they go in addition to creating natural review periods where work can be reassessed to ensure it is further tailored for success.

Within this a common language is cultivated and this cements the experience of the present changes making them firmer in their influence in the foundation for the future. By pivoting on the present and ensuring the experience is good, the visioneer may get more from the team undergoing the changes in terms of new ideas and fresh motivations. This home grown enthusiasm can then make the visioning voyage a self evangelising one. So, a non-linear use of time is the focus. By avoiding too much retrospective reflection, a wider exploration of new possibilities is possible and the incorporation of the whole team within this enriches the overall vision created.

Many levels of sub-vision platform can be created on and under the overall vision platform in order for the whole vision to succeed. They must relate closely to each other through stabilising elements. These then, consist of an environment which supports their intertwining, an agreed common language from the top as well as then used throughout and a common and positive experience of change. The latter broken into manageable stages into which the employee engages fully and goes to internally market the vision tactically at the heart of the company and this feeds back through to the overall vision which is delivered more strategically.

Strategic vision (Westley 1989) could be the starting point then for managing more and more complex companies more successfully. The process above can essentially be broken down into three parts:

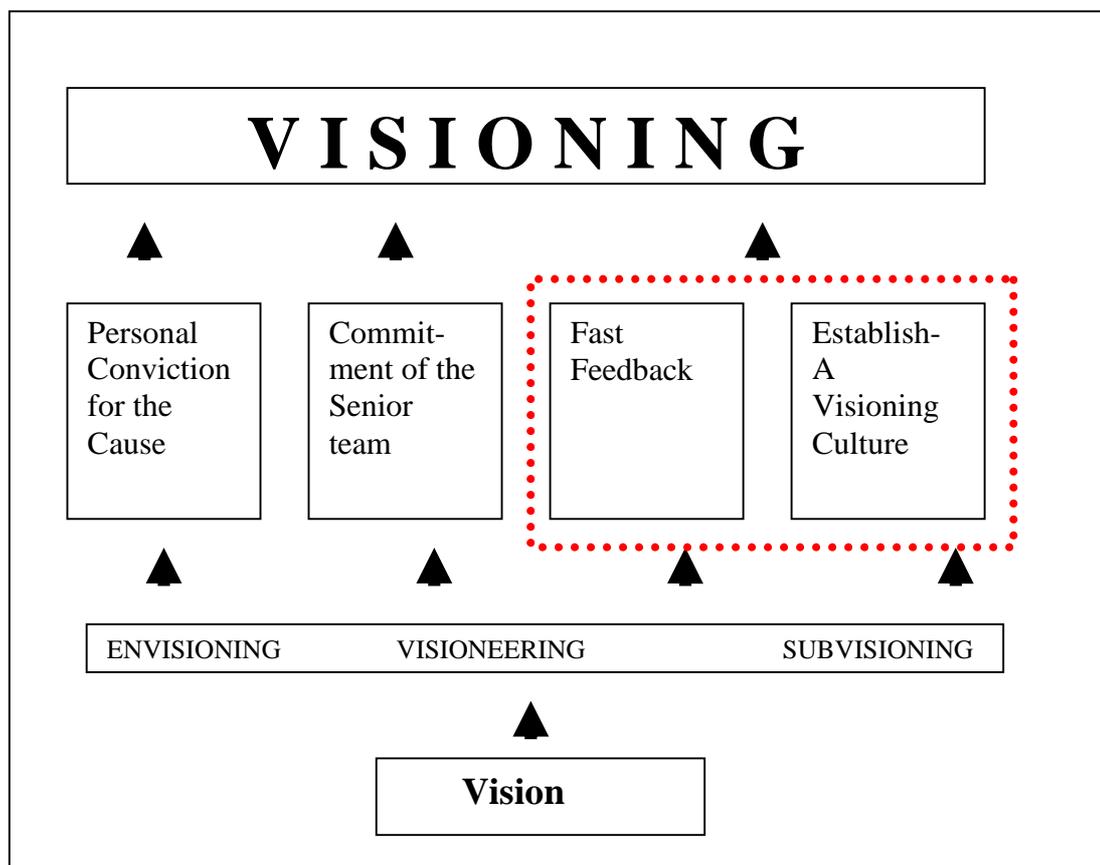
1. **Envisioning** stage where the future is formed and an image/idea of that is created and firmed up. There is a need to find a clear ideal for the future. In the ideal future every person will be able to perceive a guiding value that has evoked the leader's decision. From this ideal, the notion of value must be then expressed as a more concrete image or vision of the organisation, which can encourage people to realise that ideal. The ideal, on its own, within such a vision, is not powerful enough to arouse people to put their energy into action towards it.
2. **Visioneering** stage or Evangelising – where the message is effectively articulated and communicated to followers in the company. This stage also involves the selection of the final vision. It is best done in collaboration with colleagues/team in order to achieve maximum unity. It therefore requires high levels of skill in moderation at all levels to gain the commitment of the senior team for a united front and to handle resultant discussion and debate throughout the company.
3. **Sub-visioning** stage which serves to understand and empower the followers to enact the vision but also be part of it and work with manageable amounts of change. This is the stage of reaching the final vision in a practical day-to-day

way. Working with and holding democratic meetings with stakeholders (e.g. staff, customers etc.) will help reach a final vision through a full and fair dialogue/discussion. Breaking the overall goal into realistic shorter-term targets which complement the chosen direction and motivate the teams to achieve the next stage is a crucial part of the process but very different from the ‘Short-termism’ on the other side of the equation.

The parts can be chronologically applied or indeed used in different degrees at different times to achieve maximum following and success. However used, they would seem pivotal to the degree of success of the whole visioning process.

Figure 2 shows how these fit into the positive side of the visioning process.

Figure 2: Visioning



Source: Compiled by the authors

So, having a vision is different to visioning. Visioning is the action required to achieve the vision and is broken down into a number of essential components. These can be used serially, simultaneously or pro rata necessitum. They are deliberate but positively so. In this case the envisioning, visioneering and subvisioning are a communication and enaction of the overall vision at different layers and levels resulting in and operating with the four steps forward given. As each of these four steps work alongside each other too, it is also expected that they also all apply to different degrees at the different layers within the hierarchy. These positive causal loops operate then with different specifics appropriate to their level but feed into each other in the same way and have the same overall direction and purpose.

In the visioning process leaders need to take into consideration and to examine five complex factors, namely sensations, internal verbalisations and visualisations, feelings, values and interpersonal relations as they all consciously or sub-consciously impact on the envisioning process and can limit or augment it accordingly. Each of these comprises of number of variables (Nevis, 1987: 25):

- *Sensations*: the outcomes of all the senses used to understand
- *Internal verbalisations and visualisations*: from thinking to memories
- *Feelings*: all manner of feelings at the time which may affect acceptance
- *Values*: predispositions, the past and prejudices
- *Interpersonal and group relations*: participation patterns and norms

Visioning vs Divisioning: Leaders Choice or Lack of Insight?

Having travelled down the two pathways and examined the links between stages, the question arises as to where it all starts. Although the journey can be clear to see and even the stage of the journey a company has arrived at easy to plot on the two pathways given, it is not clear exactly what decides the direction towards visioning or divisioning in the first place. Does it come down to individual leadership choice or is it merely a lack of insight? (Kakabadse and Kakabadse 1999).

The leader's philosophy (i.e. held views) may be important. Some leaders do not believe in the softer people skills or "fluffy" stuff of parts of the visioning process and how that feeds into long term profit.

They may believe that coercion is more effective and that autocratic example is truly the way forward. They may even have no option in order to keep their own job safe. Either way, they make a definite choice.

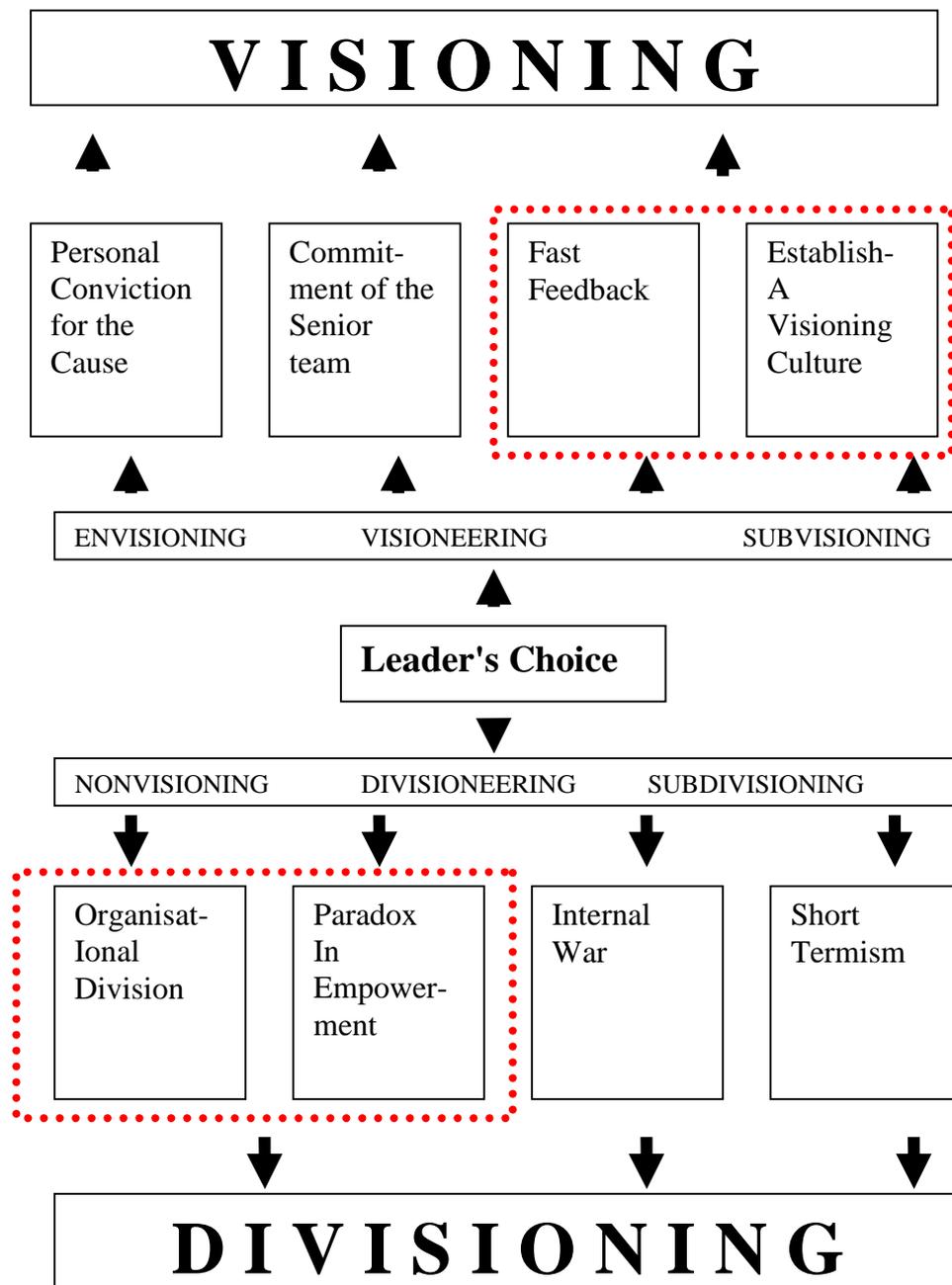
It could merely come down to the ability of the leader and their lack of insight (i.e. lack of imagination) - some simply do not know how to or cannot do it. They may not even be aware of it themselves.

Also, one should not overlook the effects of an entrenched culture within (i.e. a traditional culture that is difficult to change). Embedded views can occur at any level and present the leader with limitations.

It could be said that, whether deliberate or not, a choice is actually made and that that choice dictates the direction of the company towards the vision or towards division. It is decided then to call the central pivot of the visioning pathway – leader's choice – however it came about.

The Visioning Process Model shown in Figure 3 illustrates the key elements of successful visioning while at the same time outlining the consequences of their absence or vision vulnerability (Kakabadse 1991) and the subsequent 'Divisioning'.

Figure 3: The Visioning Process Model (or Visioning Pathway)



Source: Compiled by the authors

Conclusion

So the choice of the leader, whether deliberate or otherwise, has a direct bearing on the overall success of the company in terms of visioning. It is at this central point that the degree of cohesiveness of the company is decided for the future.

Follow the pathway forwards by incorporating the steps illustrated and teams at the various layers are more likely to stick together and work for the overall purpose and direction. It is also likely that as this bond is made by the correct visioning course, it adopts a self-perpetuating adhesiveness with more people more likely to buy into the overall cause from the positive example they see. This could be especially attractive to the newly recruited who buy into the vision from the start.

Follow the pathway backwards, even accidentally, and any existing cohesiveness deteriorates. Teams become more survivalist in nature and look less and less far ahead and work less and less for the company and more for themselves. Energies are turned inwards on internal competition and dispute rather than outwards for the benefit of the whole company in its competitive market. There is not one direction and purpose but many, not one main agenda but many and perhaps hidden at that. In addition to increasing the turnover of existing staff this could be especially unattractive to the newly recruited who find the division within the company too much to bear. High staff turnover rates then cause cyclical problems themselves for the business and exacerbate the problem.

Aside from viewing the possibilities with a vertical eye on the Visioning Process Model, it would be useful to apply it three dimensionally to the many layers within

any organisation. The pivotal leader's choice may not always be that of the overall leader and how the leaders through the layers act can have the same bearings as above and perhaps undo any good visioning work carried out at higher levels. This could equally apply the other way round. Therefore, the visioning or divisioning pathway may be visible many times over within the hierarchy.

In addition to the internal influences on the visioning process it is also accepted that many external influences will affect leader's choice. This paper has not set out to explore those but recognises that constant change makes any visioning diagnosis an ongoing requirement in order for the company to assess its competitive worthiness.

Visioning relies on setting up for and encouraging ongoing synergy as part of organisational culture. The traditional concept of organisational vision was represented with two distinct concepts; as an approach to vision driven business strategy or as an approach to vision driven organisational culture (McGivern 1998). The Visioning Process Model helps identify that vision driven organisational culture or successful visioning precedes and is key to strategic development.

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