

Casting Vision To Volunteers

by Powell Grisham

As I've been putting my thoughts together around the idea of casting vision to volunteers, my mental Rolodex can't stop pulling up incredible events where passionate leaders creatively shared their compelling vision. How about you? Is your mind racing around from event to event stopping on the most memorable highlights? Do you have that one really funny, maybe even quasi-embarrassing memory that immediately popped into your head? For me, the one that's forever affixed in my head is from a corporate event where the president of the organization came on stage in a Superman costume. I mean, he had on the long blue tights and the flowing cape. This was so out of character for him that it left a lasting impression and rallied us all around our vision.

Even if Superman hasn't shown up yet at your event, I'm sure your memories are just as lasting. But I believe, if we all sat together and really evaluated the events we've attended, we would all agree our vision is bigger than the event itself. Even though some events are more memorable than the vision someone was trying to cast, the event is really secondary and simply the conduit used to convey the vision.

So, how do we do it? How do we make sure we're casting a clear vision that's memorable, meaningful and helpful? It involves way more than planning an over-the-top event. Really, the event is the easy part. The tougher part is clearly defining and communicating the vision. During the 10 years I've been in ministry, I've always been involved with a church plant. Of the many interesting things about planting a church, the need to continually cast vision is at the forefront. As we've continued to grow and add new volunteers and staff members, we are constantly casting vision. With that being the case, I want to share a few things I've learned along the way. Now let me warn you, these steps aren't necessarily as fun as planning your grandiose event, but when they are effectively addressed, your show stopping vision casting event will be way more effective.

1.) Clarify the Vision.

I know this sounds simple, and that there is a group of you who are talking to your computer screen and telling me how you and all your team absolutely, 100 percent know the vision for your ministry or organization. Honestly, I'd be doing the same exact thing. But if you're a hard charging type-A leader, it's possible those who follow and support you might not know the vision as well as you do. As a type-A leader, I've learned the hard way that just because I shared the vision with my team and our volunteers once, doesn't mean I did it in a way that helped everyone automatically catch it. I encourage you to first spend time alone making sure you can clearly state your ministry's vision. Maybe your vision has crept or drifted a few clicks from where it started. Maybe you need to take time to narrow your focus and determine if you're doing things that aren't directly tied to your vision. Once you believe you can clearly state the vision, invite your team to help you clarify the wins for all areas of the vision. After you and your team are on the same page, then you're ready to tackle my second idea.

2.) Capture the Vision.

Prior to jumping into church planting world, God had planted me in corporate America . . . where Superman came on stage. I was pushing for the next promotion and striving for an office rather than a cubicle. While I was there, I had a front row seat to what it looks like when an organization effectively captures their vision. The organization ended up with over 6,000+ employees after they made a bold shift in their market and merged with their biggest competitor. Both organizations saw the greater good of the merger, but getting everyone rallied behind a single vision required a clear and concise plan. As they began sharing our new vision, it was obvious the upper management and leadership levels were all on the same page. They all “spoke the same language” and passionately shared where we were heading. Then, in order to help us all “learn the language,” they creatively captured it in writing. There were easy to read, digest and understand overviews of what was shared . . . even down to how we’d write our new organizations name in emails and share it publicly with others. As leaders, we must always remember we think about our vision more than our volunteers. While our volunteers are committed and passionate about what we do, they don’t sit and think about what we sit and think about. Many have full-time jobs outside the home and others have full-time jobs inside the home. In order to effectively engage our intelligent and awesome volunteers, we must capture our vision in a way that makes it easy for them to reference it and repeat it.

3.) Drip the Vision.

I tried to do the three “C” thing with these steps but it wouldn’t work . . . so we’ll have to go with CCD. When we think about repeating the vision in a way that’s easy for volunteers to retain, I have seen and believe dripping it on them is better than drowning them. Think about this in regards to saving for your retirement. All financial investors I’ve talked to say it’s better to put away 10 percent of your income over 40 years than to invest a lot late in life. Drip over time rather than drown. Casting vision is the same. It’s better if we continually drip small amounts over time rather than drown them all at once with an amazing lights, camera, action event. When we slow down and think about this in our own lives, it makes sense . . . and really is easier to implement. We’ve been working with this mindset for quite a while; here are a few ways we’ve dripped vision to our volunteers:

Each week, leaders email their volunteers. It’s doesn’t have to be a long email . . . remember, we’re dripping. We thank, inform, encourage and cast our vision for why we do what do. Also, each environment has a huddle before their service hour begins. Literally it’s 5-10 minutes long—again, we’re dripping not drowning—where we inform them of specific details for the morning, thank them, feed them and cast vision. Here’s the last one I’ll share. When we clarified the win for all our areas within the church, we determined stories of life-change to be one of the best ways to see God working through us and to help us all remember our vision. As a staff, we share these inspiring stories with one another, I pass them along to my elders, we capture them on video and share during a service, we tell and re-tell them to our volunteers. It’s these real life stories that help cast the heart of our vision and keep everyone connected and more importantly engaged.