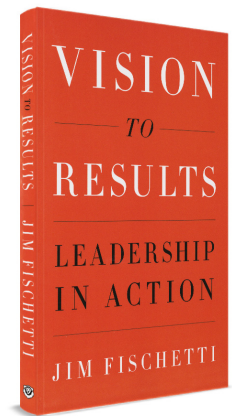


# Vision to Results

Leadership in Action

by **Jim Fischetti**



## Contents

The Crisis In Leadership

Page 2

It All Begins With A Vision

Page 2

Great Visions,  
Communicated

Page 2

Connecting The Dots

Page 2

Empowerment

Page 3

Accountability

Page 4

## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

True leadership involves creating a vision, communicating it fervently, and holding people accountable. A compelling vision is the answer to the big question: what is this company about, and how are we going to achieve our goals? Being a visionary doesn't automatically make you a leader, but leadership without vision isn't leadership. A leader's vision must be communicated to their team or organization; otherwise, it's just words on a wall. And a leader must hold their people accountable to live the company's vision. This is hard sometimes, but accountability is an act of love.

*Vision to Results: Leadership in Action* is intended to offer a solution to the corporate world's crisis of leadership, which manifests in leaders too often valuing caution over everything and companies acting in ways designed to protect the status quo at all costs. Author Jim Fischetti, an ultra-successful leader, innovator, and consultant, has spent four decades refining his notions of what makes a great and transformative leader. He believes that the biggest vision in the room always wins.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The importance of a compelling vision to any organization.
- How to keep your vision from being just words on a wall.
- How your vision and empowerment of your people are connected.
- Why you should think big when crafting your vision!

### The Crisis In Leadership

We live in a time of corrupted leadership. Not corrupt, necessarily, but corrupted. Leaders who aren't accountable. Systems designed to protect the status quo at all costs. These are symptoms of a larger disease, and they are existential threats to the success and longevity of any organization. The common thread running through this crisis is vision. Organizations need a leader with compelling vision who is dedicated to spending lots of time communicating that vision to their people.

One hallmark of the corrupted leader is that they avoid danger at all costs. Gridlock and stasis are the inevitable result. Perfection is an unattainable idea, and failure is underappreciated. It is in failure that growth occurs. Unfortunately, we idolize the image of the infallible leader, and fear of failure leads to paralysis. Leaders who worry about failing are leaders inclined to do nothing in the first place.

The need for instantaneous results has exacerbated the problem. With social media and wall-to-wall media coverage, there's no anonymity to act these days. Leaders have no room to figure things out, so deficiencies in vision inevitably lead to colossal public failures of the kind that don't easily lend themselves to correction. This isn't a call for less transparency. But there needs to be space to be wrong or adjust decisions that don't work out as planned. Without it, leaders take the most cautious route possible—and greatness rarely results from meekness.

There must be mechanisms for holding the leader and the led accountable for achieving the mission. The price for failure to hold people accountable to the vision can be steep. Accountability is a safeguard against failure and an act of supreme care. Too many leaders lack the intestinal fortitude to hold people accountable, and it shows in every public arena.

Real leadership requires a certain kind of strength—the strength to do the right thing, not the thing that necessarily feels the best. Leadership is not for the weak of mind or character. More of us should be more committed to removing bad performers, negative actors, and even mediocre people from our organization more quickly.

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### It All Begins With A Vision

The most common problems with establishing a vision often arise from within.

A vision that isn't communicated isn't a vision at all. Too

often, leaders think there's got to be more to it—there has to be a grander scope to this earth-shattering activity of being the head honcho. They don't understand one key idea: success is simple; it's just not easy.

An insecure leader often needs reassurance that no one else could do the job but them. Complexity is a way of cementing the leader's importance to the organization—but there's a cost. This type of leader creates a role for themselves that's nearly impossible for anyone but them to perform. Others are both baffled by and excluded from the leader's vision.

What is a vision? A mental image of what the future will be or could be. It's rare for the person with nothing but financial motives to achieve massive success. Making money is great, but it's hardly the basis for a compelling vision on which to base the hopes of an entire organization. Compelling visions lead to compelling outcomes.

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### Great Visions, Communicated

Leaders have to achieve absolute clarity is delivering their vision. Muddled thinking at this stage of the process will lead to inevitable confusion among your people.

Conciseness is important, too. Being concise brings rewards beyond taking less time—a concise vision is clearer, and a clear vision may be the difference between people aligning with your mission and their discarding it as more white noise in the midst of a day overflowing with it. Being concise will push aside the unnecessary, so people won't get sidetracked with things that are outside the goal.

Be consistent in communicating your vision. Your message should never change, no matter the audience. And consistency is also about your actions being in alignment with your words. If your actions don't support the articulated vision and mission, then that vision is just a bunch of words on a wall. Communicating a vision is not a one-and-done thing. Be sure to communicate via multiple methods.

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### Connecting The Dots

An ever-present danger is that visions become misaligned. Priorities change and the focus gets blurry, and once the leaders and the led are no longer aligned, things can get tricky.

When everyone in an organization connects through a shared vision, one of the interesting results is that these connections tend to flatten hierarchies. The worth of each per-

son is directly related to the fact that each of them plays a necessary role in executing the vision. In a culture in which every member of an organization is equally important to achieving its mission, leaders can afford a vibrant sharing of ideas and healthy discussions.

The secret to ensuring that staff is connected to the vision is to create measurables that go beyond basic statistics. Get people to regularly tell stories showing how they're carrying out the vision.

Having fun is underrated in ensuring that staff is connecting to the vision. If you as the leader aren't the jovial type, designate a "fun captain" and charge them with making sure people are having fun. Offices in which people aren't having fun are also most likely offices that aren't hitting their goals. People who are willing to laugh and have fun are people who feel safe where they work and likely feel connected to their leaders through the shared vision for the company.

Fear is a sign of a dysfunctional organization. Workers who live in fear of disagreeing with the leadership will keep all their best ideas to themselves. Worse, they might decide against pushing back against the leader's mistakes. Disagreements mean employees feel safe.

Connecting with your people through the vision brings out their best work. If your vision includes space for your people to expand their skills, explore their interests, and bring their best ideas to the office, you will maximize the chances of success.

### The Biggest Vision In The Room

Visions need to be big enough to move people to action and to encompass the individual visions of all the people in the organization.

One of the hallmarks of any big vision is that it is also a little outlandish. We have always loved visionaries who tilt at windmills. The vision should be so outlandish that it causes people to pause. Audacity is attractive. A big vision that's also a little bit crazy will be a siren song to the kinds of people who are looking to connect to something larger than themselves. The why of your vision is important. Ideally, your why needs to connect your vision to a larger goal in order to resonate with people.

A powerful and compelling vision, communicated often and connected to leaders and the led, is like rocket fuel for achieving massive results. One ingredient in formulating this propellant is emotion. Logic will get you only so far.

Emotion is the thing that makes people act.

Highly successful people know when to say no so they can focus their energies on fewer things. This is counterintuitive because it may cause some people to not like you, but it's the essence of great leadership. Saying no protects your vision. It keeps you from getting sidetracked.

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### Empowerment

There is nothing as important in empowerment as how one finds, nurtures, and rewards the people you bring into an organization. These people bring the talent and drive to the task of making your vision a reality. In this context, empowerment is made up of five components: hiring, investing, releasing, rewarding the talent, and letting the talent reward you.

Hire talent that's going to get the results your company needs and invest in that talent to set your people up for success. Then, most importantly, release your talent into the world and allow them to own it. Reward talent. Financial opportunity is important, but there are other rewards too. Bringing additional resources to bear on the work at hand is one reward. If you can make the work component of your employees' job easier, more efficient, and more productive, that is reward in itself. Training opportunities are also a great reward. Finally, let the talent of your people reward you. The natural result of all the work and investment you put in should be getting results through your people.

Empowerment is a two-way street. When leadership empowers the led to accomplish their shared vision, there is an onus on the led to take that empowerment and run with it. To know if they've done so, inspect the work of the people you've entrusted to get it done. And act quickly when it

becomes clear that the vision is not being accomplished.

Empowering people can lead to detachment. The worst thing you can do is become a seagull leader—the type of leader who floats around up in the sky all day, swooping in at the last moment to defecate on people. The result is a lack of ongoing consistency. Even if the leader’s actions are justified, people are going to stop listening after enough squawking and defecating. Course correction is best accomplished on an ongoing basis, not in intermittent bursts of displeasure and anger.

### Accountability

When accountability is lacking, problems and issues arise constantly, forcing leaders to play Whack-a-Mole, smacking down problem after problem. This is inefficient.

Leaders need to remind themselves that accountability is not about simply tracking achievement and execution. Keeping an eye on your people is fundamentally an act of kindness toward them and a demonstration of your care and concern for them.

The leader fosters an atmosphere of accountability through four key attributes: culture, commitment, standards, and expectations.

Culture arises from the answers to these questions: What does your organization stand for? What is it like to work there? What types of people do you seek? It is imperative that every member feels committed to the organization, from the top to the bottom. Culture drives the standards to which you hold your people. The organization either has high standards or none at all. Pair the company’s standards with clear expectations.

Holding people accountable leads to the occasional difficult discussion. Leaders must have the guts to confront a person in the company when their performance demands it if they care about that person. You don’t have to relish the idea of holding your people accountable, but you need to do it. This builds your relationship with them.

Consistency is key to accountability, which is about offering weekly feedback. Monitoring your direct reports’ performance and giving consistent feedback lets them know you’re aware of their existence and that they’re doing the job well.

The accountability process can be broken down into three categories: set expectations, track and monitor results, and give consistent feedback. The best team of any sort will always win over the team with the single best player. (Well, almost always. There’s only one LeBron James.) A great leader knows that any results they generate come through the people on the team.

Your goal should be to set your team up for success in such a way that they can succeed without you. To do this, empower, equip, and encourage your people.

### Conclusion

The biggest, most compelling, well-communicated, and successful vision is not a lottery ticket. Putting the principles to use takes lots of hard work and dedication. Any results you achieve as an organization will be through the work of your people. Your personal greatness is almost irrelevant.

The insight that vision and communication are the pillars on which everything else is built in your organization is key to your evolution as a leader. If the biggest vision in the room always wins, this insight is the biggest vision of them all.



Jim Fischetti is a leader, innovator, and consultant who’s spent over 50,000 hours developing leaders throughout corporate America. He’s spoken to more than 60,000 people and helped one organization increase sales from \$4 billion to \$13 billion in just three years. Jim has spent four decades refining his notions of what makes a transformative leader and is committed to helping others understand the importance of vision in their lives outside the corporate world.

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