An Often Missing Element to Leading Change

There's no debate that listed at the top of a leader's job profile is the capacity to lead CHANGE. It's what leaders do. And what the successful ones do well.

One of the top-tier voices in the arena of change is John Kotter, Professor of Leadership Emeritus at Harvard Business School and founder of Kotter International. Arguably his most significant contribution to the topic of change is his bestselling book, *Leading Change*. In this insightful and practical book, he presents his legendary eight-step process for leading change.

Allow me to outline his change process and make a comment about each step. And then I'd like to offer one observation for your consideration.

1. **Establish a sense of urgency.**
   Any change initiative is DOA in a context where complacency reigns unchecked.
2. **Create the guiding coalition.**
   A key step on the pathway to effective change is selecting a group of people to navigate the process who among other things bring **expertise and credibility.**
3. **Develop a vision and strategy.**
   Change is possible only when there is a vision that is **compelling and inspiring,** aligned with clear steps toward implementation.
4. **Communicate the change vision.**
   In every way possible, the voice of change needs to drown out the voice of status quo.
5. **Empower broad-based action.**
   Create the context for change by removing barriers and retooling systems that undercut the vision.
6. **Generate short-term wins.**
   Make a big deal about steps of progress by recognizing those who are forwarding the vision.
7. **Consolidate gains and producing more change.**
   Replace old-model policies and recruit people who have the commitment and capacity to make the vision happen.
8. **Anchor new approaches in the culture.**
   Call out the connection between how new approaches and actions translate into organizational success. Ensure sustained success **by investing in the leadership development of your people.**

I am sure you would agree that Kotter offers a formidable, not to mentioned time-tested, construct for

leading change.

But I have a question—a question for those of us who are committed to bringing spiritual leadership to our sphere of influence. It goes like this: **In leading change, where does the compelling vision come from?**

Most leadership models would contend that the source of vision belongs to the key leader. But herein lies a fundamental point of departure for those who practice a different model of leadership.

The spiritual leadership model posits that vision is not developed but discovered. Simply stated, the heart of spiritual leaders is to discern God's plans, not invent their own. They are not in the business of persuading people to buy into their vision, they are inviting people to join God in His vision. Big difference.

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Accepting the premise that you as a spiritual leader seek out vision from God, then it becomes your job to be an **exceptional listener.** To that end, I leave you with a few questions worth pondering:

- What practices do you engage in regularly that amplify your ability to hear God's voice?
- What distractions do you need to eliminate so that you might more fully recognize the presence of God in your life and leadership?
- Does the pace of your life allow you to notice the activity of God around you?

Important questions.

Essential questions.

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