

## How to Become a future shaping Leader in an Uncertain World

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Do you ever wonder what it takes to be a great leader? What skills do you need to be one? What approach do you need to take? Responding to such questions was relatively simple in bygone days. Our world has been much more stable and business has been able to develop a ten-year plan with clear end goals and then just stick to it. Leaders could focus on developing strategies and getting people to execute them without having to worry too much about unforeseen obstacles. Unfortunately, that approach to leadership no longer cuts it all together. We live in a world of unremitting political, social, and economic uncertainty that affects businesses of all sizes, from large corporations to budding startups.

Not only is that, but a huge digital and AI revolution are undergoing in a global society. If the leaders want their companies to survive these turbulent times, they will have to take responsibility for their fate and become shapers of their future. Global society is entering the fourth industrial revolution which is an era marked by modern breakthroughs in science and technology. These breakthroughs include artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain technology and precision medicine, each transforming our world in many ways. Such emerging technologies are transforming industries, for example, the emergence of digital banks in the financial industry has forced traditional banks to upgrade their online services to compete.

Then, there is AI, for example, self-driving cars that are challenging and changing how we live and work. As the digital revolution offers limitless possibilities for businesses, a sense of global uncertainty has also been generated. Technology is a troubled territory: it poses new risks, raises ethical concerns and serves as a reminder of the unpredictability of the future. Therefore being a leader in 2020 is harder than ever before. CEOs and management teams are on a "constant threat alert," where they have to predict shifts, be innovative and adapt continuously to keep their companies afloat.

The problem is, if you are a leader on constant threat alert, you will never have the time to step back and learn the leadership skills that will help you navigate today's relentless, ever-changing business environment. To survive these uncertain times, businesses will need their leaders to take control, empower their teams and stand firm in the face of overwhelming challenges. However, there is a need for you to define your long-term vision if you want to be a future-shaping leader. Let us start with a story about a historically great leader. US President John F. Kennedy had a dream in the early 1960s. Kennedy expressed what he wanted to do in a single sentence: "To put a man on the moon by the end of the decade."

No doubt Kennedy's dream was ambitious. But this is not what successfully created it. Read this over again. There is no confusion, no ambiguous discussion about "the future." Not only did Kennedy make it clear what he wanted to do, but when he wanted to. Yeah, its goal was ambitious. But, more importantly, they were specific. What Kennedy might have called a "vision," we can also call it the preferred outcome for the future, or in short, preferable. And, as you have just learned, the trick is to be precise when defining preferences for your company. It is no use, for example, saying you want to "change the

world" or "make a difference," these goals being too broad. Where would you start anyway? Therefore be specific.

All of that advice could sound obvious. But how many leaders set vague goals that leave their employees feeling confused about what they are working towards? This is mostly because leaders are so fixed on the details of solving everyday problems and planning for the worst-case scenario that they fail to look at the bigger picture. If this sounds like you, consider taking a moment to pause. Stand back and ask yourself why you have become a leader. What motivated you to step into a leadership position? What impact do you try to have over the long term? How do you measure success?

Henry Ford, Ford Motor Company's founder, is a good example of a leader who has had strong responses to such big-picture questions. He had a clear and purposeful preference in mind right from the get-go: to give the masses affordable mobility. He also knew why he wanted to achieve this goal – he was deeply concerned with building an automobile that suited everyone. If you can define a preferred goal, like Ford, and state why you want to achieve it, your employees will still know what they are working for and why. And you are going to have the time and space to marshal your resources and lead the way.

Ideating without limits is the perfect way to work your priorities out. This approach has produced many ideas that have been breakthrough. Take self-driving cars for example. At first, the idea that an automobile could drive itself without a person behind the wheel was merely a desirable result. Now driverless cars are on the verge of becoming a widespread reality. Another example can look at artificial intelligence. Once upon a time, robots were nothing more than a fanciful idea – but today, humanoid robots function in airports as customer-service terminals and even serve as anchors for TV news in China. This shows that you allow yourself the opportunity to envision the wildest possibilities when you consider what your destination is – and you momentarily shelve your doubts on how to get there.

Consider what patterns and trends are emerging around the world, and take a close look at what consumers want. Keep up to date with the new technical developments, too. Tapping into new ideas will help you stay ahead of the curve as soon as they come up. Carve out some time in your day, to declutter your mind and let yourself dream. You could just come up with your best idea yet with a clear mind and a blank canvas, and the freedom to just make. Leaders need to articulate a strong vision to win the trust and have a roadmap on how to get there. The corporate world looked a lot different in the early 1990s and the decades before that than it does today. Back then, corporate executives were typical of sitting at the head of a long board room table, handing out orders and assigning tasks. Leaders were kings or queens of their corporate realm.

The model has changed. Today, the old leadership style of "command and control" stops working. This is because employees are more empowered, educated and self-sufficient than ever. They demolished conventional corporate hierarchies and corporations operate less like monarchies and more like democracies. Well, if you want to turn your preferred goal into results, you will need a good team's support but you will need to earn that support. Explain explicitly and concisely what your goal is and why the firm must accomplish it. Try to show your prospective followers an example of what you are trying to achieve in real life. Maybe you have got a current example from another industry you can use

or maybe you should make one show what you're aiming for.

It should be clear how it will change the company to achieve your desired goal, and why that change will be for the better. Remember to spice up the presentation with strong imagery. Research has shown that people have a greater chance of being persuaded by something they can visualise. Stories containing relatable characters should make your choice easier for your listeners to understand and inspire. No leader may predict the future. Yet forming it will benefit them. It is up to you, in an increasingly uncertain world, to decide what kind of future you want to create, and the strategies for getting there.

It is important to have self-belief in addition to motivating your team, keeping a close eye on current developments and setting clear goals. If you do not trust in yourself and your ideas, then probably nobody else will.

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