



# GETTING ON THE TRAIN

## HOW LEADERS LIVE OUT VISION

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# INTRODUCTION



Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached into his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.



# INTRODUCTION



The conductor rushed back and said, "Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one."

Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going.'<sup>1</sup>

For leaders "Getting on the Train" (driving an organization) is not just knowing who you are but where you are continuously going. What are the north stars and waypoints that act as the seams that keep the integrity of the organization's fabric together? Today we are going to talk about what it means by "Getting on the Train" and the parts of the train that are analogous principles that I offer for leaders to consider in their service to others!



# PURPOSE



Purpose is the reason for something or someone's existence. Purpose aids us in operating within our vision and getting on the train daily for the journey. It is our WHY! Both the reason you are motivated (extrinsically) and the reason you are inspired (intrinsically). What is the existential purpose of your life and organization? Let's take a look at the differences between ambition and aspiration to better open the motivation lenses behind purpose.

## Ambition vs Aspiration

The etymology or origin of the word **Ambition** is ambitionem (Latin). Which is "a going around," especially to solicit votes, hence "a striving for favor, courting, flattery; a desire for honor, thirst for popularity"<sup>2</sup>. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, ambition is defined as "an ardent desire for rank, fame or power". Dr. Andreea Vanacker, CEO of SPARKX5 puts it as "Being ambitious is often associated with competition and winning. It can be about evaluating where we are in comparison to other people and letting that propel us toward new heights. Since it is often linked to power and rank, we may rely on the outer world to define our "success" or our "wins".<sup>3</sup>



# PURPOSE



*Theodore Roosevelt offers, "Comparison is the thief of joy"*

The etymology or origin of the word **aspiration** is *aspiratio*, which means to *breathe into or breathe on*. Aspiration by definition means to have a strong desire to achieve something high or great. In this context what is something great that you desire to breathe into? The greatest organizations desire to pour into the vision not extract something for themselves. How can you or your team breathe life into communities and organizations through the inherent roles, responsibilities, and unique talents?

*"Legacy is not what you just leave behind but what others can achieve because of you!"* <sup>4</sup>

From the Christian worldview, for example, we know why we were created and Who we are (belong to).

*Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

*Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.*<sup>5</sup>

*And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* <sup>6</sup>

*"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* <sup>7</sup>

# PURPOSE



Purpose drives the vision. Members from any community or organization should have ownership within the continuum of the plotted vision and the ability to aspire through the delegated (clearly defined) roles and responsibilities as a way to capitalize on talents and resources to fulfill the intended purpose from all levels.

## Motivations —————> Perceptions —————> Behaviors

Motivations shape perceptions which influence our behaviors. Our fundamental motivation (purpose) for doing anything shapes the way we assess the world, take on just causes, and enact behaviors that resemble the original purpose in an effort to accomplish meaningful work. Stephen Covey says everything is created twice. Once in our mind and again once it is created in the world. The heartbeat of our why will be depicted in the daily behaviors exhibited by the organization.

*"As water face reflects face, So a man's heart reveals the man"- Proverbs 27:19*





# VISION



*Aimlessness is the great wrecking ball of possibilities!" – Sydney Sullivan*

*"Where there is no **VISION**, the people perish" – Proverbs 29:18*

Vision is the picture of the future. It keeps our eyes on and down the train tracks while on the journey. Seeing past the potential into what's possible. Vision is vital in peacetime and turbulent times. Communities and organizations with a clear vision of where they want to go can better weather volatile environments such as an economic downturn or even a pandemic. Decisions can be made to counter volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) while keeping the organization's vision in mind. This enables direction toward the horizon. The vision keeps an organization in alignment with the continuous journey to fulfill the enduring purpose by enabling progressive evolution, creativity, and innovation. Let's explore further...

# VISION

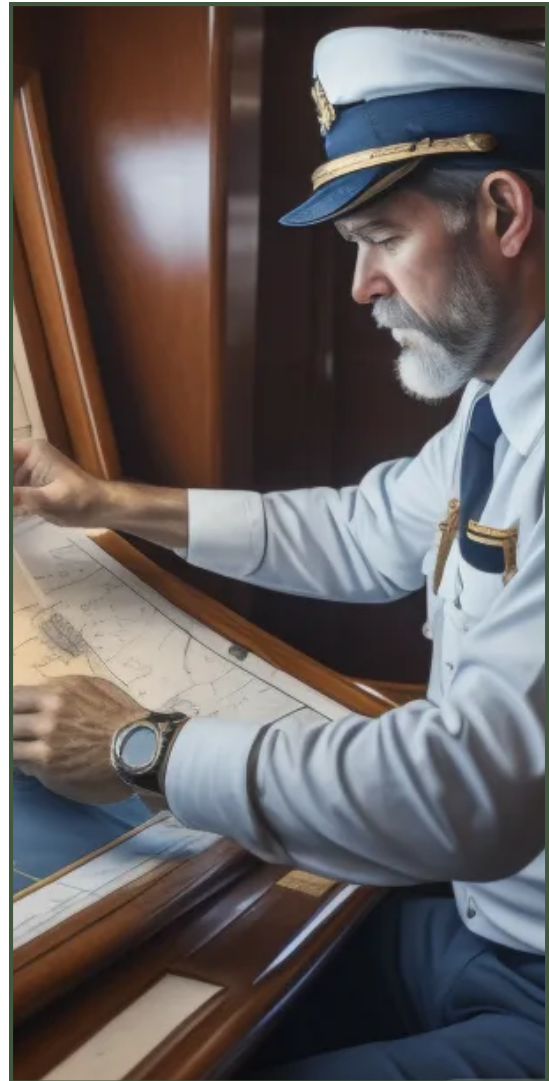


## Plotting vs Plodding

*"We operate out of our vision, not out of our circumstance" – Rear Admiral Douglas Fears*

Plotting is to set markers in place that coincide and chart the way forward. Setting the swim lanes so that time, talents, and resources have the parameters for energy and efforts to be used efficiently and effectively.

Plodding is procrastinating, slacking, to move apathetically bit by bit. To walk heavily or slowly. To trudge, be complacent, or to proceed slowly and tediously. Even reading this I am sure some of you feel what this means within an organization you've worked in. This leads to abdication, which points to a lack of enthusiasm, and ultimately a failure to execute willfully and fulfill intended purposes.



Having a vision is being able to take a step onto the balcony and assess the dance floor of our lives. Taking a different vantage point by canvassing the various movements as they contribute to the journey.

*"Always keeping the main thing the main thing" - Stephen Covey*

Where do you stand today and what do you need to do to get to where you want to be tomorrow?

*"The only thing worse than blindness is having sight but no vision" - Helen Keller*



# VALUES



On what principles or core ideologies do you or your company stand? Values are the engine within the train of the organization that continues the flywheel of momentum for the institution. Core Values are waypoints and north stars for the organization. (i.e. Creativity, Integrity, Courage, Discipline, Humility Generosity)

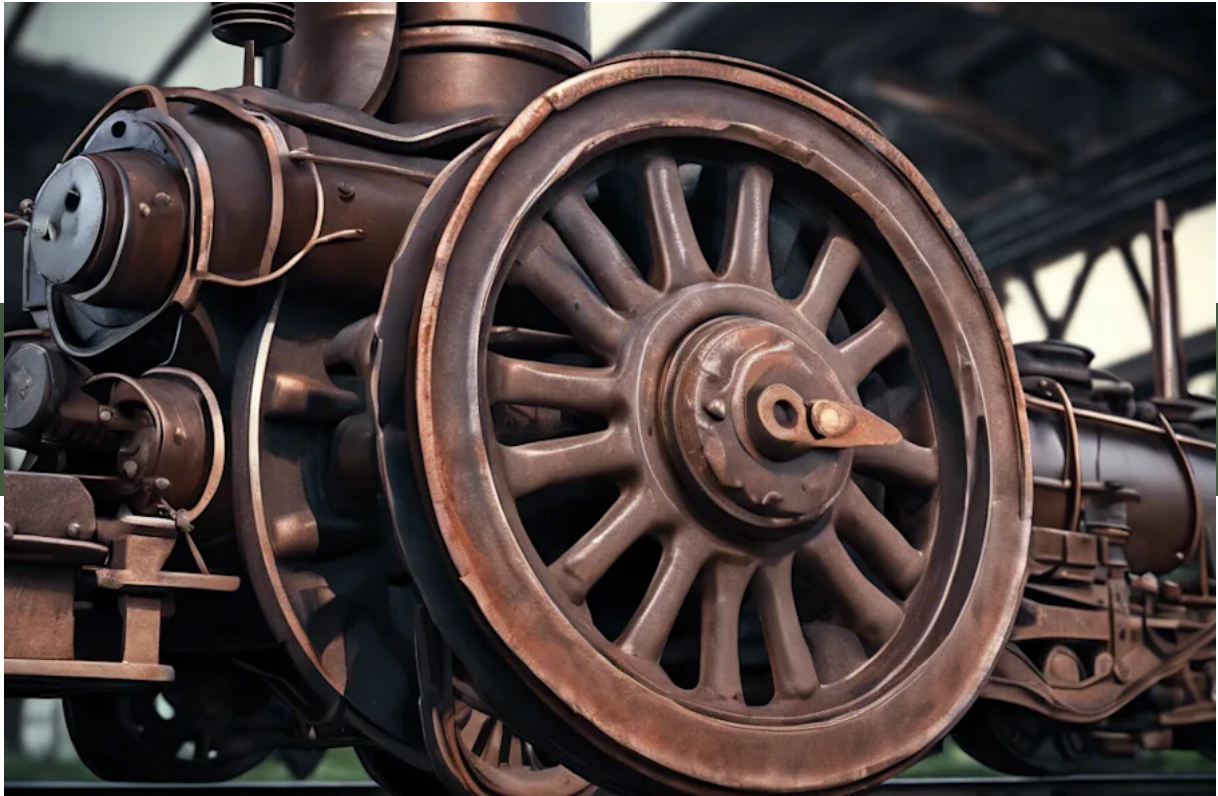
Institutional competencies or values are the foundation upon which an organization's culture, principles, and strategy are built. Organizational competence is essential for businesses to keep up with the surrounding ever-changing environment. They set the ethical standards. The moral framework from which activities can be qualitatively and quantifiably aligned with the purpose. Values are the flowerbed from which attracts & filters new talent, primary stakeholders, and partnerships. Values are the linkage, the chains that solidify the ship (organization) to the anchor (purpose).

*"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"<sup>8</sup>*

The Greatest Commandment as represented above is a value system seen across the canon of the Bible.

Can your value system be seen rippling throughout your organization? Has it sunken into the grassroots or only vocalized through company marketing and memos?

# HABITS



Habits are the sum of repeated actions that codify behaviors which reflect the value system. The principles that are subscribed to within any organization drive the practices that ultimately shape the behaviors enacted throughout any tenure within a company. Habits are the wheels that keep everyone on the tracks. If our habits (wheels) are not in lock sync with the values (engine) culture then operational goals become derailed ultimately causing unnecessary friction, delays, and catastrophic disruptions. To live in our vision and not our circumstances, values must be lived out and deliberately demonstrated throughout the tiers/levels of any organization.

*Implementing best practices is replicating today, innovation is designing tomorrow – Paul Sloane*

Keep in mind behavioral competencies encompass attitudes and actions that distinguish members from each other. Technical competencies are specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that are applied to accomplishing a specific taskjob, or function.

Example habits for the Christian are Knowing and applying Scripture, Prayer, Solitude, Accepting and abiding in God's love, and Maintaining Supportive relationships.<sup>9</sup>



# HABITS



*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*<sup>10</sup>

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*<sup>11</sup>

Within the Sermon on Mount Jesus speaks about going the extra mile, turning the other cheek, praying for those who persecute you, bless those who curse you, and loving your enemies.

Dr. Mark Batterson of National Community Church has listed off five behaviors that he believes in regards to the organization; Check your ego at the door, fill the gaps with positive assumptions, catch people doing things right, brag about people behind their backs, and loving everyone always.

A habit is usually broken into a cue, craving, response, and reward. Questions I would ask leaders to consider within this context...

What cues or signals are being sent throughout your organization by the policies, leaders, partners, and employees?

Are what people asking for (craving) in alignment with the values and vision of the institution?

How do people respond to the existing moral compass and governance? Are they embedded within the framework enough to make deliberate decisions regardless of the level of adversity internally or externally?

We reward the behavior we approve of directly and indirectly as leaders. What behaviors are you rewarding or indirectly perceived to be rewarding?

"Collaborative empiricism, which involves a systemic process of therapist and patient working together to establish common goals in treatment, has been found to be one of the primary change agents in cognitive-behavioral therapy".<sup>12</sup> How is the organization empowering change agents to walk alongside others to breed the behaviors valued?

# Conclusion



*"The definition of Hell is: Your last day on Earth the person you became meets the person you could have been"- Dan Sullivan*

Getting on the train is an everyday decision. It takes courage. It takes resilience. And most of all a dogged persistence that will long outlast any one person's individual will. It takes faith and an idea that is bigger than yourself along with other champions that can propel the purpose forward with their own unique gifts and talents. Moses didn't cross the Red Sea alone, Joshua didn't take the promised land by himself, Rome wasn't built in a day, and life believe it or not is a team sport. Take time to understand the "why" behind everything you do. The core ideological purpose is always the root of the organization and never the other way around. Finally, our reasoning for undergoing any worthwhile venture should be underscored by the transcendent modicum of truth that lies in service to others and the love of God that employs it.

*"What we have deemed to be our community, is only limited by our own perception to see who God has already called us to love." – Sydney Sullivan*



# REFERENCES



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hughsnews.com/newsletter-posts/billy-graham-albert-einstein-a-short-story-with-a-message-a-parable-of-our-modern-world-and-a-special-benediction>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/ambition>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/08/30/ambition-vs-aspiration-why-leaders-need-to-understand-the-difference/?sh=24451db385b8>

<sup>4</sup> Mark Batterson

<sup>5</sup> *Genesis 1:26-30*

<sup>6</sup> *Luke 10:27; Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Deuteronomy 6:5*

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:10

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28

<sup>9</sup> Lead like Jesus

<sup>10</sup> Galatians 5:19-23

<sup>11</sup> Colossians 3: 12-14

<sup>12</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23616295/>