



## Visionmaking Should be a Daily Activity, by Patrick O'Neill

One of the most important responsibilities of every leader is to envision the future. Visionmaking should be a daily activity ... and deal with practices of inventing the future, a future that frees us from the quagmire of the status quo and allows us to enter a "œfield of possibility." Possibility is the geography that supports individual and collective growth, development and achievement.

Every leader has an enemy "œ and that enemy is the status quo. The status quo is defined as "œœa state of stasis where there is neither motion or development and where there is no hope of change." It is common knowledge that in business, as in life, we either advance or decline and there is nothing in between. The status quo disguises decline. We are seduced into the false sense that things remain exactly the same, when we're actually heading downhill but so slowly that it is virtually imperceptible until free-fall occurs. By the time we recognize we're falling, it's too late.

Wise leaders see that the status quo is the breeding ground for organizational inertia, the inability or unwillingness to move or act. Once this condition arrests an organization, team or individual, the result is lethargy, apathy and disinterest. These are the signposts of decline "œ and an announcement that leadership has been abandoned.

Sir

William Ostler, the father of modern medicine, suggests that such conditions can be formidable in their ability to undermine our energies and jeopardize our preferred future: "œœBy far the most dangerous foe we have to fight is apathy -- indifference from whatever cause, not from a lack of knowledge, but from carelessness, from absorption in other pursuits, from a contempt bred of satisfaction."

Carelessness, distraction and narcissistic pre-occupation undermine a chief resource in leadership -- the practice of reflection. Reflection is the act of turning the eyes from the outer world to the inner landscape of our aspirations, dreams, and possibilities and opportunities. This is the domain of the future and vision is fashioned in the silence of careful contemplation.

-- Patrick O'Neill, from "œœEnvisioning a Preferred Future"

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