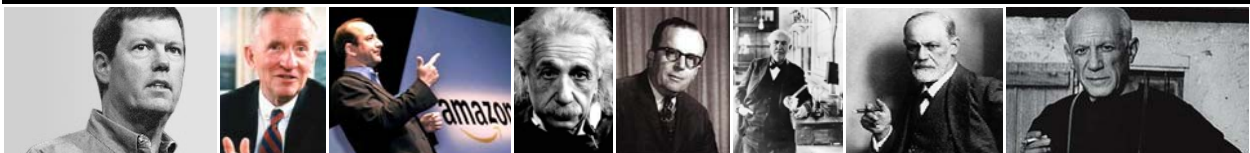




The Visionary Evangelist

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**Where there is no vision, the people perish.
-Proverbs 29:18**

In the early 1960s, J.C.R. Licklider, an MIT psychology professor, envisioned a global network – what he called “an intergalactic network” – of computers linked together. At the time, a “computer” was as big as an apartment, consisted of a large number of machines the size of refrigerators, and had to be housed in a specially cooled environment. Only a small number of people even knew about the few that existed. Yet “Lick” saw the enormous potential in a field that, as he expressed it, “gets

a thousand times as good in 20 years.” He saw that people anywhere could use computers to access and share information.

According to a fellow MIT faculty member, “the vision was really Lick’s – none of us can claim to have seen this before him. Not anybody in the world. He didn’t have a clue as to how to build it. He didn’t have any idea how to make this happen.” And yet he knew it could be done.

Within a few years, building on Licklider’s vision, the

ARPANET was created, at first linking computers at UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, the Stanford Research institute, and the University of Utah, and for the first year or so expanding at the staggering rate of—one additional site per month! This was the origin of what we now enjoy as the Internet.

Importance of the Visionary Evangelist

The book of Proverbs surely had it right. A vision bestows

an authentic purpose for being, and sets the direction for a group, an industry or a nation. It inspires followers by giving them a vision of possibilities, a compelling new direction, a sense of destiny and meaning.

Visionary Evangelists are those leaders who not only develop this vision of the future, but also use their influencing skills to motivate others, by persuading them to join the cause. They are “pied pipers” who energize and inspire followers to get on board.

Throughout history, visionar-

ies have challenged their societies to think and act in new ways. They see what others have missed. They find opportunities others have ignored and challenge what others accept as given. They are pioneers. They are non-conformists. They are inventors. They open new vistas. You may not like them. You may think they are self-centered and narcissistic but, you have to admit, they have changed the societies in which they lived.

Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Larry Ellison may not like each other but they share a common bond – they are Vi-

sionary Evangelists.

Some, like Thomas Edison are seen as heroes. Others, like Joan of Arc are burned at the stake. They influence busi-

It is difficult to imagine any organization succeeding without the creative vision, persuasive skill and dynamic leadership of the Visionary Evangelist.

Question Conventional Wisdom



“The most important aspect of my personality, as far as determining my success goes,” says Oracle founder Larry Ellison, “has been my questioning

of conventional wisdom, doubting the experts and questioning authority... Don’t assume they’re right just because they’re in authority or because they’re experts. In other words, think things out for yourself. Come to your own judgments. Don’t simply conform to conventional ways of thinking, to conventional ways of dressing, conventional ways of acting. Even morality at times is based on fashion.”

ness, politics and government, economics, science, religion, fashion, architecture and the arts, and change the course of history. They are the ones who make the medical, scientific and technological breakthroughs, who initiate innovative art forms and religious reforms. Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein, H. Ross Perot, the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton, Jeff Bezos, Thomas Jefferson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Benjamin Franklin, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Stephen Hawking, Sigmund Freud, Martin Luther King, Pablo Picasso, Mozart, Fidel Castro, John Lennon, Napoleon, Saint Francis of Assisi, George Lucas are all probably

Visionary Evangelists.

Visionary Evangelists see the world differently. They see beyond what is to what might be. Perhaps they have a broader perspective or deeper level of insight. They are certainly much more creative than most of us. They dream up new products and new ways of doing things. They are independent risk takers who can't help but challenge

They always see a better way to do it and feel confident that they can do a better job. Often, they are right. That's why the ranks of entrepreneurs around the world are filled with Visionary Evangelists.

the status quo. "Good business leaders," former General Electric CEO Jack Welch said, "create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion."

When the organization's vision, strategy and goals need to be presented to employees, shareholders, or the invest-

ment community, it's usually the Visionary Evangelist who stands up to do it. They know how to sell.

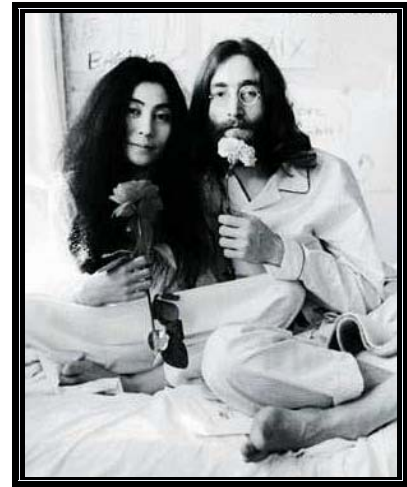
Filled with energy and drive, Visionary Evangelists hold up the flag and run forward; they take charge, push for action, and instill a sense of urgency to achieve the organization's goals.

It is difficult to imagine any organization succeeding without the creative vision, persuasive skill, and dynamic leadership of the Visionary Evangelist.

Problem Children?

From a young age, Visionary Evangelists can be a pain in the ass. Their inquisitive nature and proclivity for exploration often drives their parents crazy and sometimes endangers life and limb.

VE's have an unusually strong need for independence and autonomy and are overflowing with restless energy. They feel a need to be constantly busy and on the move. This refusal to sit still and submit to the routines of classroom education and their tendency to challenge authority often lands them in the principal's office. Others, who are more socially skilled, press the lim-



its but get away with it because of their personal charm.

They are bored with routine and seek out any activity that requires original thinking and creative expression. They are always building, tinkering and taking things apart. Even as children, their minds are open to multiple possibilities, beyond things as they are.

As they enter the workforce, these people have a hard time working for others – especially when there are a lot of rules to follow, or innovation is not highly prized. They are, says Prof. Gary A. Davis, author of *Creativity is Forever*, "naturally independent, unconventional, and bored by trivialities. Because rigid enforcement of rules will alienate creative people and squelch their creativeness, flexibility and rule-bending are necessary on occasion." They will always see a better

way to do it, and feel confident that they can do a better job. Often, they are right. That's why the ranks of entrepreneurs around the world are filled with Visionary Evangelists.

Both men and women with this personality profile have a lot of drive, and often have an abundance of vitality and drive.

More than just independent-minded, they are non-conformists who question the beliefs, rules, and practices of the organizations in which they work. In the words of the poet William Blake, "I must create my own system, or be enslaved by another man's." But if they are given enough freedom and not restricted in their creative expression, they love their jobs.

They are comfortable being alone and working alone. But they are usually quite willing to seek advice from others when they run into something they can't understand or manage on their own.

Despite their independence, VE's like being around people and they handle their relationships with confidence. They are skillful at guiding conversations to influence and persuade others, though it is not beyond them to use their per-

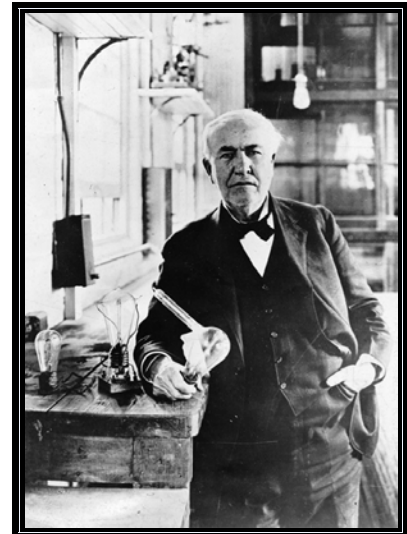
suasive skills in ways that might be viewed as manipulation.

In one sentence, Visionary Evangelists "see" something that excites them, and they love to pursue their vision with passion and bring it to life.

Natural Strengths

Creative Visionary

In our research, the skill most correlated with the cluster of skills we have labeled the Visionary Evangelist is, not surprisingly, "Creating a Vision". At their worst, they can be impractical dreamers who drift from one wild idea to another, living in their heads, rarely if ever bringing any of their ideas to fruition. At their best, they are the visionary geniuses who set new directions for organizations and



for society as a whole. Metal birds that fly through the sky, self-propelled vehicles that make the horse unnecessary, a computer on every desk, an organization of nations dedicated to peace and global problem-solving – their innovative conceptions are without number.

One key factor that fuels their creativity is an innate curiosity, a desire to learn and to

The manager administers; the leader innovates. The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective. The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why. The manager has his eye on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon. The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it.

-Warren Bennis

understand this complex world we live in. This drive has characterized creative geniuses throughout history, as well as the leaders in our research.

The mind of a Visionary Evangelist is a busy place. Innovative ideas bubble up at any time of the day or night. “At times it seems that more good ideas are coming from Charlie than from the rest of the management team put together,” one of our clients said of his boss. “He is not afraid to step out of the box and try a new angle. He understands the power of crea-

tivity, and provides all of us with the time to consider new ideas, thought patterns, and solutions.” Another person commented, “Suzanne is an idea person. She excels in generating innovative and creative ideas.”

VE’s love work that requires original thinking, and are always seeking new ways to look at things. Prof. Davis notes that a creative person “looks at one thing, and sees modifications, new combinations, or new applications,” and “makes connections between one situation and another.”

Leonardo da Vinci



Leonardo da Vinci, artist, architect, anatomist, engineer, biologist, city planner and surely one of the great creative figures of all time, wrote in his journals more

than 500 years ago: “I roamed the countryside searching for answers to things I didn’t understand – why sea shells and the imprints of coral and seaweed existed on the tops of mountains; why the thunder lasts longer than the lightning that causes it...and lightning becomes immediately visible to the eye while thunder takes time to travel; how the various circles of water form around the spot that has been struck by a stone; how a bird sustains itself in the air. These questions and other strange phenomena engaged my thought throughout my life.”

Leaders make ideas tangible and real to others so that they can support them.

-Warren Bennis

Intellectually curious, Visionary Evangelists love exploring and learning about new ideas. They love to experiment. They take the time to study and reflect. Although they don’t have strong needs for companionship and seem to enjoy periods of solitude, their creativity is fueled by lively discussions and philosophical debates with friends and coworkers. They try to surround themselves with people who have different beliefs, political views, and backgrounds, and who come from different cultures. They like nothing better than stretching their minds.

But because they tend to think they’re smarter than other people, they’re more likely to talk than to listen. This of course curtails their ability to learn.

Translates the Vision into Strategy

Visionary Evangelists are stra-

tegic thinkers. Once they have conceived a vision, they find it natural to translate the vision into a strategy for the organization. Long-range plans need to be developed, and resources mustered to carry out the plans that will turn the vision into a reality. Not content just to dream, they also excel at creating the plan which makes it happen.

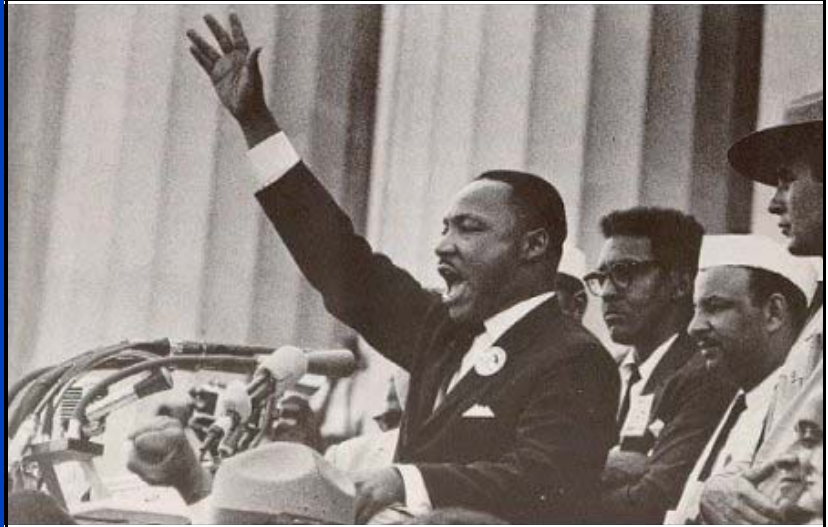
However, although they love putting together the master plan, they are relatively uninterested in the nitty gritty details of executing the plan. What's important to them is the Big Picture. Once the design is in place, they are ready to move on to the next grand idea.

Sells the Vision

When the vision and strategy are in place, the time has come to rally followers and supporters. Webster defines an evangelist as "a person who crusades for, and builds support for a cause, and whose behavior is marked by evangelical enthusiasm." When it comes to influencing others and finding just the right words to persuade and paint a powerful and inspirational picture, VE's are the masters.

Bringing a vision to life involves persuading colleagues and employees to work to-

I Have a Dream



Every Visionary Evangelist begins with a dream. The most successful have the ability to communicate the dream with a passion and power that attracts followers whose combined strength transforms the vision into a reality.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was not a business leader, yet he is a perfect example of a Visionary Evangelist. A genius in his own right (he graduated high school at 15 and college at 19 before going on to his Ph.D. and Doctor of Divinity degrees) King was a passionate advocate not only for civil rights but for human rights for all. His vision of justice and equality drove him to campaign relentlessly, putting his life on the line day after day. In the eleven year period between 1957 and 1968, he traveled over 6 million miles and spoke more than 2500 times. His famous "I have a dream" speech to 250,000 at the Lincoln Memorial is known throughout the world. At 35, he was the youngest person to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Lady with the Lamp

In the 1800s, nursing was primarily a male profession; the women who practiced it, with little or no training, were known more for their sexual promiscuity and alcohol consumption than



medical expertise. Florence Nightingale single-handedly changed that. Learning of the large number of British soldiers dying in military hospitals in the Crimean War, she felt a deep calling to serve. Going against her parents' wishes, she obtained permission to take a group of 38 nurses to the front. When she arrived in November 1854, the mortality rate of wounded soldiers was 60%, mostly from infections and contagious diseases such as cholera and typhus. Nightingale was made less than welcome by the male medical establishment in the hospitals, but in less than half a year, by the spring of 1855, her sanitary innovations, establishment of a

fresh water supply, and fresh fruit and vegetables paid for with her own funds, dropped the mortality rate to 2.2%. After the war, she brought her vision of improved medical care back to England and, by persistent effort,

persuaded the authorities to apply it to both military and civilian hospitals. A passionate and life-long advocate of nursing as an honorable profession for well-trained and self-disciplined women, she established the first nursing school for women, the Nightingale Training School and Home for Nurses, and wrote more than 200 books, pamphlets and reports, including the first textbook specifically for use in the teaching of nurses.

Known to the British soldiers in the Crimea as the "lady with the lamp" because of the late hours that she worked caring for the sick and wounded, Florence Nightingale is remembered as a symbol of selfless caring and tireless service.

gether to make it a reality. Leaders need to communicate their vision with a level of emotion, excitement, and passion that captures people's hearts. VE's bubble over with ideas, and they radiate enthusiasm. The unemotional, over-controlled executive who only has access to his rational side will have trouble creating excitement and inspiration.

Many shy or reserved individuals have a creative vision, but lack persuasive skills to enlist the support of followers. They don't know how to sell the thing they've created. Having a creative idea is only part of the equation. On fire with the compelling nature of their vision, leaders must also be able to paint it in glowing strokes and promote it like a preacher offering salvation.

Because they are so natural and so effective representing ideas, products, programs, or services that have meaning to them, as their companies evolve they often take on the job of spokesperson. Dynamic and socially confident, VE's know how to make a strong and positive first impression. Many pay attention to cultivating their public image. They like to be the center of attention, with the spotlight on themselves.

Takes Initiative

When it comes to taking initiative and getting things moving, VE's don't have to be asked to take charge. If an opportunity presents itself, they feel impelled to take advantage of it. If they have a dream or an insight, they feel they

must act on it. Conceiving the idea isn't enough. They must turn it into something concrete. In fact, their vision consumes them and often takes over their lives, filling every waking and sleeping moment until it becomes a reality. They can't help but take the lead.

The initiative of leaders is recognized and appreciated by their peers. "Hiroshi looks for things that need to be done, and takes action," one co-worker said. "He is quick to take a leadership role. His initiative to grow the organization is an inspiration to the rest of us. Hiroshi leads by

Wilbur and Orville Wright



The first flight lasted only 12 seconds, a flight very modest compared with that of birds, but it was, nevertheless, the first in which a machine carrying a man had raised itself by its own power into the air in free flight, had sailed forward on a level course without reduction of speed, and had finally landed without being wrecked.

- Wilbur and Orville Wright

Young men who never graduated from high school, the Wright brothers shared a boyhood fascination with the possibility of flight that became an obsessive desire. "For some years I have been afflicted with the belief that flight is possible to man," Wilbur wrote to a friend. "My disease has increased in severity and I feel that it will soon cost me an increased amount of money if not my life."

Wilbur, described as "a voracious reader and gifted public speaker," was always focused on "the big picture, the systems involved in the whole project," while his brother Orville "loved to concentrate on the detailed mechanics." They were a perfect team.

“Good leaders make people feel they’re at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens, people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.”

-Warren Bennis

example.” Another person commented, “Ray is always the leader. He identifies problems, then attacks them. He has a solution for us most of the time before we even know it is a problem.” And another, in just a few words: “Very action oriented. Afraid of nothing.”

Creates Meaning – Shows Employees Why They Matter

One of the greatest sources of trouble in organizations today is the lack of connection employees feel to the organization’s mission, vision and

goals. Quarterly earnings and enhancing shareholder value, of vital concern to upper management, don’t motivate many employees. The leader must touch their hearts as well as appeal to their intellects and pocketbooks. Why? People have a deep need for meaning and purpose in their lives. Without meaning, work becomes merely a repetitive chore. This leads to apathy, lackadaisical performance and reduced productivity, as well as a discontented workforce.

Visionary Evangelists are an effective antidote to this problem. Through their eloquence and passion, they help employees connect their jobs, and their lives, to the organization’s vision and strategy. They achieve employee buy-in and ratchet up motivation by showing people how to relate their day-to-day activities to a higher meaning and broader strategic priorities.

One of the core attributes of the evolving biotechnology industry is a core focus on improving the well being of patients with serious illness. As James Sabry, the CEO of Cytokinetics, Inc., a biotechnology company in the San Francisco Bay Area says, “Our whole reason for existing is to create novel drugs with new ways of attacking serious human illness. To be a member

of the team that creates such a product is a lifelong goal for those people working at our company and in this industry.” Wouldn’t you go to work with enthusiasm if you had this sense of meaningful, purposeful work lively in your heart?

“One needs something to believe in, something for which one can have whole-hearted enthusiasm. One needs to feel that one’s life has meaning, that one is needed in this world.”

-Hannah Senesh

Although “creating meaning” is not generally recognized on the 360 degree evaluations as having great importance, our research and consulting experience show that it is one of the vital components in promoting employee loyalty and building a strong corporate culture.

Optimism

One employee said of her boss, “Bill never lacks for enthusiasm and optimism. He always looks for strategies to manage through tough times rather than hang his head.” Another put it slightly differently, “She works so hard despite the lagging numbers of the division, and always has a positive outlook on the future. It makes you want to work hard for her.” This is what Visionary Evangelists do for the people around them. They always assume that no matter how difficult things may appear to be, it will all work out just fine in the end. They tend to look on the bright side, seeing the glass as half full, and do not worry much about the future.

Napoleon Bonaparte suggested that, “A leader is a dealer in hope.” Followers need leaders who give them hope and reassure them that they will succeed. One employee paid tribute to his boss’s optimism this way, “The positive morale in the department is directly and almost solely attributable to his leadership, mentorship, optimism, energy and enthusiasm.” Visionary Evangelists not only exude a confidence that things will work out – many of them also have an in-

Apple’s Steve Jobs

“My father was a machinist by trade. He had a workbench in his garage, and when I was five or six years old he sectioned off a little piece of it and said, ‘Steve, this is your workbench now.’ He spent a lot of time with me, teaching me how to build things, how to take things apart and put things back together.



“Inspired by a neighbor who worked at Hewlett Packard, I used to buy Heathkits to build radios and other electronic equipment. These kits came with detailed manuals and color-coded parts. Putting a piece of equipment together gave one the sense that one could build the things that one saw around oneself in the universe. These things

were not mysteries any more...they were the results of human creation, not magical things that just appeared in the environment. It gave a tremendous sense of self-confidence, that through exploration and learning one could understand seemingly very complex things.”

herent trust in the good heartedness of people; they believe people can be trusted. This uplifts followers and inspires them to create a successful outcome.

Self-Confidence

If you met a Visionary Evangelist for the first time, one thing you would almost certainly recognize is their high level of self confidence. Sure of their capabilities, values, and judgments, they believe in

themselves and in their gift for leadership. Many of them truly feel that they were “born to be a leader.” They know they can almost always count on their ability to make a good impression on others. They are frequently “silver tongued devils” who have the self-assurance and persuasive power to win over the skeptical and ultimately get their way. A subordinate described his boss by saying, “Elaine has the power of persuasion through suggestion. Her confidence makes us want to follow her wherever she leads.”

Visionary Evangelists set high goals, often difficult to reach, and never question whether they can achieve them. They seem to be untroubled by self-doubt. They genuinely believe they are more talented than others, and their coworkers often agree with this self-assessment.

They can also freely admit their shortcomings. They’re willing to acknowledge their mistakes, and are ready to work to overcome them and to learn from them. However, it isn’t easy to convince them that they are wrong.

Risk Taker and Agent of Change

“I witnessed Karen coming in and ripping apart a process that was outdated, inefficient, and meaningless. It was a beautiful thing.” Visionary Evangelists can’t help but be agents of change. Their willingness to try something new, coupled with their creativity and vision, makes them fearless in trying out new approaches and challenging the status quo. “Leaders,” said Dr. Robert Jarvik, inventor of the first permanently implantable artificial heart, “are visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept at all of the odds against them. They make the impossible happen.”

This is not always a walk in the park. “There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things,” said Niccolo Machiavelli. Yet they are willing – even eager – to challenge the system in order to make things better. “Bruce challenges departments to constantly re-evaluate the processes and priorities they set.” They are simply not satisfied with tradition or “the way we have always done it” if it

How hard are Visionaries willing to work to accomplish their dreams?

Here’s an excerpt from an interview with Len Bosack, Founder of Cisco Systems:

Len Bosack: “Sincerity begins at a little over 100 hours a week. You can probably get to 110 on a sustained basis, but it’s hard – you have to get down to eating once a



day, showering every other day, and things of that sort to really get your life organized to work 110 hours a week.”

Interviewer: “And the level that follows sincerity? What do we call that?”

Bosack: “Commitment.”

doesn't move the organization forward.

Independent thinkers, Visionary Evangelists are not susceptible to social pressure. If they believe in something, they are willing to take an unpopular position. Says one co-worker, "Aimee will confidently and readily buck the status quo if she believes it impedes getting results. She is tenacious and sticks to her guns if she feels very strongly about an issue."

VE's are not plagued by fear and appear to worry less than others. They are not foolhardy but they are willing to take a risk on an idea or a venture if they believe it might pay off. When they really want something – when the potential reward or return is great enough – they are willing to go out on a limb. In fact, they seem to enjoy taking chances.

Competitive Drive

Competitiveness is one of the most highly regarded and highly rewarded qualities in the American character. From Little League to the Olympics and the Super Bowl, and in virtually all educational institutions, we are trained to compete and rewarded for coming out on top. The drive to be the best leads to high

achievements as well as personal gratification. In the words of sports broadcaster Howard Cosell: "The ultimate victory in competition is

"Exasperated parents, teachers, colleagues and supervisors are all familiar with some negative traits of creative people," says creativity expert Gary A. Davis. "They can be stubborn, uncooperative, indifferent to conventions and courtesies... careless and disorganized, especially with matters they consider trivial."

derived from the inner satisfaction of knowing that you have done your best and that you have gotten the most out of what you had to give." In the business world, most people would agree that the best thing that ever happened to Detroit – and for the driving

public – was competition from Japanese automakers. The competitive spirit has contributed greatly to America's strength at home and abroad.

Visionary Evangelists are highly competitive individuals whose drive to succeed is legendary. The literature of successful entrepreneurs, from Thomas Edison to Bill Gates, is full of stories of men who hardly slept, ate, or changed their clothes while working to achieve their goals.

But this kind of drive for dominance is a double-edged sword. On a personal level, an obsession with success at all costs often results in neglected marriages and children, poor health and heart attacks. It poisons the marketplace by turning competitors – who, after all, are also legitimate business enterprises – into symbols of evil. At its worst – especially if the entrepreneur's path is blocked and the achievement of their vision is threatened – it breeds a kind of self-centered callousness toward "the enemy" that can bring out ruthless behavior, where the end justifies any means no matter how illegal or unethical. One need look no further than the monopolistic practices of Bill Gates' Microsoft or the hostile takeover bid for PeopleSoft of

Larry Ellison's Oracle.

These two icons of the technology revolution are notorious for the fierceness of their competitive nature. A Web biography of Bill Gates tells us that his family upbringing taught him competitiveness from an early age. "His great-grandfather had been a state legislator and mayor, his

Even Oracle founder Larry Ellison was ready to admit, when asked about some mistakes at Oracle, "I was not a competent and capable CEO. I'm still responsible. But it was neglect, not malice."

grandfather was the vice president of a national bank, and his father was a prominent lawyer. Early on in life, it was apparent that Bill Gates inherited the ambition, intelligence, and competitive spirit that had helped his progenitors rise to the top in their chosen professions." Combative and hard-driving, Gates has been called "a brilliant and ruthless businessman who single-mindedly pursues not

only his own success but also the annihilation of his foes."

Ellison, as inordinately ambitious as he is a Visionary, is also known as an uncompromisingly fierce competitor. In a biography of Ellison entitled *The Difference between God and Larry Ellison*, author Mike Wilson says, "The Oracle Way, to the extent that such a thing existed, was simply to win. How the goal was achieved was secondary."

This combativeness and drive to dominate is a trait that Ellison exhibits "off the field" as well as in business. After nearly dying in a violent storm that sank five boats and claimed six lives during a race off the coast of Australia (in which he took first place) he invested \$85 million into designing and building an 80-foot racing yacht and manning it with a world-class crew in order to come back a few years later and win the prestigious America's Cup.

Challenges and Areas of Vulnerability

Like all of us mortals, Visionary Evangelists also have their weaknesses and challenges. "Exasperated parents, teachers, colleagues, and supervisors are all familiar with some

negative traits of creative people," says creativity expert Gary A. Davis. "They can be stubborn, uncooperative, indifferent to conventions and courtesies...careless and disorganized, especially with matters they consider trivial." Especially when they are not strong in Personal Grounding, they easily fly off the handle, become defensive when they are questioned or, God forbid, criticized. They can absolutely refuse to pay attention to others. In short, they can continue being a pain in the ass for the duration, which makes working—or living—with a Visionary Evangelist quite a challenge.

If you look closely, you will see that – as in our discussion of Competitiveness in the previous section – many of these "weaknesses" can best be understood either as the "shadow" or dark side of one of their strengths, or as less-developed or immature aspects of essentially positive qualities:

- Their rebelliousness is the other side of their willingness to challenge the status quo.
- Their indomitable optimism, so inspirational to others, easily leads to a kind of cavalier attitude about deadlines and commitments – "It's okay, it'll

- all work out.”
- The self confidence and love of being center stage that make them such charismatic presenters has an element of narcissism and can lead them to believe they are “special” and are therefore entitled to special privileges and exemptions from rules everyone else has to follow. Having the attitude that “*I am the greatest!*” may be okay if you happen to be Muhammad Ali, but it gets Visionary Evangelists in trouble, especially when they need to work as part of a team.

After a lifetime of following their dreams, getting their own way and flying solo, they don't play well with others.

It seems that the basic characteristics of the Visionary Evangelist— independence, creativity, vision, self-confidence, optimism and so forth—are always present. So, what is it that tips the scales to determine whether their confidence (for example) is inspiring or off-putting because it feels like arrogance, or their

habit of not listening to what others have to say allows them to pursue their vision undeterred or lands them in deep sawdust because they fail to pay attention to perceptive criticism or timely advice? Our research suggests that one of the keys is the set of skills and character traits that we have called Personal and Contextual Grounding, which we will examine in depth in an upcoming article.

Self Centered and Egocentric

Visionary Evangelists are well aware that they are highly intelligent, creative, charismatic, charming and natural leaders. All too often, this breeds arrogance. As one manager's colleague put it, “He displays a negative form of confidence that sends the message, ‘I am smarter and better than you.’ His self-importance and huge ego comes at others' expense.” For most Visionary Evangelists, humility is not their strong suit.

Sure that they will achieve their vision, VE's often see only opportunities and possibilities and fail to consider that they might fall short of their goal. This is an out-growth of their sizeable ego and can be dangerous to their organizations. “I think

Justin's confidence in the team's ability to make miracles happen is unrealistic and more than a little arrogant. We cannot blindly assume that ‘if we can think it, we can do it.’”

VE's are frequently poor listeners who would much rather talk and expound their own ideas than hear what others have to say. They become so wrapped up in their own ideas that they don't leave much room for other's opinions. On personality self-assessments, VE's tend to see themselves as tolerant and open. The truth is that they are so sure they're right that they are not really open to feedback or to differing views.

They are also not very sensitive to the needs and concerns of others. This is another blind spot. They frequently describe themselves as affectionate and aware of others' feelings, but in fact they tend to be self-absorbed and insensitive.

As we have seen, Visionary Evangelists are independent non-conformists. This is a double-edged sword. Because by nature they question beliefs, rules, and practices that others take for granted, they are often able to see a new and better way. But their need for autonomy and their ten-

dency toward non-conformity can create friction when they have to work in a group. They are not natural team players. They don't want to be bound by confining rules or the necessity for compromise. In fact, they don't like restrictions of any kind. They want to do it the way they want to do it.

This is fine when the Visionary Evangelist is an entrepreneur, running his or her own company. But the organization's very success works against them. As the company grows larger, in order to function efficiently it must develop rules, policies, and procedures, which they often violate, resisting these curbs on their freedom. They can actually do the organization harm at this point, and indeed, sometimes have to step down for the good of the organization they helped to create.

Managerially Challenged

Skillful managers are organized, good at planning, and disciplined in carrying out the plan. Visionary Evangelists are often undisciplined, undependable, and uninterested in bothering with the nuts and bolts of execution.

Even Oracle founder Larry Ellison was ready to admit, when asked about some mis-

takes at Oracle, "I was not a competent and capable CEO. I'm still responsible. But it was neglect, not malice."

Why would leaders who are so driven to achieve their vision and so action-oriented fail to follow through and meet their commitments? Because they are seers of vast unbounded possibilities, dreamers and creators of what might be brought to life; they are enamored of the big picture and simply bored with the details. They hate to be restricted by boundaries such as deadlines, budgets and systematic processes.

Their native optimism also works against them. People who are not so certain "it will all work out" tend to see the value in tactical planning and disciplined project management. The optimistic Visionary Evangelists don't sweat the details; as a result, they may miss deadlines and fail to deliver on their commitments.

Our research at HCG has shown that being a visionary is negatively correlated with orderliness and thoroughness and our observations bear this out. As leaders, Visionaries don't tend to establish the structures, systems and processes that are needed to implement their vision.

Although they may set broad goals for themselves, when it comes to managing their own teams, they may fail to clarify objectives, roles, and priorities. *They* understand the vision and are confident that they can work their way toward achieving it, and they assume that other people will know what to do – that others will be able to act independently, too. Once the design phase is complete, they often lose interest and leave subordinates to figure out what to do next.

Poor Team Players Who Don't Empower Others

As entrepreneurs, the Visionary Evangelists' independence, creativity and habit of taking decisive action work in their favor. But when it comes to building teams and working through others, these identical qualities can become an obstacle.

Effective leaders must learn to leverage the input and efforts of followers. This is one of the key factors that enables them to grow their organizations and multiply themselves. Headquartered in Silicon Valley for nearly 25 years, I have seen numerous Visionary Evangelist entrepreneurs hit the wall when they don't figure out how to fully utilize

the capabilities of their team.

So, what prevents them from benefiting from the diverse experience and skills of those who work for them? First of all, they don't delegate well and don't empower others. They are fundamentally loners who are accustomed to succeeding by individual initiative and action. They are also certain that they are smarter than the people around them, and don't really value the input of others. They prefer to maintain control and make the calls. Consequently, they fail to harvest the full potential of their team.

In addition, Visionary Evangelists don't want to give up their special status and the ego gratification that comes from being center stage. After a lifetime of following their dreams, getting their own way and flying solo, they don't play well with others. Team play requires you to subordinate your own individual agenda for the good of the team. This isn't easy for Visionary Evangelists.

Tendency toward Manipulativeness

The Visionary Evangelist's skill at guiding conversations and swaying others through the persuasive power of their

words and personal charisma, so valuable for getting votes, securing buy-in, or making high-power presentations, has a shadow side. They can use this power to manipulate others, and may be seen as insincere. Although leadership involves motivating others to achieve the vision and direction they have set, transparent manipulation and hidden agendas drive a wedge between leaders and followers. The Visionary Evangelists' ability to persuade, if overused or abused, can undermine their ability to win or maintain the trust of those they lead.

Lack of Emotional Control

The other side of the Visionary Evangelist's aggressiveness and drive to succeed is a tendency to become angry and defensive. When they are not personally grounded—centered and inwardly secure—they are easily threatened by those who disagree with them, and prone to become anxious and even enraged when achievement of their vision is thwarted, stalled, or derailed. Often they are blind to the fact that they react this way (self-knowledge is not high among Visionary Evangelists), and

are totally oblivious to the pain they may inflict on others with their uncontrolled outbursts. They are the best candidates for stress management—and the least likely to recognize the need. Three of our favorite Visionary Evangelist poster children in this article, Bill Gates, Larry Ellison and Steve Jobs—all of whom are Visionary Evangelists of the highest order—are notorious for their fits of rage and their insensitivity to the wounds they inflict on others with their behavior.

Conclusion

Creativity, and the ability to inspire and to motivate people with a compelling vision, are not skills that are easily learned. Indeed, our research indicates that Visionary Evangelists are a rare breed—there appear to be significantly fewer of them walking the planet than there are Relationship Builders and Managers of Execution.

It would not be overwhelmingly difficult for Visionary Evangelists to warm up their people skills or to add some of the disciplined behavior characteristic of effective executors. Doing so would surely add balance and completeness to their leadership. Learning to be a better lis-

tener, making an effort to reply to memos and requests and to get to meetings on time, to honor deadlines that they set or agree to meet, paying more attention to holding people accountable and to the vital function of team building, letting go of total control and delegating some power to others – doing a few of these things will add to their effectiveness and elicit greater support and buy-in from others.

But our primary advice to Visionary Evangelists is: Leverage your God-given assets! Don't try to become something you are not. Your gifts are relatively rare, and are vital for the success of any enterprise. Use them with energy and passion. At the same

time, admit that you are not perfect and can't do it all. Some aspects of your personality are less-well developed, so you'll need to find effective managers and relationship builders to complement your strengths and fill out your team.

Development, for you, is more about facing yourself honestly and dealing with the natural weaknesses that go with this leadership style. Observe your attitudes and your behavior – not just once but consistently! – and be alert for signs of arrogance, self-importance, failure to empower others, manipulativeness, and the other “negative” characteristics mentioned above.

Preview

This article has revealed both the strengths and deficiencies of the Visionary Evangelist. In our next article, we'll talk about what we have called the *Relationship Builder* and see how these people – outgoing, people-centered, good listeners, socially astute, excellent at building teams and partnerships – bring to the party some of what the visionaries don't, can't, or are not interested in bringing. Then, in the third article in our series, we will profile the *Manager of Execution*, the one everyone relies on to get things done.