

## On Leadership: Community Building

*Conroy Ross Partners is a proud community producer for the series On Leadership that is being aired by Access7, a community programming station in Southern Saskatchewan. The following is based on thought leadership of our firm, as well as our local guest leader.*

In *On Leadership: Community Building*, his worship Mayor Pat Fiocco of the City of Regina did not just want to build and grow the community, he wanted to change it. He had a vision that the perception of the city through the eyes of its citizens needed to change where citizens would consistently view Regina in a positive and affirmative manner. Leading this type of ambitious change is difficult, and when Fiocco took on his official title as the City of Regina's leader, he was up to the challenge and he knew what he had to do to attain his vision. In *On Leadership*, Fiocco shared with us his personal leadership traits that he would draw upon to lead Regina through this transformational change, two of which were vision and common sense.

**“Reality without vision destroys possibilities;  
vision without reality destroys credibility”**

~Robert E. Quinn  
*Building The Bridge As You Walk On  
It: A Guide for Leading Change*

To successfully achieve transformational change, a leader requires a clearly defined vision that people can rally behind. The challenge is that there are always sceptics who view a leader's "vision" as only hopes, dreams and a grand image for the future. To overcome these sceptics, we believe that a leader's vision must go hand-in-hand with common sense (that is grounded in reality), similar to Fiocco's point of view.

Thought leader Robert E. Quinn also agrees with this sentiment and refers to the balance as 'grounded vision.'<sup>1</sup> What it means to have grounded vision is to set your sights high on the hopes for the future – the vision – and to remain deeply in touch with the reality of the followers to gain buy-in. This 'grounded vision' assists in achieving transformational change because it integrates the comfort and reality of the present into the image of a positive future, which enables followers to trust their leader that the desired future state is attainable.

In his book "Building The Bridge As You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change", Quinn goes on to demonstrate that there is a necessity for a leader to integrate both hopeful vision and grounded facts in order to lead change. Vision without facts of current reality and the present can be deluded; equally as important, a grounded leader without vision for the future can breed hopelessness.

In the table below Quinn illustrates that too intense focus on past and present or too intense focus on vision without an appropriate balance on the other can have negative consequences. It is important to keep a balance of being grounded and sharing vision (from within the 'positive' columns) in order to become an 'integrative leader'.

| Negative  | Positive   | Integrative                                      | Positive  | Negative  |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| This person is so visionary as to be ungrounded and deluded | This person conceptualizes a compelling and hopeful vision of the future | This person practices grounded vision            | This person is grounded in the facts of current reality | This person is so grounded in the facts of the past and present as to be without hope or vision |
| <i>Ungrounded; deluded</i>                                  | <i>Visionary; hopeful</i>  | <i>Grounded and visionary – the "sweet spot"</i> | <i>Grounded; factual</i>                                | <i>Visionless; hopeless</i>   |

Illustration taken from Quinn's *Building The Bridge As You Walk On It: A Guide To Leading*

Beyond having a "grounded vision", a leader should also consider the following factors to lead transformational change,<sup>2</sup> according to Quinn:

- **Be sure that the final result is attractive enough that people are willing to fail to get there.** Additionally, be sure that you are willing to sacrifice for the desired result. Remember that your integrity is continuously being examined and if you do not believe in the vision with every instinct in your being, it will be difficult for followers to sacrifice in order to support you.
- **Focus on the result you want to create.** Quinn recommends going to the extent of producing a film in your mind of you and your cohorts achieving the desired result. Playing this film over, and editing it as needed, and describing this film to others keeps everyone focused on the result. It brings the vision to life, and people can see, feel, hear and taste it as much as you, their leader, can. It is also proven that communicating visual images that capture the imagination can be a helpful tool to enlist people to believe in your vision.
- **Gain a deep understanding of the history of the unit and the people in it.** It is as important to know the past as it is to see the future, because you will be grounding your vision to the reality of those who will be supporting you. As such, you must know their reality, and what is their 'bread and salt.'
- **Help people relate the pain of change to the big picture.** The pain of change may not really be the change itself; listen carefully to the arguments of resistance and hear the deeper messages. Support those who are going through the change with you by surfacing and exploring their fears. Additionally, model the processes by surfacing your own fears and exploring those with the team. Show which constraints and fears must be accepted and are factual constraints, and also those which must be transcended.
- **You do not have to answer to all problems.** While it is important to face the problems and fears and constraints, it is also important to identify which of these are miniscule and do not need to be dealt with. Keep focusing on the result that you wish to achieve.
- **Focus on the early small wins, and celebrate when they are accomplished.** As with any long process in business, celebrating small wins makes the process more real. Additionally, the gratitude makes it more engaging to continue with the process.

<sup>1,2</sup> Robert E. Quinn, *Building The Bridge As You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change*, 2004