

# Inspiring Others: The Language of Leadership

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## Objective

- Examines ways in which managers can powerfully communicate the essence of organisation's vision and goals.

## Background

- A more educated and more intrinsically motivated contemporary workforce requires that managers learn to 'sell themselves and their missions'. This depends on having highly effective language skills; but these are skills that can be learned.
- Generally speaking, few managers today possess the skills to communicate the collective purpose in ways which are highly motivational and inspirational.
- 'Inspiring others' is the one of the five dimensions of transformational leadership.

## Main findings

- The 'language of leadership' can be broken into two distinct skill categories: (1) framing, and (2) rhetorical crafting.
- **Framing.** Use language that creates a sense of shared endeavour, and draws on shared values. This can be done without resorting to BS and cant, but it does require careful crafting of the message in terms that all members will find engaging. For example, contrast these two approaches: *Example 1*: 'I want this unit to be so well trained that it is capable of achieving the commander's mission' *versus Example 2*: 'I want each of us to feel that we are part of a unit that those in other units will admire and will want to have fighting alongside them'. I submit that the second works much more powerfully than the first.
- **Rhetorical crafting.** An effective message should have **three** main elements:
  - **why** we need to achieve this outcome,
  - **how** we are going to achieve it, and
  - **why we should be confident** that we will succeed.
- Rhetorical crafting involves communicating the message in the form of a story that links all three of these elements and, directly or indirectly, links all those who will be involved. Stories have much more psychological impact than statistics and facts. A good story makes use of **metaphors, analogies, and historical parallels**, and draws on images that have deep cultural roots.
- Three provisos: (1) know your audience, and use language appropriate to that audience; (2) keep it simple and repeat it often; and (3) **you must be credible if your message is to have credence**: this means you need to be perceived as both **competent and principled/ethical**.