

# What's in a leader?

Gerri King, Ph.D.

The dictionary says that "to lead means to show the way." If that's the case, every one of us is a leader.

Take, for example, a parent showing his or her child how to ride a bike, a factory worker showing a new employee how to do a job, a teacher helping students understand math, a child pulling another child by the hand to a secret spot on the beach, or your attempt to convince a friend to go to your favorite restaurant.

As we all have so much practical experience, leading ought to be easy.

But we're finding that it isn't. At least that's the word we get from our consultants in the field. Training leaders is big business these days; as a matter of fact, we've set up leadership courses in some of the newer corporate universities. "Leadership for the New Century" has always been a hot topic in my speaking engagements, and I see leadership discussed on the internet and in business magazines several times a day.

I believe that being a leader requires having a vision (the ability to anticipate or have foresight). The parent wants her or his child to know how to ride that bike because it means freedom and an ability to go places and see new things. It gives the child a way to socialize and to feel part of a mobile society. It means building confidence and experiencing a sense of accomplishment.

If s/he feels strongly enough about the vision, and is able to clearly articulate it, the child will not only learn how to ride the bike, but will also know what it is to work hard and reach a goal.

What's so different about having a vision regarding your work environment, or about where your team is headed, or about the way your company or organization provides its products or services?

Being a leader doesn't necessarily mean you're "in charge" of a group. But I do think it means that you're willing to work hard to clearly articulate a vision for yourself that gives you purpose within that group, that motivates you to work toward that vision, and that helps create conditions that energize and inspire those around you.

Chances are, if your vision is clear and appealing, you may find others willingly following your lead.



### **Five things leaders must do**

develop and clearly articulate a vision.

be passionate about it.

find and allocate the money for it.

coalesce key partners around the vision.

help the employees see and understand it.

provide the inspiration and resources to  
achieve it