

Claiming a Breakthrough
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The Leadership Challenge Activity Book
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The Leadership Challenge covers 5 practices of exemplary leadership. This practice best matches: Inspire a Shared Vision

Objective(s)

- Participants will use a unique guided-imagery process to envision a compelling future for their work team or company.
- Participants will use their image of the future in the development of a vividly described story of what they saw, heard, felt, etc. during the guided imagery process.
- Participants will develop a breakthrough statement of the commitment they have to achieving their vision of the future, a statement that can be shared with their team to guide present actions.

Audience

This process is appropriate for any size group, however, given time constraints, facilitators may want to limit the group size.

This process is appropriate for executives, leadership teams, management groups, project leaders, and trainers/consultants who will be developing leaders.

Time Required

60 minutes

Materials and Equipment (List handouts, material and equipment required)

- Claiming a Breakthrough Worksheet for each participant.

Room Setup

- Room set up would include an area where participants may sit at shared tables (either round tables or in a U) during the guided imagery process, and room for them to stand during the breakthrough statement process.
- Facilitators may choose to use relaxing music to create a context of relaxation and retreat to enhance the guided imagery process

Process

1. Introduce the process by saying:

“Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their book *The Leadership Challenge*, say that “. . . the unique reason for having leaders—their differentiating function—is to move us forward. Leaders get us going someplace.” This thinking fits with research that indicates that all action is conditioned by the fact that we live in an anticipatory world of images, that our organizations exist because leaders and stakeholders envision the same possibilities for their shared future. Therefore, as a leader in your organization, inspiring a shared vision will be an important factor in your success, impacting every day’s commitment to quality operations. You and your organization’s members will be working together into an image of the future.

Vision shapes direction, but also influences daily decision-making. In organizations it shapes hiring, promotion and actions towards customers, partners, teammates and investors. It conveys a **sense of direction**. It releases a **sense of discovery**. And it implies a **sense of destiny**.

An inspiring, shared vision helps align our espoused values with our everyday practices, ensuring our own personal congruency and that of a work team, a leadership team, and an organization. A shared vision includes two components:

- a **vision story** that captures that essence of who and what we will be when we are in our desired future. The vivid story is a vibrant, engaging and specific description of what it is like when the future is achieved. It is told in the language of the senses to make the dream of the future more alive.

- a **breakthrough statement**, a succinct statement declaring the commitment that is intended to inspire the present. It is spoken using powerful language. Examples: “We are committed to being . . .” “I will . . .” “We will create . . .”

Today you will

- use a unique guided-imagery process to envision a compelling future for your work team or company;
- use your image of the future in the development of a vividly described story of what you saw, heard, felt, etc. during the guided imagery process; and
- develop a breakthrough statement of the commitment you have to achieving this vision of the future—a statement that can be shared with your team to guide your present actions.”

2. Handout the worksheet (below).

3. Have participants set aside materials, and find a place to stand in the room where they can take a step forward and back in a safe manner with eyes closed. Ask them to close their eyes, if they are comfortable doing so. Suggest ways for them to be more relaxed, yet erect, balanced, and allowing their hands to fall to their sides.

4. Say:

“Close your eyes and imagine that a shiny, golden circle is next to you on the floor. This is the future when a breakthrough in your team’s work, or organization has already been achieved.

Step into the golden circle, and notice that you are now at this time, and that you have already achieved your breakthrough. Notice what is going on around you, see what you see and hear what you hear, and feel how resourceful, engaged and competent you are feeling. Let your mind imagine the possibilities in all senses: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Even notice what you are tasting and smelling.

Now slowly shift your posture a bit, and stand in a way that shows you have achieved your breakthrough. Think of a small gesture, but one of the tremendous resourcefulness you are experiencing, a gesture that will serve as your private anchor to this experience. Make this gesture now, as you are experiencing yourself as fully resourceful, engaged, accomplished and successful.

Still keeping eyes closed, step back out of the circle, leaving the future there. (pause)

Now, remembering that time in the future when you have achieved your breakthrough, and the resources you have then and now, think of something you will need to do in the very near future to forward your breakthrough commitment, when you will need those resources. Imagine experiencing this situation, feeling yourself in your own body, looking through your own eyes, seeing what you see and hearing what you hear.

As you are experiencing this time, take a step back into your circle. Make the gesture signifying your resourcefulness, and experience yourself having those resources in this situation. Notice how you are feeling even more powerful and capable in this situation, with your sense of already having achieved your breakthrough result.”

Now step out of the circle, open your eyes and quietly return to your seat.”

5. Have participants take the next 7 - 10 minutes to read the top part of the Worksheet and complete the sections at the bottom.

6. Have participants tell their vision story to one person sitting near them.

7. Say:

“Breakthrough statements are powerful conversations for possibility. By declaring your commitment in front of the group today, you invite their active support along with the coaching you need to be prepared to make this powerful statement before your work team or organization. We ask each person to stand and speak their breakthrough statement, using language such as “I will,” “I commit to,” etc., and for everyone else to provide coaching on the clarity of the statement, its impact on you in terms of the power of the words used, and the congruency and commitment with which it is presented.

Please make any suggestions for how it might be spoken even more clearly, congruently and powerfully.”

8. Have each participant stand and share their breakthrough statement. Ask for coaching for them and after others and your coaching, ask the participant to repeat their statement in order to practice being even more congruent, clear and powerful.

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Ms. Zolno served on ASTD’s OD Professional Practice Area board. Her writing has been published by ASTD, ODN and appeared in Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer’s 2000, 2002 and 2008 *Annuals*.

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“ . . . the unique reason for having leaders –their differentiating function–is to move us forward. Leaders get us going someplace.” –Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*

“The manager has his eye always on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon.”
–Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*

CLAIMING A BREAKTHROUGH

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An inspiring shared vision conveys a *sense of direction*. It releases a *sense of discovery*. And it implies a *sense of destiny*. It allows you to lay claim to a breakthrough in possibility for your team or organization.

An inspiring, shared vision helps align our espoused values with our everyday practices, ensuring our own personal congruency and that of a work team, a leadership team, and an organization. A shared vision includes two components:

- a **vision story** that captures that essence of who and what we will be when we are in our desired future. The vivid story is a vibrant, engaging and specific description of what it is like when the future is achieved. It is told in the language of the senses to make the dream of the future more alive.
- a **breakthrough statement**, a succinct statement declaring the commitment that is intended to inspire the present. It is spoken using powerful language. Examples: “We are committed to being . . . “ “I will . . .” “We will create . . . “

Use the space below to draw an image or write words describing your vision story, answering the questions: what are you *seeing*, what are you *hearing*, and what are you *tasting, smelling or feeling* in your breakthrough future?

What are you committed to now that you have envisioned the future? Write your breakthrough statement here: