

IMAGE ELEVEN

[Cathedral Building]





Cathedral Building

MOST BUILDERS SEE ONLY THE PAYCHECK, OR THE TASK IN FRONT OF THEM. GREAT BUILDERS SEE THE BIG PICTURE: THEY'RE BUILDING A CATHEDRAL. LEADERS MAINTAIN A PERSPECTIVE BEYOND THEIR OWN LIMITED VISION AND CHANGE THE CULTURE.

A man strolled along a downtown street one day. He enjoyed all the hustle and bustle of the city, filled with street vendors during the day, and bright lights in the evening. He loved the sounds of the streets, the sights of the advertisements everywhere, the feel of people moving about, and the taste of the hot pretzels he munched on as he walked to his apartment. He even liked the smell of the downtown area where he worked. It carried the feeling of growth and change and progress.

This particular day, he decided to walk a different route home, and he noticed a new structure going up along the street. From the work done so far, he could tell it promised to be a large building, very ornate and probably quite important. He got curious, so he decided to inquire what kind of building was going up. He walked up to a construction worker and asked what he was doing. Without even looking up, the builder replied, "I'm laying bricks, what does it look like?"

Obviously, this wasn't the answer this man was looking for, so he located a second worker and approached him with the same question. The worker grunted, obviously in a bad mood. "Mmph. I'm drawing a paycheck."

This still wasn't the answer the man was seeking, so he thought he'd give it one more try. He tapped a third construction worker on the shoulder and asked the same question, "What are you doing?" This time, he got the answer he was looking for. The builder looked up toward the sky and with a gleam in his eye, he responded: "I'm building a cathedral!"

There's a lesson in this little story for leaders. Consider these three construction workers. None of them were lying when they responded to the question, "What are you doing?" However, the first one only perceived his work from a logistical perspective. He only saw what he was doing personally. The second could only see

his work from a tactical viewpoint. The outcome of his work was a paycheck—which was the only reason he showed up for work! The third worker, however, was able to see the big picture, and how his personal effort was part of something bigger than he was.

These three perspectives are central to understanding culture. I use military terms to describe them. Let me define these terms, so you can evaluate how folks are motivated on your team:

1. LOGISTICAL

This is the “here and now” perspective. I only see what’s in front of me today.

2. TACTICAL

This perspective is broader and futuristic, but is still limited to my world.

3. STRATEGIC

This is the big picture perspective that enables me to see how everything fits into the overall plan.

When leaders can move people beyond their own personal tasks to see the big picture, it not only helps to align everyone’s work, it accelerates the creation of a desired culture. Part of the key to building a culture stems from the leader’s ability to communicate clear vision for how every team member fits into the plan. It also diminishes a “primadona attitude” of selfish, territorial behavior. It enables team members to help each other, because they think outside of their own “box.” All cultures require someone to maintain the big picture and to move others toward the big picture.

When leaders fail to provide perspective, people will likely act in their own interests. Just ask Earl Weaver. Earl was the manager of the Baltimore Orioles baseball team more than thirty years ago. One of his bright young stars was Reggie Jackson. Reggie reached first base one night and desperately wanted to steal second. He knew he could do it against the opposing pitcher, but Earl Weaver never gave him the signal to steal. Earl had set a rule that no one was to steal a base without his signal. Reggie was fuming because his manager obviously didn’t recognize how fast he was. Finally, he decided to steal without a signal. He got a good jump and sped toward second base, sliding in...safe! He got up and brushed the dirt off his uniform, feeling justified for making the decision on his own. Now everyone saw how fast he was.

When the inning was over, Earl motioned for Reggie to come over and talk. When they met, Earl said, “Reggie, I knew you were fast enough to steal off of that pitcher. I didn’t give you the signal for two reasons. First, if you stole second, you’d open up first base, allowing our opposition to intentionally walk Lee May, our best power-hitter besides you. When they did just that, it took the bat right out of his hands. Second, our next hitter wasn’t doing well against their pitcher, forcing me

to use a pinch hitter to move runners up. This ruined my plans for using him at a different spot later in the game." Earl paused, then finished. "Reggie—remember that you see the game from your own angle, but I see the big picture. Next time, wait for my signal."

In 2002, the Anaheim Angels surprised everyone and won the World Series. Manager Mike Soscia said later that it was all about creating a new culture on the team. He didn't have any big names on the team, but he knew if they could forget their personal stats for a season and play as a team, they could go all the way. Mike began casting vision for the big picture to his players in February. Next, he began to reward players who moved runners up on base, and penalized hitters who failed to do it. Beginning in April, he posted team results on how well his guys were playing rather than personal statistics. He only had to do this for one month. The culture began to change. That year, with no big superstars, the Angels won the World Series. Why? Because some free agents and average players got together and acted on the big picture. While talent is important, playing as a team is far more important to winning championships. Individuals win trophies but teams win championships.

This is the job of leadership—moving people from logistical to tactical to strategic thinking. Providing every team member a perspective that empowers them to act unselfishly, to use their talent for something bigger than themselves, and to see how even a little job contributes toward a very important mission. Leaders who contagiously spread this vision change their organizational culture.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy did the unthinkable. In a speech, he cast vision for putting a man on the moon before the end of the decade. The story's been told over and over, but at the time he cast this vision, the U.S. didn't even have the technology to do it. However, his big picture perspective was infectious. Immediately, the team at NASA focused their energies on this monumental mission. Staff members who for years "felt like a piece of furniture," began to display unusual performance—all because of this vision. It turned average workers into extraordinary workers. To this day, NASA has this revolutionary performance leap on record.

A year after President Kennedy cast the moon-landing vision, he visited NASA to check on their progress. As he walked the halls, he ventured into a small room accidentally. Everyone in his entourage followed him; after all, he was the president. When he entered the room, he saw a custodian with a broom. He reached out to shake his hand and asked what his job was. The custodian paused, then smiled and replied, "I'm putting a man on the moon, Mr. President."

I love it. The custodian got it. Sounds like a cathedral builder to me.

A LOOK AT THE BOOK

Check out 2 Kings 3:5-18. This passage tells the story of the King of Israel and his battle against the King of Moab. He rallied two allies and marched across the desert to fight the Moabites. Sadly, their troops ran out of water along the way. Israel's king all but gave up the entire vision.

1. When they decided to approach the prophet Elisha, they begged him for water. Notice how they had their eyes on the "water" not the "war." How does facing a challenge distract people from the big picture goals they've set?

2. Elisha's response was classic. He told the kings that God would grant them water, but that this was a "small thing in the sight of the Lord. He will also give the Moabites into their hands (verse 18)." They asked for the logistical goal not the strategic goal; they focused on the water not the war. They saw only the immediate need not the big picture need. Name a time this has happened to you.

3. Jesus demonstrates a big picture perspective in two passages. Jot down your response to them.

- a. John 12:27-28. Jesus refuses to focus on the logistical need for safety.

- b. Matthew 9:36-38. Jesus looks at the multitudes, but sees something different.

4. Are you a naturally “big picture” person or a “detail” person? How does this affect your actions?

GETTING PERSONAL

Evaluate how well you embrace and pass on a big picture perspective. How do you see your job?

1. LOGISTICAL

What's your immediate job in front of you now?

2. TACTICAL

What's your departmental job this year?

3. STRATEGIC

What's the ultimate job or mission, over the long haul?

PRACTICING THE TRUTH

The next time you meet with your team, take a moment and ask them what their job is. Then, ask them what the mission is for your organization. Finally, ask them how their job fits into the big picture mission of your organization. See if you get any surprises. Discuss what your team members said.

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