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**The role of
vision in
today's
business
environment**

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role that vision covers in today's dynamic and complex companies. As a matter of fact, the business world is changing rapidly and is characterized by crucial events that impact not only organizational dynamics but also employees. In this scenario, the importance of the leader's job is enhanced. On the one hand, they should be able to motivate, encourage, and assist employees during their careers and personal growth.

On the other, leaders should conceive a powerful vision capable of stimulating and driving followers' energy and work.

Visions are extraordinary tools able to guide companies during moments of change, they characterize firms and help employees to feel part of the organization, notwithstanding they are often disregarded when dealing with such subjects.

All these topics are addressed in this thesis as follows. The first chapter analyzes which are the main events of the last years that had a substantial impact on the business environment. The effects of such events on leadership and the consequent leadership styles are investigated too. The chapter's purpose is to clarify how leadership has evolved over time in response to changes within companies and the resulting needs of workers.

The second chapter focuses on vision. By defining what a vision is and which is the process that allows leaders to conceive it, the aim is to understand which is the role that a vision plays inside a company. The elements that determine a vision and that may lead to its failure are investigated too in order to have a complete idea of the topic. Finally, the chapter offers insight into visionary leaders and the capabilities that they should have to develop an effective vision.

The last chapter analyses a case study to investigate how companies adopt a vision. In particular, the aim is to explore the role of vision during a transitional period. As a matter of fact, the main aspects examined are how strong a vision is in a moment of a major organizational restructuring, and which are the different stages of the change process that all this entails.

2. The leaders of the 21st century

2.1 Introduction

During the last few years, leadership has changed profoundly. This implied a whole new set of challenges brought about by a transformation of the environment where companies operate, with whom the leaders of the 21st century must deal.

As the world changes and becomes more complex, leaders should be able to shift the focus and emphasis of their choices and develop the knowledge and the ability to anticipate, adapt to, and drive the change. Thus, they must cultivate empathy, trust, and cooperation, be innovative in managing teams, promote mental and physical well-being, and adapt to new technologies.

Furthermore, the role of leadership has been rethought in order to be a more useful and appropriate instrument to deal with the everyday challenges of companies. The focal point is the relationship between leaders and followers. How they interact, cooperate, and collaborate to work and grow personally.

In the first chapter, these topics are going to be discussed as follows. Firstly, the three main changes that have impacted the business world in the last years are going to be briefly analyzed, focusing on the role that leaders should assume in such an evolving landscape.

The next paragraph tries to define what leadership is by investigating the various facets of the concept. encompassing diverse definitions and approaches, particularly in response to evolving challenges in the business landscape. It underlines how the leadership discipline should evolve to address contemporary challenges.

In the last paragraph the recent leadership approaches, which strongly emphasize the relationship between leaders and followers, are examined. In particular, they are the transformational, servant, emotionally intelligent, authentic, resonant, commanding, democratic, affiliative, coaching, and visionary theories. All these theories stress the well-being of followers and their motivation.

2.2 How the environment has changed

In order to understand how the role of the leader has changed and what its new fundamental traits are, it is important to analyze what has driven this shift in the business environment.

The main events that have impacted the context are the diffusion of information technologies, globalization, and Covid-19.

For what concerns information and communications technologies, their rapid diffusion has transformed the economies of developed countries. Nowadays we live in an increasingly interconnected global economy, where information and knowledge matter.

Indeed, the locus of wealth creation is no longer capital-intensive industries but information-intensive industries, such as information services, financial services, and logistics.

The new sources of competitive advantage of the 21st century are innovation, flexibility, responsiveness, and the creative definition of markets and opportunities. (Dess & Picken, 2000) These elements represent dynamic sources of growth, employment, and wealth creation and are typical of innovation-driven industries.

Therefore, now the vital element for firms is innovation, which has gained increasing importance not only because of the advances in information technology but also due to the globalization of markets and the consequent foreign competition.

What does this imply for companies? The strategic focus has shifted from managing mass markets and tangible assets efficiently to innovating and using knowledge and human resources effectively.

Moreover, all the members of a company should operate collectively. As a matter of fact, organizations must rely on and trust the knowledge, skills, and experiences of their employees. In this way, they can create and combine new knowledge, and sustain competition. (Dess & Picken, 2000)

Companies could encourage the generation of innovative ideas by developing an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of innovation, a well-crafted innovation strategy, and a well-designed process for implementing the innovation strategy.

In addition, innovating may be extremely beneficial for organizations because by performing this activity the latter can lower their costs, introduce new and differentiated products and services that can help them to protect their margins, and make manufacturing more efficient. (Schilling, 2017)

The term globalization has two meanings. An empirical one that refers to “the actual structural changes occurring in the way the global economy is organized and integrated”. (Dicken, 2015, p.31)

An ideological one that refers to “the neo-liberal, free market ideology of the ‘globalization project’”. (Dicken, 2015, p.31)

Some fundamental aspects of this phenomenon need to be mentioned; firstly, globalization consists of a transformation in the nature, degree, and speed of interconnections, and in the where and how of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Secondly, it produced a quantitative and qualitative transformation of economic relationships across the geographical space. Finally, it involves complex and changing geographies rather than a single global one.

The predominant result of globalization is a more interconnected business world where the distances between companies are reduced. As a consequence, we can access the information and technology of different countries and experience greater levels of cultural exchange.

Globalization contributed to increasing the level of complexity and introduced new challenges that companies have to face.

Due to the quick rate of change firms have to always look for new ways to innovate and reinvent, this means that innovation should be a continuous process.

Competition bases are shifting, consequently, the organization could be forced to make drastic changes to stay competitive.

Lastly, because of the great amount of information that firms can access, people may feel overwhelmed, and directing their attention to the right problems may be demanding.

The effects of globalization on today's businesses have resulted in a significant shift in operational procedures. The rapid speed of change in technology, consumer demand and tastes, and market conditions must be managed by companies. Hence, it is essential to have capable leaders who can play a crucial role in the process of embracing new ideas, adopting them, and putting them into practice in a variety of contexts in order to successfully lead organizational changes and ensure their survival. It is of paramount importance for leaders to have a crystal-clear vision as well as an open mind for innovation in order to effectively manage change since long-term success and sustainability depend heavily on organizational change. (Ha, 2014)

Regarding COVID pandemic, it represented an enormous shock that changed completely how people were used to doing business.

The fast-changing structure of the economy and society, which was hastened by Covid, has generated a wider variety of transformations in how and where we work, the methods in which work, workplaces, and workforces are organized, and the interaction between employees and their employers.

Before the pandemic, the most significant changes to the workplace consisted of new technology and expanding trade linkages. Covid has highlighted a particular facet of labor, namely its physical character.

The significant rise in the number of employees who work from home is likely the most noticeable effect that COVID-19 has had on the labor force. This event demonstrated some of the advantages of working remotely, including increased adaptability and productivity for employees as well as enterprises.

Companies and leaders must organize and determine the future of work considering the impact that the pandemic had on it and its consequences. In particular, there are four areas in which companies have to work. Firstly, rethink the workspace and shift to remote working. During lockdown, businesses have swiftly shifted their focus to employees working remotely. This has been accomplished through the implementation of new digital technologies, the clarification of policies on remote work, the promotion of employee involvement and mental health, and the provision of equipment for working from home to combat problems such as increased physical strain.

In addition, the effects of COVID-19 have prompted abrupt reevaluations of the function of the office on the part of businesses all around the world.

Secondly, contribute to and promote the mental and physical well-being of all the employees. Thirdly, establish a system that is both socially responsible and environmentally sustainable by mandating a fair distribution of risks and benefits between employers and their workforce. Finally, adapt to the new technologies and assist employees to do the same. Companies have stepped up their efforts to digitize work procedures in response to the COVID-19 dilemma. As a matter of fact, they are employing digital resources to reorganize their production lines and spaces in a manner that facilitates more social separation. In addition, they are revamping engagement, communication, and operations in preparation for remote work.

Corporate executives are tasked with providing a crystal-clear picture of the organization of the future and expressing how this will influence the organization's team structures and new roles. Building learning cultures that support lifelong education should be a priority for the

company, with the goal of making education a routine activity for all employees. (World Economic Forum, 2020)

How can leaders facilitate this transition? By proactively cultivating empathy, trust, and cooperation, leaders will be required to rethink, investigate, and iterate new approaches to the management of businesses and teams. In addition, it is essential to interact directly with individuals at all levels of the business, in order to flatten the organizational structure and encourage involvement.

Companies should take the appropriate measures to mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis on groups that are at risk and to ensure that equity and inclusion become the "new normal" in the workplace.

Instead of focusing on the full job, leaders should concentrate on the individual tasks and activities that need to be completed. The result is enhanced efficiency, flexibility, and agility. It is essential to preserve a unified culture through hybrid work arrangements, mentoring, development, and onboarding of new employees regardless of workers' physical location. Finally, leaders should sharpen their focus and be more innovative when it comes to hiring and keeping members of various groups. (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021)

In summary, companies have realized how much their employees value and need to accept that the priorities of the latter have changed. There has been a shift in the decision-making power of workers. As a matter of fact, the companies that during the pandemic gave more autonomy and decision-making power to employees revealed the more successful. This underlines how important is to loosen control over employees' work, support them, and make sure they have the right tools to operate in the right way. (Kennedy, 2011)

Furthermore, the change in the context where companies operate determines a change in the values of society. As a matter of fact, nowadays employees are more aware of their skills and competencies and require greater involvement in the company as a satisfaction tool. (Marques, 2015)

From an organizational point of view, it is vital for companies to become more flexible, responsive, willing to change and adapt, and sensitive to all that is happening. Only in this way they can remain competitive and be successful in this rapidly changing environment. The key to achieving this is an ongoing process of learning.

In order to generate value for shareholders, companies should learn better than their competitors and apply the new knowledge faster than the latter.

The role that the company itself can play is crucial. The former has to create an environment where the emergence of new skills and collaboration between workers is facilitated. According to Martin (2007), a solution could be rewarding employees not only for their input but also for teamwork and innovation.

The challenges that the current environment poses require companies to rely on and exploit the knowledge and skills of the employees. Therefore, a new approach to organizational leadership is needed. (Dess; Picken, 2000)

2.3 New leadership styles

Over the years there have been many scholars who tried to define what leadership is and what the role of the leader is, consequently, there are different ways to interpret this concept depending on the facet on which people focus.

According to some definitions, the primary function of leadership is to direct the work of a group of members. From this point of view, the leader sits at the epicenter of their activities and personifies the collective will of the group.

Another definition approaches the topic of leadership from the angle of the individual's personality. This line of thinking says that leadership is a conglomeration of unique features that are possessed by certain people. These characteristics provide such persons the ability to persuade other people to do activities.

According to other theories of leadership, this concept refers to an action or behavior, that is, the things that leaders do in order to effect change in a group.

Furthermore, some people define leadership in terms of the power dynamic that occurs between leaders and the people they lead, also known as followers. According to this point of view, leaders possess authority, which they may use to influence the behavior of others.

Some people think of leadership as a transformative process that encourages followers to achieve more than what is often expected of them.

Lastly, some academics approach the topic of leadership from the standpoint of skills. This perspective emphasizes the capabilities that are necessary to effectively exercise it.

Notwithstanding, certain aspects of the phenomenon can be identified as being fundamental. Consequently, leadership can be defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2016, p. 6).

By analyzing this definition emerges that certain keywords are essential for the concept: process, influence, groups, and common goals.

Leadership is a transactional process that takes place between a leader and their followers. Process means that a leader may both influence and be influenced by their followers, consequently, leadership is not a linear, one-way relationship, but an interactive one.

Influence is a part of leadership, as a matter of fact, the leader has an impact on those who follow him/her.

The context in which leadership occurs is groups. Leaders have the ability to influence a group of people who are working towards a shared goal. Thus, for leadership to take place, there must be others, namely a group.

Finally, leaders focus their efforts on the followers who are working towards a common goal. Since it emphasizes the necessity for leaders to collaborate with followers in order to accomplish particular goals, paying attention to shared goals imbues leadership with an ethical dimension. When leaders emphasize mutuality, there is less of a chance that they would act in a way that is coercive or immoral toward their followers. Moreover, it raises the likelihood that followers and leaders would collaborate for the benefit of the group. (Northouse, 2016)

To meet the challenges that the new environment presents, leaders should create and combine new knowledge, stimulate innovation, and find new ways to compete. In particular, there are five key actions that leaders should undertake within the company (Dess; Picken, 2000):

- Empower employees.
- Put under question the status quo and facilitate the creativity of workers.
- Motivate and inspire through a strategic vision.
- Collect and assemble external information.
- Share and gather internal knowledge.

In order to implement change successfully, leaders have to rely less on traditional structures, propose revolutionary visions, and stimulate innovation, responsiveness, and creativity.

Usually, individuals tend to resist and avoid change. In this new context characterized by continuous change, an organization must adapt to it to survive otherwise it will lag behind its competitors and its effectiveness will be compromised. (Jones, 2017) Therefore, leaders

should not only learn the proper method to manage change but also guide employees to positively adapt to it.

According to Martin (2007), there are some features that the leaders of the 21st century should have:

- Ability to collaborate and work in a team to achieve important results.
- Ability to cross organizational boundaries and create relationships with employees to increase the agility and flexibility of the company, and to respond to changes.
- Be flexible and willing to participate in different experiences within the firm.

Leadership has always been tougher during difficult times, but the specific strains that are currently being faced by companies all around the world call for a fresh focus on what defines true leadership. Today, the goal of leaders should be to restore confidence, hope, and optimism; to be able to quickly recover from catastrophic events and demonstrate resilience; to assist people in their search for meaning and connection by cultivating a new sense of self-awareness; and to honestly relate to all stakeholders.

Because of factors such as rapidly advancing technology, increasing levels of round-the-clock global competitive pressure, and a very uncertain economic and ethical climate, leaders at all levels and in all types of organizations are facing the challenge of dwindling hope and confidence in both themselves and the people they lead.

At such times, there is a rising acknowledgment among researchers that new and enhanced leadership tactics are important and urgently needed for acceptable outcomes. (Avolio & Gardner, 2005)

In conclusion, events like globalization, COVID-19, and the emergence of new technologies have produced enormous changes not only in the business world but also in the world of work. These changes have prompted the need to rethink leadership in order to adapt it to the current environment, to deal with the challenges that the latter poses, and to create a superior relationship between leaders and followers.

For what regards this last aspect, these phenomena that we are experiencing have transformed the role of the leader. In particular, there has been an evolution in the relationship between leader and followers, which nowadays is the focus of leadership.

In the next paragraphs, I am going to discuss the leadership theories that devote more attention to such relations. The main aspect that they have in common is the role that the leader adopts in order to support, motivate, and encourage followers.

2.4 Review of recent leadership approaches

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that emphasizes encouraging and motivating people to reach their potential and make positive changes. This leadership style relies on the belief that leaders can transform individuals and organizations by inspiring a common vision and establishing a supportive work environment in which individuals may grow and develop. (Burns, 1978)

In addition, transformational leaders widen and elevate their employees' interests, raise knowledge and acceptance of the organization's purposes and mission, and inspire employees to look beyond their self-interest for the welfare of the group, in this way superior leadership performance is achieved. (Bass, 1990)

A related concept is charismatic leadership, according to it, a leader's personality can influence, stimulate, and inspire followers. Therefore, charisma is essential for the success of a transformational leader.

The key attributes of this leadership style are, firstly, leaders foster trust between them and followers. Secondly, they prioritize values such as integrity and fairness and set an example for their followers to follow. Thirdly, transformational leaders accept the responsibility for the organization's growth and social impact. Lastly, they create a supportive work environment by encouraging open communication, providing feedback, and promoting individual growth and development.

As a consequence, followers' need for achievement, self-actualization, and maturity are enhanced, and they are inspired to look beyond their self-interests for the welfare of the group, organization, or society. (Bass, 1990)

How does the relationship between followers and transformational leaders work? The latter wants to inspire followers to share its values and connect with its vision to establish consensus and achieve goals that benefit them and the company. This relationship is proved by the leaders' real concern for their followers and the followers' reciprocal confidence. Consequently, leaders are elevated above self-interest.

Transformational leaders invest time in the growth and well-being of their followers. They offer individualized assistance, guidance, and mentorship to their followers in order to help them attain their maximum potential. This personal attention fosters trust and loyalty while motivating people to work more and accomplish better.

In addition, leaders allow employees to experiment, explore new approaches, and transfer authority and trust to their subordinates to make decisions, which makes employees feel valued and engaged.

Workers are brought together around the same goal. This contributes to the creation of a healthy and supportive work environment that inspires and motivates people to collaborate and instill a sense of belonging in followers. (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999)

The "4 I's" of transformational leadership refer to the four key aspects or characteristics of this leadership style and are, firstly, idealized influence. This refers to the leader's ability to act as a role model for followers, inspiring them through their personal qualities and values. The charisma of the leader and the trust that exists between him or her and the followers is characterized by high moral and ethical standards. In such a case the leadership can be truly defined as transformational.

Secondly, inspirational motivation gives followers challenges and stimulates them to participate in shared goals. The leader's appeal to what is right and necessary motivates everyone to move forward.

Thirdly, intellectual stimulation, means that transformational leaders encourage their followers to think creatively and challenge the status quo by creating a culture of innovation and encouraging individuals to come up with new ideas and approaches.

Lastly, individualized consideration which consists of the leader paying attention to the developmental needs of followers and supporting their professional and personal growth. (Bass, 1990)

These are four interrelated components that are essential for leaders to develop the bonds necessary to make transformational leadership possible and to move followers. By combining these aspects, transformational leaders can create a dynamic and inspirational work atmosphere where individuals are inspired to achieve their best.

Transformational and transactional leadership are two distinct but related styles of leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to reach their maximum potential, whereas transactional leadership focuses on rewards and punishments in order to control followers' behavior and motivate them.

Transformational leaders are frequently perceived as more inspirational and visionary, and they prioritize the development of their followers. They accomplish this by establishing a shared vision, offering tailored assistance, and motivating followers to take on new challenges and possibilities.

Transactional leaders, on the other hand, are more concerned with maintaining the status quo and ensuring that followers obey the standards and expectations that have been established. The two leadership styles are frequently depicted as a continuum, with transformational leadership at one end and transactional leadership at the other.

According to research, developments in the marketplace and workforce over the last two decades have prompted the need for leaders to become more transformational and less transactional in order to remain effective.

Furthermore, transformational leaders boost their followers' morale and motivation, as well as their degree of maturity and ideals, worries for achievement, self-actualization, and the well-being of others, the company, and society. While transactional leadership “refers to the exchange relationship between leader and follower to meet their self-interests”. (Bass, 1999, p. 30)

Depending on the situation and the demands of their followers, some leaders may employ a blend of both techniques.

The strengths of this leadership style are various. Transformational leaders are able to inspire and motivate their followers. They cast a vision for the future and let their followers understand the possibilities of what they may accomplish together. This contributes to the development of a sense of purpose and engagement, which can lead to enhanced performance and productivity.

Leaders are personally interested in the growth and well-being of their followers. They offer individualized assistance, guidance, and mentorship to their followers in order to help them attain their maximum potential. This promotes trust and loyalty, which can lead to higher staff retention.

Leaders create a work atmosphere that stimulates creativity and innovation. They allow employees to take chances, experiment, and explore new approaches. This can lead to better problem-solving abilities, enhanced creativity, and more imaginative solutions.

The morale and job satisfaction are enhanced thanks to the supportive work environment that is fostered by transformational leaders.

Transformational leaders are good communicators because they can express their vision and motivate their followers. This helps to foster a sense of community and to unite everyone in pursuit of a common objective. (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999)

Despite its popularity, transformational leadership is not without its critics. Leaders may find it challenging to provide individualized support to every one of their followers, especially if they have a large team. As a matter of fact, transformational leaders devote a great amount of time and energy to their followers, which may be demanding.

Transformational leadership can build a dependence on the leader, which can be troublesome if the leader is absent or departs the organization. This might cause followers to lose direction and motivation.

This leadership style may result in opposition and backlash from employees, and difficulty implementing new ideas and efforts, due to the degree of change and risk-taking that it involves and that many people may want to avoid.

Transformational leaders frequently value creativity and innovation over structure and systems, which can leave followers confused and disoriented. It might also make it harder to carry out plans and achieve goals.

Lastly, it can lead to fatigue and excessive turnover, particularly if followers are not properly nurtured and developed due to the high expectations of leaders for their followers. (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999)

The transformational leadership model offers the potential to improve a corporation's image as well as its success in recruitment, selection, and promotion. This approach also has consequences for the organization's training and development operations, job design, and organizational structure.

For what concerns the implications for the company image, a company that deals with transformational leadership communicates to its workers, other stakeholders and shareholders, and the community at large, that it is focused on the future, is confident, has employees who work together for the common good, and places a premium on its intellectual resources, flexibility, and employee development.

In terms of recruiting, increasing transformational leadership within the organization may be beneficial. Firstly, because a company whose CEO is charismatic and has a public image of being a confident and dynamic leader, appeals to applicants.

Regarding employee development, managers tend to mold their leadership style after that of their immediate bosses. As a result, if more upper-level executives are transformational, lower-level employees will imitate such behavior. However, to achieve this situation, is crucial to develop organizational policies that promote the awareness and appreciation of the workers that are willing to adopt difficult stances, know when to challenge conventional wisdom, and take fair risks. (Bass, 1990)

The transformational leadership mindset can be applied not only to organizations as a whole but also to teams and international relations.

In conclusion, when a company faces a chaotic marketplace in which products are born, live, and die within a few years and the technology becomes out of date before it is fully depreciated, transformational leadership must be nurtured in the whole company. To prosper, the firm must be able to foresee and respond to new demands and changes as they arise, transformational leaders have the proper charisma and motivation to do so. Challenges, quick change, and uncertainty necessitate a flexible organization with leaders who can inspire employees to eagerly join in team efforts and share common goals. (Bass, 1990)

Servant leadership

“Servant leadership is an other-oriented approach to leadership manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community”

(Nathan, Mulyad, Sendjay, Dierendonck, & Liden, 2018, p. 114). This definition underlines the main ingredients of this mode of leadership: motive, mode, and mindset. The human motive for taking on a leadership responsibility is a critical part of servant leadership, this orientation toward others demonstrates the leader's belief that leading others entails a shift away from self-focus.

The mode is manifested through the recognition that each follower is different with different interests, goals, and needs, and the willingness of the leader to understand each of them. Finally, servant leadership mirrors the mindset of a trustee. The intentional focus on follower growth is kept within the context of a concern for the greater community and a commitment to be accountable for their well-being.

This approach is based on the idea that leaders who prioritize serving their followers' needs and interests can create a more productive and fulfilling work environment. As a matter of

fact, servant leadership occurs when leaders take on the role of servant in their interactions with workers. In this way, self-interest rises to a higher level of motivation that is concerned with others' needs.

Servant leadership involves followers in several dimensions, namely ethical, emotional, and relational, empowering them to grow. According to this method, when the well-being and potential of followers are addressed, they are more engaged and effective in their work. Therefore, the primary goal is to cultivate followers based on the leaders' moral and altruistic principles.

In addition, servant leaders regard themselves as stewards of the organizations' resources and he or she works to grow them. (Nathan, Mulyad, Sendjay, Dierendonck, & Liden, 2018) The leader attempts to create opportunities for followers to succeed within the organization. The main difference compared to other leadership styles is that the final aim is not the organization's well-being but serving followers. This people-centered mindset fosters true relationships throughout the company. (Dierendonck, 2011)

Some key principles of servant leadership theory include functional and accompanying attributes.

The functional ones are the distinctive features of servant leadership and as such can be observed in the workplace. The accompanying ones complement and increase the functional attributes, and, in certain cases, they are prerequisites to successful servant leadership.

For what concerns the functional characteristics, they are:

- Vision, the main duty of the servant leader is to create and establish a strategic vision for the company.
- Honesty and integrity, are both part of good leadership. In particular, honesty is crucial to establish credibility.
- Trust.
- Service.
- Modeling in the sense of being a visible personal example is crucial for servant leadership. As a matter of fact, it has a wide range of implications for the company, and it represents an essential method for focusing on and establishing a leader's organizational vision.
- Pioneering, servant leaders should drive change, be decision-makers, and take risks.
- Appreciation of others, servant leaders recognize the value, work, and uniqueness of followers.

- Empowerment, servant leaders enhance their influence by empowering workers. This means that they should set the vision and direction, but delegate decision-making on how to achieve such goals.

Regarding the accompanying attributes, they include: communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement of workers, teaching, and delegation, as a matter of fact, servant leaders empower and encourage followers to take responsibility and make decisions.

Overall, servant leadership is distinguished by a strong emphasis on helping others, developing relationships, and cultivating a collaborative, growth-oriented culture.

Moreover, the servant leadership ideology is focused on putting followers' needs first and working together to achieve common goals. Servant leaders can create a more positive and effective work environment for their followers by emphasizing service, empathy, and teamwork. (Russell & Stone, 2002)

According to Liden and colleagues, there are crucial antecedents and outcomes of servant leadership as well as processes through which the latter operates.

Specifically, the antecedents of servant leadership are leader and follower characteristics. For what concerns leader characteristics, they are related to and influence the servant leadership potential of leaders. As Figure 1 shows, they are desire to serve others, emotional intelligence, moral maturity, prosocial identity, core self-evaluation, and narcissism.

The desire to serve others is the main and initial reason to engage in such type of leadership. The ingredients of emotional intelligence are “empathy, an awareness and understanding of others’ emotions, and/or the ability to manage emotions, namely, emotion regulation” (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014, p. 5). This means that people who score high on emotional intelligence have the proper sensitivity to understand individuals’ needs. In order to serve and help others accurately, leaders require a certain knowledge and awareness. Therefore, leaders that have a high degree of emotional intelligence are more likely to show servant leaders’ attitude.

Servant leaders should have a “high degree of moral ownership, moral efficacy, and moral courage, and as such, feel responsible for moral action, believe they can act morally, and do so in the face of obstacles” (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014, p. 7).

Thanks to a tenacious prosocial identity a leader may be more prone to engage in servant leadership.

Leaders with higher CSE (core self-evaluation) are more likely to exhibit servant leadership characteristics. As a matter of fact, people who have favorable self-concepts are more likely to engage in altruistic acts since they are less focused on themselves.

Finally, narcissism is negatively correlated with servant leadership behaviors.

The servant leader can modify its behaviors according to each follower and situation, this allows the leader to develop a unique relationship with the follower. By delivering individualized attention to each follower's requirements, the servant leader may elicit the best from each follower. In addition, the “servant leaders’ perceptions of follower characteristics drive the specific way in which servant leader behaviors are employed for each follower” (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014, p. 9).

The three characteristics of followers that may influence leader involvement in servant leadership are proactive personality, core self-evaluation (CSE), and servant leader prototype.

Proactive people are those who engage in behaviors aimed at improving a current situation. Servant leaders emphasize service rather than authority and power, consequently, they allow proactive followers to grow. As a matter of fact, the servant leader feels at ease with those who take initiative and speak up, and this is demonstrated through empowering and assisting workers to flourish.

The type of servant leadership behavior used with a follower is determined by the core self-evaluation of the latter. In particular, followers with high CSE respond more positively to empowerment opportunities and benefit more from the servant leader's efforts to contribute to its growth and thrive.

Lastly, “the more accurately leaders perceive followers’ servant leadership prototypes, the stronger the positive relationships between servant leader potential and servant leader behaviors” (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014, p. 10).

The behavior adopted by the servant leader influences followers through several processes, that, in turn, lead to favorable outcomes in followers.

Leader/follower mutual trust enhances creativity and innovation, which encourages idea implementation and problem-solving.

Through role modeling and frequent exposure to servant leader actions, servant leaders elicit followers' prosocial/moral identity. As this identity becomes more prominent, followers engage in prosocial actions such as servant leadership and organizational and community citizenship in order to preserve continuity with their own identity.

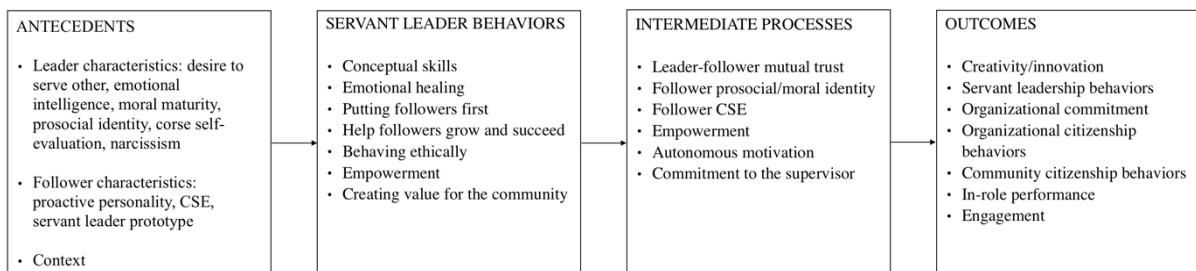
Servant leadership has the power to influence positively two components of core self-evaluation, namely self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Moreover, the latter induces followers to engage in servant leadership behaviors.

Empowerment is composed of four dimensions, self-determination, sense of impact, meaning, and competence, and it is particularly suited to lead to autonomous motivation.

Since servant leaders aim to empower their followers, they should develop autonomous motivation through feelings of empowerment. Furthermore, by offering emotional healing and prioritizing subordinates, servant leaders may contribute to meeting followers' need for relatedness.

Finally, by committing to the supervisor followers' organizational commitment is enhanced. (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014)

Figure 2.1: Servant leadership model



Source: Liden et al, 2014

Moreover, it is important to underline the main challenge of servant leadership: an excessive emotional cost. As a matter of fact, because of the emotional regulation involved when seeking to assist others, this method of leadership may be emotionally exhausting.

In addition, by making himself/herself always available to help and support followers, leaders may trigger role conflicts in seeking to serve all relevant "others" first. But, if servant leaders prioritize the needs of all members, they may experience stress and burnout. Lastly, the servant leader may be vulnerable to manipulation by more astute followers who may manipulate the servant leader for personal benefit, putting an undue emotional and logistical strain on him. (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014)

What characterizes this approach from the other leadership theories is the aspect of caring for others. As a matter of fact, servant leaders focus on followers' growth and are willing to share control with them. On the other hand, to fully embrace this mentality followers should

be open and ready to be supported and inspired by the leader. This also represents the main benefit of servant leadership.

Emotionally intelligent leadership

Emotionally intelligent leadership refers to the capacity of a leader to comprehend and control not just their own emotions but also the emotions of others around him/her in order to effectively lead and inspire his/her team.

According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, emotional intelligence (EI) consists of “The ability to monitor one’s own and other's feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.” (Salovey & Grewal, p. 281)

Emotional intelligence bridges the gap between the study of intelligence and the study of emotions by framing emotional experiences as valuable information sources that may assist individuals in comprehending and navigating the social environment.

Intelligence may be considered as expressing, essentially, the capacity to carry out abstract cognition, as well as the overall ability to comprehend and adapt to the environment. It is common practice to differentiate between various forms of intelligence based on the sorts of information with which they are able to function. In addition, every feeling is communicated via a distinct range of distinguishing cues, and sensitive and personal details, hence, we think of EI as acting based on emotional information.

Specifically, emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to motivate people, deal with frustrations, control impulses, and “keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (Sadri, 2012, p. 537)

Emotional intelligence is characterized by a combination of interconnected talents that enables people to process emotionally relevant information effectively and efficiently. In order to put these abilities to use, one must be aware of the kinds of behaviors that are regarded as acceptable by the individuals with whom he/she deals.

EI is needed for effective teamwork, as a matter of fact, the leader's role is to inspire the members of the team to work together towards a common goal and to foster supportive connections among themselves. Furthermore, the emotionally intelligent leader exerts a transformative impact on the members of the team. (Salovey & Grewal)

Regarding leaders, emotional intelligence is one of the most important factors in successful leadership. Indeed, leaders who possess a high level of emotional intelligence are able to

identify, evaluate, anticipate, and control their own emotions in such a way that enables them to collaborate effectively with their team members and inspire them to achieve their goals. Finally, leaders who are emotionally intelligent can interact successfully with others and develop strong relationships that are founded on trust and respect. They are also capable of empathizing with followers, understanding their opinions, and adapting their leadership style appropriately. (Sadri, 2012)

For what concerns emotional intelligence, according to Goleman, its components are four, as Figure 2 shows.

Firstly, self-awareness, which refers to the state of having a clear comprehension of one's feelings, as well as their strengths, shortcomings, needs, and motivations. Individuals who have an appropriate sense of self-awareness are not too judgmental of others nor are they unrealistically optimistic. Instead, they are truthful with both themselves and those around them.

Individuals who have a high degree of self-awareness are aware of the ways in which their emotions impact not just themselves but also the people around them and their performance at work.

A person's grasp of his or her ideals and ambitions is an extension of his or her self-awareness. Individuals who have a strong sense of self-awareness are able to communicate their feelings and the effect those feelings have on their job in an honest and forthright manner.

Performance evaluations are another opportunity to gauge a person's level of self-awareness. Those who are self-aware are conscious of both their strengths and weaknesses, are comfortable discussing both of these aspects and frequently have a hunger for receiving constructive criticism. Finally, those who are self-aware can also be identified by the self-confidence they exude.

Secondly, social awareness, whose main component is empathy. Demonstrating the latter implies considering the sentiments of coworkers as part of the process of making knowledgeable judgments.

As a component of leadership, empathy is particularly vital in today's world for three reasons: the rising usage of teams, the quick pace of globalization, and the growing need to retain people.

About the topic of globalization, interaction between people of different cultures frequently results in mistakes and misconceptions, and one of the best solutions is empathy.

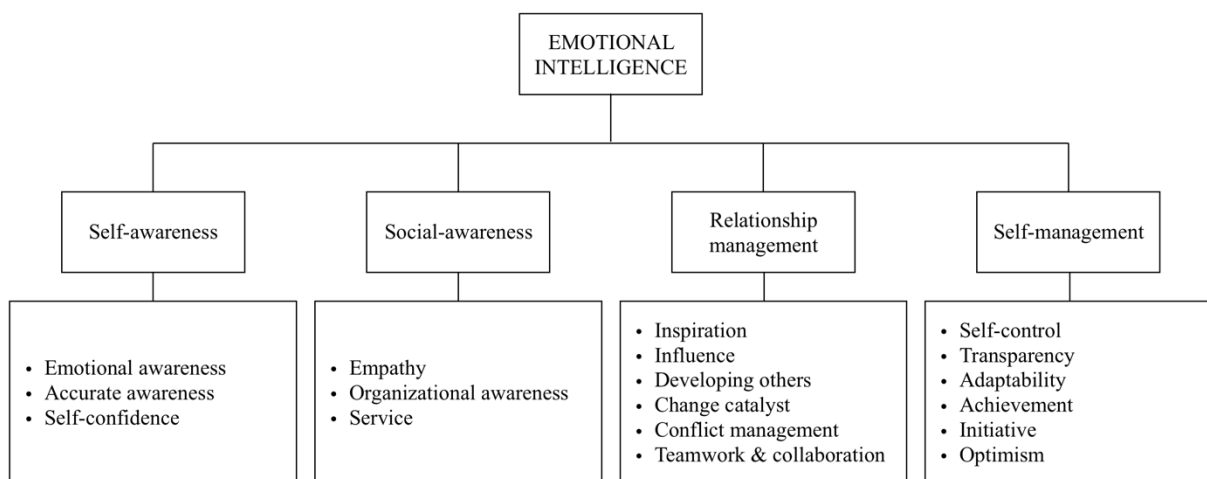
Thirdly, relationship management or social skills. Having social skills is being kind, but doing so with a goal, which is to move others in the direction that you want them to go.

The other aspects of emotional intelligence come together to form social competence, which is the apex of those abilities. As a matter of fact, when people are able to comprehend and regulate their own emotions as well as empathize with the feelings of others, they tend to be particularly talented at managing relationships with other people. The ability to motivate oneself is also important for social skills.

Lastly, self-management is of paramount importance for leaders. As a matter of fact, those who are able to reign in their emotions and impulses are first and foremost in a better position to foster an atmosphere that is trusting and equitable.

In addition, for reasons related to competition, self-regulation is an essential component. It is common knowledge that the modern business world is characterized by uncertainty and constant change, moreover, the rate at which technology is transforming labor is staggering. Those who have achieved emotional mastery are able to adapt easily to such shifting circumstances. (Goleman, Leadership: the power of emotional intelligence. Selected writings, 2011)

Figure 2.2: The components of emotional intelligence



Source: Daniel Goleman, 2011

A related model is the 4-branch one, according to it emotional intelligence is composed of 4 distinct branches. The ability to perceive emotions and recognize them in the facial and postural responses of others is the first branch, which depicts how emotions are perceived. It involves the perception of nonverbal cues and the expression of those cues through the face, voice, and other communication channels associated with it. In addition, it contains the

capacity to recognize one's feelings. Because it paves the way for all other forms of emotional information processing, the ability to perceive emotions may be considered the most fundamental component of emotional intelligence.

The potential of a person's feelings to facilitate thinking and the resolution of problems falls under the purview of Branch 2 - facilitation.

Understanding emotions is the third facet of emotional intelligence, and it refers to the capacity to interpret and evaluate the language of emotions, as well as to appreciate the complex links that exist among emotions and to comprehend the results of emotional states. The regulation of feelings is reflected in Branch 4, which must necessarily incorporate the other aspects of personality. To put it another way, an individual's objectives, level of self-consciousness, and level of social awareness all play a role in the management of their feelings. In addition to this, it involves the ability to perceive and articulate the progression of feelings over time, such as how surprise might morph into sadness over a day. (Salovey & Grewal)

The four branches can be measured thanks to the Mayer-Salovey-Cwaruso Emotional Intelligence Test. According to it, branch 1 is evaluated using photos and faces. For faces, individuals are asked to identify the emotions that are being given by designs and landscapes, while for pictures, people are asked to identify the emotions that are being transmitted by landscapes and designs.

Branch 2 is evaluated based on senses, in which individuals evaluate emotions concerning a variety of different tactile and sensory cues; and facilitation, in which individuals select the emotions that would most effectively assist a certain way of thinking.

Branch 3 is measured through changes, which tests a person's ability to know under what circumstances emotional intensity lessens and increases as well as how one emotional state changes into another and blends. Additionally, this measurement asks people to identify the emotions that are involved in more complex affective states.

Branch 4 is evaluated via emotion management, which entails presenting individuals with hypothetical scenarios and asking how they would keep or change their feelings, and emotional relationships. This consists in asking people how they would manage the feelings of others in order to achieve a desired outcome. (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004)

Furthermore, the degree to which a person's talent is incorporated into his or her whole personality is shown by the sequence of the branches, which goes from perception to management. Therefore, the perception and expression of emotion (Branch 1), as well as the capacity of emotion to enhance thought (Branch 2), are two relatively distinct areas of

information processing that are anticipated to be modularized or bound within the emotion system. These expectations are based on the hypothesis that the emotional system will be organized in this manner. In contrast, the management of one's emotions, which is covered in Branch 4, needs to be included in an individual's overall aims and objectives. There is a gradual continuum of talents within each branch, moving from the more fundamental to the more advanced levels. (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004)

There are mainly nine strategies that emotionally intelligent leaders use. First and foremost, keep an eye on the prevailing emotional state. This indicates that the majority of leaders consistently monitor the emotional environment of meetings as well as any other interactions that take place. They are always on the lookout for the tiniest expressions of emotion, and when they identify a possible issue, they immediately act. When this is done, it not only helps to build alignment and enhance work processes, but it also helps leaders acquire credibility with their followers.

The second step is to verbalize your emotions in order to motivate other people. Emotionally intelligent leaders have an innate understanding of how they should convey their sentiments, and they also have the skills necessary to do it in the most effective manner possible.

Thirdly, employees are continually influenced by both the emotions and behaviors of a leader.

Putting yourselves in the position of another person is the fourth step. This method not only assists leaders in becoming more empathetic, but it also offers a unique vantage point on the situation.

Find out what the underlying emotional dynamics of the situation are, which is the fifth step.

Reframe the way you think about the situation, which brings us to our sixth point.

Seventhly, adjust the environment in order to establish healthy intrapersonal boundaries.

It is frequently the most emotionally wise thing that a leader can do to seek out and rely on the assistance of others, both executive coaches and staff members in the firm, this is the eighth point.

Lastly, assist other people in developing their emotional intelligence and making effective use of it. This technique has the potential to be the most effective when seen from the point of view of a company. (Cherniss & Roche, 2020)

Authentic leadership

“The authentic leader brings people together around a shared purpose and empowers them to step up and lead authentically in order to create value for all stakeholders.” (Bill, 2007, p. 34)

Authentic leaders create true ties with people and foster trust, consequently, they are able to drive others to high levels of achievement.

Leaders exhibit behaviors that are centered on transparency, optimism, and morality, have the ability to short-circuit the system and allow followers to participate in their job.

A crucial feature of an authentic leader is that they are more interested in helping others than in achieving their own goals or gaining fame. As a matter of fact, they are driven by selfless, altruistic motivations that are based on genuine care for the welfare of their followers. They are able to rise beyond their egocentric self-interest in order to achieve higher-order ideals that are in the best interests of the group. (Winton, Whittington, & Meskelis, 2022)

For what regards the relationship that exists between followers and authentic leaders, the latter’s main goal is to assist and support followers in their growth and to develop a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. With their honesty, integrity, transparency, and reliability, authentic leaders have the potential to inspire trust and a sense of psychological safety in their followers. As a consequence, the degree of optimism and confidence among followers may be raised, which may result in improved levels of engagement, commitment, work satisfaction, job performance, and additional effort. (Winton, Whittington, & Meskelis, 2022)

To summarize, the essential characteristics of authentic leaders are: first, they are true to themselves rather than pretending to be someone else. Second, they are driven by personal convictions rather than by status, honors, or other personal benefits. Third, they lead from their point of view. Finally, their actions are based on their convictions and values.

According to Bruce and Gardner (2005), authentic leadership is composed of several crucial factors that make this method completely different from the others discussed above. The authentic leader draws on his or her resources, which include the positive psychological capacities of self-assurance, optimism, hope, and resilience. As part of a process of positive self-development, these positive psychological states are thought to increase the leader's level of self-awareness as well as his or her ability to self-regulate his or her activities.

A natural ethical and moral component is included in the formation of authentic leaders as well as increased degrees of self-awareness. Individuals achieve this level of self-awareness when they are aware of their existence and what factors contribute to that.

Authentic leaders link their principles with their intents and behaviors via the process of self-regulation.

Together, the processes of identification, positive modeling, emotional contagion, supporting self-determination, and positive social exchanges go a long way towards explaining how authentic leaders influence followers, i.e., how the leadership component of authentic leadership works.

The authentic connection that occurs between a leader and his/her followers is defined by open and constructive exchanges. Over time, as the two parties' connection grows more authentic, both the leaders and the followers will inevitably mature.

It is imperative to also consider the context in this analysis, given that all interactions involving leadership take place within a fluid and ever-changing environment. (Avolio & Gardner, 2005)

To analyze authentic leadership two approaches can be applied: practical and theoretical.

Concerning the first one, four dimensions characterize authentic leaders. Firstly, being passionate about following one's goal. Authentic leaders need a deep understanding of themselves and the things that truly drive them before they can discover their mission.

Secondly, putting moral principles into practice. The personal convictions of leaders are the foundation upon which the values they uphold are built. These values are then developed further via research, reflection, consultation with others, and years of experience.

Thirdly, leading with your heart means having a passion for the work that you do, having compassion for the people that you serve, having empathy for the people that you work with, and having the bravery to make decisions that might be challenging.

Establishing meaningful connections with others is the fourth component of authentic leadership.

Finally, it is important to exhibit self-discipline. Leaders are the ones who set the bar high for themselves and demand others to do the same. This includes taking full responsibility for the results and keeping others accountable for the fulfillment of their responsibilities. (Bill, 2007)

For what regards the theoretical approach, according to Bruce and Gardner (2005), the development of authentic leadership is an active and lively process that lasts many years and is shaped by crucial events. As a matter of fact, such events are affected by the leader's moral reasoning and positive psychological capacities. The latter are confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience.

In addition, these critical events play a decisive role in developing several characteristics that are fundamental for the authentic leader and that differentiate this leadership style from others, namely, self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. Particularly, self-awareness is the core element of the model. As a matter of fact, if the leader who is the focus of the development effort is unaware of the areas in which she or he may self-reinforce and strengthen themselves, then very little or no effort will be devoted to the goal of development. (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass, From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision, 1990; Bass, From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision, 1990)

Resonant leadership

Resonance is the achievement of physiological and personal synchrony between a leader and followers.

It results in a reduction of the noise of the environment, affecting in this way the emotional climate of the group and guiding their feelings in a positive direction.

Resonance is positively correlated with emotional intelligence. As a matter of fact, how effectively leaders can regulate and channel their sentiments in order to assist the group in achieving its objectives depends on their level of emotional intelligence.

The crucial feature of resonant leadership is leader and followers working in sync and harmonizing their thoughts and emotions. In addition, the presence of a group of followers who resonate with the positive and passionate energy of their leader is one indication of this leadership style.

A fundamental tenet of effective leadership is that resonance magnifies and extends the emotional impact of the leader's actions. The less static the interactions between individuals are, the more resonant they are with one another. The emotions that individuals experience are the element that binds them together as members of a team and that keeps them committed to an organization. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Three main elements must be present in the personality of a leader if he or she wants to preserve resonance in himself/herself and others: mindfulness, hope, and compassion. For what concerns mindfulness, can be defined as the ability to live one's life with a complete awareness of, consciousness of, and attention to one's own and other people's experiences, as well as of the environment in which one resides. The concept revolves around the practice of self-awareness. As a matter of fact, a crucial element of effective leadership is the capacity for accurate self-evaluation, or the ability to view oneself as others do.

Furthermore, mindfulness involves taking an interest in the people in our lives and inquiring about how they are doing. It consists in determining how to respond to different people and circumstances in a way that is true to who you are as a person and in line with the things that are important to you.

Regarding hope, it is a state of mind that comes with a crystal-clear vision of what the future can be and how to get there (McKee & Massimilian, 2006). A basic component of hope is the conviction that one can shape the course of events. In addition, it involves intellectual honesty as well as the capacity to be strict in your goals while remaining flexible in your approach.

Finally, compassion, the latter requires maintaining an awareness of other people, understanding the perspectives of other people, and catering to their requirements. (McKee & Massimilian, 2006)

The role of a resonant leader is of paramount importance in today's world. As a matter of fact, they are able to inspire, create hope, and motivate followers to deal with the new challenges that the environment poses.

Resonant leaders behave following one or more of the six basic approaches to leadership, namely, visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic pacesetting and commanding, and they are able to deftly move between the various styles depending on the circumstances.

Commanding leadership

The commanding leader requires compliance with his/her orders and prefers to manage and monitor the situation himself/herself with little or no delegation of authority.

Consequently, when it comes to performance, feedback is almost often offered with an emphasis on what individuals did incorrectly rather than what they did successfully.

Such a leadership style is exceptionally effective during business crises and to kick-start a change of direction. As a matter of fact, it unfreezes ineffective business routines, stimulates followers into new ways of doing things, and assists everyone in navigating through the chaos. Resonance is built by giving directions to mitigate fears during an emergency.

In addition, when all other methods have been tried and found to be unsuccessful, resorting to this manner can occasionally be successful in dealing with problem employees.

The emotional intelligence competencies required to implement the commanding leadership style appropriately are achievement, influence, and initiative. Regarding the latter, it consists in taking opportunities and employing an unhesitating "command" tone issuing orders without planning the course of action excessively. Furthermore, the authoritative leader also manifests initiative by not waiting for circumstances to drive him/her but taking decisive actions to get things done.

If not used judiciously the commanding leadership may destroy the satisfaction and gratification that followers get by their work. As a matter of fact, by frequently criticizing workers they may feel useless to the company's goals and mission. Thus, the commanding leader should rely on his/her emotional self-control to monitor and keep impatience and annoyance under control. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Pacesetting leadership

The pacesetting leader sets high criteria for performance and then lives up to those goals. As a matter of fact, he/she wants things to be done more efficiently and effectively and expects the same from everyone else. In addition, the leader rapidly identifies employees who are not performing up to par and places higher expectations on them, and if they do not meet those expectations, he/she steps in to save the day, the consequence is an increase in results in the short-term.

On the one hand, the emotional intelligence competencies required to implement this leadership style appropriately are achievement and initiative.

Concerning achievement, it is the core of pacesetting leadership, as a matter of fact, the leader is continuously looking for methods to enhance performance and for new strategies to improve not only his/her performance but also that of followers. In addition, the leader is mainly driven by the intense urge to fulfill the standards of greatness that he/she has set for himself/her selves.

On the other hand, pacesetter leaders often lack empathy, the ability to collaborate and communicate with followers, and emotional self-management.

Such a leadership approach works effectively when employees are self-motivated and qualified and therefore need little guidance, otherwise, it may leave employees with the impression that they are being forced to work too hard to meet the leader's unending expectations.

Furthermore, followers may believe that the leader is pushing them too hard or that he/she does not trust them to do the task in their own way, and the result is lower morale in the workplace. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Democratic leadership

The distinguishing characteristic of democratic leaders is their impressive capacity to listen and communicate. As a matter of fact, they transmit the impression to their followers that they are ready to listen to their opinions and problems, and that they genuinely want to hear them.

Moreover, the emotional intelligence competencies that democratic leaders usually have are conflict management, influence, empathy, teamwork, and collaboration. Regarding the latter, such leaders are able to bring an end to arguments and establish a feeling of unity by patching up the cracks that have appeared inside the group. In this way they do not behave like top-down leaders but as members of the team. For what concerns empathy, it is essential to work and cooperate with a wide range of people.

When a leader is unsure of the path to pursue and wants input from capable staff, such an approach is the most suitable, as it creates resonance by appreciating the input of followers and encouraging them to participate. As a matter of fact, even if a leader has a clear vision for the future, this style of leadership is still the best way to surface ideas on how to put that vision into action or produce new ideas on how to carry it out.

However, when a leader relies excessively on this strategy the result is exasperating, never-ending meetings during which ideas are mulled over, the consensus is difficult to achieve, and the only visible outcome is the scheduling of further meetings. Confusion and a lack of direction might be one of the costs, which can then lead to delays or an escalation of existing disputes. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Affiliative leadership

What characterizes the affiliative leadership style from others is the open sharing of emotions and the value that leaders give to people and their emotions. Consequently, the group's climate and harmony are enhanced, building team resonance and loyalty.

Because of its main features, the affiliative leadership approach should be used to “heighten team harmony, increase morale, improve communication, or repair broken trust in an organization” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013, p.64).

The emotional intelligence competencies required to implement this style appropriately are, firstly, collaboration. Affiliate leaders are particularly concerned with encouraging unity and interactions, as well as building linkages that increase the connectivity between themselves and the people they lead. As a result, affiliative leaders place a high importance on periods of rest within the company. This provides more opportunities to accumulate emotional capital, which can be utilized during times of increased stress. Secondly, empathy. This means that leaders care about the full person keeping followers pleased and boosting morale. In addition, the spirits of employees are improved even while they slog through routine or uninteresting work. Finally, when affiliative leaders have to work and collaborate with people with different cultures and backgrounds, conflict management competence is essential to keep the group harmonious.

Notwithstanding, since this approach places a sole emphasis on praise, it may let bad performance go undetected, leading employees to believe that mediocrity is acceptable in the workplace. Employees are left to figure out how to improve themselves on their own since leaders provide little to no constructive guidance on how to do so, thus the affiliative leadership style should be used in conjunction with other styles. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Coaching leadership

Coaching leadership emphasizes primarily the personal growth and aspirations of employees rather than the completion of tasks. As a matter of fact, people feel connected and in harmony with each other creating in this way resonance. Leaders build a relationship based on trust with their teams by making sure they have personal dialogues with each one, and by making it clear that they care about their employees as individuals, rather than viewing them as merely instruments for achieving the company's goals. As a consequence, a continuous discussion is created, and this enables followers to listen to performance feedback with

greater candor, seeing it as serving not only the objectives of their employer but also their personal goals.

The role of the leader is vital, as a matter of fact, he/she assists followers in determining their strengths and limitations and then links those findings to their personal and professional goals. Furthermore, the leader encourages workers to identify long-term development objectives and assist them by conceiving a strategy for achieving those goals, all the while being specific about where his/her accountability resides and what the employee's role would be in accomplishing those goals.

The everyday work of followers is connected to these long-term goals that they establish together with the leader so that the latter can keep them engaged. Leaders can only start to make that link a reality if they have established a deeper and more personal connection with their workforce.

Coaches are also adept at distributing duties to their staff, providing them with demanding activities that push them beyond their comfort zones rather than those that are designed to just get the job done.

The result of the focus on employee advancement and personal career is a more favorable emotional response as well as improved performance. Employee's talents and self-confidence are improved, and this enables them to work more independently and at a higher performance level.

The coaching leadership style is most successful with employees who demonstrate initiative, seek greater opportunities for professional growth, and are willing to build long-term capabilities.

The three main emotional intelligence competencies that usually coaching leaders have are first, empathy.

Secondly, the ability to develop others, which enables a leader to behave as a counselor by investigating the followers' aims and values and assisting them in expanding their own set of skills and competencies.

Finally, emotional self-awareness that contributes to reinforcing the authenticity of leaders. Thus, they are able to guide employees that is really in their best interests, as opposed to counsel that leaves the recipient feeling misled or even assaulted.

Coaching leadership may not be successful if followers do not have the willingness to improve if doing it demands an excessive amount of personal guidance and feedback, or if the leader does not have the experience or sensitivity necessary to assist them in moving

forward. When it is not done well, the coaching method might appear more like micromanagement or excessive control of an individual, this may be very damaging to an employee's sense of self-confidence, which can ultimately lead to a downward spiral in performance. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

Visionary leadership

Visionary leaders explain where a group is heading, but not how it will get there, in this way individuals feel free to invent, experiment, and take risks. This leads to many benefits for the company and the leader. Firstly, the feeling that everyone is contributing to the accomplishment of a common objective also helps foster commitment and pride within a team.

Secondly, when individuals have a strong emotional connection to the aims, values, and missions of a business, that business becomes their first choice when it comes to employment. Therefore, usually, visionary leaders are able to keep their most valuable staff. Thirdly, “framing the collective task in terms of a grander vision” allows the visionary leader to define a “standard for performance feedback that revolves around that vision” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013, p.56). By being aware of the bigger picture, understanding what is required from them is clearer for followers. Consequently, this kind of leadership encourages the greatest amount of buy-in possible for the organization's overall strategy and goals in the long run.

What makes this style so effective is that leaders constantly remind employees of the bigger goal of the work they are doing, this gives otherwise unremarkable activities significance. Employees are aware that the common goals are congruent with their pursuits of happiness and success, thus they feel inspired and motivated.

The emotional intelligence competencies required to implement this style appropriately are self-confidence, self-awareness, empathy, and transparency. Thanks to the combination of these capabilities, visionary leaders are able to establish a mission that resonates with them personally and attune that purpose to the values that are held in common with followers. Moreover, because they have a deep-seated conviction in that goal, they are able to have a commanding influence over others around them.

The visionary approach is successful in a variety of different business contexts, yet it may be especially useful when a company is floundering, such as when it is amid a turnaround or when it is in desperate need of a new vision.

Visionary leadership may fail when a leader is working with a team of specialists or peers who are more experienced than he is. These individuals may regard a leader who is expounding a broad vision as being pretentious or just out of sync with the task at hand. A mistake like this can lead to cynicism, which is a fertile environment for bad performance. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013)

According to many researchers, the visionary approach is the more effective one to deal with new circumstances and situations, such as the diffusion of new information technologies, globalization, and Covid 19. In addition, by feeling free and stimulated to innovate, followers may come up with several solutions and ideas to deal with such new challenges.

2.5 Conclusion

As the environment is changing, the role of leadership and how it is structured is evolving too. Information technologies have shifted economies towards information-intensive industries, where innovation, flexibility, and market creativity are vital.

We are in an era where teamwork and collaboration are crucial, most of all inside a company. To survive in today's context, companies do not need a leader that just gives orders to employees and supervises, but a leader able to guide them toward the future giving directions on where the company wants to arrive. Therefore, not only the relationship between the leader and followers is essential but also how they interact to approach the future.

Effective leaders must foster empathy, trust, and innovation while embracing change. Companies should prioritize learning, collaboration, and employee growth. Rewarding teamwork and innovation can drive success. Overall, leaders need to navigate evolving landscapes, support employee needs, and cultivate cultures of adaptation and growth to remain competitive.

The relationship between leaders and followers has evolved as well, becoming a central focus of leadership theories. In addition, the role of leaders has shifted to focus on fostering strong relationships with followers and embracing change to ensure success in an evolving business landscape.

Due to the above-mentioned changes, the business environment is primarily characterized by uncertainty. Those assuming leadership roles within this uncertain context consistently confront unparalleled risks and difficulties. To deal with such an environment, leaders should be able to both drive organizational advancement and cater to employee needs. A potent resolution to this intricate challenge lies in visionary leadership.

As a matter of fact, a vision guides employees and motivates them to deal with change positively and proactively. Visionary leadership empowers followers to innovate and devise solutions for emerging challenges.

Notwithstanding, the future and the process of visioning are often disregarded when talking about leadership. Thus, in the next chapter, I am going to analyze more deeply what leads to the formation of a vision inside the company, how it helps the company to face uncertainty and changes, and what is the role of the visionary leader in this context.

3. The process of envisioning

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on vision and its function from an organizational perspective. In particular, the first paragraph analyzes the meaning of vision by considering the most popular definition of this concept, its components, and the attributes often associated with an effective vision. In addition, four different types of visions, namely corporate, entrepreneurial, founding, and sub-organizational, are briefly reviewed.

In the second paragraph, the various phases that compose the envisioning process are deeply examined to understand the tasks that the leader and the whole company undertake from the development to the assimilation by followers of the organizational vision.

According to several authors, the actors mostly affected by a vision are usually individual workers, teams, and the company. However, this happens only if the organizational vision is properly conceived and applied, otherwise, it may fail.

Furthermore, this chapter analyses two important characteristics of a vision, which are its relationship with the future and its role in dealing with environmental uncertainty.

The last two paragraphs focus on leaders. As a matter of fact, the skills that they should have in order to properly conceive a vision and the different types of leaders that rely on visions to inspire and guide followers are examined.

3.2 What does vision mean?

“Vision is a mental perception of the kind of environment an individual or an organization aspires to create within a broad time horizon and the underlying conditions for the actualization of this perception” (El-Namaki, 1992, p. 25). It could be a description of a company, corporate culture, technology, or activity in the future, or an image of a desirable future reality that an organization would like to achieve usually in five or ten years.

Vision offers direction regarding which elements should be maintained and which aspects of the future should be adopted to improve it. This means that companies have on the one hand core values and purpose that do not change, and on the other business strategies and procedures that are always evolving to accommodate an ever-changing environment.

For what regards change, as mentioned above, when employees perceive it as a threat to their role in the company, to the identity and core values of the latter, they tend to resist it.

In order to be powerful a vision should have the following characteristics: firstly, preserving the key elements of the company identity no matter what happens in the external environment. Secondly, supporting employees to realize which are the weaknesses of the status quo and how they can be managed. Finally, it describes an attractive future in order to stimulate followers to move toward it. (Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg, *Visions of change as visions of continuity*, 2019)

The degree to which a vision of change emphasizes the fact that despite the change, the organizational identity will be maintained is called a vision of continuity. A vision of continuity refers to the extent to which visions of change also emphasize the preservation of the distinguishing characteristics of the company. Therefore, the vision of continuity is part of the vision of change which “concerns an image of the future state of the collective that captures that within the collective change there is continuity of collective identity” (Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg, *Visions of change as visions of continuity*, 2019, p. 671), but its presence is not compulsory.

Hence, a vision of continuity cannot exist independently of a vision of change in visionary leadership, and the degree to which a vision of change embraces a vision of continuity might vary.

“Visioning is a cognitive process where the manager takes an explorative, relatively short-term view of future changes related to the surrounding network and emerging strategic opportunities, considers the future at a relatively short time horizon, and forms strategic intentions accordingly” (Abrahamsen, Halinen, & Naudé, 2022, p. 10). The process focuses on two key themes: prospective network and managers’ strategic intentions. Regarding the first one, it answers the question “what do we expect to see?”. It consists of the network’s expected future development and the direction and rate of change of the latter. Where the network is composed of actors, activities, resources, and roles. For what concerns the strategic intentions of the managers, are formulated through several activities, such as evaluating the accessible strategic alternatives, finding network positioning pathways, and determining the sort of engagement that is necessary with the actors.

The network is formed through the insights acquired during business interactions, while the strategic intentions are found both in the prospective network and the options that the present network offers. (Abrahamsen, Halinen, & Naudé, 2022)

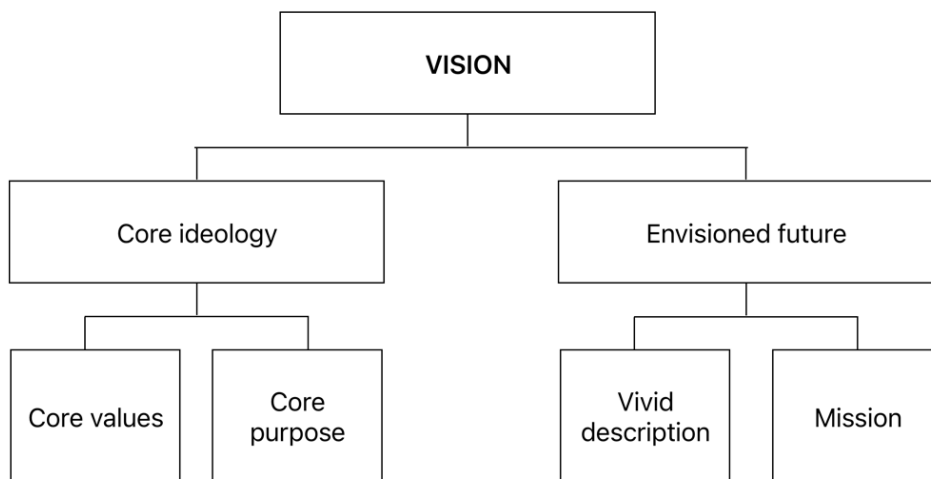
What is important to underline is that a vision is the path or destination specifically chosen by an individual or a group towards which they will work to accomplish. Consequently, a

vision should be readily understood and welcomed by all members of the organization in order to be successful. (O'Brien & Meadows, 2007)

According to Schwarz et al. (2006), a vision is a “picture of desirable futures toward which organization members should aim and that should appeal to the values, hopes, and ideals of organizational members and other stakeholders”. Therefore, it sheds light on what could be achieved, why actions are valuable, and how they can be performed in order to be realized. In this way, visions are useful instruments to reduce the uncertainty due to decision-making.

As Figure 2.1 shows, a vision is composed of two major elements: core ideology and envisioned future.

Figure 3.1: Vision’s components



Source: Collins et al, 1996.

Core ideology describes what the company stands for and the reason why it exists, the second one defines what the company aspires to achieve and become through several changes.

For what concerns core ideology, it is the lasting identity of a company that characterizes the evolution of the latter. It is usually conceived by the first leaders of an organization who shaped it with their personal values through daily actions. It should go beyond internal and environmental changes, guide leaders’ actions, and help to keep the whole company together during its primary phases. Furthermore, it should guide and motivate employees and people who belong to the company.

The core ideology has two different parts, namely core values and core purpose.

The core values are beliefs and principles of a company which are selected independently of the environment and are meaningful mainly for workers. A vision can be effective only if values are precise and genuine.

The core purpose is the company's reason for existing and represents what stimulates employees to work.

Regarding the envisioned future, it has two components: a mission and a vivid description, which is the instrument to make the mission more inspirational.

A mission is a goal that stimulates and unifies the company and rewards employees for their efforts. To be efficient, it must push and challenge the company while being feasible and translating the company philosophy into a tangible objective. It is usually referred to as Vision-level BHAG, which means Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals. The main difference between the latter and the core purpose is that the first one is a goal that can be reached in 10 to 30 years, while the other one is the rationale behind the company's existence and therefore can be never fully achieved (Collins & Porras, Building your company's vision, 1996).

There are four approaches to establishing a mission:

- Targeting: it consists of setting a specific, attainable goal, which can be quantitative or not, and focusing on it.
- Common enemy: in this case, the main goal is to outplay a competitor in order to become the most outstanding company in the market.
- Role model: this type of mission is often established by potential small to mid-sized businesses that have considerable possibilities for the future. The success of role model missions is directly proportional to the extent to which the companies chosen as role models produce compelling images for the members of the firm.
- Internal transformation: it is typically successful in older companies that need to radically transform themselves in order to stay competitive and healthy or regain their health.

The vivid description is a “vibrant, engaging, and specific description of what it will be like when the mission is achieved” (Collins & Porras, Organizational vision and visionary organizations, 2008).

In order to be effective, a company's vision should communicate three main themes: the mission, the strategy for achieving it, and the characteristics of the organizational culture that are vital to accomplishing the mission and supporting the strategy.

As mentioned above, the mission answers to the question "Why does the company exist?", it should attract and stimulate stakeholders with little or no explanation and instill engagement in employees.

In addition, the strategy can be defined as the operational path to achieve the mission.

A vision is developed by identifying "a domain for competitive behavior or arena, a set of sources of competitive strength and a profile for resource capability" (El-Namaki, 1992, p. 26).

A defined fighting area is called an arena. In the context of business, it consists of a limit for competitive behavior and is represented by a group of linked industries or a section of the economy. The advantages that a company can gain from it are identification of the business units with which to collaborate, growth opportunities, and future competition areas. This delineation of a competitive domain is extremely helpful in determining the direction of future company development, the breadth of the goods and markets that will be examined, as well as those that will not be.

Regarding the sources of competitive advantage, they can be both individual and organizational.

Individual sources include characteristics and attributes such as creativity, motivation, determination, initiative, and trustworthiness. While the organizational one comprises performance and positioning sources of competitive strength. The former can be achieved through a cost advantage, that in turn is obtained with either scale and low-cost achievement of raw materials or wider distribution, product positioning, and differentiation. It is possible to achieve distinctive product positioning by entering new market categories or by basing marketing tactics on distinctive qualities. Differentiation might result in a competitive advantage through flexibility in the products offered, forward or backward integration, or breakthrough technology that other companies do not have.

A positioning source of competitive strength can be found in the corporate dominance of a company. In particular, a company could take on one of the following positions:

- Dominant: able to control the actions of competitors.

- Strong: able to decide on which activities to undertake without threatening long-term profits.
- Favorable: able to acknowledge the strong points of competitors.
- Tenable: a company under the power and authority of other companies.
- Weak: a company whose results are not satisfactory but able to improve them.
- Non-tenable: a company whose results are not satisfactory, and it is not able to improve them.

Finally, for what concerns the resource capability, it may include various elements: managerial, logistic, technological, and financial capabilities. Managerial competence results from the ability to problem-solve and monitor the surrounding environment. The logistic competence includes skills in operations and marketing.

The concept of "effective vision" might be understood in either of two different ways. On the one hand, a vision can be effective thanks to its ability to motivate and inspire. On the other hand, a vision may be useful since it establishes a framework that enables the company to meet crucial performance requirements.

According to O'Connell et al. (2011), the main attributes that make a vision effective are: brevity, abstractness, challenge, future orientation, stability, desirability, or ability to inspire, and clarity. Such attributes were empirically tested by Baum et al. (1998) through the analysis of venture growth in young firms in the wood products industry.

In addition, several factors define a vision and make it an appropriate starting point to develop the company strategy (Lloyd & Ogbonna, 1999):

- Coherence: the key elements of the company's strategy should be included straightforwardly in the future state that the organization aims to achieve.
- Translatable: leaders and followers should be able to translate the vision into actionable goals and strategies for the company.
- Powerful: the vision should motivate and trigger followers to improve their performance.
- Challenging: the vision should require higher commitment from employees.
- Unique: the distinguishing traits of the company should be included in the vision.
- Feasible: the vision should embody attainable and realistic objectives.
- Idealist: The vision should make it very clear what the desired end state for the business is, and it should do it within a feasible time frame.

As Lynn et al. (2001) sustain, an effective vision should have three components. Firstly, clarity which relates to having a target that is clearly expressed, simple to comprehend, and that guides the company. A vision should produce a distinct picture of what it is that the organization hopes to accomplish. As a matter of fact, the first stage in developing an effective vision is gaining clarity, it serves as the rallying point for those who are interested in it. Without this crucial element, followers cannot believe in the vision, nor the latter can be durable and lasting over time.

Secondly, being supported by others, this means that leaders should make sure that followers are committed to the vision and ready to work to achieve it.

Thirdly, stability, thus a vision should remain constant over time in order to reduce troubles inside the company.

Moreover, the empirical study conducted by Ruvio et al. (2010) revealed that the factors often associated with vision are primarily vision formulation, implementation, and innovative realism. This means that leaders relate vision to strategy, effective communication, and responsiveness to events that involve the company's internal and external actors. Other factors that were mentioned are risk-taking, profit-oriented, and general, which underlines the vague aspect of a vision.

In addition, according to Fiset et al. (2019), visions that are powerful and successful are primarily motivating, moving, and future-oriented, and they may also contain instrumental elements, such as goal setting.

For what concerns the vision statement, it tells followers where to go but not how. This means that it focuses on the desired end state as well as the overarching reason that lies behind collective aspirations, but it seldom discusses how such a state should take place. This is meaningful because in this way followers can decide which is the best path to reach the objectives established by the leaders.

Vision statements are powerful tools to convey to the outside world the mission and purpose of a company. The former is not only a way to attract followers and encourage change, but it also gives followers a sense of collective identity, promotes task engagement, and determines a framework that groups can adopt while responding to crises.

Vision statements frequently include figurative and metaphorical language, and they emphasize ideals, far-reaching ambitions, and idealized results. In addition, leaders usually came up with the best vision statements either when they thought on powerful models and

looked for their underlying causes, or when they pondered on less powerful models and looked for their overarching objectives. (Strange & Mumford, 2002)

A vision statement is not essential, but it serves two purposes that are beneficial to the company. Firstly, it makes the planning stage of establishing the vision smoother. Secondly, it may turn into a public document that will not permit any room for ambiguity to exist, as a sort of constitution.

Furthermore, the more a vision statement appears to be consistent and compatible with a certain context, the more attractive it is to followers. This is because relevance is one of the most important factors in determining attraction.

In order to deeply understand the meaning of a vision is important to distinguish between the latter and a goal. A vision can be defined as a sort of goal that operates as an "umbrella goal" or "ultimate objective" under which other goals can be developed and rejected (Lewis & Clark, 2018).

Visions and goals share a main characteristic; indeed, they are both a standard that employees aim to achieve. Notwithstanding, on the one hand, visions are abstract and function as a guide or a path for the behavior of followers. They influence the feelings and collective identities of followers, as well as their aspirations and their relationship with the leader. Vision statements frequently employ language that is symbolic and abstract, and they place an emphasis on values, distant goals, and utopian ends. In addition, visions concern the long term, the future, and uncertain and unlimited outcomes, and their complete achievement may not be mandatory.

On the other hand, a goal is the objective or purpose of an endeavor, a target level of performance or competence aimed to be achieved, typically within a predetermined amount of time. It should be concrete, specific, clear, and challenging. Goal setting often entails the establishment of tangible and proximate objectives that are both challenging and reachable, and it molds the cognitions of employees by directing their attention to challenging standards and operations in order to increase performance and results. The consequences are the direction of employees' attention in the right path, improvement of performance, enhancement of employees' effort, and thus results, and development of cohesion and shared vision. As a matter of fact, the difficulty of a goal will lead employees to collaborate in order to achieve it leading to the emergence of a shared vision. (Gutiérrez Gutiérrez, Lloréns-Montes, & Bustinza Sánchez, 2008)

Individuals are more motivated to undertake unpredictable and open-ended tasks by visions than by goals. Moreover, defining goals is most successful when they are directed towards clearly defined end states. As a result, visions and goals work on distinct aspects of the environment; more specifically, visions address the self-concept of followers, whilst goals relate to the specifics of the tasks.

Furthermore, visions usually differ from goals on two dimensions: hypotheticality and temporal distance. Regarding the first one, “the less real, tangible, and probable an event or an outcome is the greater is its hypotheticality” (Berson, Halevy, Shamir, & Erez, 2015, p. 148). While an event is considered to be temporal distant if it took place in the distant past or future; events that took place more recently, in the present, or in the near future are considered to be closer in temporal proximity to the present.

3.2.1 The different types of visions

There can be different types of vision according to the level at which the leader conceives it works.

Firstly, a corporate vision is a statement of what the executives of a company want their companies to look like at some point in the future. Such types of visions have rarely been developed by a wide range of company stakeholders, but they are usually conceived by a few individuals at the top of the firm. They are typically presented in an extremely broad and non-operational language. In most cases, corporate vision takes the form of a list of desirable characteristics for the company in question, usually ignoring to express the real design and architecture the company should have to achieve such features (Ackoff, 1993).

Secondly, entrepreneurial vision is the outcome of the entrepreneur's instinctive and holistic thinking which bridges the gap between the existing state of affairs and the desired future state. It is an image of the new business that is focused on the future, the purpose is to push both the entrepreneurs and their followers, who in this case are both investors and workers towards this ideal future. Given that at the beginning of the entrepreneurial process, the entrepreneur is the venture itself, he/she “may be more likely to envision the organization strategically as an extension of his/her needs.”

The entrepreneurial vision is often linked to the driving force behind an enterprise, or the kind of business being pursued. As a result, the vision statement of the business will seem very different depending on the kind of venture. Moreover, “different entrepreneurs have unique sets of goals for their ventures, which are influenced by the context. Their model of

entrepreneurial motivation associates this set of goals with the venture's idea, namely its vision.” (Ruvio, Rosenblatt, & Lazarowitz, 2010, p. 146)

Thirdly, the founding vision, which according to Harris et al. (1999) is crucial to the established success and achievements of the company's operations, performance, and survival in the short and long term. As a result, the company is a concrete representation of the founder's perspectives and judgments on the broader environment. Therefore, the realization of the vision is contingent not only on the qualities of the founder, namely his/her level of foresight, market perception, and incentives but also on the circumstances of the surrounding environment, which can range from the economic conditions in that moment or simple luck.

Behind the realization and achievement of the founding visions, there are several organizational requirements, such as:

- Founders are typically conscious of the necessity of adapting their business to the existing environmental conditions.
- A vision gives an instrument for defining the innovative business strategy of a company's founders, who are often very sensitive to the competition and the necessity of gaining a competitive edge.
- By having a strategic vision, founders are able to directly control the course of their business.
- Through the strategic vision, the founder has a concrete method of conveying his or her perspective on the kind of organization culture that should be fostered by the business.

Furthermore, the founder of a company performs a crucial role in determining the fundamental qualities that define the firm. As a matter of fact, it is generally acknowledged that the initial vision of the company's founder will have a significant impact on the success and continued existence of the business.

Lastly, sub-organizational vision, which is defined as “a vision that is communicated by a leader operating below the upper echelons of an organization where the collective it speaks to is a subunit or component of the organization” (Liden, Meuser, Panaccio, & Wayne, 2014, p. 52). Therefore, the concept is strongly linked to the one of organizational structure. As a matter of fact, sub-organizational visions are made feasible, at least in part, by the multitude

of units that are included inside an organizational structure. These units stand in for the sub-organizational collectives that these visions address. The content of this type of vision is impacted by three main elements: sub-organizational leaders, the organization, and relevant institutions. Regarding the organization and the institutions, the structural position of the unit is a crucial determinant of their strength in the content of the vision.

The main benefits that the company, the leader and the followers enjoy through sub-organizational visions are several. They are a technique through which the significance of sub-organizational actions can be connected with the overarching goal of the organization. Sub-organizational visions operate as a bridge over structural distance. As a matter of fact, their characterizing feature lies in the fact that they provide executives operating at various levels with important information on how they are related to a larger vision and how they are able to contribute to that goal.

In addition, leaders gain various advantages as a result of the relevance of the sub-organizational visions. Relevance consists in the connection that exists between the future foresighted by followers, and based on the leaders' vision, and the activities they carry out in their organizational unit. For example, sub-organizational units may give instructions and directions more efficiently than the organizational unit itself. Indeed, if the corporate vision is unable to offer guidance, sub-organizational visions do. This enables workers to be empowered to act, depending on what their vision and priorities are, and to make a choice.

3.3 The envisioning process

As Figure 2.2 underlines, the visioning process is composed of various phases, namely, vision formation, communication, assimilation, and implementation.

Vision formation

The requirement for an organizational vision is often characterized by five different situations. According to O'Brien et al. (2003) they are:

- Change in the status of a company.
- Change among top management, for example, the arrival of a new CEO, which frequently brings with him/her fresh ideas and a desire to leave his/her imprint on the company.
- Change in profitability.

- Change in the environmental context, for example, competitiveness enhancement.
- Part of a wider change program is downsizing, restructuring, and rebranding.

Internal or external transition is what characterizes the need for change. As a matter of fact, companies believe that they are at a turning point, which is why it is necessary for them to build a new vision in order to offer a sense of focus and direction during times of upheaval. Although visions can be prompted by several factors, the development of a vision is particularly important during three main moments of a company's life cycle: when the organization is founded, when it is encountering periods of disruption, and when it is planning for the future consciously.

During the first stages of a company, the entrepreneur is fully committed to achieving the company's success in the future.

A company trying to pull itself out of a downturn or serious trouble is another chance for visioning.

Planning with a purpose takes place whenever the leaders of an organization decide to evaluate the culture and operations of the company, or when a significant course correction or change may be required. In situations like this, vision may be formed at the top organizational levels with a relatively long-time horizon, with precise goals and shorter periods stated at lower levels.

Other situations in which the creation and development of a vision are needed are the emergence of a start-up, a change in leadership, or a perceived need to drive the business away from decline or to boost its performance further. The resulting visions may affect the performance of the company in the future. Moreover, industry accreditation authorities that look over formal strategy plans may need vision articulation.

Notwithstanding, even if a company's vision may be dictated by factors in its external environment, how that organization responds to those factors may have a significant impact on its trajectory going forward. (O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2011)

In particular, during the vision formation phase, the company analyses both the future and current situation. The former comprises the company's future environment and the future competition. While for the latter, the company assesses which are its resources, core competencies, key values, and the stakeholders that should be involved in the process.

All the people who have a stake in the company's activities should be included in the visioning process as participants. Usually, the process of creating a vision is carried out via

a one-time workshop or event with a single group that is representative of the stakeholder groups. However, there are four ways to accomplish it:

- The leader independently develops the vision and then conveys it to the followers.
- A key leader and a group of top managers come up with the vision and then communicate it to the followers.
- The leader and the followers co-create the vision through a sense-making and sense-giving process. The leader proposes a vision, which is then iteratively updated through exchanges between the leader and followers.
- The entire business participates in a collaborative process involving a broad group to arrive at the vision.

Regarding the last point, a shared vision will allow for the elimination of issues such as inaccurate interpretations of the actions carried out or the terminology that is employed.

The formation of a common vision is contingent upon the fulfillment of five requirements. Firstly, a distinct team identity, including a clear understanding of who is a member and who is not. Secondly, the actual presence of collaborative efforts like working on projects together and holding regular meetings.

Thirdly, determining the make-up of the team as well as the duties that each member will play.

Fourthly, the availability of incentives that recognize and reward cooperative efforts.

Lastly, the direction provided by the organization's executive director. (Gutiérrez Gutiérrez, Lloréns-Montes, & Bustinza Sánchez, 2008)

The culture of the organization may have an impact on the people who are involved in the formulation of the vision. Hence, the concept of a single individual establishing the vision is more likely to emerge in cultures that place a high value on "power." On the other hand, it is probable that cultures that are more 'open' promote larger participation in the process of developing a vision.

In addition, a single shared desired future vision is conceived with the attached vision statement. In this step, it is ideal for the company to clearly explore several potential future visions. This should be done as part of a participatory journey towards the creation of a common vision of the future.

A key element to consider is creativity, which is an essential component of the visioning mix, although it is a challenging component to actualize in reality.

Moreover, the articulation of a vision should include the following aspects: the use of imagery that is inspiring, the use of inclusive language, the indication of tasks and goals; vision clarity and challenge.

This common vision is compared with the existing reality in order to ease the formulation of action plans. The latter involves the strategic objectives, goals, and alternatives that the company set, and are designed to take it from the present to the future.

The basis for the construction of a vision is the prescriptive mental model that results from an understanding of idealized objectives and their causes.

It is important to understand how individuals move from a mental model that describes the system in its current state, known as a descriptive mental model, to a mental model that describes the system in a potential future state, known as a prescriptive mental model.

When a descriptive mental model is rethought in terms of idealized objectives and the factors that contribute to them, a prescriptive mental model is produced. The latter details the events that need to be changed as well as the principles that need to be sustained. Nonetheless, there is a further process involved in the creation of a vision. As a matter of fact, vision arises from a prescriptive model that is employed to express and deal with key system concerns while taking into consideration the actual or projected responses of others. Consequently, the construction of a vision necessitates the social and contextual elaboration and improvement of a prescriptive mental model.

Concerning manipulations, particular crucial events may be engaged in the construction of prescriptive mental models that serve as a foundation for vision development. The three occurrences that seem to be of the utmost significance are (Strange & Mumford, 2002):

- Involvement and exposure to different models of system operations.
- Comparison between these alternative models and previous experience, and consideration of the existing descriptive model.
- Development of crucial objectives and goals needed to design the prescriptive mental model, relying on experience, as well as other models.

As mentioned above, the need to develop a vision may be triggered by a crisis or a change in the company.

Leaders can use their company's mental model in order to grasp this crisis or change event. As a matter of fact, the leader may use these mental models, which were established through previous experience, in order to reflect on the situation in connection to personal beliefs and

perceived social requirements. In this way, he/she could deduce important causes and pertinent goals after giving this descriptive mental model some thought. A prescriptive mental model for understanding the issue is developed using such causes and aims as its building blocks. By using this prescriptive mental model and doing an appraisal of personal and interpersonal meaning, a vision will emerge, which the leader may then communicate as a framework for tackling the change event or crisis. (Shipman, Byrne, & Mumford, 2010)

Vision communication

In the next phase, the leader communicates the vision to followers. Vision communication consists of a verbal depiction of the end states that are desired by the group, this might include talking about the strategic goals and future orientations of the company.

It is a form of social persuasion that attracts the receivers' desired results and future orientations, such as molding the recipients' expectations for their careers.

Vision communication can also be defined as the expression of a vision to persuade followers that the vision is genuine and valuable. When a leader conveys a vision to his/her followers, he/she often asks his/her followers to support the visionary message being sent.

One of the main goals of vision communication is the achievement of complete comprehension of the message on the part of the target audience.

The communication methods differ according to the stakeholders involved and the approach adopted for the development of the vision.

On the one hand, when the leader develops the vision on his/herself or in cooperation with a group of top managers, vision communication is direct and one-way. In this case, the vision is diffused from the upper to the lower levels as a cascade. On the other hand, when vision is co-created by the leader and followers or by a broad group, then its communication is interactive and central to its assimilation, the next step.

The leader is better able to control the amount of content variation that occurs during the formal communication process when they are not constrained by the presence of intermediates. Although communication between leaders and followers does not have to be one-way, when a single person is responsible for developing a vision for the business, it is imperative that this vision be articulated and communicated effectively to the rest of the organization.

In addition, the vision is usually communicated internally to all the employees and externally as well.

To effectively execute this step leaders should adopt a two-way communication process. Therefore, it should include top-down (leader–follower) communications incorporating task signals that link the vision with real behaviors and choices, as well as bottom–up (follower–leader) communications that include follower comments, questions, and concerns regarding the implementation of vision to behaviors and choices. Consequently, followers who see bidirectional communications with their leader about the latter’s vision will be more inclined to incorporate it into their everyday activities. As a matter of fact, only when the vision has been properly conveyed throughout the business and thoroughly established as a guiding principle, it can make a difference.

Moreover, vision is communicated most effectively when it is conveyed by leaders who have a greater social distance from their followers. In this context, social distance is defined in terms of organizational hierarchy.

This happens because “the psychological distance (social distance) between the leader and follower will align with the psychological distance (hypotheticality and temporal distance) of the vision.” (Lewis & Clark, 2018, p. 53)

Job satisfaction tends to be unaffected by a vision that is communicated by managers at lower levels. As a matter of fact, at closer social distances leaders concentrate their efforts on conveying future situations at a lower level, for example, they communicate a goal instead of a vision. However, this does not mean that leaders at lower levels of the hierarchy should not convey their views at all.

Usually, leaders communicate their visions by selecting among two different tactics: abstract-based rhetoric or image-based rhetoric (Carton & Lucas, 2018).

The former is extremely troublesome to comprehend and may possess various interpretations leading to the “blurry vision bias” phenomenon. The latter is partly caused by people's propensity to think in general terms when they are contemplating the far-off future.

In light of the fact that the majority of theories concerning vision communication are predicated on the idea that leaders can improve vision communication by paying close attention to the choice of words, the solution to the problem of blurry vision bias is incorporating image-based rhetoric into leaders’ visions.

The blurry vision bias exists because leaders place an excessive emphasis on the meaning-based system, consequently, it can be overcome by assisting leaders in activating the experience-based system.

On the one hand, the meaning of words and symbols is processed by the meaning-based system. It is the portion of the mind where individuals evaluate facts, reflect on ideas, and think abstractly.

On the other hand, the experience-based system is responsible for processing information received from the senses and is what enables people to conceive and envisage upcoming occurrences.

Therefore, since the future has not yet occurred, it cannot be seen or felt, as a consequence, when people think about the future, they tend to depend on an abstract knowledge of what it will entail rather than a mental simulation of how it may be experienced. This inclination is exacerbated when leaders need to communicate their vision.

Image-based rhetoric consists of describing and communicating visions in a vivid way precisely using images in order to convey and allow followers to effectively see the representation of the future. A leader may make a vision more enticing to followers by presenting it desirably and employing specialized rhetoric. Thus, followers have a greater propensity to expound on this vision and to visualize themselves as being a part of it, improving visual acuity (Stam, Knippenberg, & Wisse, Focusing on followers: The role of regulatory focus and possible selves in visionary leadership, 2010). This communication method leads to several advantages both for the leader and the followers. It activates emotions and feelings and thus triggers followers to act, it represents a precise and simple guide, consequently, it allows them to simulate the future in their minds, increasing motivation and incentives. By perceiving their daily work as more linked to an event that can be accomplished, thanks to image-based rhetoric, followers' connection to the company mission can be enhanced.

Image-based rhetoric is particularly useful to improve coordination, as a matter of fact, when individuals and groups have both a mental vision of the future, and share the same one, it is much simpler for them to come together and accomplish a collective achievement, especially during moments of uncertainty.

In addition, it has a tremendous impact on the cognition of followers, which in turn causes them to regard leaders in a more favorable light.

There is a two-step process that leaders can adopt to formulate image-based visions most easily.

Firstly, relying on the experience-based system in order to develop a certain understating, and secondly, dropping the latter into the meaning-based system by driving the search for image-based rhetoric.

In particular, leaders should imagine future experiences by mentally envisaging themselves in the future and picturing what the world will look like. Then, once leaders are required to communicate their vision to followers, they will select words in the meaning-based system using image-based rhetoric because, “given that abstract words will not convey the visual snapshot they see in their mind’s eye” (Carton & Lucas, 2018, p. 2111), it is more useful.

Therefore, leaders who cognitively hop forward to the far future before constructing and presenting a vision will open the barrier between the experience-based and meaning-based systems of cognition.

The benefits that the leaders, the followers, and the company in general can achieve from this phase are multiple. The transmission of a leader's vision enables followers to have an understanding of the goals that are likely to be achieved in the future. This enables followers to mentally journey into the future and visualize the work lives they desire, which ultimately leads to the nurturing of their future work selves.

By communicating their visions, leaders who are focused on the future can communicate their attitudes towards potential future situations and desired paths, which in turn corresponds with their sense of self-worth. As a result, vision communication is likely to assist future-oriented leaders in confirming their desired ideals and personal qualities. As a matter of fact, leader vision communication and leader future orientation are positively correlated.

Leaders reveal their perspectives on, and preferences for, the long-term strategies of their enterprises and the future ideal scenarios by articulating their visions. Indeed, while developing narratives about their future work, followers should adopt a mentality that is long-term since they are more likely to comprehend the significance of paying attention to company objectives and outcomes. Therefore, leaders may convey visions as a method of stimulating both the individual and collective performance of their followers.

In addition, effective communication of the vision may cause followers to identify more strongly with the group, to be more effective, to view the significance of their work and the charisma of their leaders as increasing, and to be generally more motivated to achieve success in their professional endeavors. (Guo, Mao, Huang, & Zhang, 2022)

Future-oriented leaders are prone to engage in self-affirmation behaviors including communicating visions to followers. As a matter of fact, with a future-oriented mentality, the components that constitute the vision communication process are more easily accessible in the memory of leaders, which in turn encourages them to express their ideas to others.

Vision assimilation

The third step is vision assimilation, which can be defined as “the extent to which followers use the vision as a guiding framework to make sense of the uncertainties inherent in daily organizational life” (Kohles, Bligh, & Carsten, 2012). As a matter of fact, followers usually assess the vision and decide, either consciously or subconsciously, to put it into practice by incorporating it into their activities and decisions. Conversely, followers may view it as irrelevant or contrary to their work habits and goals, or they may determine that it is just too hazardous, imprecise, or unclear to merit adoption.

According to O’Connell et al. (2011), the assimilation of a vision can be achieved in several ways. Procedural ownership, that consists of employees’ training in order to create ownership. A disadvantage of this approach may result in less organizational commitment to the vision.

Hierarchical partnership where the visioning process is retained mainly by senior managers.

Execution in which few top managers control the vision and followers execute it.

Sharedness that includes multidirectional interaction among a group of followers. In this way, the understanding and commitment to the vision is enhanced.

To motivate followers to assimilate the vision, a leader can employ both positive and negative forms of motivation. Leaders may present goals to strive towards, namely positive motivation, but they may also highlight failures and dreaded occurrences that followers should avoid negative motivation.

As a matter of fact, appeals that focus on a desirable scenario to approach, called promotion-appeal, as well as appeals that focus on an unpleasant condition to avoid, called prevention-appeal, have the potential to successfully inspire followers.

A promotion focus is a propensity to “approach desired, ideal end-states, while a prevention focus is a tendency to approach end-states related to duties and responsibilities.” (Stam, Knippenberg, & Wisse, Focusing on followers: The role of regulatory focus and possible selves in visionary leadership, 2010, p. 459)

Regarding people with a promotion focus, they are more likely to be motivated by a goal that emphasizes gains or by a role model that embodies excellence and values the presence of ideal versions of themselves.

At the same time, people who have a prevention focus are more likely to be motivated by a goal that emphasizes losses or by a role model that symbolizes failure and is more responsive to the presence of tasks and responsibilities.

In addition, according to a study performed by Stam et al. (2010), when dealing with followers who are focused on promotion, a leader should focus on them and their ideals, but when communicating with followers who are focused on prevention, a leader should focus on the good of the collective and obligations.

The success of prevention- and promotion appeals may be determined by follower regulatory emphasis. According to the regulatory focus theory, two unique and independent self-regulatory methods cover a significant role in guiding behavior: the promotion and prevention strategies.

The promotion focus refers to a strategy that is geared towards achieving a certain end-state because it is desirable and beneficial. The pursuit of pleasure serves as the primary motivator behind a such strategy. Individuals with a promotion focus are motivated to accomplish goals and highlight values and advancement.

The prevention focus refers to a strategy that aims to achieve an objective because of an irrational dread of the alternative. Avoiding suffering is the primary motivation behind a prevention-focused approach. In addition, people who emphasize prevention are watchful not to lose, stress their worries, and concentrate on avoiding those anxieties.

“If an individual’s activities are congruent with an individual’s regulatory focus, he/she will experience regulatory fit.” (Stam, Knippenberge, & Wisse, 2010, p. 502). An employee will be more likely to participate in certain activities if he/she achieves a regulatory fit.

Moreover, followers will tend to engage more powerfully in a vision that matches their regulatory fits than in one that does not. This is because followers will perceive the vision as being better aligned with their interests. Engaging in a vision that focuses on attaining ideals (a promotion-appeal) would be appropriate for those who are promotion-focused, whereas participating in a vision that rotates around avoiding dreaded occurrences (a prevention-appeal) would be appropriate for prevention-focused individuals. The efficacy of a vision may also be improved by regulatory fit.

Furthermore, when a company is facing a crisis, a leader may be perceived as charismatic by adopting prevention appeals to guide followers in order to avoid or terminate such a crisis.

This is especially true considering that a crisis may prompt employees to follow prevention appeals.

Vision integration leads to various benefits, both for the company and for followers. Firstly, enhanced organizational commitment which refers to the extent to which a follower embraces and identifies with the values of the company. It denotes the follower's trust in the company as well as the degree to which he or she is committed to the success of the latter.

Moreover, by embracing the vision in their behaviors, followers develop a psychological connection to the vision and the obligation to base their actions and choices on it.

Followers' desire to remain in the organization may arise as a result of the incorporation of the firm's core principles. However, a lesser level of commitment might arise from organizational ties that lessen a person's sense of duty to the company.

Secondly, increased job satisfaction for followers. In addition to improving employee commitment, vision integration may also improve the notion that the job they do has the potential to substantially contribute to the realization of the organization's vision. Workers who focus on incorporating the vision into their duties are more likely to comprehend the inherent relevance of these tasks in connection to the broader goal of the firm.

Finally, vision statements that are able to resonate with their followers are also related to better levels of performance. As a matter of fact, when a vision pushes followers to reflect on what is their role in the vision, they are encouraged to create an ideal self-based on it. Thus, it is possible for employees to be inspired to reframe their self-concepts by vision statements that place a greater emphasis on followers. This, in turn, is related to superior performance results. (Kohles, Bligh, & Carsten, 2012)

Vision implementation

Ready et al. (2008) research highlights the path that usually companies follow to translate a vision into actions.

Setting the agenda is the first step. If the senior executives of a firm spend most of their time waiting to complete top priorities, they will eventually put the leader's vision behind them, where it will slowly boil down to nothing until it is forgotten.

Engaging the company is the second step. After change leaders have formulated their objectives, they should do all in their power to ensure that as many people as possible feel ownership of the vision that is being pursued. Indeed, what employees are looking for is a

different kind of leadership, one that is defined by genuine collaboration and participation from a wide range of sources. Moreover, audacious visions will raise levels of stress and anxiety among the stakeholders of a company whose primary focus is on conducting business as usual.

Building capabilities that are essential for the vision is the focus of the third step. Although participation in the new vision is essential, it is not sufficient. In most cases, businesses have a gap between what they wish to achieve and what they are capable of doing, making it necessary for them to build new skills.

Connecting the “dots” through alignment is the fourth step. Frontal assaults seldom succeed in stopping audacious concepts. On the contrary, visions may be hindered by mindsets and processes which are not harmonized, or by leaders who unintentionally send messages that undermine the visions' ability to take hold.

Energizing the company's vision through employees is the focus of the fifth phase. There is no way for any idea of the company to become a reality without the support of managers and employees. As a matter of fact, employees from different functions and areas play an essential part in enabling the transition of a vision from the stage of design to the stage of implementation.

As mentioned above, the envisioning process may be adopted during periods of change. Therefore, the development of a vision could be triggered by a change. In this light, two concepts that are essential to deal with such situations.

On the one hand, sensemaking consists of building and reconstruction of meaning by the relevant parties while trying to establish a framework for comprehending the nature of the planned strategic changes.

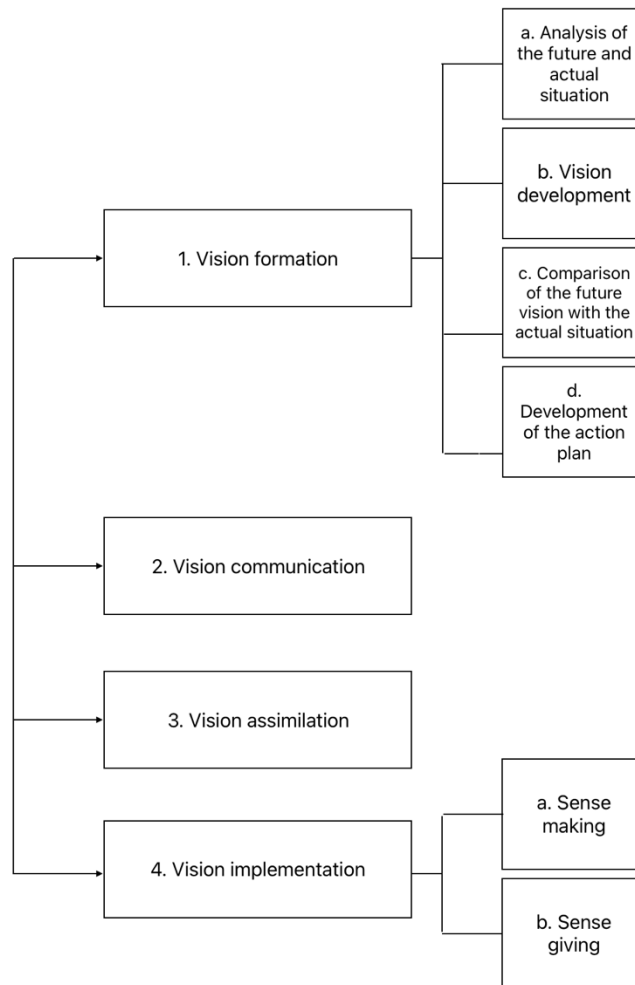
On the other hand, sensegiving deals with seeking to influence the sensemaking and meaning creation of others in the direction of a favored reinterpretation of organizational reality.

These concepts focus on the underlying processes that are involved in controlled organizational change. As a result, they offer a way of looking at the beginning stages of strategic transformation.

Usually, the cycles of sensemaking and sense-giving are characterized either by periods of understanding and influence or by periods of cognition and action, respectively.

In addition, “these sensemaking and sensegiving processes occurred essentially sequentially and reciprocally that encompassed progressively expanding audiences in the strategic change effort.” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991)

Figure 3.2: The envisioning process



Source: O'Brien et al., 2000, 2007

3.4 Vision's impact on organizational phenomena

As Table 2.1 shows, the process of visioning has various effects primarily on followers, teams, and the whole company.

Regarding the advantages that the company can gain by developing a vision, according to many authors, the main one is a substantial increase in its performance. As a matter of fact, several theories and empirical studies on business strategy have led to the discovery that an organization's vision may have an impact on the results achieved by the company. In addition, its effects are amplified when employees are aware of and comprehend it. Vision has a substantial impact on the performance of a company and has the ability to influence

performance both directly and indirectly by communicating it and mobilizing followers to take action. (Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998)

This benefit can be perceived even by individual followers and team members. Indeed, the envisioning process inspires more effort from the people who are following it. According to various research, visionary leaders are able to increase the intrinsic worth that group members attribute to their responsibilities and objectives, as well as diffuse the sense that these goals are unique. These impacts of visionary leaders translate into improved performance by group members from both an individual and organizational point of view, as well as stronger self-efficacy (Halevy, Berson, & Galinsky, 2011). Moreover, by giving followers a feeling of significance and purpose, visioning may increase follower efficacy and identification with their work and the business. As a consequence, a well-crafted vision may improve individual performance results and encourage direction, alignment, and convergence (Kearney, Shemla, Knippenberge, & Scholz, 2019).

When visions are employed as strategic instruments to govern organizational cultures, concrete performance measurements such as “profit, return on shareholder equity, employee turnover, and rate of new product development” can be experienced by a company. (Lipton, 1996)

Furthermore, a strategic plan is built on the foundation of a vision, therefore, for strategic planning to be effective, an initial vision is essential. Strategic planning, on the other hand, cannot supply the vision on its own and is completely pointless without it. As a matter of fact, concentrating on a plan rather than a vision may be overly restrictive, limit individual motivation, and result in paralysis. If the plan is conceived as a vision, even if it is expressed through images or metaphors, it may prove to be a far higher motivation to action.

The quicker a company is able to conceive a vision in which new goods and industries are positioned inside evolving product-market frameworks, the greater its power to govern its future and confirm a sense of direction. The result is a competitive advantage, which is the result of analysis and responses to the actions of competitors. The main benefit of this process lies in creative ideas and the strategies that are formed from those visions. Such strategies give a longer-term view of what customers and end users desire to achieve. The core of the vision is that companies must create rather than just respond. This vision may induce a shift in behavior, the explanation of the latter, the mobilization of followers behind the new norms, and the encouragement of new entrants in the market whose norms and

beliefs align with those espoused by the innovative vision. Therefore, the positive benefits that a company can gain from a vision include increased worker ambitions, simpler learning, and longer-term commitments. Because of these advantages, the company is better able to respond rapidly and flexibly to shifting market conditions, which ultimately results in a strengthened competitive advantage (Boyatzis, Rochford, & Taylor, 2015).

The capacity of workers to share a future picture towards which they may concentrate their efforts permits the attainment of a series of substantial advantages for all the three main actors. As a matter of fact, the development of better connections between professionals, the facilitation of learning, and the stimulation of long-term commitment are all benefits of having a common vision. Consequently, the performance of the workers, teams, and, company is significantly impacted by these aspects (Gutiérrez Gutiérrez, Lloréns-Montes, & Bustinza Sánchez, 2008).

A vision may support and encourage change. A typical motive for engaging in visioning is a sense of unhappiness with the way things currently are or the direction in which things are going.

Successful visions of change highlight the deficiencies of the status quo and give a divergent and idealized alternative. Therefore, they establish a need for change, provide a feeling of challenge, emphasize the presence of possibilities, and encourage followers toward change. In addition, “effective visions motivate change by breaking with the past, promoting a new future, discouraging current identities, and promoting new future organizational identities.” (Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg, *Visions of change as visions of continuity*, 2019, p. 667) More support for change is generated by communicating a vision of change that emphasizes group continuity. This support is even stronger in the case of increased follower uncertainty. Furthermore, adopting a vision as a management tool will determine how smoothly a company will make the shift from being bureaucratic to being flexible, as a matter of fact, vision is an important factor in the success of quality management systems. (Lipton, 1996)

By providing focus and direction, a vision aids in contextualizing decision-making. A common vision may provide effective yet unobtrusive control and establish a framework for decision-making. This becomes increasingly significant when management structures inside firms grow less hierarchical and more horizontal. People have a compass in the form of a vision that is easily comprehended. If it is effectively established and put into action, vision has the potential to change the viewpoint or premises upon which individuals base their

decision-making when there are no rules, direct supervision, or threats present (Lipton, 1996). This leads to beneficial consequences both for employees and the whole company.

A vision inspires people and makes it easier to recruit talented people. By linking them to the mission of the business or department, a common vision may energize employees. Individuals have the desire to believe that they are contributing something of value to an endeavor, and having a clear perspective of how their work fits into the bigger picture helps them to fulfill this need. (Lipton, 1996)

According to Ibarra et al, (2009), through the envisioning process companies are able to identify opportunities and threats in the external context, establish their strategic direction, and motivate stakeholders. Consequently, companies can benefit from the following aspects:

- Making complicated circumstances easier to understand.
- Anticipating events that will have an impact on the corporation.
- Motivating new business.
- Developing innovative tactics.
- Making choices with the larger picture in mind.
- Challenging the current situation.
- Being open to new methods for operating.
- Motivating people to see possibilities where there may have been constraints.

For what regards teams, a vision assists them in making sense of the environment in new and unusual ways, as well as in developing new standards of conduct and new mental models to accommodate shifting requirements. As a consequence, research on visionary leadership has revealed that vision directs the focus of team members to the collective. Therefore, the role identities of team members as members of the collective may become more prominent, frequently taking the place of their identities. When members of a team become more aware of their collective function, it is possible that this will inspire them to participate in conduct that is consistent with the expectations placed on them as members of the collective.

Furthermore, the use of vision is related to increased coordination among teams, yet the success of this influence depends on everyone sharing the same vision (Kim, Waldman, Balthazard, & Ames, 2022).

Practitioners and academics sustain that the formation of a vision, whether it be at the level of the person, the team, or the organization, motivates followers to act and pushes them to go beyond where they are now in their lives. Leaders who rely on visions motivate their followers by increasing the intrinsic worth they place on the work they do and the goals they strive to achieve. The use of a vision to inspire followers requires placing an emphasis on the creation of higher-level motives as well as the arousal of followers. Leaders radiate confidence and enhance their followers' needs to achieve and fulfill their jobs via the visions that they share with them. By influencing followers' emotions, collective identities, ambitions, and relational commitment to the leader, vision increases motivation and performance. People are motivated to succeed in risky, open-ended enterprises by their visions (Berson, Halevy, Shamir, & Erez, 2015, p. 147).

Several studies have proved that a vision can operate to minimize the potential detrimental impacts of stress on followers. According to the Conservation of Resources theory (COR), people are driven to both maintain and acquire new resources. The term resources can refer to a variety of things, such as physical items (like a comfortable workplace), personal qualities (like high self-esteem), environmental factors (like a positive atmosphere), and even energy (like knowledge). As a matter of fact, the COR theory offers a way to understand the leader's vision as both supplying and enabling a more effective allocation of resources during stressful circumstances. A vision helps followers see a clearer road forward, removes uncertainty, and creates a better knowledge and appreciation of the long-term benefits and chances for advancement. Moreover, a vision may promote in employees the view that challenging periods characterized by a high amount of stress are only a stretch. Therefore, when viewed through the lens of the COR theory, the leader's vision possesses the ability to provide resources from a variety of COR-related categories, such as conditions, constructive, and supportive. (Newton, Bish, Anibaldi, Browning, & Thomas, 2018)

The modern working environment is defined by dynamism and changeability, thus it is advantageous for employees to look forward and envision themselves in significant work roles in the future. Employees can better match their job goals with their career ambitions if they have clear ideas of their future work selves.

Leader vision communication acts as a stimulant of workers' possible selves in the future and enables followers to imagine their future work selves by assisting them in considering their objectives, expectations for future work, and possibilities for self-development.

Communicating visions not only clarifies corporate goals and outlooks, but it also provides individuals with purpose for their jobs and pathways for professional advancement. Consequently, sharing visions helps employees to recognize how their personal evolution into a future work self might prepare them for the accomplishment of future corporate goals. On the one hand, leaders inspire followers to be more open to new experiences and inquisitive about work objectives by painting a picture of work that is more engaging through the lens of their ideals. In addition, through a vision a leader is more likely to question the status quo, participate in future-related thinking, and find chances for accomplishing distant objectives, which enables followers to model their future-oriented attitude and think about their ideal work life.

On the other hand, when visions are discussed with followers, they are better able to comprehend where the company is headed and how they may contribute to its development (Berson, Halevy, Shamir, & Erez, 2015).

In addition, according to Guo et al. (2022), when there is a high level of goal clarity, followers are aware of their roles and responsibilities, as well as the objectives they should work towards and the standards that are required of them. Indeed, the visioning process may help followers to see their goals more clearly by explaining their ultimate aims, which in turn provides orientation and alignment.

Visionary leaders may serve as examples for others to emulate, which can improve group performance. Team members who watch their leader advocating and acting in line with a vision that contains socialized values are likely to mirror such orientation by collaborating. As a matter of fact, a social learning process may result in members of the team mirroring the way in which the leader is oriented towards the vision, which places an emphasis on going beyond one's self-interests. Thus, by mimicking their leader's socialized orientation, team members may take behaviors that are advantageous to the company as a whole (Kim, Waldman, Balthazard, & Ames, 2022).

Finally, a vision may increase the feeling of identification of an employee with the company where he/she works. Some employees, for instance, will have a much easier time identifying with the long-term goals of the firm if their organizational leaders have a clear vision for it. According to the Organizational identification theory, these more powerful identifications activate support from other identifiers throughout the business, which has a positive influence on more distal indications of employee adjustment.

The Organizational identification (OI) is defined as an individual's sense of unanimity with the company. The theory postulates that people who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to behave in a manner that is consistent with the organization's values and culture. Within the larger business, an employee may have a sense of belonging to a particular department, social group, or work unit.

Therefore, the vision of the leader will lead to higher levels of company identification, which in turn activates local support mechanisms from other proximal high vision identifiers, resulting in positive proximal indications of employee adjustment (Newton, Bish, Anibaldi, Browning, & Thomas, 2018).

Table 3.1: The outcomes of the development of a vision

LITERATURE	OUTCOME		
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Company</i>
Baum et al. (1998) Halvey et al. (2011) Kearney et al. (2019)	Increase in performance	Increase in performance	Increase in performance
Kim et al. (2022)		Direction of members' focus toward the collective	
Lipton (1996)			Increase in profits
Boyatzis et al. (2015)			Competitive advantage
Gutiérrez et al. (2008)		Better connections among team members	
Gutiérrez et al. (2008)	Stimulation of long-term commitment		Stimulation of long-term commitment
Venus et al. (2019)			Higher motivation to change
Lipton et al. (1996)			Improvement of management systems
Kim et al. (2022)		Increased coordination	
Lipton et al. (1996)	Establishment of a framework for decision making		Establishment of a framework for decision making
Lipton et al. (1996)			Increase in the recruitment of talented people
Ibarra et al. (2009)			Identification of threats and opportunities

Berson et al. (2015)	Increase in motivation		
Newton et al. (2018)	Stress reduction		
Guo et al. (2022)	Improved orientation and alignment		
?		Increased participation	
Kim et al. (2022)		Willingness to go beyond self-interests	
Newton et al. (2018)	Higher identification with the company		Higher identification with the company
Berson et al. (2015)	Development of ambitions and goals		

It is important to underline that, as Berson et al. (2001) suggest, the effects of a vision on outcomes depend on several moderators, namely “individual, task, and contextual factors”. Firstly, delivery strength is one of the traditional moderators of vision communication, stating that the impacts of vision on employee motivation rely on characteristics as the communicator's facial expressions.

Secondly, the degree of unpredictability in the surrounding environment. Particularly during times of crisis, people have a greater tendency to believe that visions are effective and useful. Moreover, in the interaction between a leader and a follower, psychological distance serves as a moderator that is both critically important and qualitatively distinct. As a matter of fact, psychological distance modifies the influence of both visions and objectives, albeit in opposing directions.

In addition, in contrast to other moderators of visions' effects mentioned above, which have a tendency to be exogenous to a leader's communication, the abstractness versus the concreteness of a vision statement is an aspect that is strongly related to the leader's communication.

3.5 Why does a vision fail?

Despite the tremendous advantages that a vision brings for the company and in particular for employees, sometimes it may fail to produce the desired effects. Indeed, several reasons explain why a vision may fail in its mission (Lipton, 1996) (Ready & Conger, 2008):

- Lack of focus. If a company engages in many initiatives at the same time, among which the creation and implementation of a vision, leaders and followers may be confused.
- Unaltered behaviors and mindsets. Even if the vision requires it organizational performance measurements and performance management processes are frequently left unmodified.
- Conflicting powers. In many situations, the political dynamics and culture of a company can constitute a significant obstacle to the realization of the new vision. Strong groups may be associated with the core operations that contributed to the success of the organization in the past. If the new vision threatens their authority, they may prevent its implementation.
- Lack of talented employees. Companies may miss talented employees capable of carrying out the tasks needed by the vision. In addition, a company may not invest in developing the new skills needed by their current workers.
- Inconsistency. A vision that is conceived in a vacuum has the potential to be inconsistent with the requirements of the people who are supposed to follow it. Employees will reject it if it is not grounded in reality if it does not take into account the environment, and if it does not take into consideration the capabilities and difficulties of the company.
- Disregard of the present. Visions, even though they are not intended to be reflections of reality, need to be rooted in it. Employees may have trouble associating with a vision that presents a bright view of the future, ignores the hostile environment in which the business operates, or dismisses its incapability. Leaders should recognize

the apparent hurdles to the goal as difficulties rather than disregarding them. To create a vision, you need a healthy dose of idealism and the capacity to picture what an organization will look like once all of its pressing issues have been resolved. The process consequently entails handling the inherent paradox of generating a vision that is sufficiently idealistic but realistic and tangible enough so that people may feel it is possible in certain aspects.

- Insufficient participation. Building consensus, listening, and provocation are all necessary steps in the process of developing a final vision statement. The amount of engagement is also crucial. When managers just explain the vision, they increase the likelihood of compliance but decrease the likelihood of commitment. Establishing a vision and convincing others to follow it is one of the most crucial responsibilities of a leader. If the leader allows the responsibility for the vision to be widely distributed, then he or she is abdicating their obligation. Leaders are ultimately responsible for formulating the organization's vision while also gathering information from external sources.
- Lack of concern. Because visions focus on an idealized future, there is a common misunderstanding that they address factors that can only be altered with time. Failure is a real possibility when a concept is put into action without a strong feeling of time pressure and without clear, quantifiable milestones.
- Ineffective content. Many successful companies' strategies are, at their core, magnificent visions, while many unsuccessful visions are nothing more than constrained tactics that were doomed to fail from the beginning. If a leader has a desire for control, is afraid of making mistakes, is intolerant of ambiguity, or judges rather than produces ideas, then he/she may establish restricting views that are defined by a narrow time horizon. Developing a vision calls for creative thinking, the ability to mentally synthesize, and a well-honed intuitive sense.

In addition, the attempts of companies to create and express a longer-term and customer-centered vision have transformed the focus of many leaders. Consequently, the disparities in perspective among many directors and managers have become a question of emphasis or

degree. Thus, sharing a vision has heightened the possibility for conflict in situations in which it is seen that the vision and the behaviors are irreconcilable.

In particular, the relationships characterized by conflicting forces are the following.

Firstly, business unit managers and the directors of operational or subsidiary firms are working to create longer-term connections with customers, and in many cases also with suppliers; and focus externally on the customer and relationships throughout supply chains. Therefore, they have been urged to think long-term and to have more of an outward emphasis as a result of the corporate visions and strategies that have been implemented.

Secondly, people who have positions on the main board and head office feel under pressure from analysts to maintain short-term success. As part of their efforts to build companies that are more adaptable and responsive, they are placing a greater focus on the reform of the bureaucracy that exists inside the corporations. (Colin Coulson, 1992)

The need for leaders to communicate and share a longer-term vision has worsened friction in four different areas: directors and managers, head office and business units, holding company and subsidiary, generalist and specialist.

When it comes to the subject of where a lack of commitment may be found inside the company, directors, and managers do not come to the same conclusion.

Head offices and business units may hold divergent ideas and opinions on the necessary actions to put a vision into action.

The relationship between subsidiaries and parents is characterized by divergent points of view and approaches to problem-solving.

There is a lack of perspective and comprehension between CEOs and the leaders of specialty departments, according to surveys conducted on topics about IT, personnel, marketing, and quality. (Colin Coulson, 1992)

As a result, different perceptions of the company vision and levels of commitment to achieving that objective appear to have expanded the gaps in viewpoint.

3.6 Vision's determinants

There are two main elements that characterize a vision and make it such: how it is strongly linked and interconnected with the future, and its relationship with environmental uncertainty.

A vision rotates around the concept of the future and motivates followers to achieve it. A vision is part of a process of direction setting, which consists of identifying both a desired future, namely the vision, and a strategy for achieving it.

Future orientation consists of focusing on and operating in function of the future, this has benefits for both followers and leaders. As a matter of fact, employees who are future-oriented have a strong desire to plan for the events that will occur in the future, to actively construct their lives and professional careers, and to take steps towards the accomplishment of their long-term goals. While leaders prioritize strategic planning and accomplishments, place a high priority on desirable end states and community needs, and value more long-term goals. (Guo, Mao, Huang, & Zhang, 2022)

In addition, a vision is part of a process of direction setting, which consists of identifying both a desired future, namely the vision, and a strategy for achieving it.

Since a vision is strongly linked with the future, the activity of forecasting is crucial for its existence. Forecasting consists of developing hypothetical manipulation of causes taking goals as given, and thus identifying unanticipated future events. The advantages of this activity are improvement of the ability to formulate backup plans, adaptive performance, and the production of stronger visions. As a matter of fact, during forecasting, people envisage changes in operations and the consequences such changes will have on the achievement of their goals. People are then able to restructure prescriptive mental models before acting in the actual world. (Shipman, Byrne, & Mumford, 2010)

The construal-level theory is concerned with how people go beyond themselves from the present to the future, imagine situations from another perspective, and create mental representations of psychologically distant objects by analyzing hypothetical realities. On the one hand, the low-level construal of an operation is concrete, unstructured, contextualized, and involves a secondary component. The focus is on the how of situations, lower-level goals, the proximal future, and outcomes that are certain and local” (Venus, Johnson, Zhang, Wang, & Lanaj, 2019, p. 2669).

On the other hand, high-level construal is abstract, decontextualized, and deals with primary components. The focus here is on the way of operations, essential goals and values, and the ambiguous, abstract, and nonlocal objectives for the future.

As mentioned above, visions deal with the future, therefore, in order to take advantage of them people should focus on their potential self, namely the part of the self-concept that

regards the future and who an individual would like to become. Moreover, this concept concerns “motivational and self-regulatory processes, such as identity development, long-term self-regulation, and social comparison processes” (Stam, Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010), which in turn affects how vision communication mobilizes followers.

People's self-concepts could impact the objectives that they set for themselves, increasing the possibility that those goals will be achieved. Thus, if leaders are able to influence the way their followers perceive themselves, they can indirectly and significantly change their followers' performance and motivation.

There are two different types of possible selves: ought and ideal. The first one concerns the self-image that deals with responsibilities, duties, and obligations. The second one consists of “positive ideal future images of the self that represent what or whom an individual aspires to become” (Stam, Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010). Ideal possible selves are extremely useful for vision effectiveness and self-improvement motivation and deal with wishes, aspirations, and ambitions. A vision can be defined as effective when it creates an ideal future, and each follower can customize it making an ideal future self-image. As a matter of fact, if the vision conceived by the leader is so powerful to create ideal possible selves for followers, the latter will be extraordinarily motivated to make the ideal selves, and therefore the vision, reality. The self-concept is a dynamic, interactive, interpretive system that governs how an individual understands and processes information, possible selves are a component of such system.

The development of possible selves is a cognitive process that involves both the connection of complex mental structures to “autobiographical memory and associated goals” (Stam, Lord, Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2014, p. 1180), and “information processing and consumption of cognitive resources” (Stam, Lord, Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2014, p. 1180).

In addition, this process is impacted by other aspects of the self, particularly those parts that are engaged at specific times and contexts.

Leaders have the ability to affect a follower's self-concepts and information processing by the means through which they communicate a vision to them. These processes, in turn, have the potential to support the construction of collective possible selves within a follower, as a result, vision pursuit may be impacted.

The collective possible self is the combination of the individual possible self and the collectiveness. This means that a follower instills their own emotions and factors that motivate him/her into the collective vision. In this way the follower's self-concept is

activated and linked to the collective vision, therefore, the latter can be internalized by every single follower.

Because a collective possible self immediately relates the self to the goal-directed behavior of the individual engaging in vision pursuit, it is of paramount importance to place emphasis on such a focus.

There are five characteristics of possible selves that are crucial to move from vision-based collective possible selves to vision pursuit: desirability, feasibility, centrality, complexity, and regulatory nature.

- Desirability: the more desired a collective possible self is for followers, the more it is related to vision pursuit. In this way the achievement of the collective possible self will be perceived as more valuable by followers, therefore they will be more stimulated to achieve it.
- Feasibility: the more feasible a collective possible self is for followers, the more it is related to vision pursuit. The degree to which a follower feels that the efforts he/she is taking to achieve the collective possible self have a chance of being successful is referred to as the level of feasibility. The concept of feasibility suggests that the pursuit of the collective possible self and the linked vision are not fruitless and will instead lead to the accomplishment of hierarchically lower- or higher-level objectives that are connected to the vision.
- Centrality: the more central a collective possible self is for followers' self-concept, the more it is related to vision pursuit. The importance of the possible self for a follower's self-definition is referred to as centrality in the self-concept. Those aspects of the self that are deemed to be more important receive more attention from the individual and generate more activities that are in line with the individual's values.
- Complexity: the more complex a collective possible self is for followers, the more contexts it suits, and the more opportunities there exist for vision accomplishment, and thus the more a follower can recognize with these possibilities. The term "complexity" refers to the number of distinct elements that are included in the collective possible self as well as the depth of the interactions that exist between those aspects. If the complexity of the collective possible self is too extreme, it may be difficult for an individual to grasp the link between low-level objectives and the collective possible self. As a result, the degree of vision pursuit may shrink.
- Regulatory nature: different types of possible self, namely ideal and ought, influence self-regulatory activities in different manners. In particular, self-regulation concerning ideal

selves, also known as a promotion emphasis, focuses on the enthusiastic attitude of the ideal self and is linked to broad-mindedness, innovation, and creativity. Self-regulation in relation to ought selves, also known as a preventative emphasis, focuses on the watchful attitude of the ought self and is connected to alertness and task-oriented perseverance.

Desirability, feasibility, and centrality are the main driving forces of persistence in vision pursuit. As a matter of fact, according to Daan et al. (2014, p.1178) these characteristics “make the collective possible self and the lower-level goals that are tied to the collective possible self more important and motivating for the individual, a pre-requisite for persistence in vision pursuit”.

In particular, the more central the possible self, the more significant its achievement is for the individual, thus centrality represents instrumentality, namely the expectation that success leads to results.

The goal network's size and variety in relation to the possible self are referred to as complexity. By enabling pursuit in many settings and various ways, complexity satisfies the purpose of vision pursuit. Consequently, a person who has a complex possible self has the ability to employ a variety of perspectives as well as lower-level goals in the process of working towards the vision. In the pursuit of a vision, this variety of viewpoints could inspire originality and adaptability.

Furthermore, ideal and ought selves may have different effects on the behavior undertaken to achieve the possible self. On the one hand, the ought self is more concerned with self-regulation driven by vigilance, task-oriented persistence, and the willingness to deal with threats and anxiety. Thus, this motivation triggered by the need to avoid the mentioned factors leads to persistence in vision pursuit.

On the other hand, the ideal self is concerned with self-regulation concerning creativity, adaptability, enthusiasm, and willingness. These characteristics lead to flexibility in vision pursuit.

In addition, complexity may offer chances to link the possible self to various parts of the self-concept, so creating centrality. While centrality may inspire an individual to widen the possible self, resulting in additional complexity. As a result, these factors may have an indirect, as well as a direct, effect on vision pursuit. A certain minimum level on all dimensions may be required for vision pursuit, and the various features may also function together to facilitate vision pursuit.

As discussed above, nowadays the external environment is extremely uncertain and is always in transformation. Environmental uncertainty can be defined as the unpredictability of the context or of organizational elements that have an impact on the company's success. An uncertain environment generates a situation that is beneficial for the creation of visionary leadership, despite the fact that it also places high work expectations on firm leaders. Indeed, on the one hand, the more an environment is uncertain, the higher the impact of leaders' actions and decisions on the company, this may stimulate and push leaders to conceive effective visions. Visionary leadership can function as a guide, encourage followers, and reduce uncertainty.

On the other hand, even if the environment may limit leaders, they have the responsibility to establish viable plans and to support and encourage employees.

In addition, according to Guan et al. (2023), the psychological resilience of leaders plays an important role in the effect that environmental uncertainty has on visionary leadership. As a matter of fact, leaders with higher psychological resilience can satisfy their need for autonomy and capability by dealing with the challenges posed by the environment. This may in turn improve their motivation and push them to behave in a visionary way. While the inability of leaders with low psychosocial resilience to deal with uncertainty may impede them from satisfying the needs of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation.

Context influences vision in the sense that certain organizational settings will unavoidably impact and interact with the set of preferred visions by offering new options and excluding others that would have otherwise been chosen.

In particular, the dimensions of contexts that can impact a vision can be grouped as objective and subjective.

Regarding the objective dimensions of contexts, they are the industry type and geographic location. As a matter of fact, the sector where a company operates makes a difference, indeed, the goals articulated by individuals in industry and those in academics are not identical to one another. In a similar vein, it seems that the size of an organization might have an impact on the topics that are included in the vision.

The influence of a vision on an organization's success may be diminished if the competitive environment is turbulent, which may be defined as the rate at which things change. Vision leads to a desired but far-off future, yet turbulence may make the vision appear even further off by unpredictably modifying the surroundings. Notwithstanding, the context as it was

received by individuals who were engaged in the conception and deployment of the vision is probably more important than the objective background.

Furthermore, four frames affect the analysis of organizational situations and the decisions taken by leaders.

Firstly, the human resource frame which focuses on employees' engagement in the workplace.

Secondly, the political frame that emphasizes the relationships and conflicts among competitors over resources.

Thirdly, the structural frame that underlines the goals, authority, and roles of workers.

Lastly, the symbolic frame which underlines the culture and meaning of companies.

Such frames would increase or decrease the visibility of particular context elements, giving them variable degrees of salience. Moreover, the mental model within which leaders act may impact their interpretations of events and the development of vision content.

The analysis conducted by O'Connell et al. (2011), led to the conclusion that "leaders whose dominant frame is symbolic will more likely be more concerned with vision creation than implementation; those whose dominant frame is structural, HR, or political will be more concerned with vision implementation than vision creation."

3.7 How to develop the envisioning capability

According to Mumford et al. (2017), there are several skills that allow leaders to develop a sensemaking capacity. Such skills function as a cascade where one is essential and mandatory for the development of the next one.

First of all, leaders should be able to highlight difficulties that are remarkable or substantial challenges, which consist of problem definition. The ability to define problems and gather information is contingent on leaders' capacity to dedicate cognitive resources to those tasks. Being able to conduct a cause-and-effect analysis, also known as an analysis of goals and causes, related to solving this problem is another skill required. By assisting leaders in developing this capacity they may develop stronger mental and increasing ability to recognize key goals and causes.

Another leadership skill is related to being able to identify the factors that prevent any acceptable issue solution from being implemented, namely the constraint analysis.

Skills in constraint analysis and cause-and-goal analysis are valuable in part because they serve as a foundation upon which to build a strategy. Planning has, for a considerable amount of time, been disregarded as a significant factor in leader effectiveness. But it ultimately requires mental modeling of the activities that will be taken in the future and is a fundamental skill for leaders.

In addition, having a balanced approach to planning is beneficial to the building of a leader's vision.

Leaders should be able to forecast and predict the downstream implications that may arise as a result of carrying out the strategies. The nature of a leader's experience, which is singular, as well as the particular facets of information that are retained in these instances, will affect the accuracy of the forecasts that they provide. Leaders can be “trained to apply case-based knowledge in forecasting, through interventions, which encourage them to think about contingencies, project positive and negative outcomes, and project long-term outcomes” (Mumford, Todd, Higgs, & McIntosh, 2017, p. 32)

Leaders are required to develop different ways of doing things and fresh concepts for dealing with the probable difficulties that were highlighted in the forecasts, namely creative thinking. A leader who is competent at forecasting will assume that plans will work out without substantial issues developing. This lack of confidence, together with the contingency planning that it inspires, will promote innovative thought on the side of leaders. As a matter of fact, the knowledge of ambiguities or potential errors in plans that arise from forecasting may be responsible, at least in part, for the lack of confidence displayed by leaders. But, if leaders recognize the challenges and possibilities that are brought to light by forecasting, it may also act as a constructive incentive for innovative thinking on their behalf. Hence, the ability to think creatively is a requirement for leaders, as suggested by both opportunity exploitation and contingency preparation.

Innovative thinking can provide leaders with many ideas for carrying out strategies. Nevertheless, leaders may not be able to put many different ideas into action at once. Indeed, they should be able to evaluate the ideas that have been created in order to pick the concept, or subset of ideas, that is most likely to contribute to the effective implementation of the plan. Thus, idea evaluation is another talent that leaders need to have.

Moreover, experience helps leaders to develop their idea evaluation skills. As a matter of fact, as leaders gain experience, complexity is reduced, which leads to improved proposal evaluation, more and better structured case-based information, and stronger mental models for organizing case-based knowledge. In addition, leaders can learn more suitable and

successful standards for evaluating ideas via experience, and occasionally through viable education. These standards, in turn, can result in more appropriate concept appraisal and idea rewriting, as well as more effective decision-making.

The examination of ideas by leaders, on the other hand, needs to take place within the context of the situation. Even an exceptional concept cannot apply to the particular circumstances of a company or group. The evaluation of the applicability of ideas in their respective contexts shows that wisdom may be a critical quality that leaders are required to possess. As a matter of fact, intelligent leaders utilize their expertise to take into consideration non-rational and subjective parts of choices. They then use their knowledge to generate solutions that are more practical and suitable for both the business and its followers. In addition, when leaders gain experience working in a certain field, their level of wisdom will rise.

Finally, leaders should be able to create a vision that will assist others, namely their followers, in understanding and taking action on the issue, this relates to sensemaking.

Even though leaders are expected to exude an air of confidence at all times, they should also devote time and effort to the development of compelling visions and the provision of followers with a means of making sense of the world around them. So, asking or teaching leaders to evaluate the danger to themselves or their followers may help to greater vision creation and improved sensemaking by followers.

The output of leader cognition that has the most direct influence on followers is visioning and sensemaking. Therefore, it will be essential for leaders to have empathy for their followers, as well as a hands-on understanding of their followers and their worries.

Moreover, leaders' ability to predict the future will also depend on whether or not they have developed workable mental models for comprehending their followers and whether or not they actively endeavor to integrate their mental model of followers with the problem-solving strategies they devise.

Another competence that enhances a leader ability and willingness to create and communicate vision is self-integrity. The latter consists of a worldwide sense of being ethically and adaptively competent.

On the one hand, leaders who have a high level of self-integrity are self-assured, have the ability to make their own free choices, and prefer to be authentic to who they are.

They are not likely to be swayed by the possibility of danger and are more likely to act in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs and values. In addition, self-integrity leaders are likely to confirm their future inclinations by expressing their opinions about upcoming

events and the results of those occurrences. This leads to two consequences. Firstly, leaders are likely to convey more visions. Secondly, high self-integrity is expected to facilitate follower future work self-salience (FWSS) by channeling future orientations into vision communication.

On the other hand, low self-integrity prevents future-oriented leaders from expressing visions, which lessens the influence on followers' future-oriented work-life satisfaction.

Low self-integrity leaders are less self-assured and don't live up to the potential of who they are. They are less likely to be complacent and less certain of their ability to meet the problems that lie ahead for them in the future. Leaders who are focused on the future are likely to be more circumspect when it comes to articulating their core ideas and ideals. As a result, having low self-integrity decreases the chance of future-oriented leaders sharing visions, which in turn impedes the development of followers' future work self-salience (FWSS) (Guo, Mao, Huang, & Zhang, 2022).

Self-projection occurs when a person mentally simulates himself in different scenarios that are unrelated to the current one. The intrinsic activity of the default mode network (DMN), a brain network whose essential function is projecting oneself, is indeed often associated with self-projection. The latter is comprised of several interconnected factors that are pertinent to the conduct of visionary leaders.

Firstly, intrinsic DMN activity shows a propensity to broaden one's mind by allowing a free flow of thoughts, or what is known as mind-wandering. Mind wandering frequently leads to thoughts that are focused on the future, such as speculating about and organizing for self-relevant future objectives.

Secondly, the self-projection shows a tendency to envisage and project oneself into a desirable future, as well as to reproduce future events involving oneself. The DMN also allows for mental simulations to be carried out on what-if scenarios that include both the individual and other people. By engaging in these activities, the leader can visualize the results of prospective actions and, as a result, adapt the vision by modeling alternative actions and probable outcomes.

Thirdly, the DMN is the fundamental component of one's capacity to develop and sustain a logical representation of a prospective or hypothetical scenario, a notion referred to as scene formation.

When considered as a whole, these aspects of self-projection are likely to be beneficial in the process of designing and developing a vision. For example, in order to be able to visualize

the future, one has to be at ease with letting one's thoughts wander but still maintaining a concentration on the current situation. As a matter of fact, leaders who engage in mind wandering are likely to clear some mental space in their heads, which makes it possible for them to think about the future. Consequently, this additional mental space enables leaders to participate in future-oriented simulations and scene creation, which may assist them in seeing and communicating what their future selves, including the collective self, may appear like.

Nonetheless, for leaders with lower levels of intrinsic DMN activity, mentally seeing the various future versions of themselves may be challenging. As a result, they may have a harder time communicating vision, which is a problem because the process of visioning requires the generation of clear mental representations of the ideal future.

Furthermore, if the leader does not conduct adequate mental simulations of possible action–outcome relationships, it may be difficult for the leader to formulate plans and carry out appropriate actions that are consistent with the vision. As a consequence, lower leader DMN activity, which reflects a lessened aptitude or inclination for self-projection, is likely to be associated with less visionary leader conduct (Kim, Waldman, Balthazard, & Ames, 2022).

In addition, the article of Halevy et al. (2011), proposes that members of a group may look at a leader as visionary when such leader is archetypal of the group. Therefore, visionary leaders are individuals who, within a specific group, best represent the relative similarities among members and separate them from an out-group. Hence, from the social identity point of view, individuals who are perceived as representative of their groups are more likely to arise as leaders. This is because these individuals have a stronger sense of their group's identity.

People rise to the position of leader when they are able to most accurately represent the identities of the members of their group and, as a result, enable the members' social identification and intergroup distinction. In particular, “as group membership becomes more important to self-definition and members identify more strongly with the group, leaders who are perceived to be more prototypical are more effective than leaders who are perceived to be less prototypical of the group” (Halevy, Berson, & Galinsky, 2011, p. 894).

These leaders get their ability to influence other members of the group from the fact that they are considered guardians of the company's principles. By protecting and preserving the essential values of the group, visionary leaders, defined as representational leaders, generate social closeness and liking with him/her.

Therefore, visionary leaders appear to have the ability to garner significant support while also enhancing group identification and consideration.

Companies play an essential role as well in assisting and guiding leaders to develop the envisioning capacity. In particular, organizations may take different measures and approaches at two main phases: selection and training of leaders.

For what concerns the first one, during the selection of leaders, companies should look for people who have certain desirable characteristics, such as future orientations as well as a sense of integrity (Guo, Mao, Huang, & Zhang, 2022).

In addition, individual characteristics, such as self-evaluation and monitoring, past experience in leadership roles, and motivation to lead, are all positively connected with leadership self-identity. Therefore, companies may choose individuals for leadership roles in part based on one or more of these individual distinctions. (Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg, Visions of change as visions of continuity, 2019)

Regarding training, companies should see their leaders as valuable assets and make investments in leadership development. One of the aspects is creating a future-oriented attitude among leaders, which makes it easier for them to concentrate on the advantages that the followers will enjoy in the long run. This is of utmost significance since many leaders have a tendency to put their short-term interests ahead of the long-term well-being of the companies they represent.

Companies should bring people together and incorporate group talks into management development programs in order to improve the self-integrity and self-affirmation of their leaders. It is important for leaders to be encouraged to share and discuss examples of future orientations, as well as action plans for bringing these instances into reality (Guo, Mao, Huang, & Zhang, 2022).

Furthermore, understanding the parts of the brain that are connected with visionary leadership can be one of the ways to improve this capacity. Even if the intrinsic brain is generally constant and resistant, it might possibly alter by using systematic efforts such as neurofeedback. By employing such a strategy, leaders may employ cognitive methods to boost brain processes related to self-projection while viewing their own real-time brain activities. Therefore, the combination of traditional leadership training with visual

neurofeedback has the potential to improve its efficacy (Kim, Waldman, Balthazard, & Ames, 2022).

When vision communication is required, companies may apply different tactics to promote a high construal level in managers. According to Venus et al. (2019), a strategy to stimulate a high-level construal in leaders consists in emphasizing “the core values and purposes of the organization, encouraging long-term planning and outlook, highlighting the meaning and impact of company outputs on distal stakeholders outside the company, and urging managers to think about why they do things (vs. how) and to frame actions based on desirability (vs. feasibility)”.

Employing one or more of these techniques can assist leaders in better understanding the meaning and qualities of their daily job, therefore nurturing a higher construal level.

Moreover, companies need to take additional measures to boost the prominence of managers' leadership self-identities. In addition, they may provide training and mentorship programs for current or aspiring leaders to develop their recognition of leadership duties and responsibilities (Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg, *Visions of change as visions of continuity*, 2019).

Finally, if an employee's reluctance to contribute to change stems from anxiety over the possibility of a break in the fundamental components that comprise the company's identity, then leaders need to reassure workers that this would not be an issue. This necessitates development programs that teach leaders not how to plan or rationalize change in the most beneficial way, but in such a way that it will be perceived as a maintenance or protection of who the company is as a collective. In order to accomplish this goal, training may aid leaders in learning how the organizational identity is viewed by followers. This knowledge may then assist leaders in understanding how planned changes may be perceived as being dangerous to the organizational identity. So, it is incumbent upon leaders to devise novel approaches to present the change in a manner that does not compromise the integrity of the organization's identity (Venus, Johnson, Zhang, Wang, & Lanaj, 2019).

3.8 In deep review of visioning leadership

After the analysis of the concept of vision, its main components, and distinguishing features, it is now possible to deeply understand which is the function of the visionary leader in this “machine”.

According to Shipman et al. (2010), there are three main kinds of leaders who establish and develop mental models: charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic.

Pragmatic leaders focus on expertise to develop a mental model for the present which control different degree of employees and situational causes.

Ideological leaders rely on attracting followers who have similar goals and motivations to develop a mental model for a hypothetical past that operates on situational causes. During the phase of vision creation, such a type of leader focuses on personal values and standards that should be respected by followers to create a message. Followers are viewed as individuals whose activities affect the values and standards that are being set by the leader.

Charismatic leaders aim to inspire people by developing a mental model for the future where the focus of attention is the individual or group. The primary purpose of charismatic leadership is to assist in the production of a new or different world that is "phenomenologically legitimate," which means that it is real to the followers and distinct from the reality that existed previously.

The focal point here is change, the meaning it creates, and how it can be employed to develop a better future. By effectively articulating a strong sense of vision and translating this vision into concrete objectives and tactics, charismatic leaders are able to win the esteem, confidence, and trust of followers.

The main difference between charismatic and ideological leaders is their relationship with followers and their involvement in institutional change. An ideological leader may be more suitable when, firstly, the company relies on shared values and opinions. Secondly, when the company is experiencing a crisis due to divergences in culture. Thirdly, when previous attempts at change have failed and a consensus cannot be established around an imagined future. (Strange & Mumford, 2002)

As the analysis conducted by Hunt et al. (1999) revealed, charismatic leadership can be divided into two subgroups, namely visionary and crisis-responsive.

For what regards crisis-responsive leader, his or her main aim is to re-settle the link between followers' behavior and beneficial consequences, which during a crisis is compromised. Notwithstanding, the temporal effect generated by this leadership style tends to deteriorate over time.

Concerning visionary leaders, they give direction to the company and ensure that all the followers are aware of the selected path. They recognize that remarkable visions are seldom the result of one person conducting in-depth research on his/her own, so when they are

looking for new directions, they engage in a dynamic interchange with a variety of individuals both inside and outside companies. They define a distinct point of view about what will occur and position their organizations to respond to that, then evaluate fresh ideas in light of existing resources and collaborate with others to determine how to bring about the desired future. For this reason, they are usually defined as “practical futurists” (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009).

Today’s business environment is characterized by a fast-paced and competitive corporate climate where leaders must strike a balance between guiding organizational development and catering to the requirements of their workforce. This is what a visionary leader aims to do. As a matter of fact, at the organizational level, he/she concentrates on determining critical environmental elements, identifying new possibilities, and conceiving the company’s future plans. While at the individual level, the leader’s goal is to convey visions to followers in order to prove to them that it is meaningful and have the potential to be fulfilled.

Visionary leaders begin their work inside the current structures but, their scope is to transform those structures in a way that is subsequently embraced and encouraged by functional leaders.

They are capable of influencing others by shifting the commonly held mental models and conventions, which in turn makes it easier to establish new structures that direct the activities of members of the team. In addition, as the structure develops, the leader will draw attention to and define the emerging structure and convince the team to accept it.

A visionary leader has the responsibility of ensuring that each employee has a reason for being inside the organization by guaranteeing that the vision is continuously related to workers’ specific cares, concerns, and tasks. As a matter of fact, followers may consider a vision to be impractical or improbable if it is not founded in some amount of realism. Therefore, the visionary leader should be able to pull even the most resistant followers towards the achievement of the vision by making it exciting as well as related to instrumental aims and objectives. As a result, leaders are able to utilize images while they are articulating the future visions of their companies. Thus, since followers are able to visualize the events of the future in their minds rather than thinking about the future in general, they find visions that are rich in images to be more emotionally stimulating and simpler to comprehend than abstract visions. The realization of this helps to fuel followers’ motivation. (Berson, Halevy, Shamir, & Erez, 2015)

For what concerns the relationship between the visionary leader and followers, through the design of the vision, he/she tries to connect their needs to values and objectives and to

demonstrate how their actions contribute to their realization. Leaders establish deep emotional relationships with the members of the group by offering a sense of direction and identifying possibilities and difficulties. As a result, the members of the group trust and identify with them, and thus, visionary leaders are particularly successful in drawing followers.

A leader can convey a picture of the future whose objective is not only to prone followers to achieve it, but also to provide them with increased independence, power, and the ability to make decisions.

Furthermore, visionary leaders usually reflect the group's agreement with regard to the group's current stance. Their one-of-a-kind outlook on the future of the company, on the other hand, sets them apart from the other members of the group and makes them especially qualified to steer them in a new path when change is required. (Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999)

Finally, as Kearney et al. (2018) suggest, visionary leadership can be interpreted as a combination of agentic and communal leadership. The first one helps leaders exert control by fostering alignment around common goals, whereas the second one permits leaders to relinquish power. Both may be carried out at the same time, even in the same conversation with a follower.

3.9 Conclusion

A vision has been described as an idealized future goal state, a strategy for the achievement of future goals, and a picture of the future that articulates the values, objectives, and identity of followers. Therefore, the focus placed on the future and the creation of a plan for it is what unites these definitions. Vision is a collection of ideas about how people ought to act and interact in order to make some idealized future state a reality.

A vision should excite, as well as stimulate dedication and connection with it, inspire and motivate. In addition, it should emphasize optimism, self-assurance, and a focus on the future.

Vision is a crucial instrument to deal with changes both outside, namely in the business environment, and inside the company. Indeed, it is characterized by a strong orientation toward the future and provides guidance about how to achieve a desired state. Consequently, in moments of transition, it is essential for the survival and prosperity of a firm to have

leaders able to guide and inspire followers through the development of an effective vision, thus brief, clear, challenging, stable, abstract, future-oriented, and inspirational.

In addition, it is important for visionary leaders to carefully plan and implement all the steps of the vision creation process, namely, formation, communication, assimilation, and implementation, as well as the sensemaking and sensegiving phases. In this way, leaders can make sure that everyone inside the company totally understands the vision and the reasons behind it. As a matter of fact, only if followers comprehend a vision they can work and strive to achieve it. Thus, a successful vision is the combination of the efforts of both followers and leaders.

Regarding visionary leaders, there are some skills and competencies that assist them in the development of a vision. In particular, the ability to plan, forecast, think in a creative way, and make sense.

Notwithstanding, if not properly managed, coordinated, and disregarded by employees it may fail or not lead to the expected results.

4 Case study - Rossimoda

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the need to develop a vision is often triggered by a change. Such changes could regard the status of a company, its profits, the environmental context, or top management.

Change, in its broadest sense, refers to an effort made by the members of a company to modify the manner in which they currently think and behave. Therefore, strategic change entails making an effort to transform present patterns of thought and behavior in order to equip an organization with the capability of benefitting from significant opportunities or surviving in the face of significant environmental challenges. Thus, significant changes may result in the modification of preexisting values and meanings.

For what concerns changes in top management, usually the arrival of a new person inside a company who covers a significant position, as for example a CEO, could lead to the creation of a vision.

When it comes to crafting the vision for the company, the CEO usually plays an essential role. As a matter of fact, the appointment of a new chief executive officer may serve as the impetus for the formulation of a fresh strategy. This is because the new CEO frequently carries with him a different way of thinking as well as the aspiration to leave his own imprint on the organization. In addition, strategies frequently mirror the values of top managers, thus, an initial focus is placed on the values or meaning system of the CEO.

Indeed, it is up to him/her to decide if the process takes place at all, how, when, and where it takes place, who should be engaged, and what approaches should be applied. (O'Brien & Meadows, 2003)

This is what happened in Rossimoda. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate which is the role of vision in a moment of transition. As a matter of fact, the company has faced two main changes, namely the appointment of a new industrial director which coincided with the integration of the company into an existing organization.

Therefore, the aspects that I would like to analyze through the case study are twofold.

Firstly, whether the arrival of the new leader and the integration of the company inside the Celine group represented a force to change the company vision or not.

Secondly, the various phases of the change process and the role that the industrial director covered in this.

4.2 Case study methodology

The sample used to conduct this analysis consisted of three strategic individuals. As a matter of fact, their role was crucial to understand the mechanism behind the change process. As the table shows, these persons were the industrial director, the product development manager, and the talent acquisition and development manager.

Table 4.1: Interviewed information

Role	Years in Rossimoda	Interview length
Industrial director	0,5	40 minutes
Product development manager	1	30 minutes
Talent acquisition and development manager	10	30 minutes

The data collection techniques adopted were mainly two: observation and interviews. Regarding the first one, it is a method for gathering information by watching. This approach to data collection falls into the category of participatory research because the researcher must fully engage in the environment where the subjects are located. The process of observing can encompass activities such as watching, listening, reading, touching, and documenting the behaviors and attributes of phenomena.

In this case, the data collection method of observation was unstructured therefore, it was carried out in an open and spontaneous manner, with no predetermined variables or objectives, with research subjects aware that they were being observed.

Regarding the interviews, they were carried out separately for each of the respondents, were conducted in their personal office without other people, and lasted from 30 to 40 minutes, depending on the time they had available.

The topics addressed with the industrial director and product development manager were similar and touched on two main arguments:

- The mission, values, and objectives of the company.
- The first three phases of change are according to the sensemaking framework of Gioia and Chittipeddi.

While the interview of the talent acquisition and development manager focused on the history of the company and the main events that characterized it.

Then the data and information collected through these approaches were elaborated and interpreted using a storytelling methodology.

4.3 The setting of the research: analysis of the company context

As mentioned above, the research took place in Rossimoda, which is a footwear company located in Vigonza, Padua, founded in 1947 by Narciso Rossi.

Rossimoda is part of the shoe industrial district located in Riviera del Brenta, between Padua and Venice. The origins of the district date back to 1898, when Luigi Voltan, a pioneer in local development, brought innovative organizational models in the footwear sector to Riviera del Brenta. That know-how was successfully applied elsewhere but not widely adopted by Italian companies. As a matter of fact, Voltan can be defined as a trailblazer within the Italian footwear industry. It was the first one to introduce and put into practice an industrial production model akin to the American approach, effectively tailoring it to suit the unique demands of the Italian market, which differed significantly from that of the United States.

The progress of the Venetian shoe industry has closely mirrored Italy's economic growth. Even during the pre-industrial era, it gained notable importance both in terms of quality and quantity, particularly within urban regions. (Belussi & Scarpel)

For what concerns the Riviera del Brenta's shoes industrial district today, it proves to be one of the leading industries in the Veneto economic context. As a matter of fact, it is composed of 1.442 active businesses in the area (accounting for 12.9% of Italian companies in the sector) and 14.886 employees, constituting 19.9% of the Italian workforce engaged in the manufacturing of footwear.

In particular, the primary foreign markets of reference for the district are France (the largest buyer in 2021 with a value of 666 million euros) and Germany. In addition, the percentage of exports to the United States market peaked from 2019 to 2021, going from 52.8% to 56%. (Camera di commercio di Venezia e Rovigo, 2022)

Furthermore, the present composition of the district includes three categories of business entities:

- Manufacturing firms that provide services to others.
- Companies that manufacture products under their brand.
- Businesses that cooperate and engage in projects with prestigious brands.

For what regards the history of the company, there are several moments which can be considered salient for its history.

Initially, the company was a family business, indeed, in 1956, Luigino, son of Narciso, took over the management of the company with the intention of enhancing the family tradition and the precious legacy left to him by his father, together with his brothers Dino and Diego. Luigino held the role of CEO from 1956 to 2009, bringing about significant changes for the company, which will specialize in the production of luxury footwear, also expanding into the international market.

In 1960 Luigino decided to transform the company into a luxury one by starting to produce footwear signed by renowned designers; this represented a turning point for Rossimoda.

As a matter of fact, in 1963, the company acquired the license of Yves Saint Laurent, initiating a collaboration with the brand that lasted for 38 years. In Italy, Rossimoda was the first to begin work under this type of contract for famous French brands.

Simultaneously, it also obtains licenses from the most prestigious fashion houses of the time, including Christian Dior, Givenchy, Emanuel Ungaro, Vera Wang, Christian Lacroix, Fendi, Calvin Klein, Marc by Marc Jacobs, Donna Karan, Kenzo, and Porsche Design.

In the year 2000, a significant milestone occurred for Rossimoda, marking a second pivotal moment in its history. As a matter of fact, the company embarked on a partnership with the LVMH group, becoming part of its Fashion and Leather Goods division.

The group, capitalizing on its financial strength and managerial expertise, has established a central holding company capable of steering numerous high-end businesses toward success and, in some cases, revitalizing them by unlocking their untapped potential. In addition, LVMH is actively pursuing a strategy of vertical integration by acquiring ownership stakes in several exceptional producers, thereby ensuring control over both product quality and production timing for the brands within its portfolio.

LVMH's strategic alignment with Rossimoda occurred during a period when the company was facing a generational transition dilemma within the Rossi family. As a matter of fact, the three siblings had reached retirement age, and there was no apparent successor ready to take over the helm of the company. They couldn't identify an heir to assume control of Rossimoda, and at the same time, they were hesitant to maintain ownership while entrusting external management with the company's operations.

In these years, the luxury sector was also undergoing a significant transformation, marked by a trend where luxury brands and manufacturers were consolidating into large luxury conglomerates.

In 2001 the Rossi family reached an agreement with the French multinational company. Initially, they sold a 45% minority stake in Rossimoda's share capital to the LVMH group. Subsequently, in 2003, they sold almost the entire stake, totaling 97%. This resulted in Dino and Diego, the Rossi brothers, exiting the company completely. Luigino then took on the role of President and CEO, retaining just 3% of the shares, he held this position until 2009 when the group was able to find a suitable replacement.

This agreement allowed the Rossi family to avoid layoffs and the closure of the company. As a matter of fact, it provided the company with the prestige and stability associated with a leading luxury group and brought in a continuously expanding portfolio of brands. The company's growth strategy led to changes in the distribution network, improving the visibility of licensed brands and introducing innovations in the production system through

the implementation of a more efficient organization and increased production standardization—all without restricting the creativity of the designers.

The next years were characterized by considerable changes to the company's business model and structure. As a matter of fact, in 2019 elegant women's footwear is beginning to lose ground as sneakers gain it, so at Rossimoda, there is a conversion of a substantial portion of production in favor of sneakers. Consequently, the company finds itself having to create and develop both the necessary technical infrastructure and suitable skills.

This allowed the company to become the new platform for the development and production of footwear for some Group Maisons, emphasizing the ability to be a relevant partner in manufacturing excellence.

The last turning point for Rossimoda happened in 2022, when the company was absorbed into the industrial assets of one of its major clients, Celine. From that moment on, there are several changes:

- Rossimoda enters directly into Celine brand as its exclusive platform for the development and production of women's and men's footwear.
- A reporting change occurs. In fact, being part of the same group, the company now reports directly to Celine, so there is more cross-functional communication where the focus is more on collaboration.
- A new industrial director for Rossimoda was appointed directly from the board of Celine. He entered the company in March 2023.

In the next paragraph, I am going to analyze which was the impact of these changes on the company.

4.4 Analysis of the findings

Firstly, I have tried to understand which was the vision of Rossimoda, to figure out if it has been modified due to the multiple changes that the company has faced.

The core purpose and values of the companies remained almost unchanged while the mission and vivid description underwent some modifications.

The core purpose of Rossimoda is to provide high-quality service, both in terms of product development and production, to all the brands within the LVMH group that have not already been vertically integrated with their own industrial companies, namely Celine and Givenchy. However, now there is a special focus on Celine products.

Furthermore, the mission of Celine is to strengthen the brand while maintaining its niche allure but with strong market recognition. Continuing to strengthen the brand, its recognition, and strategic positioning in the market.

Rossimoda is part of this vision, as a matter of fact, it contributes to the development and creation of high-quality shoes that allow Celine to distinguish itself and be identifiable by people.

Therefore, now Rossimoda is inside this plan, and its mission is to continue collaborating in the best way with the brand by offering a high-level service and technical consultancy in terms of development and production, as well as managing the production chain for the men's and women's sectors.

The core values of the company are passion for work, attention to quality, flexibility, and agility in addressing very different situations, thus responding to very diverse requests. This makes it highly versatile and drives it towards innovation.

In addition, there is a strong focus on people which has been amplified with the arrival of the new industrial director. As a matter of fact, the company focuses strongly on the care and attention towards the human capital by offering various initiatives both from the point of view of personal training and benefits for the employees.

Moreover, a personal value that the new industrial director is trying to diffuse inside Rossimoda too is the respect of aspects as employees, their work, and clients.

All these values are part of a broader culture, that of LVMH. The group has an axiom and three values, namely:

- People make a difference, which means that individual contribution is crucial in any context.
- Being innovative, striving for excellence, and having an entrepreneurial vision.

These values are fundamental for LVMH but can also be found in Rossimoda's culture.

Regarding the vivid description and mission for the future, the integration into Celine and the appointment of the industrial director had an impact on these aspects.

As a matter of fact, the industrial director has a vivid image for Rossimoda, and he aims to achieve several objectives.

Firstly, the safety of people, the quality of products, and efficiency in work, these must represent essential principles for the company.

Secondly, agility in responding to customer demand. If the company can satisfy the customer promptly, switching from one request to another because the market demands it, the product because it is available in stores, therefore, the customer has a higher potential to sell it. Consequently, Rossimoda has a greater opportunity to grow in turn.

Thirdly, the improvement of the work environment. If Rossimoda will effectively manage the client's financial statement, their own will also perform better. Therefore, the company can become healthier both in terms of aesthetics and its people, by continuing to invest in experienced individuals in terms of spreading their knowledge within the company and nurturing the growth of younger employees. By triggering this mechanism of both numerical and economic growth, it will be possible to reinvest these results within the company, foster personal development, and thus create a better working environment.

We can notice that the strategic changes that the company went through led it to focus more on communication. As a matter of fact, the industrial director's main objective is to improve the communication inside Rossimoda, as reported below.

Industrial director: We are a company that can do more in terms of communication. We need to communicate, share, explain, and give meaning to the goals we have set for the future. If we make all this clearer, it will be much more logical for people to understand what they are doing and why. In this way, we can direct our energies in the right direction and discard activities that may not be a priority based on our vision and objectives. If we work extensively on communication, repeating what we are doing and why, it is a significant contribution to achieving our goals.

Secondly, I have tried to analyze the role of the industrial director as a change agent for the company, adopting an ethnographic technique.

Envisioning phase

This phase started a few months before the industrial director's appointment began. During this initial period, he focused on gathering information through visits to the company and assessing its capabilities. In addition, he had many meetings with the COO of Celine, the person who appointed him, to understand which were his expectations.

This allowed him to develop a preliminary vision for Rossimoda, shaped by his own prior experiences, and Celine COO's objectives and adapted to the company circumstances.

Industrial director: The main activity before taking on the role was sharing information and expectations with those who assigned me the task. Initially, it involved understanding from their perspective (Celine) what their vision and goals were for Rossimoda and then beginning to think about how to translate them into action. So, there was certainly a process of exchanging ideas and reflecting with Celine's executives. Subsequently, there was a period of assimilating and elaborating on the objectives I was given and contemplating how to implement them.

In addition, his vision is totally aligned with the one of Celine. As a matter of fact, when it comes to people, products, and customers, these objectives align directly with Celine's own goals.

Regarding his prior experiences, he worked both in Italy and abroad for different typologies of companies, and this helped him mainly to develop a deep understanding of business organizations.

Signaling phase

This phase started when the industrial director arrived in Rossimoda and was characterized by the announcement of the changes that he planned to make.

Industrial director: As is customary in the Celine world, I decided to communicate the upcoming changes through immediate communication with all personnel. This had never happened within the company. There were several meetings with small groups of people during which I explained the vision, objectives, where the business was heading, and what the major projects were.

Moreover, he is planning to carry out further initiatives to communicate his vision.

Industrial director: Coming up soon, a monthly meeting will begin with the key people, who will be tasked with cascading communication to all employees. We have established that for all important communications, key people will be summoned and provided with all the information. Subsequently, they will be responsible for disseminating this information to all levels.

It's the manager's role to communicate with the team because when you convey something, you need to be able to listen and address doubts, provide guidance, and observe body language.

In addition, the industrial director met with the managers of the organizing committee to discuss their impressions and expectations.

Industrial director: The team is aligned with this approach. These are things that, if you have done them in your previous professional life, you understand their importance; otherwise, you come to realize it by doing them. However, there is a risk that it might be perceived as a waste of time. I need to be mindful of this aspect, but on average, we are at a good level of understanding the importance of communication.

These meetings have generated consensus among managers and allowed them to be “on the same page”.

Product development manager: The industrial director speaks a language that I embrace, which is to involve everyone in strategic decisions and choices, especially the key people. He has made many small changes. As for Celine, relationships are more open and transparent, addressing even the most sensitive topics with more points of discussion. At an industrial level, we are reevaluating the business model. There are several ideas on the table regarding how to manage the budget.

Revisioning phase

This is the phase where the company and the industrial director are actually in. During this phase, he is trying to assess the impressions and thoughts of people inside Rossimoda and Celine's COO.

Industrial director: There are some positive signals because, in addition to communication, there has been a meeting with the key people, and there will soon be a meeting with all the employees of the company to understand what they think about this process. Some people are starting to talk about my vision and objectives, which means that something is on its way, but it still takes time. My supervisor is aligned. He is aware of the changes I am making, but it is similar to what has been done in the past with him. Others are already starting to see small results in terms of profitability and agility. They see that Rossimoda is beginning to be talked about, and they say that Rossimoda seems to have been part of Celine forever.

Product development manager: The message of change has reached everyone, even at the operational level. Directors and managers must be capable of explaining the ongoing and future changes effectively.

4.5 Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that the vision of the new industrial director for Rossimoda is based on improving communication.

As a matter of fact, the company has recently joined the Celine group and has assisted to the arrival of a new industrial director, who has been appointed by Celine COO.

These main changes did not impact the strong culture of Rossimoda. Indeed, its purpose and values remained unchanged. This was dictated also by the fact that Rossimoda and Celine are both part of the LVMH group, thus their cultures have many points in common. Of course, the new industrial director is trying to transmit his own values too to the company.

Regarding Rossimoda's objectives, the industrial director would like to strengthen even more the existing ones, namely the safety of people, agility during work, and improvement of the work environment, through a strong campaign based on communication. All these

findings have been strongly confirmed by the analysis of the first three phases of the change process.

In conclusion, as the environment undergoes changes, leadership, and its structure are also adapting. Information technologies have shifted economies towards industries reliant on information, where innovation, flexibility, and market creativity are crucial. Collaboration and teamwork are essential in today's era, especially within companies.

To thrive in the current context, companies require leaders who not only issue orders and supervise but also guide them toward a future direction. The relationship between leaders and followers is vital, as is their collaborative approach to the future. Effective leaders must nurture empathy, trust, and innovation while embracing change. Prioritizing learning, collaboration, and employee growth is essential, with rewards for teamwork and innovation contributing to success. Leaders must navigate evolving landscapes, support employee needs, and cultivate cultures of adaptation and growth to remain competitive. The dynamic between leaders and followers has evolved, becoming a central focus of leadership theories. Additionally, leaders' roles have shifted towards fostering strong relationships with followers and embracing change to ensure success in a changing business landscape.

Due to these changes, the business environment is primarily characterized by uncertainty. Leaders in this context face unique risks and challenges. To address this, visionary leadership becomes a potent solution. A vision guides and motivates employees to confront change positively and proactively. Visionary leadership empowers followers to innovate and find solutions for emerging challenges. A vision is described as an idealized future goal, a strategy for it, and a portrayal of the future reflecting the values, objectives, and identity of followers. What unites these definitions is the focus on the future and the creation of a plan to achieve it. A vision should be inspiring, fostering dedication, connection, inspiration, and motivation, while emphasizing optimism, self-assurance, and a future-oriented perspective.

Vision plays a crucial role in addressing external changes in the business environment and internal changes within a company. It is essential for a firm's survival and prosperity to have leaders who can guide and inspire followers by developing an effective vision, characterized by being brief, clear, challenging, stable, abstract, future-oriented, and inspirational. Visionary leaders should carefully plan and implement all stages of the

vision creation process, including formation, communication, assimilation, and implementation, as well as sensemaking and sense-giving phases. This ensures that everyone within the company fully understands the vision and its rationale. A successful vision results from the joint effort of both followers and leaders.

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