

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

SIXTY-SECOND VISION: INSPIRING FOLLOWERS WITH A PERFECT PITCH

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

Contributor: Rob-Jan de Jong, Founder of Vongolo Consulting, Instructor in Wharton's *Global Strategic Leadership* program, and author of the forthcoming book *The Vision Thing*.

THE GOAL:

Inspire others with your vision of the future by crafting and delivering a compelling short story.

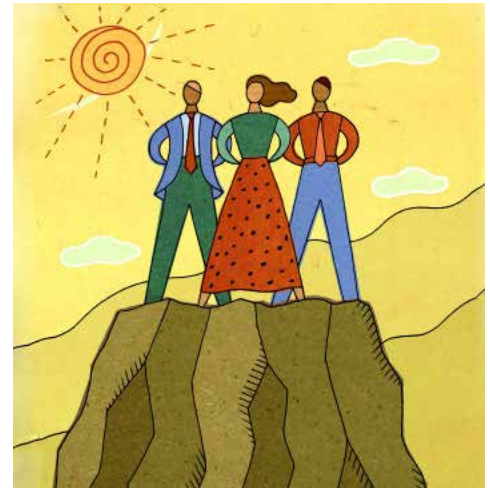
NANO TOOL:

Having a vision of the future for your team, your division, or your organization — and setting the kind of long-term goals that will get you there — is just the first step in visionary leadership. Inspiring others to believe in and commit to that vision is what moves it from idea to action. And you won't inspire followership with another set of slides or a memo. Instead, you need a combination of message, emotion, and authenticity to communicate your vision most effectively.

The sixty-second vision is a short speech — similar to an elevator pitch — that combines these elements in a powerful, imaginative, yet linear way. Using metaphor and personal anecdotes, it is more compelling than referencing specific strategies. By following the simple action steps below, you can create an appeal to your followers that will inspire them to commit to your vision. And there is an additional benefit: crafting the sixty-second pitch will also help you think more deeply about and clarify your vision.

HOW COMPANIES USE IT:

- A media company CEO had a vision for the adjustment required to respond to the rapidly declining print business and the rapidly growing digital economy. It called for a complete upheaval of their business model that would bring great uncertainty. When he shared the vision with his management team, they fully agreed, but still seemed reluctant about it since the work to realize the vision was daunting. Rather than overwhelming them with more arguments, the CEO switched off the projector, and shared his recent personal experience in an ice skating marathon. It had been an ordeal. He showed a picture of his frozen face at the finish, and briefly explained that he only survived because he and his friends had formed a group, stuck together, kept each other out of the wind as a team, and waited for each other when one tripped or fell. He was proud to have finished, but was even more proud to have been a member of such a team. The story drove home the message as he galvanized his management team, communicating all he needed to say about the pivotal importance of now standing up for each other in the challenging times ahead. No impersonal argument would have gotten him there, but the personal anecdote sank in.



- A senior executive at a credit union had a vision for a “credit union 2.0.” But rather than describing the trends and developments in the current business environment, such as increasing digitalization and individualization, he started by sharing a personal anecdote. He described a true scene in which his young daughter said “Daddy, we hardly see you anymore.” The experience changed his life, causing him to reevaluate the long hours he and his team spent at the bank. He formulated a new model based on the needs of their customers and themselves. As he told the story, the room grew silent. When he finished he got a standing ovation. He moved his audience with a vision that blended the practical with the personal.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Answer these three questions: Where we are going? What is inspiring about that future? Why am I committed to going there?
2. To bring your vision to life and unlock your audience’s imagination, choose a metaphor to help describe where you are headed. Practice with a few and see how the natural associations connect to your story. Introduce it, and then keep referring to it over and over. Useful — and not overused — sources of metaphors are nature (e.g., safari, oak tree), the arts (e.g., theatre, rock-and-roll), architecture (e.g., fountain, Sydney Opera House), and sports (e.g., the Olympics, kite surfing). But creating your own is even better.
3. To add authenticity and emotion, make yourself part of your pitch by integrating a personal anecdote that had a profound impact on your thinking and what you stand for. A powerful anecdote that illustrates the roots of your values, beliefs, and why you really care says everything about the integrity of why you are committed to going there.
4. Rehearse your pitch, and then practice it with a colleague or team member. Don’t worry if you don’t get it right on your first try. Most people don’t; it takes a few attempts. Keep working with your metaphor until you find the right words to tap into others’ emotions.
5. Ask for specific feedback: Were you clear? Were you believable? Did you convince your listener to join you?
6. Reflect on how the metaphor is working to engage others in your vision. Remember that it takes at least 6 repetitions for the metaphor to really sink in, so don’t be afraid to refer to it often.

SHARE YOUR BEST PRACTICES:

Do you have a best practice for communicating your vision for the future? If so, please share it on our blog at Wharton’s Center for Leadership and Change Management. <http://whartonleadership.wordpress.com/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

“Leadership, Vision, and Organizational Effectiveness,” Stephen J. Zaccaro and Deanna J. Banks. In *The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance*, Stephen J. Zaccaro and Richard J. Klimoski, eds. (John Wiley and Sons, 2002). Provides a framework for understanding vision in an organizational context, including definitions, leadership behaviors, and the role of vision in organizational effectiveness. It also includes links to other academic research on the topic.

YouTube.com:

- “I Have a Dream,” Martin Luther King, on the power of metaphorical language
- “The Stanford Commencement Speech,” Steve Jobs, on the power of personal anecdotes
- “Achieving your Childhood Dreams,” Randy Pausch, on the power of personal anecdotes
- “The Girl Who Silenced the World,” Severn Suzuki, on the power of authenticity

Speak Like Churchill, Stand Like Lincoln: 21 Powerful Secrets of History’s Greatest Speakers, James Humes (Three Rivers Press, 2002). Provides historical examples to build communication skills for greater influence and inspiration.

Rob-Jan De Jong teaches in Wharton’s [Global Strategic Leadership](#) program.

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, Director of Innovative Learning Solutions at Wharton Executive Education. It is jointly sponsored by Wharton Executive Education and Wharton’s Center for Leadership and Change Management, Wharton Professor of Management Michael Useem, Director. Nano Tools’ Academic Director is John Paul MacDuffie, Wharton Associate Professor of Management, and Director of the Program on Vehicle and Mobility Innovation (PVMI) at Wharton’s Mack Institute for Innovation Management.