



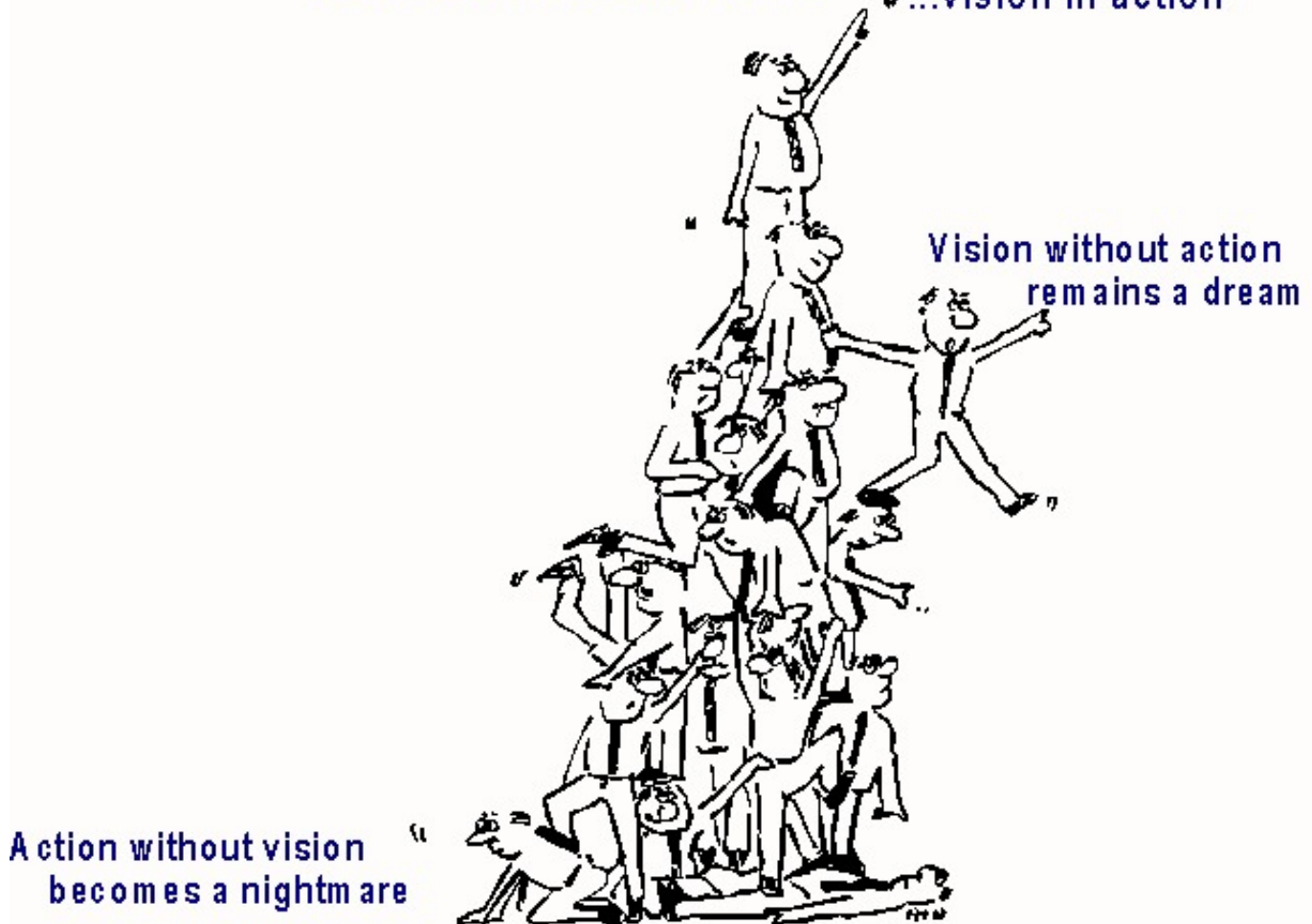
Vision Is Not Enough

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Effectiveness comes from... ..vision in action



There are hundreds of books written every year about leadership. They focus largely on big questions, and nearly all of them talk about the importance of creating a shared vision. I have no quarrel with most of what is written about leadership—my problem is with the element that too often is ignored. Visionary leadership is not enough. Effective leadership also must include the ability to implement a vision for change, which inevitably involves the less dramatic work of management and administration.

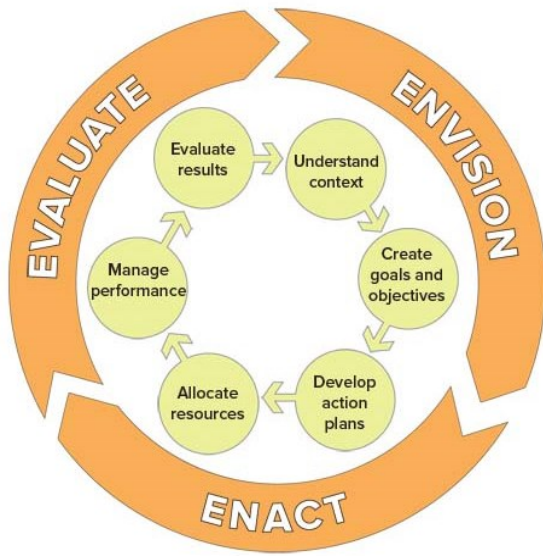


I thought about this distinction between leadership and management last week as I read yet another article about the botched rollout of the website for the Affordable Care Act. The new law may be President Obama's signature accomplishment, and it may reflect a great vision, but it is floundering partly because he paid inadequate attention to making it work. Based on newspaper accounts, it sounds like too many contractors were involved in developing the website and there was a lack of overall coordination and supervision. In other words, the implementation was managed poorly. How can that be possible?

One reason may be that leadership is considered king in our country and management is viewed as its boring cousin. I once had a senior campus leader tell me that he saw himself as a leader, not as a manager or an administrator. The clear implication was that leadership is more important and somehow more deserving of our best efforts. That perspective is reflected everywhere in our country's culture. It is important to recognize that leadership as traditionally conceived—creating a vision—is not nearly enough to get things done.



Someone has to implement even the most inspiring vision, and that requires talented and creative administrators. Leaders must understand the importance of administration and know how to support, supervise, and evaluate administrators. In the School's teaching about [strategic public leadership](#), we highlight the importance of developing action plans, allocating resources, managing performance, and evaluating results. In other words, we take a holistic view of leadership that includes much more than creating a vision. It is a false dichotomy to separate leadership from management, a lesson that President Obama may be learning the hard way.



Strategic Public Leadership

President Obama may feel like John McKay felt years ago as the football coach of the hapless NFL expansion Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After his team had lost yet another game, a reporter in a post-game press conference asked McKay what he thought about his team's execution. His answer: "I'm all in favor of it." President Obama may feel the same way about the team responsible for implementing the Affordable Care Act. In his case, however, it is hard to avoid concluding that he bears a large responsibility for not paying enough attention to the administration of the new law.



Coach John McKay



In thinking about the School, we are fortunate to have staff members in all of our divisions who understand the fundamental importance of effective administration. Their efforts in managing our work requires great skill and creativity, and they do it very well. Our ideas for continuously improving how we serve North Carolina officials cannot implement themselves. Vision is not enough. Luckily, we have a talented professional staff that is dedicated to first-rate administration in advancing our mission.