

Re:Focus

simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

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The visionary's dilemma

"Let me tell you about my vision. It's all about the convergence of technology. We're developing applications that combine any portable device with a desktop computer. Now the nightwatchman can become a world famous recording artist. What we're doing is better than YouTube and better than anyone else out there. It's revolutionary!!!"

What you just read is how a visionary mind described his revolution to me...at least what I could understand of it. And that's the problem...

Visionaries can see a world that doesn't exist. This is the reason we call them visionary - because they can see into the future. They can imagine products or services not yet invented. They can envision a way of living different to the way we live now. Yet they can't always get it out in a way that anyone can understand. It's no surprise most people think so many visionaries are crazy - just listen to what comes out of their mouths. And they always include some coup de grace like how much better their idea is compared to an accepted standard, refer to a huge multi-billion dollar corporation as "idiots" or say something to do with changing the world.

And I'm sure they could change the world or take down the largest of corporations...if anyone could understand a thing they were saying.

This is the visionary's dilemma.

A vision, no matter how brilliant, will only ever see the light of day if others, those less visionary, are able to also see the potential. It is a person's ability to paint a picture of something that doesn't exist in words so clear that others can clearly picture it themselves without any confusion or uncertainty that matters most. It is at that point that an idea can inspire people to act. To share the idea and to help bring it to reality.

There is a simple formula to explain one's vision in words that can be clearly understood by more than the visionary themselves. No matter the what the vision is, no matter how simple or how complicated the technology, always communicate so that a scientist AND a truck driver could understand you equally (note: if you communicate as if you're a scientist, a truck driver won't understand

you, but if you communicate as if you're a truck driver, everyone will understand you).

1. Words that require thinking should be avoided, words like "convergence," for example. When someone says that in a sentence, I have to furl my brow and really pay attention.
2. Explain why it matters, not what you're doing. Who cares if you're "developing applications for mobile devices...blah blah blah," why should I care?
3. And most importantly, always, always speak as if you're describing an image. A picture. A scene.

If I were to rewrite the original vision based on these simple steps, it would sound more like this:

"I imagine a world in which a couple interested in building a house could take a picture with their phone of a house they like and immediately submit the image to have blueprints drawn up and have architects bid to build that house before they picked up the kids from school.

I imagine a world in which a nightwatchman could use nothing more than his cell phone to record a song he wrote, while at work, with perfect studio quality and post it for the world to hear before he goes home at the end of his shift.

I imagine a world in which our cell phones and our desktop computers become so blurred, that everything you can do with your home computer...I mean everything...you could do with your phone. This is the world that I imagine and I am building. If you can see the impact of what I'm talking about, join me and let's build it together."

Big difference, right? No big words. I spoke in images not explanations. I described the final images and not the shades of paint that make up those images. And, after all, it is why you have your vision, not how you intend to create it, that inspires.