

Texts on Active Interchange

In the next few months of The RE-IMAGINE Project, Jewish professional teams will be called on to pose questions that inspire bold innovation. In creating shared answers to those questions, that draw from the head and the heart, professional teams will need to influence others and be willing to be influenced.

Three steps can support professionals in the work of forging shared insights that will result in bold innovation. The three steps are: Uncovering, Discovering and Envisioning. These steps are described below by change experts, a Jewish professional, and then a Jewish text.

1. Uncovering your passion

Change Expert:

(Before having a vision)...leaders have a theme. They have concerns, desires, questions, propositions, arguments, hopes dreams and aspirations-core concepts around why they organize their aspirations and actions. Leaders begin the Envisioning of the Future by discovering their own themes...Finding your vision, like finding your voice, is a process of self exploration and self creation. It's an intuitive emotional process. (Kouzes & Posner, The Leadership Challenge)

Jewish Professional:

Before I was able to help others see a vision I had to ask myself, "What is my vision?" You need to have spent the time answering the question, "What is my personal vision?" Once you can answer that, what is even more important is "Where does my vision come from?"

I had to understand clearly what brought me to that vision. Only then could I help others get there, too.

Jewish Text:

The Baal Shem Tov: When people listen well to the inner voice which is within the material voice and sound that their ears hear, they will not hear anything other than the voice of God. The voice of God enlivens and brings into being that very minute, the sound they hear. (Hadrachot ha-Besht end of Divrei Shmuel, as quoted by Yitzchak Buxbaum in Jewish Spiritual Practices, p. 469)

2. Discovering the passions and voices of your partners

Change Expert:

One talent leaders need to strengthen is the ability to sense the purpose in others. By knowing their constituents, by listening to them, and by taking their advice, leaders are able to give voice to constituents aspirations...Understanding leadership as a reciprocal relationship puts listening in its proper perspective. Leaders know that they can't do it alone. ..Leaders develop a deep understanding of collective yearnings; they seek out the brewing consensus... it requires only receptiveness to other people and a willingness to listen. It means being delicately aware of the attitudes and feelings of others and the nuances of their communications. (Kouzes & Posner, The Leadership Challenge)



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Jewish Professional:

You have to be open to ideas that may expand yours. You have to part of an open process. Some leaders who I have met have a vision and say, “I’ll impose my vision.” Other say, “I have a vision, I’ll have an open process—at least I’ll let it look like it is an open process—but I’m clear that, in the end, it will be my vision.” And then there are leaders who really have an open process. It is not easy to do. I think it comes from cultivating humility. Remembering this is not about you. When you have a sense of the vision, you have to spend time thinking, “Where does it come from?” Once you understand that it is not a manifestation of an ego, that this vision comes from God-place, I think you can be open more easily.

Jewish Text:

Once a great throng of people collected about the Rabbi of Apt to hear his teachings. “That won’t help you,” he cried to them. “Those who hear will hear even at a distance; those who are not to hear will not hear no matter how near they come.” (Martin Buber, *Tales of Hasidism: The Later Masters*, p. 115)

3. Envisioning shared bold and passionate insights that inform the future you create together

Change Expert:

You have to teach others your vision. Teaching a vision-and confirming that the vision is shared-is a process of engaging constituents in conversations about their lives, about their hopes and dreams. Remember that leadership is a dialogue, not a monologue. Leadership isn’t about inspiring the leader’s solo dream; it’s about developing a shared sense of destiny. A vision is inclusive of constituents’ aspirations; it’s an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good. (Kouzes and Posner)

Jewish Professional:

You can’t just share your vision; tell it. You also have to engage in conversations about the experience of how you got there. The leader has a vision and it came out of a powerful experience; you have to articulate that and help people see what their powerful experience is. (Jewish professional)

Jewish Text:

I believe there was a Moses, that he played a central role in the life of the tribes that escaped from Egypt, and that his major achievement was not so much getting them out but the far more difficult task of welding a disparate group of tribes, a motley riffraff by the Torah’s own account, into a community over the course of a long, punishing wilderness trek... (Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Images of Moses*, 1982)

Questions for Discussion

1. What does the text add to your understanding of your role?
2. What remains illusive?
3. What do you want to share with others today or back in your congregation?



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