A change that my organization is currently implementing is the cost reduction targets that senior leadership has rolled out. Because I have been assigned to support this activity, I’m familiar with the communications and strategy; I’ve watched the ongoing evolution of the vision and strategy for this initiative.   
  
Our VP/GM started laying out expectations to the Leadership team in the fourth quarter of 2010. One chart depicting targets for improvements was created and is used in all meetings at that level. After communicating the initial targets, more thought was put into how the business unit could achieve these targets and further expectations were rolled out. As I have tried to communicate expectations and needs to the engineering teams, it’s become clear that the vision and strategy for what we are trying to accomplish and how leadership wants us to go about achieving that is still in development. “Clarifying the direction of change is important because, more often than not, people disagree on direction, or are confused, or wonder whether significant change is really necessary.” (Kotter, 1996, p. 69) How this initiative fits with the other priorities already established to run the business efficiently has not been considered or communicated, so apathy and confusion surface when I have to request information. Finalizing the targets before releasing to the team would be the first recommendation for improvement. Instead the teams have been perpetually confused by changing targets and conflicting data from different parts of management. In slang terms, this has been the equivalent of having the teams watch sausage being made – not pretty. This has distracted from actually pursuing activity that supported the targets.   
  
Kotter (1996) explains that the vision is necessary to break through the status quo and to motivate action that isn’t necessarily in short term self-interests. In this scenario, it is becoming very clear that a vision is necessary to engage the management team as well as the working level engineers. The priorities of the work groups have been set and this initiative is not integrated in with those priorities. Another recommendation is that leadership communicates the priority for this work statement and how they intend to integrate this into the daily business.   
  
Communication is a difficult thing, mostly because of the perception that good communication has occurred. The targets and intent for the initiative management is working on have not been communicated in a clear and consistent format to the management team, let alone at the working level. Leveraging the elements that Kotter cites for effective communication of vision, including simplicity, media for communication and leadership behavior, would go a long way to creating a sense of urgency and initiating momentum. It would also make my job easier because the message that management and engineering will have head would be consistent.   
  
References  
  
Kotter, J. P. (1996). Leading Change. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.