

Table 4.1 is also useful because it reveals a wide range of styles and skills required of leaders, depending on the metaphor in use:

- goal setting;
- monitoring and controlling;
- coaching and supporting;
- building vision;
- communicating vision;
- building coalitions;
- networking;
- negotiating;
- facilitating;
- dealing with conflict.

The difficulty with a list of skills this long is that it seems unattainable. In this chapter we try to help leaders to find a way through the various requirements of a leader to pinpoint the most important roles, skills, styles and areas of focus needed to make change happen.

## VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

The first basic ingredient of leadership is a guiding vision. The leader has a clear idea of what he wants to do – professionally and personally – and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks, even failures. Unless you know where you are going, and why, you cannot possibly get there.

Warren Bennis (1994)



Visionary leadership has become something of a holy grail. It seems to be a rare commodity which is greatly sought after. Our recent research (see box) indicates that today's business leaders place considerable value on visionary leadership as a tool for organizational change. But is visionary leadership really the answer?

In our change leadership sessions with private sector senior and middle managers in the UK we ask people to name significant leaders of change. The top four names mentioned over the period 1997–2002 were:

- 1 Winston Churchill;
- 2 Margaret Thatcher;
- 3 Nelson Mandela;
- 4 Adolf Hitler.

The top five characteristics that emerged through a typical discussion of these significant leaders were:

- 1 clear vision;
- 2 determination;
- 3 great speaker, great presence;
- 4 tough when needed; and
- 5 able to stand alone.

Cameron Change Consultancy data, 2002

Here we explore the views of the supporters of visionary leadership, and those who make the case against it.

## **Bennis on the characteristics of visionary leaders**

Warren Bennis identified three basic ingredients of leadership:

- 1 a guiding vision;
- 2 passion; and
- 3 integrity.

He also developed a useful comparison of the differences between management and leadership (see Table 4.2), which unpacks some of the different qualities of a visionary leader.

This comparison exercise separates management from leadership in a very clear way. This is useful for those wishing to take on more of a leadership role, although it is sometimes interpreted as slightly down-playing the important role of a good manager in organizational life. Most managers have to do both roles.