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## It is time to see past the Moon to create our vision for the future

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*"I believe this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal before this decade is out of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to earth." ~ President John F. Kennedy*

These thirty words spoken by President Kennedy in 1961 changed the world. The president did not call for a blue ribbon committee; he didn't suggest that we ought to see what is possible. He decided that we were going to the Moon and, as we all know on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong took his famous stroll.

As I watched the Super Bowl, it dawned on me: How did the Colts end up in Indianapolis or Indy as it is more affectionately called? How did Indy seemingly emerge as the sports capital of the world? Because like President Kennedy's Moon shot, they decided to be.

Their version of the Moon walk is becoming home to Indy Racing League's offices and many of its teams; the Colts – relocated from Baltimore; the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) – relocated from Kansas City; and the National Federation of State High School Associations, the national offices of USA Gymnastics, USA Diving, US Synchronized Swimming and USA Track and Field – all relocated from Colorado Springs. Indy also is home to the headquarters of three collegiate athletic conferences: Horizon, Great Lakes Valley and Heartland. And along with hosting the Big Ten Conferences annually, Indy lays down the red carpet too for three major auto races: the Indianapolis 500, the Brickyard 400 and the Red Bull Indianapolis Grand Prix.

I have copies of on my desk of nine or ten different plans for reinventing Michigan. I find it amazing that none of the plans includes a Moon shot or a single, focused vision for what we should aspire to become. The plans talk of tax increases or tax cuts. Expanding government or shrinking it. They talk of insurance, a troubled Detroit, Asian Carp and Economic Development.

But none talk of the one great thing we can become. When challenged on their lack of vision, the authors of these plans all talk about how hard or messy or difficult it

would be to create one great vision of greatness. I am reminded of President Kennedy's words when he was faced with critics who wanted to be incremental, he said, "We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

I intellectually understand that incrementalism is safe and the path is easy to see but what we need is not just smart, hard-working people. We need smart, hard-working people who have a vision in their hearts, not just their heads. We need leaders at every level to cast a vision so great that without divine intervention it is doomed to fail. Small plans don't stir the souls of men. We yearn for a great vision of who we can become, not 98-point plans of whom is blame.

As I write this, I am watching the Olympics. There is not a better example of single vision and focus than that of elite Olympic athletes. The fitness and focus of Olympic athletes is legendary. But what makes them so special is as Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits* guy would say, "They begin with the end in mind" – Winning a Gold Medal, Period. They see themselves on the stand with the medal around their neck, they see themselves making the perfect performance, they hear the roar of the crowd and they see disappointment on the faces of their competitors. It is this vision, this focus, that pushes them in the hard and lonely days of training. It is what keeps them eating the correct diet. It is this focus that becomes their single vision for greatness.

Need more examples of what can be done with an aspirational vision? Think of the Live Music Capital of the World: Austin Texas. Yes, the place that famously promotes their community vision as "Keep Austin Weird."

In Austin, with its state capital, university and computer industry, it would have been easy to just stay the course and incrementally grow but that is not their way. The Live Music Capital of the World is more than a slogan. It is their commitment to their vision of being the Capital of the Creative Economy.

Over the next six months, we will each be overwhelmed with people asking for our votes, telling us what is wrong with Michigan and who is to blame. They will all have plans and counter plans to the other guys' plans, but will they have vision?

Will they have a red hot, focused vision that will inspire personal sacrifice and a commitment to achieve, as President Kennedy challenged, something that is not easy but hard.

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