Beginning the Leadership Journey

Emerging Leaders 32

Lauren Thompson

October 24-25, 2022

SCHOOL *of* PUBLIC AFFAIRS
KEY EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

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Syllabus

Instructor: Lauren Thompson

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Course Meetings

Monday, Oct. 24, 2022	9:00-4:00 p.m. (est) via Zoom
Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2022	9:00-4:00 p.m. (est) via Zoom

Course Description

This course focuses emerging leaders on developing their understanding of who they are and aspire to be as leaders.

- What makes you want to lead?
- What makes a great leader in the organizational context in which you are working?
- How to prepare for the role of "becoming the boss"
- Developing self-awareness of your strengths and development areas to include gaining greater self-awareness through the use of a personality self-assessment tool, the Myers-Briggs
- How to be seen as a leader before getting the job
- The impact of good and bad leadership on empowering teams and organizational performance.

Participants will explore what motivates them to lead others and gain a greater awareness of what it takes to move from being an individual contributor to managing people. Through discussion, exercises, and reflection, participants will discover what they can do to ready themselves for people management responsibilities and be prepared to step into a "leading others" role within their respective organizations.

The course touches on a specific set of competencies identified in the IG Six Dimensions of Leadership

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Gain greater self-awareness of your leadership strengths and development areas.
2. Determine your own motivations for wanting to lead and manage others.
3. Identify behaviors that build your personal integrity brand.
4. Understand what you can do to prepare for a leadership role.
5. Discover what it takes to transition from managing self to managing others.
6. Build self-awareness and understanding of the interpersonal aspects of leadership.
7. Gain awareness of personality preferences and their impact on communication and relationship management to work effectively with teams and empower team members.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

Please read articles below prior to Day 1 of the course:

- **Completion of MBTI Assessment by October 17, 2022 via the link below:** https://Elevate.themyersbriggs.com/Respondent/ReturningUser?tokenId=9d92330a-4843-ed11-ade6-a085fc8eb761

– What Makes You Want to Lead and How to Prepare for a Leadership Role

Wall Street Journal, November 30, 2009, “Do You Really Want to Be a Leader?”

Amy Gallo, “Act Like a Leader Before You Are One”

Adam Galinsky, Gavin Kilduff, “Be Seen As a Leader”

Ann Morris, Robin J. Ely, Francis X. Frei, “Stop Holding Yourself Back”

Rebecca Knight "Tips for Reading the Room Before a Meeting or Presentation"

Homework: Journal Entry from Day’s Insights

– Transitioning from Individual Contributor to Managing Others – What Is Involved?

Robin Abramson, R.K. Stutman, “How To Develop Your Leadership Style”

Lauren Keiler Johnson, "Exerting Influence Without Authority"

Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman, “The Trickle-Down Effect of Good (and Bad) Leadership

John Antonakis, Marika Fenley, Sue Liechti, “Learning Charisma”

Kristi Hedges, “New Managers Shouldn’t Be Afraid to Express Their Emotions”

Homework: Journal Entry from Day’s Insights

Course Requirements

Quality of Participation: Active participation and contributions to the learning community as reflected by: Offers engaging questions/comments; i.e., moves class discussion ahead; provides new/creative insights; demonstrates mastery of the reading material; raises important/interesting questions; builds on the ideas of others.

A Few Suggestions about the Classroom Discussion Process

Our time together in class is limited. Some degree of discipline and common resolve will be necessary to make the best use of class time. We will have a number of opportunities to evaluate how well we're doing in our discussions during the course. For openers, here are a few principles that have proven to strengthen classroom dialogue:

Talk to each other as much as possible, rather than expecting me to mediate. A discussion with the instructor at the center is like a phone system in which everyone has to call the operator before they can talk to anyone else. If you're having trouble getting into the conversation, call the operator. Otherwise, speak directly to your colleagues, address them by name, and listen to what they say.

Don't be afraid of dead air. Some of the most egregious educational experiences are committed by well-intentioned people who become extremely agitated by silence in the classroom. Often, people don't speak up because (a) they don't have anything to say yet, or (b) they are thinking hard about what they are going to say. If dead air makes you nervous, think of what a Beethoven symphony would sound like if there were no rests and no spaces between the notes. Often, the absence of sound is as important as its presence.

When you run out of things to say, it's OK to stop talking and let someone else in. Sometimes it's hard to know how to conclude a particular point, so we often continue talking – using precious time -- until a conclusion occurs to us. It's OK just to stop.

Don't be afraid to disagree, respectfully and thoughtfully. This course involves complicated, high-judgment problems to which there are better or worse solutions but usually not "correct" ones. The major way we learn to make better judgments is to venture our best ones and listen to other people talk about them. Two constructive ways to disagree are (1) to ask an honest question (not a rhetorical one) that expresses your major concern about a person's idea or (2) to say how your idea differs from another's ("I came at this in a somewhat different way..."). Try to disagree in ways that move the discussion along, rather than closing it down.

Don't be afraid to inquire into the underlying reasoning of a colleague. Some of the biggest breakthroughs in problem solving take place when individuals suspend the impulse to argue or exchange points of view. Rather, they inquire into the underlying reasoning of others, often focusing on assumptions and inferences. This process of "active inquiry" enables the group to bring key ideas to surface where they can be evaluated and assessed.

Don't be afraid to take risks, to venture controversial ideas, or to be wrong. It is important to be able to make an argument and to marshal evidence in support of your ideas. It is much less important whether your ideas turn out to be "right," or whether they generate broad agreement in the group. The main criterion you should think about in evaluating your contributions is whether they contribute to other peoples' understanding in constructive ways.

Listen actively. You will feel a certain amount of pressure, at least initially, to say something smart and original. Often, this kind of pressure means that you will spend most of your time thinking about what you will say rather than listening to what other people are saying. We will discover, I think, that progress

Academic Integrity Code

All work must comply with American University's Academic Integrity Code. For more information, go to:

https://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

Academic Support Center

The ASAC will conduct all academic support and disability support services virtually for the Spring 2021 semester. For more information, go to https://www.american.edu/provost/academic-access/ .

Disability Support Services

The mission of Disability Support Services (DSS) is to ensure that students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities have equal access to university programs and services. DSS provides and/ or coordinate a range of services and accommodations to meet needs of students who are impacted by specific disability. Please note that students with learning disabilities should contact the Academic Support Center at (202) 885- 3360 or asc@american.edu.

IT Help Desk

Students should e-mail their Program Coordinator with any IT-related issues. If the Program Coordinator is unable to resolve the issue, please contact the AU Help Desk at (202) 885-2550 or email helpdesk@american.edu.

About the Professor

Lauren Thompson, Ph.D., MHSA, Certified Leadership Coach

Dr. Lauren Thompson has over 30 years of experience as a leader, executive, and leadership coach in the government, non-profit and for-profit sectors. Dr. Thompson works with seasoned executives and emerging leaders in public and private entities to assist them in becoming authentic leaders with the ability to navigate personal, professional, organization and industry dynamics, and to fully step into their roles as leaders.

Dr. Thompson has served as a senior executive leading public-private partnerships and interagency programs with the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Health and Human Services. She has held leadership positions at the Altarum Institute, a non-profit health research and consulting firm; the MITRE Corporation, a federally funded research and development center; Birch & Davis Associates, a healthcare consulting firm; and Northrop Grumman Corporation, leading strategy and operations for the healthcare group. Dr. Thompson founded and leads Principal Innovation, LLC providing leadership coaching, strategy and organizational development consulting services to federal agencies and private firms.

Dr. Thompson studied leadership development and coaching at Georgetown University where she received her certification as a Leadership Coach. She has recently completed certification as a Team Coach with Corentus. She also holds certifications in The Leadership Circle Profile 360 Assessment, Collective Assessment, and Leadership System; ADHD/Executive Function Coaching; and has trained in Adult Development and Coaching.

Dr. Thompson holds a Doctoral degree and a Masters degree in Health Services Management and Policy from the School of Business at The George Washington University and a baccalaureate from Colgate University. She has served as an adjunct professor at The George Washington University, Georgetown University, and Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Thompson is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) a Fellow in the Health Information and Management Systems Society (FHIMSS); and is a member of the International Coach Federation, and other professional associations.

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ARTICLE
MANAGING YOURSELF

How to Develop Your Leadership Style

Concrete advice for a squishy challenge

by Suzanne J. Peterson, Robin Abramson, and R.K. Stutman

MANAGING YOURSELF

How to Develop Your Leadership Style

Concrete advice for a squishy challenge

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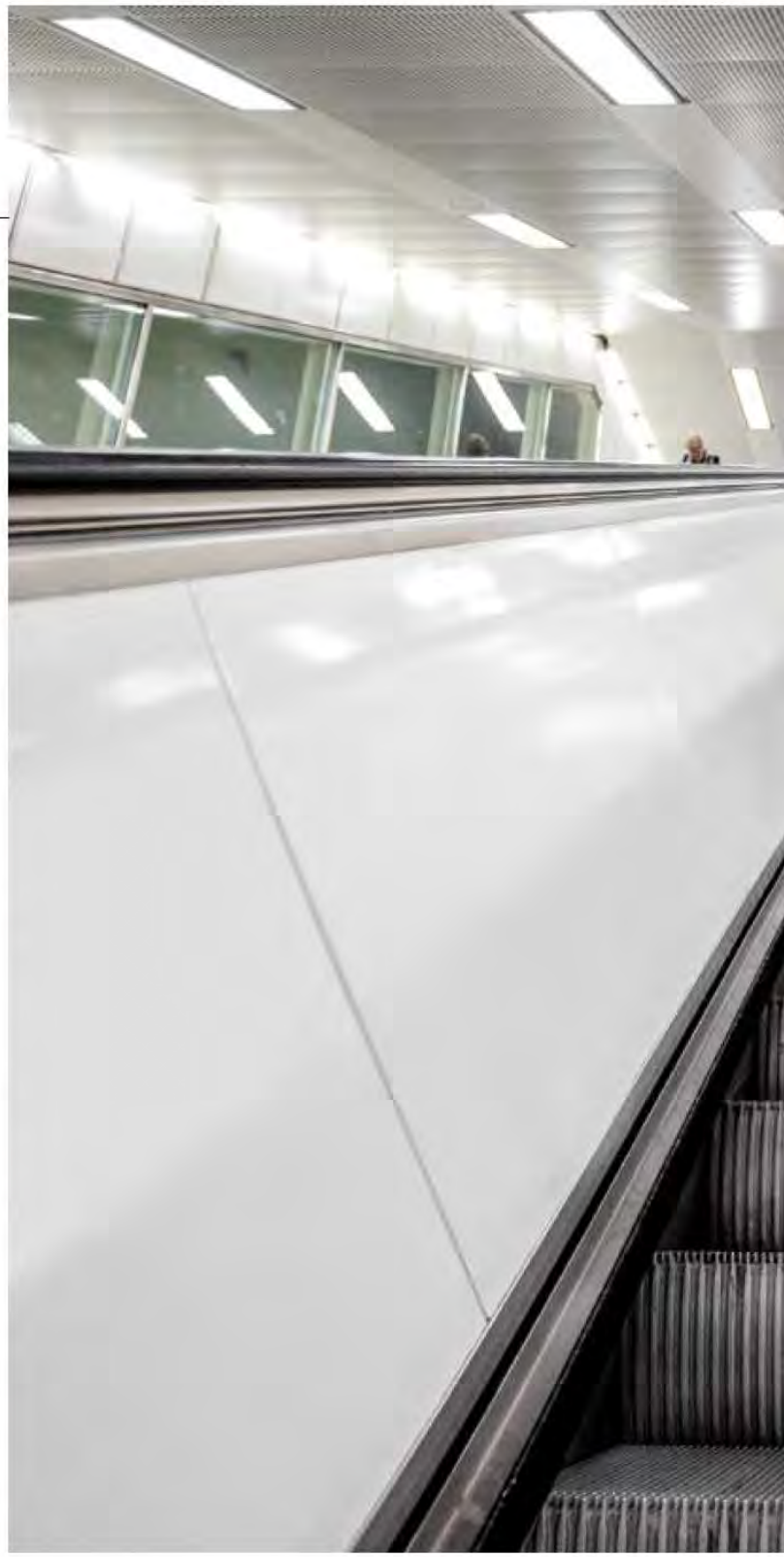

Few things are more frustrating for talented professionals than hitting a ceiling in their careers because they lack the appropriate leadership style.

A boss senses that something is missing in a person's tool kit but can't put a finger on exactly what it is or how the person can improve. The boss says something like "You're lacking important intangibles" or "You need more gravitas" but fails to provide specific advice or tools for improving.

It is equally frustrating to watch people with mediocre technical skills move up the ladder quickly because they have an exceptional leadership style. Bosses defend such promotions by emphasizing the employees' soft skills, calling them "poised," "confident," and "dynamic."

The truth is that these things matter: A great leadership style can make people appear more competent than they truly are, and a poor style can drag down a superior skill set. So how can aspiring executives improve their leadership style?

First, it's important to understand that style is distinct from personality. The latter is immutable; it's who you are on the inside. Style is best described by what you do, how often, and when. More than 30 years ago, the sociolinguist Howard Giles and colleagues first identified a set of behaviors, or social markers, that we all use to express ourselves and by which we evaluate others. These markers are a language we learn in childhood, as we begin to see that people behave differently depending on whether they hold status or not. Older siblings may bark at you for the remote control, for example,

IDEA IN BRIEF

THE PROBLEM

Bosses often sense that something is lacking in an employee's tool kit but can't put a finger on what it is. They say something like "You're missing important intangibles" or "You need more gravitas" but fail to provide advice or guidance.

THE RESEARCH

What they're talking about is leadership style. In every interaction, we send signals to others about our power and status. The more consistent we are in our signals, the more distinctive our style becomes.

THE APPROACH

This practical guide offers concrete advice for developing a dynamic and effective leadership style, including tips such as what volume and pace to use in your speech, whether to take notes in a meeting, and how and when to interrupt others.

but behave obsequiously to parents when they want to borrow the car. Social markers can be expressed through language, nonverbal communication (such as body language), or context setting (sitting at the head of the table, for instance). Your choice of markers determines how others view you.

Through our own academic research and a combined 30 years of proprietary research, including engagements with more than 12,000 leaders in our executive coaching practice, we have identified the markers most commonly used in the workplace to express status. (See the exhibit "A Guide to Leadership Markers.") Together, they make up leadership style.

The signals we send to others about our status—or lack thereof—fall into two categories: power and attractiveness. Neither set of markers is inherently good or bad. Powerful markers are associated with expressions of confidence, competence, charisma, and influence but also arrogance, abrasiveness, and intimidation. Examples include interrupting others and grabbing a pen off someone's desk without permission. Attractiveness markers are related to expressions of agreeableness, approachability, likability but also diffidence, lack of confidence, and submissiveness. Examples include holding the door for someone and favoring questions over statements. People with powerful styles often view more-attractive colleagues as weak. People with attractive styles tend to view powerful colleagues as rude.

The more consistently we express ourselves using the same markers, the more distinctive our style becomes. When a colleague gives the impression of being arrogant, for example, it's most likely because he uses a small set of powerful behaviors consistently. Or when a manager offers an appraisal such as "Kristin simply does not have a seat at the table with her peers," that usually means she uses too many attractiveness markers—perhaps she never states her views publicly, or she speaks so softly that people ask her to repeat what she said. Change the frequency or mix of these markers, and others' impressions also change.

Leadership Presence

We all have a particular set of markers that we default to in neutral situations or when the social context is unclear. This can be called our natural style. We behave more

A Guide to Leadership Markers

The signals used to communicate status fall into two categories.

	POWERFUL	ATTRACTIVE
STATUS MARKERS	More formal	More informal
	Nondeferential address	Deferential address
	Detached responses	Empathetic responses
	Expanded personal space	Respectful of others' personal space
	Interruptions and talk-overs	Respectful conversational turns
	Abrupt topic shifts	Gradual topic shifts
	Directive gestures (*finger-pointing, head-shaking*)	Acceptance gestures (*head-nodding, shoulder-dropping*)
	Less polite	More polite
	Little to no note-taking	Extensive note-taking
	Inattentiveness (*ignoring others, wandering eyes*)	Attentiveness (*engaging with all senses, especially eyes*)
NONVERBAL STYLE	Backward leans	Forward leans
	Physical distance	Physical closeness
	Eye contact when speaking	Eye contact when listening
	Averted gaze when listening	Averted gaze when speaking
	Tendency to stare	Tendency to break eye contact
	Serious expressions	Happy expressions
	Controlled movements	Natural movements
	Talking while moving away	Body square while talking
VERBAL STYLE	Longer speech duration	Shorter speech duration
	Faster speech rate	Slower speech rate
	Louder volume	Softer volume
	More direct	More indirect
	Declarative statements	Questions
	Fewer nonfluencies (*um, well, you know*)	More nonfluencies and pauses
	Intense words	Everyday words
	Technical jargon	Personal idioms
	Careful pronunciation	Relaxed pronunciation
	Fewer hedges and qualifiers (*I guess*)	More hedges and qualifiers
	Exclusive language (*I, me, my*)	Inclusive language (*we, ours*)
	More humor/sarcasm	Less humor/sarcasm

powerfully relative to our natural style when we feel we have the status (for example, we are the more senior, educated, experienced, technical, or connected person in a workplace interaction). We behave more attractively relative to our natural style when we are the more junior or less-experienced person.

Most people's natural style falls into one of five categories along a spectrum: powerful, lean powerful, blended, lean attractive, and attractive. Few people favor the extremes, instead leaning to one side or the other. A truly blended style is rare and involves an equal use of both power and attractiveness markers. A blended style can be best summed up as having "presence." Leaders who are praised for their polish and gravitas have a deft ability to adopt the right markers to suit the situation.

Our research on blended leadership styles is similar in concept to that of social psychologist Amy Cuddy on warmth and competence. But whereas Cuddy and colleagues generally advise leaders to first project warmth to gain trust and then display their competence to gain credibility, we believe that power and attractiveness should be dynamic. Some situations will call for a leader to exhibit powerful markers from the outset; some will call for a more attractive approach throughout. Leaders often need to tweak their style multiple times in a day—sometimes in the course of a single situation. In one meeting, a leader may need to gain the respect of her peers by projecting subject matter expertise and strong advocacy. But in the next meeting, she may want to be seen as a collaborative partner and will choose to lean attractive by listening attentively and asking more questions.

Cuddy and others instruct leaders to focus on how they *feel* (feeling strong will help you project strength, and feeling warm will help you project warmth). Our work with executives focuses on their *actions* and *behaviors.* Power and attractiveness are determined by what you display toward others, regardless of how you feel on the inside. For instance, you may be very nervous going into a large presentation, but by consciously favoring power markers, you can project confidence, and your audience will be none the wiser.

In our work, we have observed thousands of leaders who have successfully experimented with markers, created a blended style, and reaped professional rewards as a result. Some developed a blended style early in their work lives; those leaders are the "naturals." But others struggled to move up the ladder and learned to modify their behavior—often through painful trial and error. The learning curve can be

ABOUT THE ART

While on a photo shoot in Spain, Julia Marie Werner found a homeless dog looking for food and brought him back home with her to Hamburg. Noticing how he resembled a brave lion, she crafted a mane and documented him conquering his new adopted city.

steep, but we believe that any leader can achieve a blended style by following several steps.

Know thyself. To balance powerful and attractive markers, you must first diagnose where you fall on the leadership style spectrum. Often, executives can read between the lines when they receive feedback from managers, peers, romantic partners, or even their own children. Comments such as "You're too nice" and "You need to speak up" might suggest a tendency toward attractive markers. Comments such as "You're intimidating" or "You don't listen to me" might suggest an overly powerful style. There's no shortage of people around you who can provide helpful insight; just ask them.

If you're unsure where you fall on the spectrum, keep a list of markers in front of you during various interactions and check off the ones you use. Which column ends up with more check marks? As more meetings move online because of the pandemic, it is an ideal time to try recording video meetings and assessing your behavior after the fact.

Experiment with various markers. Once you have a sense of where you fall on the spectrum, begin to experiment with markers to try to move toward a more-blended style. As a start, pick one verbal and one nonverbal marker and find a way to use both during an interaction. This may feel foreign at first; rehearsing with a friend, mentor, or coach can help make the new behaviors more familiar.

As you become more adept, add to your repertoire. We suggest a "pick and mix" approach—taking a selection of powerful and attractive markers and experimenting with them. Consider in advance how you want to be seen in a given situation and then choose markers that reinforce

Emulating the style of others or flexing your own in new ways does not make you inauthentic; it means you're growing as a leader.

The Culture Effect

The interpretation of style markers can vary significantly by culture, context, and industry. A behavior that is considered a power marker in one situation may be considered attractive in another. For example:

Eye contact: In the United States, making eye contact with managers senior to you is often seen as a marker of confidence. The same behavior in Brazil is seen as appropriately deferential (and not making eye contact is considered rude). In Japan, it is viewed as insubordinate and disrespectful. In all three contexts eye contact is a key marker of status, yet it is interpreted differently in each.

Attire: How one dresses is a universal marker of status and influence. In some African countries wearing tribal dress is a power marker for both men and women. In the United States, people's attire is judged according to the norms of the business. A tech founder entering a meeting with investment bankers (most likely all wearing suits) in a T-shirt and jeans is displaying a power marker. An applicant for a low-level service position who arrives in a suit is displaying an attractive marker by showing an eagerness to impress.

Note-taking: In the United States, note-taking in meetings with senior leaders or clients can be perceived as too deferential. In contrast, in South Korea, *not* taking notes when speaking with senior leaders may be construed as disrespectful, suggesting that you do not think what they're saying is important or worth remembering.

Seating: In Western cultures, sitting at the head of the table for a conference or a meal is considered a power move. The same holds true in Japan, but with additional intricacies. As a rule, the area of a room closest to the entrance is where the *shimoza*, or "bottom seat," is located. The area closest to the *tokonoma* (a formal alcove for calligraphy or flowers) is the *kamiza*, or "highest seat." In the absence of a formal tokonoma, a window—or simply the seat farthest from the entrance—signifies the highest position. The guest of honor sits in the kamiza, and the host and other guests seat themselves on downward, toward the shimoza.

that style. If you want to be seen as a trusted adviser, lean attractive. If you want to be seen as a respected adversary, use mostly powerful markers. But don't go overboard: One or two markers in each category should be sufficient to establish or alter others' impression of you.

As you experiment, some markers will be easy to adopt, but others may feel contrived—and that's OK. Emulating the style of others or flexing your own in new ways to create a broader range for yourself does not make you inauthentic; it means you're growing as a leader. Successful leaders are true to who they are while continually making small adjustments in how they carry themselves, how they communicate, and how they interact depending on the circumstances.

Consider football coach Vince Lombardi, who led the Green Bay Packers to five world championships and remains an enduring symbol of leadership. After struggling early in his career as he transitioned from college football to the NFL, he quickly learned that he had to adjust his leadership style. What worked with his college players was not effective with the pros. In his first job as the offensive coach for the New York Giants, his style, which fell on the extreme end of powerful, antagonized and alienated his more-seasoned players.

According to *When Pride Still Mattered,* by David Maraniss, Lombardi was seen as loud and arrogant. The players referred to him as "Little General" and "Little Mussolini." But then something unexpected happened: Lombardi adjusted. "He began roaming the hall of the Willamette dorm at night, visiting with the...players," Maraniss writes. "He acknowledged that he had much to learn and sought their advice, help, and loyalty....He tried to become one of the guys, not the authoritarian boss but the smarter older brother; they called him Vince or Vinnie, not Coach or Mr. Lombardi. He drank beers with them, laughed loudly at their jokes, told them how much he wanted them to succeed."

An executive we worked with—we'll call him Martin—had a similar problem. He grew tired of the constant feedback that he was intimidating, domineering, and coercive. Our observations revealed that Martin, like many other people we've studied, exhibited a much more powerful style in professional settings than he did in other social contexts.

To help him soften his style, we asked him to adopt four specific markers of attractiveness. First, we pointed out how often he interrupted and talked over others, especially in

group situations, and asked him to reduce those interjections. That took some time, but eventually he learned to wait for others to finish before commenting. Second, we asked him to accompany his opinions with questions more often. That was also a difficult adjustment because he maintained a strong preference for declarative statements. Third, we asked him to incorporate "partnership language" by using fewer "I" references and more "we" and "our" references. That was easier for Martin; he deeply valued inclusive language and had not noticed his overuse of self-referential ("I," "me") and possessive ("my team") expressions. Last, we asked him to demonstrate empathetic listening by slowing down and restating what he had heard from others. The unintended consequence was that he also made more eye contact when he listened—another attractive marker.

Martin was highly committed to changing his style, and it worked. After six months, colleagues noticed a favorable difference. By moving from a powerful style to one that leaned powerful instead, Martin began to earn more-favorable evaluations.

Read the room. One question we often get from executives is how to know when to lean powerful and when to lean attractive. Gaining an ability to "read the room" is part of fine-tuning your leadership style. Although you may have an idea of how you want to be perceived when entering a situation, your plan may need to change once you're actually there. Generally speaking, you should assess the markers you're receiving from others before deciding on your own approach. More often than not, if you're receiving power markers from someone, you will want to match them to garner respect. Similarly, if you're reading attractive markers from others, you'll want to lean attractive so as not to seem overbearing.

Executives make a common mistake by using power markers with subordinates and attractive markers with higher-ups. The opposite approach is often more effective. Using power markers with juniors—such as ignoring them, abruptly changing topics, or talking too much in their presence—can make you less effective. In contrast, using too many attractive markers—phrasing statements as questions, speaking more slowly, and using nonfluencies (such as "um" and "you know")—can lead executives to conclude that you're not their peer. Overemphasizing attractive markers when communicating upward to show respect is particularly likely to backfire in U.S.-based companies. To solve this problem, lean powerful with more-senior people, and lean attractive when talking to more-junior people.

A Blended Style Matters More for Minorities and Women

Our research and coaching are complicated by the fact that leadership style cannot be fully divorced from unconscious biases and discrimination. Leadership is a normative construct; when asked to "draw a leader," people (regardless of their gender) tend to draw a man. Research shows that women face a competency-likability trade-off: The more they demonstrate proficiency, the more likely their peers are to find their style off-putting. Minorities and LGBTQ executives who look or act in a manner that doesn't conform to an organization's dominant culture may also be penalized by colleagues who characterize them (perhaps unconsciously) as "not like us."

Despite the fact that the hallmarks of leadership style are similar around the world, people of diverse groups are often judged differently even when they display identical style markers. When a woman disagrees with her colleagues, for example, she may be labeled "abrasive" or "aggressive,"

Decoding Feedback

To determine where your natural style falls on the leadership spectrum, be open to the feedback you hear from managers, coworkers, friends, and family members, and identify common themes.

Comment Given	Problem	Sample Advice
"You're not senior enough"	Too attractive	Use declarative statements
"You're intimidating"	Too powerful	Speak less, listen more
"You don't have enough gravitas"	Too attractive	Dress more formally for the context
"Your team is afraid of you"	Too powerful	Use more questions, fewer statements
"You're boring"	Too attractive	Use more-intense words
"You're overbearing"	Too powerful	Shift topics more gradually
"You're too nice"	Too attractive	Minimize deferential address

while her male colleague is seen as "candid" or "direct." We certainly don't advise women and minorities not to get angry, disagree, or promote their accomplishments. Rather, we advise them to carefully select markers that will help them develop a blended style. The right assortment can allow you to show loyalty to the group you want to lead while still maintaining your uniqueness. Certain minority leaders will want to adopt more power markers; others will need more attractive markers. But again, don't go overboard. Altering your style to conform in a way that hides your diverse traits, or overplaying your differences in a way that distracts from your leadership, can backfire. Women must walk a narrow tightrope: They must have the courage to interrupt, use fewer nonfluencies, and use more-intense words while blending in more relational and empathetic responses, statements as questions, and happy expressions. Male leaders who are perceived as outliers in a group also have a small margin for error. We wish this weren't the case—but as long as unconscious bias and discrimination exist, minorities and women will need to put extra effort into developing a blended leadership style.

The late U.S. Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg used a blended style to her advantage. She was known for her ability to "disagree agreeably"—which helped her create unlikely friendships with more-conservative judges and foster loyal followership beyond the Court. No pushover, she picked her battles wisely and used attractive markers when necessary. As she wrote about her style, "reacting in anger or annoyance will not advance one's ability to persuade."

IN OUR RESEARCH and consulting, we have seen that style is a significant differentiating factor in the reputation and career success of leaders. The good news is that style isn't like personality—it can be intentionally altered. Dynamically integrating a broader range of powerful and attractive markers in everyday interactions can make a big difference in how we are perceived. The result is a true blended style that enables leaders to become powerful enough to be heard and attractive enough to be followed.

HBR Reprint R2006D

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JR: BIZ INSIGKT NOV 2009

LEA

Do You Really Want to Be a Leader?

First, ask yourselfthese three questions

By PRESTON C. BOTTGER And JEAN-LOUIS BARSOUX

Noverri>er 30, 2009

Too many leadership scholars and executives are obsessed by a pointless question: I ve leaders born, or are they made?

The answer is irrelevant.

The Journal Report

See the con'plete Business Insight report.

The truth is, you do not know what you are born with until you try very hard to express it.

Aspiring executives who wish to gauge their ultimate potential, or that of others, should ask instead: What level of leadership do they aspire to? And are they willing to invest the effort and make the sacrifices required to take on the responsibilities of the position?

The most senior jobs present tasks that are massive, complex and full of conflict The playing field and rules become less certain. Indeed, part of a leader's job is to shape these things.

Also, the further an executive rises, the more he or she must deal with high-caliber people who know how to get what they want, are difficult, strong-willed and have a sharp appetite for power.

Here are three questions that executives should ask themselves to assess their own leadership potential.

Howfar do you want to go?

To reach higher office and to fulfill its obligations, you must continuously make choices that will affect other people's money and lives. And you will be doing this in a context where other people will want your position or will be competing with you for the next higher position.

For Further Reading

See these related articles from MT Sloan Managerrent Review.

C.-uclbles of Leadership Development
By Robert J. Thomas (Spring 2008)
Forthose learningto lead, eicperience trumps formal training. But some eicperiences matter more than others, as two unconventional but highly successful organiiations-the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club-have recogniied.
http://sloanreview.mit.edu/x/49308

Developing Versatile Leadership
By Robert E. Kaplan and Robert B. Kaiser (Summer 2003)
Leadership consists of opposing strengths, and most leaders have a natural tendency to overdevelop one at the eicpense of its counterpart. The resulting imbalance diminishes their effectiveness. But leaders who work to guard against such lopsidedness can increase their versatility and their impact.
http://sloanreview.mit.edu/x/4444

Why Leadership-Development Efforts Fall
By Douglas A. Ready and Jay A. Conger (Spring 2003)
Many corporate programs to develop next-

It is easy to criticize the competence of those with greater responsibilities than ourselves, and even easier to fantasize about how we would do the job better.

A useful exercise: Look at your im mediate boss's job and ask yourself if you could do it as well, or better-honestly. Then, stretch even further and consider the most senior leader in your line of sight -perhaps the chief executive. Learn about what that person must deal with. Get a feel for the time, energy and capabilities required to do those jobs. What would those jobs require you to do that you can't do now, or that you don't enjoy doing? What do you enjoy now, but would have to give up?

We see too many executives who set themselves up to fail because they don't realistically assess the role they are pursuing in comparison to their true capabilities.

What are you willing to invest?

Admitting to yourself what your limitations are can be difficult. But if you want to lead, you face tough choices about how much effort you must put in and in which areas you need to grow.

Leadership certainly requires business smarts, technical capabilities and cultural sensibilities, but above all, it is about power. While this point is upsetting to some people, the brutal reality is that whatever else a leader must do, a leader must gain, exercise and retain power. We meet too many "high potentials" who aspire to high leadership but are used to receiving rewards for being bright and creative. This breeds a sense of entitlement that is incompatible with the necessity to fight for leadership power.

While it has bad connotations for some people, the appetite for power is a necessary condition for

generation leaders fall victim to three pathologies that render the investments of lime and money worthless. But there are ways of fighting these diseases . http://sloanre view.rnit edu/x/44311

reaching posts of high responsibility.

There win be pleasures that you must give up. Certainly, there will be implications for your personal life-raising questions not so much about balancing work and family in the short temi, but about finding a sustainable mix for the long term.

Ability to lead is also about overcoming old beliefs that limit one's capacity to see in a new way and adopt new behaviors. ki a leader you must take people where they have never been before-in thought and action-often against their initial preferences. Personal obstacles must be overcome as well.

How will you keep it up?

Over several decades, you need ways to keep yourself going when you are not being recognized and rewarded for your performance-and to deal with criticism, resistance, setbacks and people disliking you or what you are asking them to do.

If you envision another 10, 20 or even 30 years of leadership work, then you must find effective methods for maintaining your physical vitality, your emotional flexibility and your intellectual reach and freshness.

Many who rise to positions of leadership become more closed and set in the ways that have brought them success so far. So periodically, senior executives must create timeouts to review where they are investing their time and energy, to ensure that they remain capable of generating new behaviors to deal with new challenges.

Leadership might be learnable. But instead of taking comfort in the idea that you can develop, wake up to the sobering realization of how difficult it willbe to manage novel situations continuously and under often-extreme circumstances.

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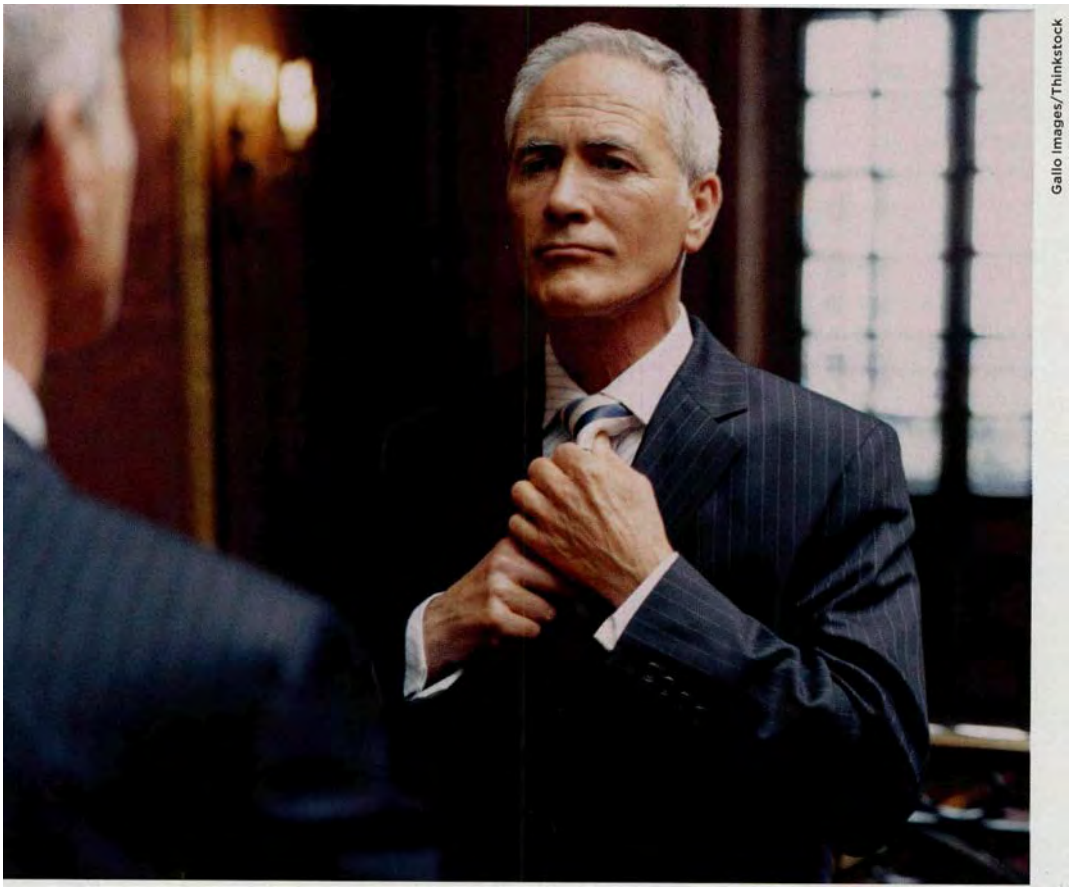
HARVARD MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Act like a leader before you are one

AMY GALLO



If you want to become a leader, don't wait for the fancy title or the corner office. You can begin to act, think and communicate like a leader long before that promotion. Even if you still have several levels to go and someone else is calling all the shots, there are numerous ways to demonstrate your potential and carve your path to the role you want.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

"It's never foolish to begin preparing for a transition, no matter how many years away it is or where you are in your career," says Muriel Maignan Wilkins, co-author of *Own the Room: Discover Your Signature Voice to Master Your Leadership Presence.* Michael Watkins, the chairman of Genesis Advisers and author of *The First 90 Days and Your Next Move,* agrees. Not only does planning help you develop the necessary skills and leadership presence, it also increases your chances of getting the promotion because people will already recognise you as a leader. "You can demonstrate leadership at any time no matter what your title is," says Amy Jen Su, co-author of *Own the Room.* Here are several ways to start laying the groundwork.

KNOCK YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES OUT OF THE PARK

No matter how big your ambitions, don't let them distract you from excelling in your current role. Focus on the present as much as the future. "You still have to deliver results in your day job," Jen Su says. "You always need to take care of today's business so that nobody - peers, direct reports or those above you - questions your performance," Maignan Wilkins adds. That's the first step to getting ahead.

HELP YOUR BOSS SUCCEED

"You have to execute on your boss's priorities too," Watkins says. "Show him/her that you're willing to pick up the baton on important projects." Maignan Wilkins also suggests you "lean more toward yes than no" whenever your boss asks you to help with something new. Find out what keeps your manager up at night and propose solutions to those problems.

SEIZE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES, NO MATTER HOW SMALL

Make sure your "let me take that on" attitude extends beyond your relationship with your boss. Raise your hand for new initiatives, especially ones that might be visible to those outside your unit. "This will give others a taste of what you'll be like in a more senior role," Maignan Wilkins says. It doesn't have to be an intense, months' long project. It might be something as simple as facilitating a meeting, offering to help with recruiting events or stepping in to negotiate a conflict between peers. You might find opportunities outside of work, too. You can sit on the board of a local non-profit organisation or organise your community's volunteer day. "These activities send the signal that you aspire to leadership

potential," Watkins says.

LOOK FOR THE WHITE SPACE

Another way to prove your potential is to take on projects in the white space. These are problems that others aren't willing to tackle or don't even know exist. "Every organisation has needs that nobody is paying attention to, or people are actively ignoring," Maignan Wilkins says. For example, you might be able to identify a customer need that isn't being met by your company's current product line and propose a **new** one. Or you could do a quick analysis of how much a specific change would save the company. When you take on a task that no one else is willing to do, you make yourself stand out.

DON'T BE A JERK

There's a fine line between being ambitious and acting like you're too big for your britches. "Don't try to exert authority when you don't have it," Watkins says. Practise what he calls "steward leadership": Focus on what your team wants to accomplish instead of putting yourself first.Jen Su recommends "humble confidence", showing appropriate modesty in your role while having the self-assurance to know that you will rise to the next level.

BE CAUTIOUS WHEN SHARING YOUR AMBITIONS

It's appropriate to raise your ambitions with your manager if you have a trusting, solid relationship, but frame them in a way that focuses on what's best for the company. Jen Su suggests you lay out your accomplishments for the past year and then ask something like: "As we look further out, where do you see me continuing to make a contribution?" Watkins warns that these conversations shouldn't come off as being all about you. Instead, engage in a two-way conversation with your boss. If you have the kind of boss who may feel threatened by your aspirations, it's better to keep your ambitions quiet and prove your potential.

FIND ROLE MODELS

Look for people who have the roles you want and study what they do - how they act, communicate and dress. "Pick people at the next level, people similar to you, and find a way to work with them," Watkins says. Volunteer for a committee they're spearheading or offer to help with one of their pet projects. Identify behaviours that you can emulate while being true to yourself "You don't want to fake it," Maignan Wilkins says. Also study people who are stuck in their careers as examples of what not to do, Watkins says. Do they disrespect the lines of authority? Do they fail to make connections between departments?

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

There's an old adage, "It's not who you know, it's who knows you." When you're evaluated for a promotion, it's unlikely your boss will sit in a room alone and contemplate your potential. He'll rely on others to assess your ability, which means you need supporters across the organisation - people who are aware of the work you're doing. "If you find yourself walking down the hall with the most senior person in your company, be prepared to answer the question: 'So what are you up to?"' Maignan Wilkins says. "Don't take lightly any interactions that may seem informal. Treat every situation as an opportunity to demonstrate the value you bring to the organisation and your knowledge of the business."

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

DO:

- Look for every opportunity to demonstrate your leadership potential, at work and outside the office.
- Support your boss in reaching his goals.
- Find people in positions you aspire to and study what makes them successfulul.

DON'T:

- Let your ambitions distract you from doing your current job we ll.
- Exert authority where you don't have any - use influence to prove your leadership.
- Openly discuss your ambitions - it's safer to take a "show, don't tell" approach .

CASE STUDY No 1: FOCUS ON SOLVING PROBLEMS, NOT GETTING PROMOTED

In late 2010, after 10 years at Citi, Heather Espinosa was promoted to managing director. She reached this executive position by continuously challenging herself and by making the most of each of her previous roles. "I've never been concerned with my title. When I thought an assignment was a stretch, I took it," she explains. "When I applied for my previous position, the job carried the title 'project manager'. But after my first conversation with the manager, I knew it was a position that would require complex leadership skills and challenge me, so I accepted the job."

In each role, Espinosa embraced additional responsibilities without being asked. "I make an effort to volunteer and raise my hand where I see a need . I started taking on the responsibility of managing director with the hope that ifl performed well, the title would come." And her bosses have always respected this approach. "I rarely walk into my manager's office and say I want to talk about my career or my next promotion. I walk in and say here's a problem, and here's how we might address it," she says.

CASE STUDY No 2: TAKE ANY LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY YOU CAN GET

Mike Subelsky, the co-founder and chief technology officer at Staq, a tech start-up that makes software for digital advertising companies, spent most of his early career in roles with lots of responsibility but not much authority. "I held a number of positions where I felt I had agreat deal of influence, but I was never the one calling the shots," he says.

Still he worked hard, hoping to someday move up the ladder. "I've always tried to be the kind of employee that the boss never has to worry about," Subelsky explains. He focused on doing the best he could in whatever role he had and always raised his hand for projects. He also looked for opportunities to exercise leadership outside of the office. In 2004, he started a non-profit organisation in Baltimore. "It was a great laboratory," he says. "It allowed me to practise being a leader."

Then, last year, he and his partner cofounded Staq. All ofSubelsky's preparation had paid off In fact, the company received $1m in seed funding this past month. "I always knew I wanted to be where I am now: I am hiring employees and creating a wonderful place to work," he says. ■

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review.*

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Illustration: Cameron law

Managing YOurSeLf

Be Seen as a Leader

A simple exercise can boost your status and influence.

by Adam D. Galinsky and Gavin J. Kilduff

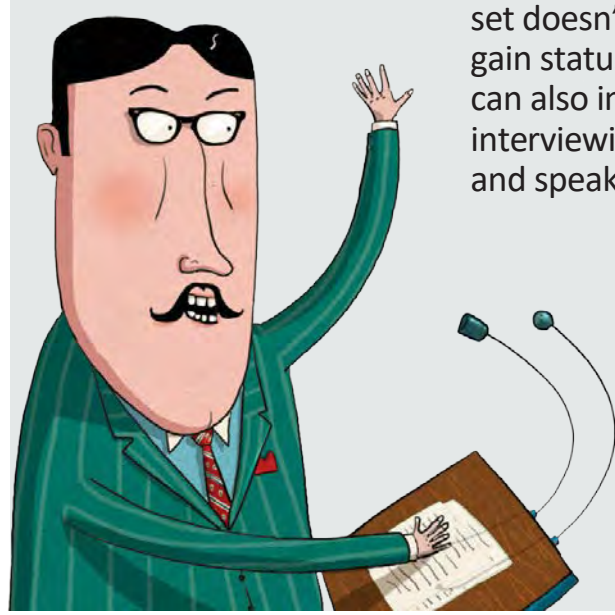
You've been assigned to a new cross-divisional task force, and the first meeting is today. Managers from across the company are gathered in a conference room at headquarters; colleagues from international offices are participating via conference call and Skype. The CEO, there just to oversee the group's kickoff, opens with a pep talk. "So we're asking all of you to help chart a new path," he says. "We expect some exciting ideas to emerge from this group." You look at the unfamiliar faces around you and imagine the other people listening in from afar. You're a mix of men and women, with varied ages and titles, representing different divisions and functional backgrounds, living in different countries. Who among you will become the stars of this team?

Social scientists have spent decades studying how individuals achieve status within organizational groups—that is, how they gain respect, prominence, and influence in the eyes of others. We know, for example, that demographics matter: People of the historically dominant race and gender and a respected age (white men over 40 in the western corporate world) are typically afforded higher status than everyone else. Appearance also plays a role (the tall and the good-looking are favored over those less genetically blessed), as do personality (confident extroverts win out) and formal rank (the boss is the boss).

Thankfully, we also use more legitimate measures to size up new teammates.

Other Ways Priming Can Foster Success

Temporarily shifting to an approach-oriented mind-set doesn't just help you gain status in groups. It can also improve your interviewing, negotiating, and speaking skills.



These include expertise, competence, and commitment—all good indicators of whether a person will command others' respect. But although educational and professional credentials may testify to these assets, they can be difficult to assess immediately. So at first, as a shortcut, we often revert to using the aforementioned easily observable characteristics to determine who is worthy of leading the group.

Initial perceptions, of course, are subject to change as people work together and prove their merit. Still, the old adage "You never get a second chance to make a first impression" is at least partially true. Numerous studies show that social hierarchies develop quickly and are generally stable: People who achieve high status early tend to retain it.

All these findings suggest—rather dishearteningly—that the influence you'll have on a group is largely predetermined by factors beyond your control. In this article, we present evidence that challenges that notion. Through a series of experiments, we have shown that anyone can achieve higher status on a team, both at the outset and over time, by temporarily shifting his or her mind-set before a first meeting. Put simply, the attitude with which you enter a new group—something completely within your control—can help boost your chances of leading it.

We believe these findings have important implications for managers in today's increasingly flat and matrixed organizations, where temporary, diverse teams are becoming the norm. Traditional predictors of status simply aren't as important as they used to be, and workers are forming and joining different groups all the time. First impressions matter more than ever, and you can improve the ones you make with a simple five-minute exercise.

A Push Toward Proactivity

Because you can't change your demographic characteristics, personality, appearance, rank, functional background, or expertise to get ready for a big meeting, our focus is on mind-set and behavior. Research tells us there are certain "competence cues," such as speaking up, taking the initiative, and expressing confidence, that suggest leadership potential. These proactive behaviors can be good indications that a person has useful expertise and experience, or they might simply reflect deep-seated personality traits such as extroversion and dominance. However, there's increasing evidence that people can propel themselves into proactivity by temporarily shifting their psychological frame of mind.

We start with the two motivation systems that underlie much of our behavior. One, the avoidance or inhibition system, pushes us to steer clear of threats and adverse outcomes. The other, the approach system, concentrates our attention on achieving positive outcomes and rewards, and it's this latter system that can spark the behaviors that lead to higher status.

In our research, we studied the effects of triggering three approach-based psychological states: promotion focus (defined as a focus on aspirations and goals), happiness, and a feeling of power. Previous work by others has shown that all three activate the same left frontal regions of the brain, reduce the stress hormone cortisol, and increase optimism and confidence. And these neurological, hormonal, and psychological effects lead to behavioral changes: For example, people primed to feel powerful are more likely to take action such as turning off an annoying fan, while those primed to focus on promotion and happiness offer more ideas in brainstorming and guessing tasks. In our studies, we wanted to know whether these mind-sets would make people more proactive—and thus boost their status—in live, face-to-face group interactions.

Our priming method involved a simple exercise that you can do with a pen and paper or your smartphone right now or before your next team project kickoff. To shift people toward a promotion focus, we asked them to write a few paragraphs describing their ambitions and what they hoped to achieve in life. To make them feel more powerful, we had them recall and describe an incident in which they had power over another person. And to stimulate happiness, we had them write about a time when they felt excited and joyful. Other study participants were primed to be in the opposite avoidance-oriented psychological state (describing their duties and obligations rather than

GEt thE Position

in a study with colleagues from the University of Cologne, insead, and northwestern University, we explored how priming students for power affected their success in practice interviews for business school. One set of students heading into these interactions were told to think about a time they had power, and another to think about a time someone had power over them. Candidates in the former category saw their odds of acceptance increase by 81% compared with a baseline control group and 162% compared with those primed to feel low power. Interviewers, who weren't aware that the students had been primed in any way, said the students in the high-power condition seemed more confident and persuasive.

sEAl thE DEAl

in another experiment with colleagues from the University of toronto, the University of Utah, and the University of Cologne, we found that priming people with a promotion focus made them more successful in business deals. Participants were asked to engage in a mock sales negotiation for a pharmaceutical plant, and buyers were told to spend no more than $25 million. Those primed for promotion made more aggressive and confident first offers and paid almost $3 million less, on average, than their counterparts who were primed to avoid risks and prevent negative outcomes. We conducted another study, this time priming for power, and found similar effects—power-primed negotiators got better deals because they became more proactive at the bargaining table.

nAil thE sPEECh

Finally, working with researchers from san Diego state University and using rigorous acoustical analysis, we learned that power priming can even alter one's voice. After thinking about a time when they had power, study subjects varied their pitch less and their volume more. When we later played recordings of these and other voices for independent parties, they identified those primed for power as sounding more authoritative. Analysis of Margaret Thatcher's voice before and after she became Great Britain's prime minister (and reportedly after voice coaching) showed the same change. Like our study participants, she maintained a steadier pitch but shifted between loud and quiet more often as she gained authority and status.

their aspirations, a time when someone had power over them, or a sad experience). A third set of participants weren't primed either way; they wrote about their commutes or recent grocery store trips.

We then put people into same-sex groups of three—one person primed with an approach orientation, one primed with the opposite avoidance orientation, and one in a neutral state. Their task was to work together to make a group decision, such as ranking items necessary to survive in the Arctic or determining the best way to launch a company. Afterward, teammates rated one another on status (To what extent do you respect and admire this person? Did she lead the group? To what extent did he influence task decisions?) and proactivity (How assertively did he act? How much initiative did she take in the discussion?).

The effects were clear. People made to feel promotion-focused, powerful, or happy before the group task behaved more proactively and achieved significantly higher status than those in other states. For example, in one experiment, 60% of those primed with an approach orientation were described by at least one teammate as the "leader of the group"—nearly double the rate expected by chance. In another experiment, we videotaped the group discussions, and independent observers confirmed that people primed with power spoke earlier and more assertively than their teammates during the first 10 minutes of discussion. We also found that these temporary psychological states mattered as much as or more than stable, traditionally status-enhancing personality traits such as extroversion and dominance.

Anyone can achieve higher status on a team, both at the outset and over time, by temporarily shifting his or her mind-set before a first meeting.

Our conclusion: It's pretty easy to push yourself into the kind of proactivity that marks you as a person worthy of respect—someone others want to follow.

An Enduring Effect

How far does that first impression take you, though? We know from previous research that the behavioral changes stemming from a primed mind are fleeting: Duration estimates range from a few minutes to an hour. But our experiments offered evidence that the effects can last longer in the context of a newly formed group. This is because team hierarchies not only arise quickly but also produce reinforcing patterns that lock them in. Workers who are initially perceived as valuable and afforded high status on a team continue to be seen that way, even when their contributions are equal to those of others. And the way they are treated—for example, being given more valuable information or more speaking opportunities—actually leads them to perform at a higher level and protects their elevated position. It's much like the Pygmalion effect in the classroom: Students initially favored by their teachers do better a year later on standardized tests.

We confirmed our finding by having participants in two of our studies return 48 hours after their original group interaction and rejoin the same teams to complete two more tasks. They spent 20 minutes together generating an idea for an environmental organization and five minutes estimating statistics (for example, the percentage of Americans who use dental floss daily). No one wrote any essays or described any experiences this time; they simply got to work. Once the job was done, participants completed the same proactivity and status rankings as before, and the results were again clear. The people who had been made to feel powerful or happy two days earlier continued to wield more influence over their teammates, even though those mind-sets were no longer being primed and the tasks had changed.

In one of these experiments, we also added a resource allocation exercise to see if the people perceived to be leaders would reap tangible gains from their status. They did: When subjects were asked to spread prize-giveaway lottery points among themselves and their teammates on the basis of everyone's respective contribution to the group, they gave more to those who had been previously primed for happiness, even though that meant keeping fewer points for themselves.

Our conclusion: The temporary mind-set that you bring to an initial group meeting can have a lasting impact on your status and influence with your teammates.

Putting It to Work

So how can you turn this research to your advantage? Before you embark on your next group project or have your first interaction with colleagues you don't know well, simply do the priming tasks we've described. We've found consistent results across all approach orientations—regardless of whether people thought about their aspirations and ambitions, their experiences with power, or times they were happy. So pick the mind-set that feels most authentic for you.

We can't promise miraculous results. For one thing, we know that most group projects last far longer than two days, and although we believe that status is self-reinforcing, we haven't tested whether the effects we observed would diminish—or grow—overtime. We also realize that priming for proactivity may be less likely to work in cultures where leaders aren't expected to exhibit such behavior. And because our experiments have been mostly lab-based, we can't yet prove that people in real-world organizations can use these techniques to advance themselves. However, these studies—and others (see the sidebar "Other Ways Priming Can Foster Success")—present a strong argument for the power of priming when it comes to setting yourself up for influence, leadership, and impact at work.

The phenomenon reminds us of what chaos theorists call the "butterfly effect": the idea that a small change in conditions in the natural world, even the mere flap of a butterfly's wings, can have profound consequences, such as setting off a hurricane weeks later and thousands of miles away. Fiction writers and filmmakers have fantasized about how the butterfly effect can play out in human interaction, and they might be on to something. We now know that a small change in the thoughts and feelings you bring to your first encounter with a group—activated by something as quick and easy as a writing task—can have a significant impact on your status in it. Conventional wisdom says that success comes from having the right attributes, or from being in the right place at the right time. Our research suggests that it is also a matter of being in the right frame of mind at the right time.

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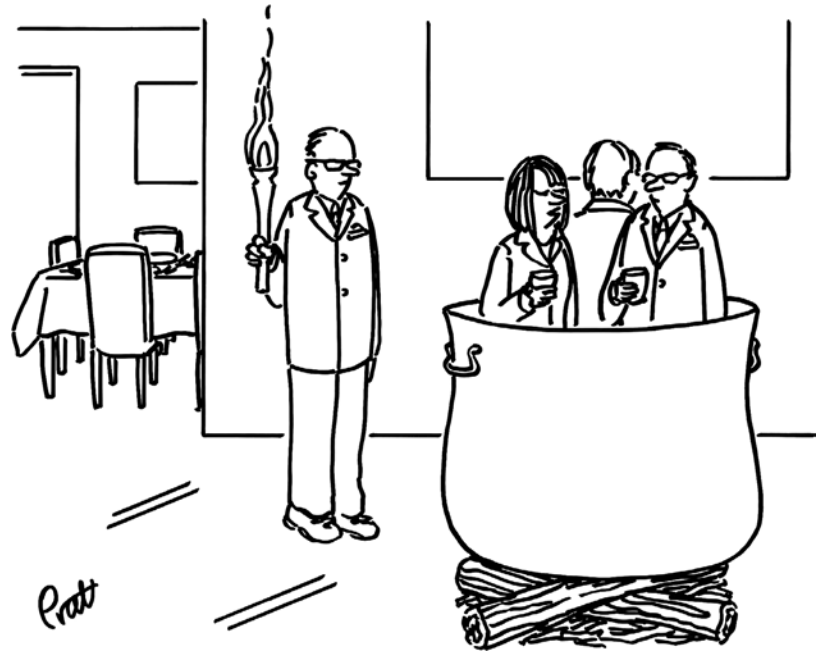

"These dinners with the boss can be so awkward."

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MANAGING YOURSELF

Stop Holding Yourself Baek

Five ways people unwittingly sabotage their rise to leadership ***by Anne Morriss, Robin J. Ely, and Frances X. Frei***

MANAGING YOURSELF

Stop Holding Yourself Back

Five ways people unwittingly sabotage their rise to leadership *by Anne Morriss, Robin J. Ely, and Frances X. Frei*

From the world's poorest communities to the comer offices of its largest corporations, ambitious employees struggle with the same basic challenge: how to gain the strength and insights not just to manage but to lead. For more than a decade, from three different perspectives, we have been investigating what gets in the way. Robin conducts research on race, gender, and leadership; Frances focuses on coaching senior executives; and Anne works on unleashing social entrepreneurs around the world.

We've worked with hundreds ofleaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, in industries spanning more than 30 fields, and in more than SO countries at various stages of development. Amid all the diversity, one very clear pattern has emerged: Organization builders, fire starters, and movement makers are unintentionallystopping themselves from becoming exceptional leaders. As a result, companies aren't getting the best from their people, and employees are limiting their opportunities.

Why does this happen? We've identified five major barriers.

BARRIER1

Overemphasizing Personal Goals

True leadership is about making *other* people better as a result of your presence-and making sure your impact endures in your absence. That doesn't mean leaders are selfless . They have personal goals-to build status, a professional identity, and a retirement plan, among other things.

But the narrow pursuit of those goals can lead to self-protection and self-promotion, neither of which fosters other people 's success.

One leader we studied fell into this destructive behavior after a long, successful run at a number of software companies. 'Troy's bosses had always valued his drive and accountability. But when customer complaints began pouring into the service division he was managing, he pinned the blame on the "mediocrity" of the product development division, claiming that his team had to support an inferior product.

Troy's COO disagreed and began to hint that Troy's job was on the line: After all, the complaints had started accumulating on his watch. To shore up his position, Troy started working to win over senior colleagues one by one-"picking them off;' as he put it-by asking for feedback on his performance. His strategy worked to some extent. Senior management recognized that he was committed to improving his leadership skills. But the customer service problems just got worse. People began trashing the company on influential biogs, and demands for refunds kept rising. The more Troy worked to save his job, the harder his job became.

Troy had a leadership breakthrough when one of his service representatives asked for help resolving the growing conflict with the product development team. The rep's despair triggered a shift in Troy's thinking-away from worrying about his own position and toward healing the split between the two divisions. Troy hosted a series of cross-team meetings and made sure that both groups felt heard. By the third meeting, the teams were brainstorming about ways to solve the service problem together, by improving the software and helping customers learn how to better use it.

Like other effective leaders, Troy changed his focus from protecting himself to supporting the members of his team and making sure that customers were happy. Within a few weeks, demands for refunds began to decrease, even though the company hadn't yet made any upgrades to the product.

The decision to focus on others can feel dangerous. It forces you to take your eyes off your own welfare and to stop scanning the horizon for predators. Risk aversion is a protective mechanism wired into our DNA; that's why security concerns generally trump impact. But all breakthrough leaders find ways to tame their security impulses. Most are amazed by the energy and meaning they discover when they no longer define themselves by their personal needs and fears.

Making other people a priority is perhaps most challenging for emerging leaders-especially women and minorities, who may feel heightened pressure to protect their interests in a world that seems (and often is) rigged against them. When societal attitudes contain built-in questions about your competence, it takes a lot of energy to keep trying to prove those attitudes wrong.

We don't underestimate this challenge. But if your goal is to lead, our advice is the same no matter who you are: First, *get over yourself.* Start with a commitment to make another person, or an entire team, better-and then go back for the skills and resources to pull it off.

BARRIER2

Protecting Your Public Image

Another common impediment to leadership is being overly distracted by your image-that ideal self you've created in your mind. Sticking to the script that goes along with that image takes a lot of energy, leaving little left over for the real work of leadership.

There are more-nuanced costs as well. Once you've crafted your persona and determined not to veer from it, your effectiveness often suffers. The need to be seen as intelligent can inhibit learning and risk taking, for instance. The need to be seen as likable can keep you from asking tough questions or challenging existing norms. The need to be seen as decisive can cause you to shut down critical feedback loops.

One woman we interviewed, Anita, was an executive vice president in charge of the regional performance ofa large retail company. The public image she'd created-tough, decisive, analytical-had been a powerful instrument in advancing her career. But it left little room for her humanity-an essential part of the leadership equation.

Anita thought that using intuition was intellectually lazy; she was known for the phrase "Show me the data:' When in-store analytics suggested that the company gained little advantage from long-term employees, Anita ordered some store managers to replace experienced salespeople with lower-paid part-timers. The experiment reduced payroll costs, but it wreaked havoc on the culture and service experience in those stores-an outcome the data didn't immediately reveal.

The rep's despair triggered a shift in Troy's thinking-away from worrying about his own position and toward healing the split in the company.

Store managers tried to communicate their frustration to Anita, but the interactions invariably went badly. She pushed back on any concerns that weren't supported by numbers and recklessly concluded that her managers simply feared change. Their resignations started to roll in. Like many leaders, Anita had decided she could be tough or empathetic-but not both. She was unable to hear feedback, particularly from people below her, or to risk looking bad by making a high-profile course correction. And so she lost some of the company's best managers.

Once the turnover on her team reached 50%, however, Anita decided she had to take action. Inspired by an exercise in

Leadership Diagnostic: Are You Having Maximum Impact?

For most of us, the high-impact leader lurking inside comes out only on our best days. If you find yourself in this category-if you're not getting the leadership traction you want-ask yourself these questions. If most of your answers are "no," you may be getting in your own way.

Overemphasizing Personal Goals

Do I spend most of my time as a manager thinking about what other people in the organization need to succeed?

Does the " best version" of my employees show up in my presence?

Does their best version endure in my absence?

Protecting Your Public Image

Do I ever stop monitoring myself and simply do my job?

Have I been willing to "look bad" in the service of my team or organization?

Do I expli citly model the attitudes and behaviors I want others in my organization to adopt?

an executiveeducation program she'd attended, she thought about teams she'd been part of that had worked together well. She then spoke with some of the people involved in an attempt to figure out why. Her conversation with her high school volleyball coach rattled her. He gave this advice: "If you want your people to care what you think, first make it clear that you care what *they* think: ' Within a few days, Anita reached out to one of the managers who had just resigned, a woman with a decade of experience making retail spaces work. She invited the manager to come back and help her repair the damage. Their collaboration was a professional turning point for Anita.

This type of journey is not uncommon. At some point in their leadership traject ory, ambitious people must choose between image and impact, between looking powerful and empowering others. They must choose, in effect, between impersonating a leader and being one.

BARRIER3

Turning Competitors Into Enemies

One particularly toxic behavior is the act of turning those you don't get along with into two-dimensional enemies. Distorting other people is a common response to conflict, but it carries significant leadership costs. It severs your links to reality, making you reliably incapable of exe rtinginfluence. As you tum others into caricatures, you risk becoming a caricature yourself.

Consider Sarah, the COO ofa global medical devices company. She specialized in integrating acquired businesses, and she was unambiguously great at her job. But she became easily frustrated by the "incompetence" of coworkers , including Max, the CFO. Sarah was quick to dismiss his abilities, having decided that he was out of his league and held his position only because he fawned over other senior leaders, particularly the CEO. She began to dislike everything about him-his voice, his ridiculous cuffiink collection, his goatee.

Sarah started to rethink her judgment only when she was seated next to Max on a flight from London to the U.S. Forced to engage, she learned the reason for his apparent sycophancy-he was concerned about the CEO's credibility with investors and senior managers. By the time the plane landed , Sarah and Max were not only mapping out a plan to present the CEO more effectively but also talking about working together on business opportunities in Asia. Just as important, the conversation made Sarah realize that her hastily formed aversion had caused her to miss out on valuable chances to collaborate with a worthy colleague.

Circumstances forced Sarah to humanize Max, but we recommend a more proactive approach. Take a hard look at how you interact with colleagues whose agendas seem opposed to your own. Recognize that these colleagues are real people who may even become your allies.

SAR8JER4

Going It Alone

Most peopleopt out ofleadership for perfectly good reasons. The road, by definition, is unsafe. It leads to change, not comfort. Troy, the software service division manager, found it deeply unsettling to try working in a brand-new way. Even tually, though , he learned how to cope with his fears: by relying on the advice and support of select friends and family members. We call these people "the team:'

Troy's team played a key role in his shift from focusing on his own career to helping his colleagues succeed. After more than a few sleepless nights, Troy decided to host a casual dinner for the people whose opinions he valued most: a sister, two friends from college, and a software entrepreneur he'd met at a recent Ironman competition. Halfway into the appetizer course, he put aside his pride, described his problem, and asked for advice.

Find the peopte who believe in your desire and ability to lead. Fall in love with them. Or at least meet them for drinks on a regular basis.

Turning Competitors Into Enemies

Is it rare for me to feel defensive, insecure, or judgmental?

Is it rare for people to feel defensive, insecure, or judgmental around me?

Is my envi ronment generally free of people I can't stand to be around?

Going It Alone

Do I have a core group of people who help me make important decisions?

Do I have people around me who can handle both my audacity and my insecurities?

Do the most important people in my life participate in my leadership dreams?

Waiting for Permission

Is it possible to make a difference from my current position?

Do I have control over when I'll be able to have a meaningful impact?

Could I become a leader before other people see me as one?

His new triathlete friend, Raj, pushed Troy to stop worrying so much about his own job and instead try to break down the organizational silos that were making his life difficult and threatening the company as well. Troy initially resisted the idea, but the next day he decided to change his behavior according to what he called "Raj's intervention." The collaborative culture he created in his division and with the product development division became a model for other groups in the company. To this day Troy continues the monthly dinner ritual so that he and his "team" offamily and friends can keep sharing problems and ideas.

We heard similar stories from other effective leaders. Almost all of them have a strong team that helps provide perspective, grounding, and faith. Your team members can be family, colleagues, friends, mentors, spouses, partners. The litmus test: Does the leader in you regularly show up in their presence? Find the people who believe in your desire and ability to lead. Fall in love with them . Or at least meet them for drinks on a regular basis.

BARRIERS

Waiting for Permission

Like risk aversion, patience can be a valuable evolutionary gift. It's a main ingredient in discipline and hope. It helps us uncover the root cause of problems. It keeps us from hurting someone at the DMV.

But patience can be a curse for emerging leaders. It can undermine our potential by persuading us to keep our heads down and soldier on, waiting for someone to recognize our efforts and give us the proverbial tap on the shoulder-a better title and formal authority.

The problem with this approach is that healthy organizations reward people who decide on their own to lead. Power and influence are intimate companions, but their relationship isn't the one we tend to imagine. More often than not, influence leads to power, not the other way around.

Most of the exceptional leaders we've studied didn't wait for formal authority to begin making changes. They may have ended up in a comer office, but their leadership started elsewhere. In one way or another, they all simply began to use whatever informal power they had.

A personal trainer named Jon was in the middle of a workout session when he made the decision to lead. One morning, while he was trying to help a client lose her post-pregnancy weight, his mind kept wandering to a teenager he knew, and especially to worries that he might have joined a gang. In the middle of counting crunches, Jon realized he wanted to do something different with his life.

He sketched out his vision that night. He knew that weightlifting could appeal to young people at risk for gang involvement, so he decided to start a program that would offer them physical empowerment, independence, and community, and help them build self-esteem. Two years later InnerCity Weightlifting was serving more than a hundred kids in East Boston. Its gyms are among the few places in the city where rival gang members come together peacefully. Jon is now poised to expand the concept to other cities.

Jon's career change was not a logical pivot, at least not from an outside perspective. He was young, he was inexperienced with youth development programs, and he'd grownup with limited exposure tourban life. His friends and family thought he was crazy to give up his lucrative personal-training practice for what seemed to them a pipe dream. But Jon was impatient, unwilling to wait until he'd gained experience and legitimacy. He went for it anyway, and the program's early results gave him enough influence to recruit students , schools, parents, and funders.

Jon's story holds a lesson for every aspiring leader: You must simply begin.

Our Closing Plea

We're sharing this research because we're quite selfishly invested in having you get out of your own way. We want to live in a world-we want our children to grow up in a world-in which your talents are fully unleashed on the issues that matter most. You should learn to recognize and overcome the self-imposed obstacles to your impact. The rest of us need you on the front lines, building better organizations. "

HBR Reprint RllOlP

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Harvard
Business
Review

Strategy

Exerting Influence Without Authority

by Lauren Keller Johnson

February 28, 2008

Congratulations—you've been asked to lead a change initiative! But there's a catch—its success hinges on the cooperation of several people across your organization over whom you have no formal authority.

If you're like most managers, you're facing this sort of challenge more often these days because of flatter management structures, outsourcing, and virtual teams. For those reasons, a greater number of managers now need to get things done through peers inside and outside their organizations. In this age of heightened business complexity, moreover, change itself has grown increasingly complicated. A majority of change initiatives now involve multiple functions within and even between companies, and many such efforts encompass an entire firm.

New kinds of partnerships and alliances have emerged as well, and they require managers to exercise influence over peers from the other companies. Santa Clara, Calif.-based Applied Materials, for example, has 800 engineers and other employees working inside Intel, collaborating daily with their Intel partners to develop successful new products.

In such circumstances, command and-control leadership—the "I leader, you follower" approach—doesn't get a manager very far. Jay A. Conger, professor of organizational behavior at the London Business School and formerly the executive director of the University of Southern California's Leadership Institute, points out that managers and executives at all levels must use a more lateral style of leadership.

Why lateral leadership?

Lateral leadership, Conger maintains, counts among a manager's most essential skills, and comprises a constellation of capabilities —from networking and coalition building to persuading and negotiating.

Though honing these skills takes time and patience, the payoff is worth it. That initiative you're championing will stand a far better chance of being implemented quickly. You'll gain access to the resources you need to carry out the effort. You'll see doors swing open freely to the key players whose cooperation you need most. And perhaps most important, you'll achieve the central purpose of managerial work: getting things done through other people—and catalyzing valuable change for your organization.

A constellation of capabilities

So how do you begin mastering the skills that constitute lateral leadership? Conger recommends focusing on four closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing capabilities:

Networking. Cultivate a broad network of relationships with the people inside and outside your company whose support you need to carry out your initiatives. If networking doesn't come naturally to you, create a personal discipline through which to acquire this capability. Conger maintains that "certain people are portals to other people—they can connect you to more and bigger networks. You need to build relationships with these individuals in particular."

Constructive persuasion and negotiation. Too many managers, Conger says, wrongly view persuasion and negotiation as tools for manipulation. But conducted with an eye toward mutual benefit, they can vastly enhance your influence.

To make persuasion and negotiation constructive rather than manipulative, view the person you're dealing with as a peer instead of a "target." Take courses and read books on these subjects to hone your skills. And find a seasoned colleague within the company who can serve as a confidant and brainstorming partner.

Consultation. Take time to visit the people whose buy-in you need. Ask their opinions about the initiative you're championing. Get their ideas as well as their reactions to your ideas.

Too many managers, Conger says, rush to define a series of steps that they believe constitutes the right way to carry out their initiative. They then circulate around the company and try to impose their solution on others—mistakenly believing that they're engaging in productive consultation.

The result? Resistance and bickering over process details. "You'll get far better results," Conger says, "if you commit to and advocate the desired outcome but invite peers to participate in defining the process for achieving that outcome."

Coalition building. It's a fact of human nature that several people who are collectively advocating an idea exert more influence than a lone proponent. For this reason, coalition building plays a vital role in lateral leadership. By building coalitions, Conger explains, you gather influential people together to form "a single body of authority."

To assemble a powerful coalition, begin by asking yourself who's most likely to be affected by the change you're proposing. Whose "blessing" do you need—whether in the form of political support

or access to important resources or individuals? Whose buy-in is crucial to your initiative's success?

The challenges of lateral leadership

Though lateral leadership consists of several concrete, interrelated skills, many managers cannot easily master those capabilities. For one thing, Conger points out, they're often so focused on their own functional silo that they don't know who beyond their own internal group should be included in their networking and coalition-building efforts.

To combat this "functional focus," take time to find out who makes things happen in your organization. Whom do people go to for advice and support? And who tends to throw up roadblocks to new ideas and changes? You won't find the answers to these questions in the organizational chart. As Conger says, you gain a sense of these things through informal contact and casual get-togethers with colleagues throughout the company.

In addition to focusing too closely on their own function, managers experience intense pressure to grapple with what they see as responsibilities more urgent than building relationships. After all, many of them are rewarded for producing concrete, short-term results, Conger notes, whereas investments in lateral leadership "capital" can take time and patience—and often the dividends don't come until much later.

So how do you reconcile the need to produce in the short run with the equally important need to lay the groundwork for productive collaboration in the long run? Conger recommends dedicating a specific amount of time each day or week to sharpening your lateral leadership skills. For example, commit to having lunch each Thursday with a different person inside or outside your organization whom you don't know well but who may play an important role in a project you'll be leading.

Conger also recommends getting to know influential people before starting to work with them on a project. For instance, suppose you'll be leading a project that will involve managers from several other functions and you've scheduled a formal kick-off meeting in a month. Seek out those managers in the weeks leading up to the meeting and ask them for their thoughts about the upcoming project.

Creating the right environment

Considering the increasing need for lateral leadership—and its unmistakable benefits—you might assume that companies are moving energetically to train managers in this important area. But, Conger notes, that isn't the case.

To be sure, many firms offer courses on influence, circulate articles on various aspects of lateral leadership, and establish mentoring programs designed to help managers identify and access "portals" quickly. But formal training and mentoring efforts can have mixed results, Conger warns.

Why? "Successful lateral leadership grows out of positive chemistry between people. You can't predict or control the natural affinity people have for one another—that glue that makes relationships of mutual influence possible."

Rather than "matching people up" through a formal mentoring program, companies have far more success by creating opportunities for people to mingle—and then letting them forge mentoring and networking relationships on their own. Conferences, seminars, and company-sponsored social events provide opportunities for people to get to know peers with whom they might not otherwise interact.

Chemistry becomes even more important, Conger adds, in virtual teams. In these increasingly common work groups, members have few chances to meet face to face and engage in the "sizing up" that humans do instinctively. Without these nonverbal

exchanges, people can't build the trust that makes lateral leadership possible. Thus, people on virtual teams must be particularly intentional about their networking. Face-to-face meetings—even if they require expensive travel—are often well worth the cost. Lunches, coffees, and other casual social gatherings can further cement working relationships.

As the business landscape continues to shift, companies will need managers who can exercise lateral leadership with increasing skill and confidence. But because many firms still don't invest explicitly in cultivating this talent throughout their workforces, managers would do well to take the initiative themselves.

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Harvard Business Review

LEADERSHIP

The Trickle-Down Effect of Good (and Bad) Leadership

by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman

JANUARY 14, 2016

We know that emotions are contagious. Research by UC San Diego's James Fowler and Harvard's Nicholas Christakis has shown that happiness is contagious, for example. If you have a friend who is happy, the probability that you will be happier rises by 25%.

We also know that behaviors are contagious. Christakis and Fowler determined that if you have overweight friends, you're more likely to be overweight yourself. If you quit smoking, your friends

are more likely to quit. Rose McDermott of Brown University found that divorce is contagious. She concluded that if you have a close friend who's divorced, you are 33% more likely to split with your spouse.

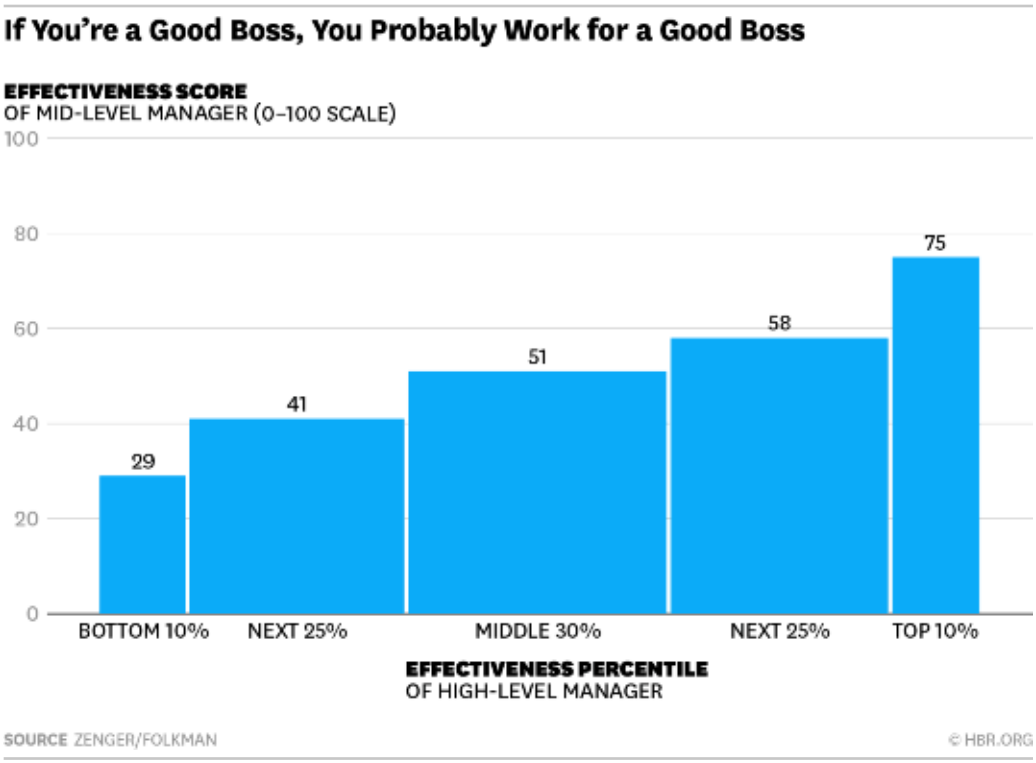
We wanted to know how such "social contagion" affects leaders. We already know that good leadership creates engaged employees and that leaders influence a variety of outcomes such as personnel turnover, customer satisfaction, sales, revenue, productivity, and so on. But if you're a good leader, do you make the people around you more likely to become good leaders as well? And which behaviors are most readily "caught"?

To answer this question, we examined 360-degree assessments of high-level managers and of their direct reports who were mid-level managers. Matching 265 pairs of high-level managers (HL) and their mid-level manager direct reports (ML), we found highly significant correlations on a variety of behaviors.

Specifically, we tested 51 behaviors and found significant correlations in over 30 of them. (All 51 showed some correlation, but not all the correlations were statistically significant.) Within the behaviors that appeared contagious, there were some that appeared even more contagious than others. Behaviors that had the highest correlations between managers and their direct reports clustered around the following themes, listed in order of most contagious to least contagious:

- Developing self and others
- Technical skills
- Strategy skills
- Consideration and cooperation
- Integrity and honesty
- Global perspective
- Decisiveness
- Results focus

We also examined overall performance. Unsurprisingly, the direct reports of the worst-performing HL managers were also below-average performers. Conversely, HL managers who were rated as very effective had ML reports who were also rated far above average. It could be argued that selection plays a role in these results, as in the old saying that "A players hire other A players, but B players hire C players." However, an incumbent manager usually has personally hired fewer than a quarter of the people in their subordinate group. So we think this finding supports our hypothesis that leadership behavior is contagious: good HL leaders inspire better leadership behaviors among their ML reports, while bad HL leaders do the opposite.

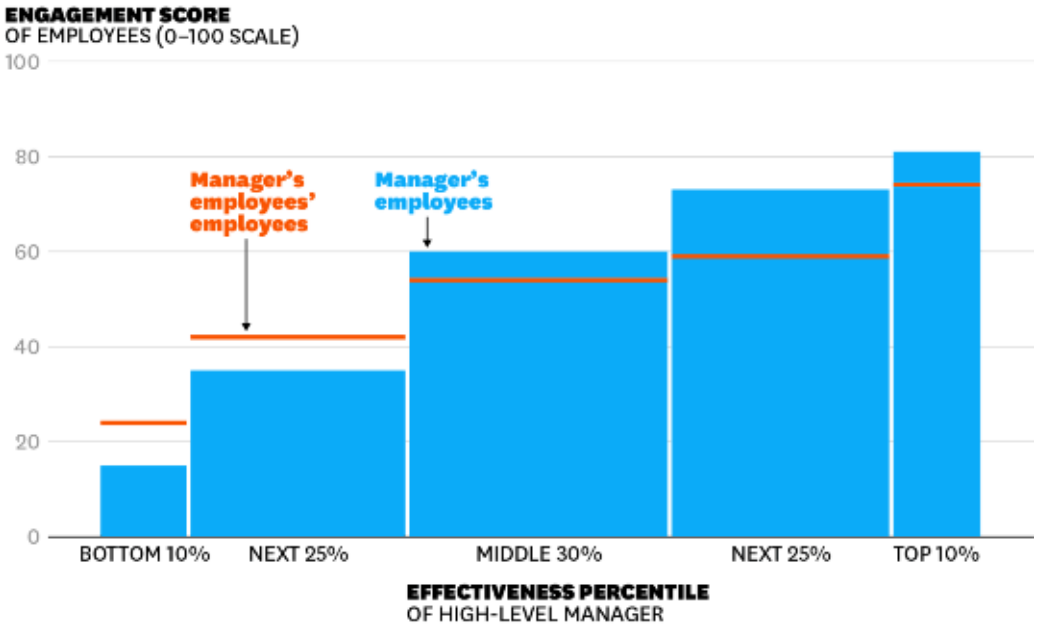


We were also curious about the impact further down in the organization. In the 360-degree feedback instrument we use, subordinates are asked five questions that describe their *own* level of engagement. This becomes a mini–employee engagement survey and correlates very strongly with other well-known measures of employee engagement. We compared the effectiveness of the HL managers with the engagement scores of the ML leaders, and in turn looked at the engagement scores of the ML leaders' direct reports.

The following graph shows the results. The x-axis indicates how effective the HL manager is overall. Those whose overall leadership effectiveness was in the bottom 10% had direct reports (MLs) whose engagement scores were in the 15th percentile, and the direct reports of those ML managers had engagement scores in the 24th percentile. In contrast, HL managers whose overall leadership effectiveness was in the top 10% had direct reports (MLs) whose engagement scores were in the 81st percentile, and the subordinates of these ML managers had engagement scores in the 74th percentile. In plain terms, that means if you're an HL manager doing a subpar job, you erode not only the engagement of those working for you but also the engagement of the people working for *them*. Happily, the converse is also true: if you're a great boss, that engages your team and your team's teams.

Good Leaders Increase Engagement for Their Employees

And their employees' employees, too.



SOURCE ZENGER/FOLKMAN © HBR.ORG

To help this sink in, take a minute to think about the occasional things you do poorly and the bad habits you can't seem to change. No doubt you're not proud of them. You might be a bit embarrassed. Considering this research might increase your motivation to change, since the things you do poorly have a reasonable probability of being mimicked by others. Your peers, your direct reports, your partner or spouse, and your children also have a high probability of practicing the example you set. Your children can't do much about the effects of your genetic code. But there is plenty you can do to inoculate your family and your team from your blunders or unfortunate habits. You can change.

Sometimes leaders wonder whether they are making an impact. Struggling to see the impact we are having on others is typical, as the influence is subtle and occurs over time. Hopefully, this research demonstrates that leaders' impact is greater than they might have suspected. You really do make a difference.

Jack Zenger is the CEO of Zenger/Folkman, a leadership development consultancy. He is a coauthor of the October 2011 HBR article "Making Yourself Indispensable" and the book *How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths* (McGraw-Hill, 2012). Connect with Jack at twitter.com/jhzenger.

Joseph Folkman is the president of Zenger/Folkman, a leadership development consultancy. He is a coauthor of the October 2011 HBR article "Making Yourself Indispensable" and the book *How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths* (McGraw-Hill, 2012). Connect with Joe at twitter.com/joefolkman.

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MANAGING YOURSELF

Learning Charisma

Transform yourself into the person others want to follow. ***by John Antonakis, Marika Fenley, and Sue Liechti***

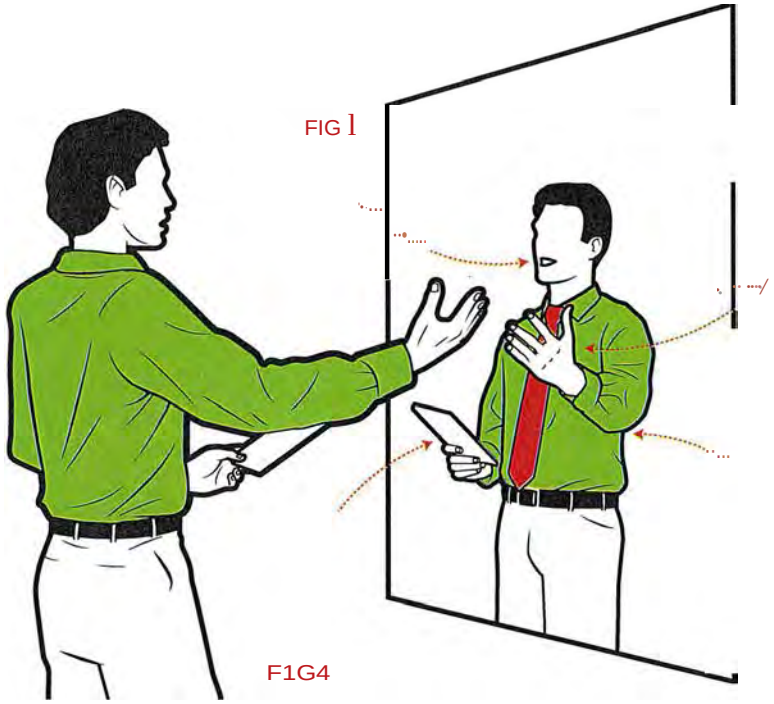

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FIG 3

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MANAGING YOURSELF

Learning Charisma

Transform yourself into the person others want t o follow.

by John Antonakis, fvtarika Fenley, and Sue Liechti

Jana stands at the podium, palms sweaty, looking out at hundreds of colleagues who are waiting to hear about her new initiative. Bill walks into a meeting after a failed product launch to greet an exhausted and demotivated team that desperately needs his direction. Robin gets ready to confront a brilliant but under performning subordinate who needs to be put back on track.

We've all been in situations like these. What they require is charisma-the ability to communicate a clear, visionary, and inspirational message that captivates and motivates an audience. So how do you learn charisma? Many people believe that it's impossible. They say that charismatic people are born that way-as naturally expressive and persuasive extroverts. After all, you can't teach someone to be Winston Churchill.

While we agree with the latter contention, we disagree with the former. Charisma is not all innate; it's a learnable skill or, rather, a set of skills that have been practiced since antiquity. Our research with managers in the laboratory and in the field indicates thatanyone trained in what we call "charismatic leadership tactics" (CLTs) can become more influential, trustworthy, and "leaderlike" in the eyes of others. In this article we'll explain these tactics and how we help managers master them. Just as athletes rely on hard training and the right game plan to win a competition, leaders who want to become charismatic must study the CLTs, practice them religiously, and have a good deployment strategy.

What Is Charisma?

Charisma is rooted in values and feelings. It's influence born of the alchemy that Aristotle called the *logos*, the *ethos*, and the *pathos;* that is, to persuade others, you must use powerful and reasoned rhetoric, establish personal and moral credibility, and then rouse followers' emotions and passions. If a leader can do those three things well, he or she can then tapinto the hopes and ideals of followers, give them a sense of purpose, and inspire them to achieve great things.

Several large-scale studies have shown that charisma can be an invaluable asset in any work context-small or large, public or private, Western or Asian. Politicians know that it's important. Yet many business managers don't use charisma, perhaps because they don't know how to or because they believe it's not as easy to master as transactional (carrot-and-stick) or instrumental (task-based) leadership. Let's be clear: Leaders need technical expertise to win the trust of followers, manage operations, and set strategy; they also benefit from the ability to punish and reward. But the most effective leaders layer charismatic leadership on top of

transactional and instrumental leadership to achieve their goals.

In our research, we have identified a dozen key CLTs. Some of them you may recognize as long-standing techniques of oratory. Nine of them are verbal: metaphors, similes, and analogies; stories and anecdotes; contrasts; rhetorical questions; three-part lists; expressions of moral conviction; reflections of the group's sentiments; the setting of high goals; and conveying confidence that they can be achieved. Three tactics are nonverbal: animated voice, facial expressions, and gestures.

There are other CLTs that leaders can use-such as creating a sense of urgency, invoking history, using repetition, talking about sacrifice, and using humor-but the12 described in this article are the ones that have the greatest effect and can work in almost any context. In studies and experiments,we ave found that people who use them appropriately can unite followers around a vision in a way that others can't. In eight of the past lO U.S. presidential races, for instance, the candidate who deployed verbal CLTs more often won. And when we measured "good" presentation skills, such as speech structure, clear pronunciation, use of easy- to-understand language, tempo of speech, and speaker comfort, and compared their impact against that of the CLTs, we found that the CLTs played a much bigger role in determining who was perceived to be more leaderlike, competent, and trustworthy.

Still, these tactics don't seem to be widely known or taught in the business world. The managers who practice them typically learned them by trial and error, without thinking consciously about them. As one manager who attended our training remarked: "I use a lot of these tactics, some without even knowing it:'Such learning should not be left to chance.

We teach managers the CLTs by outlining the concepts and then showing news and film clips that highlight examples from business, sports, and politics. Managers must then experiment with and practice the tactics- on video, in front of peers, and on their own. A group of midlevel European executives (with an average age of35) that did so as part of our training almost doubled their use of CLTs in presentations. As a result, they saw observers' numerical ratings of their competence as leaders jump by about 60% on average. They were then able to take the tactics back to their jobs. We saw the same thing happen with another group of executives (with an average age of 42) in a large Swiss firm. Overall, we've found that about 65% of people who have been trained in the CLTs receive above-average ratings as leaders, in contrast with only 35% of those who have not been trained.

The aim is to use the CLTs not only in public speaking but also in everyday conversations-to be more charismatic all the time. The tactics work because they help you create an emotional connection with followers, even as they make you appear more powerful, competent, and worthy of respect. In Greek, the word "charisma" means special gift. Start to use the CLTs correctly, and that's what people will begin to think you have.

After executives were trained in these tactics, the leadership ratings observers gave them rose by about 60%.

Let's now look at the tactics in detail.

Connect, Compare, And Contrast

Charismatic speakers help listeners understand, relate to, and remember a message. A powerful way to do this is by using *metaphors, similes,* and *analogies.* Martin Luther King Jr. was a master of the metaphor. In his "I Have a Dream" speech, for example, he likened the U.S. Constitu- tion to "a promissory note" guaranteeing the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all people but noted that America had instead given its black citizens "a bad check;' one that had come back marked "insufficient funds: ' Everyone knows what it means to receive a bad check. The message is crystal clear and easy to retain.

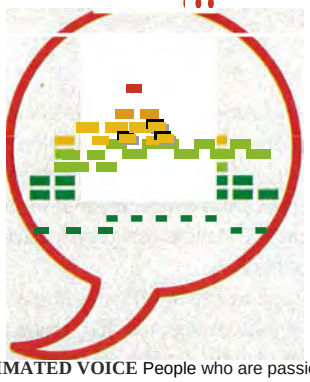
Metaphors can be effective in any professional context, too. Joe, a manager we worked with, used one to predispose his team to get behind an urgent relocaction. He introduced it by saying: "When I heard about this from the board, it was like hearing about a long-awaited pregnancy. The difference is that we have four months instead of nine months to prepare!' The team instantly understood it was about to experience an uncomfortable butulti- mately rewarding transition.

Stories and anecdotes also make messages more engaging and help listeners connect with the speaker. Even people who aren't born raconteurs can employ them in a compelling way. Take this example from a speech Bill Gates gave at Harvard, urging graduates to consider their broader responsibilities:"My mother... never stopped pressing me to do more for others. A few days before my wedding, she hosted a bridal event, at which she read aloud a letter about marriage that she had written to Melinda. My mother was very ill with cancer at the time, but she saw one more opportunity to deliver her message, and at the close of the letter she [quoted]: 'From those to whom much is given, much is expected!"

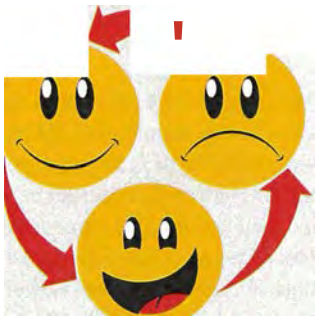
Lynn, another manager we studied, used the following story to motivate her reports during a crisis: "This reminds me of the challenge my team and I faced when climbing the Eiger peak a few years ago. We got caught in bad weather, and we could have died up there. But working together, we managed to survive. And we made what at first seemed impossible, possible. Today we are in an economic storm, but by pulling together, we can turn this situation around and succeed!' The story made her team feel reassured and inspired.

Contrasts are a key CLT because they combine reason and passion; they clarify

Three tactics for showing passion-and winning over listeners



ANIMATED VOICE People who are passionate vary the volume with which they speak-whispering at appropriate points or rising to a crescendo to hammer home a point . Emotion-sadness, happiness, excitement, surprise-must come through in the voice. Pauses are also important because they convey control.



FACIAL EXPRESSIONS These help reinforce your message. Listeners need to see as well as hear your passion-especially when you're telling a story or reflecting their sentiments. So be sure to make eye contact (one of the givens of charisma), and get comfortable smiling , frowning, and laughing at work.

GESTURES These are signals for your li sten - ers. A fist can reinforce confidence, power, and certitude . Waving a hand, pointing, or pounding a desk can help draw attention.

your position by pitting it against the opposite, often to dramatic effect. Think of John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country;' In our experience, contrasts are one of the easiest tactics to learn and use, and yet they aren't used enough. Here are some examples from managers newly trained in the CLTs. Gilles, a senior VP, speaking to a direct report managing a stagnant team: "It seems to me that you're playing too much defense when you need to be playing more offense ."(That's also a metaphor.) And Sally, introducing herself to her new team: "I asked to lead the medical division not because it has the best location but because I believe we can accomplish something great for our company and at the same time help save lives."

Engage and Distill

Rhetorical questions might seem hackneyed, but charismatic leaders use them all the time to encourage engagement . Questions can have an obvious answer or pose a puzzle to be answered later. Think again of Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, 'When will you be satisfied?;' ' and then went on to show that oppressed people can never be satisfied. Anita Roddick-founder of the Body Shop-once used three rhetorical questions to explain what led her to help start the social responsibility movement. The thinking, she said, "was really simple: How do you make business kinder? How do you embed it in the community? How do you make community a social purpose for business?"

This tactic works just as well in private conversations. Take Mika, a manager in our study, who effectively motivated an underperforming subordinate by asking, "So, where do you want to go from here? Will it be back to your office feeling sorry for yourself? Or do you want to show what you are capable of achieving?" Here's another question (also employing metaphor) used by Frank, an IT executive who needed to push back at the unrealistic goals being set for him: "How can you expect me to change an engine in a plane midflight?"

Three-part lists are another old trick of effective persuasion because they distill any message into key takeaways . Why three? Because most people can remember three things; three is sufficient to provide proof of a pattern, and three gives an impression of completeness. Three-part lists can be announced-as in "There are three things we need to do to get our bottom line back into the black"-or they can be under the radar, as in the sentence before this one.

Here's a list that Serge, a midlevel manager, used at a team meeting: "We have the best product on the market. We have the best team. Yet we did not make the sales target;' And here's one that Karin, division head of a manufacturing company, employed in a speech to her staff: "We can tum this around with a three-point strategy: First, we need to look back and see what we did right. Next, we need to see where we went wrong. Then, we need to come up with a plan that will convince the board to give us the resources to get it right the next time."

Show Integrity, Authority, And Passion

Expressions of moral conviction and *statements that reflect the sentiments of the group-even* when the sentiments are negative-establish your credibility by revealing the quality of your character to your listeners and making them identify and align themselves with you. On Victory Day at the end of the Second World War, Winston Churchill brilliantly captured the feelings of the British people and also conveyed a spirit of hon or, courage, and compassion. He said: "This is your hour. This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole. We were the first, in this ancient island , to draw the sword against tyranny.... There we stood, alone. The lights went out and the bombs came down. But every man, woman, and child in the country had no thought of quitting the struggle.... Now we have emerged from one deadly struggle-a terrible foe has been cast on the ground and awaits our judgment and our mercy;'

Another nice example of moral conviction (plus a number of other CLTs) comes

from Tina, a manager in an NGO pushing for a needed supply-chain change: "Who do you think will pay for the logistical mess we've created? It is not our donors who'll feel it, but the children we're supposed to be feeding that willgo to bed one more time with an empty belly and who may not make it through the night. Apart from wasting money, this is not right, especially because the fix is so simple." And here's Rami, a senior IT director trained in the CLTs, expertly reflecting the sentiments of his disheartened team: "I know what is going through your minds, because the same thing is going through mine. We all feel disappointed and demotivated. Some of you have told me you have had sleepless nights; others, that there are tensions in the team, even at home because of this. Personally, life to me has become dull and tasteless. I know how hard we have all worked and the bitterness we feel because success just slipped out of our reach. But it's not going to be like this for much longer. I have a plan:'

Another CLT, which helps charismatic leaders demonstrate passion-and inspire it in their followers- is *setting high goals.* Gandhi set the almost impossible (and moral) goal ofliberating India from British rule without using violence, as laid out in his famous "quit India " speech. An exam ple from the business world that we often cite is the former CEO of Sharp, Katsuhiko Machida. In 1998, at a time when Sharp faced collapse, cathode-ray tubes dominated the TV market, and the idea of using LCD technology was commercially unviable, he energized his employees by stating the unthinkable: "By 20 0 5, all TVs we sell in Japan will be LCD models."

But one must also *convey confidence that the goals can be achieved.* Gandhi noted : "I know the British Government will not be able to withhold freedom from us, when we have made enough self-sacrifice." In a later speech he expressed his conviction more forcefully: "Even if all the United Nations opposes me, even if the whole of lndia forsakes me, I will say, 'You are wrong. India will wrench with nonviolence her liberty from unwilling hands.' I will go ahead not for India 's sake alone but for the sake of the world. Even if my eyes close before there is freedom , nonviolence willnot end." Machida personally took his vision to Sharp's engineers to convince them that they could realize his risky goal; he made it the company's most important project, brought together cross-functional teams from LCD and TV development to work on it, and told them plainly that it was crucial to Sharp's survival. Or take Ray, an engineer we know, addressing his team after a setback: "The deadline the CEO gave us is daunting. Other teams would be right to tremble at the knees, but we are not just another team. I know you can rise to the challenge. I believe in each one of you, which means that I believe that we can get the prototype to manufacturing in three months. Let's commit to do what it takes to get the job done: We have the smarts. We have the experience. All we need is the will, and that's something only great teams have." Passion cannot emerge unless the leader truly believes that the vision and strategic goal can be reached .

The three nonverbal *cues - expressions of voice, body, and face-are* also key to charisma. They don't come naturally to everyone, however, and they are the most culturally sensitive tactics: What's perceived as too much passion in certain Asian contexts might be perceived as too muted in southern European ones. But they are nonetheless important to learn and practice because they are easier for your followers to process than the verbal CLTs, and they help you hold people's attention by punctuating your speech. (For more on these, see the exhibit "Charisma in Voice and Body.")

Putting It All into Practice

Now that you've learned the CLTs, how do you start using them? Simple: Preparation and practice. When you're mapping out a speech or a presentation, you should certainly plan to incorporate the tactics and rehearse them. We also encourage leaders to think about them before one-on-one conversations or team meetings in which they need to be persuasive. The idea is to arm yourself with a few key CLTs that feel comfortable to you and therefore will come out spontaneously- or at least look as if they did. The leaders we' ve trained worked on improving their charisma in groups and got feedback from one another ; you could ask your spouse or a friendly colleague to do the same, or videotape yourself and do a self-critique.

The goal isn't to employ all the tactics in every conversation but to use a balanced combination. With time and practice, they will start to come out on the fly. One manager we know, who met his wife after being trained in the CLTs, showed her his "before" videos and told us she couldn't believe it was he. The charismatic guy in the "after" videos-the one whose CLT use had more than doubled-was the person she had married. Another manager, who learned the tactics six years ago and has since become the chief operating officer of his company,says he now uses them every day-personally and professionally-such as in a recent talk to his team about a reloca tion, which went "much better than expected" as a result.

If you think you can't improve because you're just not naturally charismatic, you're wrong. The managers with the lowest initial charisma ratings in our studies were able to significantly narrow the gap between themselves and their peers to whom the tactics came naturally. It's true that no amount of training or practice will tum you into Churchill or Martin Luther King Jr. But the CLTs can make you more charismatic in the eyes of your followers, and that will invariably make you a more effective leader. ″

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MOTIVATING PEOPLE

New Managers Shouldn't Be Afraid to Express Their Emotions

by Kristi Hedges

JUNE 01, 2017

Warm . Funny. Sincere. Motivated. Deeply invested.

Those were a few of the words I would've used to describe Tendai (his name and some details have been changed), a senior leader at a global manufacturing company, after we met to kick off our coaching engagement. He was on a succession plan for the C-suite and was looking to strengthen his executive leadership skills.

However, when I spoke with several of Tendai's colleagues and direct reports to gather their impressions of him, they painted a very different picture. They described him as careful, calculating, and reserved. Several of his peers questioned his intentions, assuming he was playing office politics when he failed to reach out to them on key issues. His team was impressed by his effectiveness, yet unsure of his motivation. To most, he was a mystery.

It may sound as though Tendai has a split personality, but I see this kind of situation in my coaching work frequently. Leaders craft such a solid professional persona that they fail to be themselves, unintentionally quashing the emotional qualities that build followership, and leaving their peers and direct reports scratching their heads.

It's easy to see how this happens. In most organizations, being a good employee means projecting a calm, unflappable demeanor. We never want to lose our composure, so we develop strategies for keeping a professional face on. Who among us hasn't spent a few car rides home yelling a tirade to an invisible boss or coworker? And remaining dispassionate can be an asset. However, that same carefully crafted exterior falls flat when, as leaders, we need to build engagement and enthusiasm.

As part of my research for my latest book, *The Inspiration Code*, I commissioned the Harris Poll to survey 2,000 U.S. adults about what communication behaviors inspired them. A top-cited behavior was that the inspirational person said what they meant and spoke with authenticity. I also talked with hundreds of professionals about what inspires them, and emotion came up repeatedly as the gateway to authenticity. If people don't see your true emotions, then they can't see you.

In fact, emotionality is necessary for inspiring others. As soon as you make the transition to manager, rather than avoiding emotion, you should harness it. This doesn't have to be an abstract exercise. Here are three straightforward ways I've coached clients to achieve emotional resonance.

Set Your Intention

Before important conversations, speeches, or meetings, consider: What is the emotional takeaway I want to impart? It might be excitement, gravity, or fun, for example. Remember that emotions are contagious, and leaders in particular have a strong influence on the team's mood or *group affect*. If you want others to *feel* that emotion, then you need to *express* it. And keep in mind that if you don't deliberately set the emotional tenor, it will happen by accident. If you show up tired and distracted, those are the emotions you'll be telegraphing.

Use Emotional Language

The words you use to express yourself add to the emotional tone. Make an effort to match what you're saying with the emotions you want to convey. Be careful not to sanitize your language in an effort to make your message more palatable - your message will likely end up sounding vanilla and bland. Pepper your talks with straightforward words that signal the tone you're trying to set.

Consider these examples of emotions and words that help convey them.

- Confidence: powerful, assured, proud, significant, ready
- Joy: inspired, amazed, grateful, exhilarated, enthusiastic
- Anger: disappointed, let down, irritated, regretful, frustrated
- Urgency: critical, behind, anxious, missing out, eager

Employ Emotional Appeals

You can also use emotions to make appeals. If you consider emotional appeals the work of unsavory salespeople, think again. All leaders need to persuade people to take action. Robert Cialdini identified six principles of persuasion that can be used in any setting. Here they are, along with some examples of how new managers can turn them into rhetorical frames that appeal to people's emotions:

- We like people who are similar to us: "I consider this team family, and I'll do whatever I can to represent us."
- We reciprocate behaviors: "I've been glad to make client introductions for you, and now I'm hoping you'll make an introduction for me."
- We aim to be consistent: "You've said you're open to creative ideas, so I have one to run by you."
- We respect authority: "This message comes directly from the CEO, so it's a priority."
- We want more of something when it's scarce: "If we don't launch our product now, customers will reallocate their year-end budgets."
  We take action when others are doing so, because there is social proof: "Everyone in our market is advertising this way."

Using emotions to win hearts and minds is far from new (in fact, Aristotle's rhetorical triangle featured three equal elements: logic, credibility, and emotion), but for today's leaders it's more imperative and trickier to navigate. But I believe that the rise in online (and experientially intimate) platforms such as social media, blogging, and video have created expectations that we know our leaders to a greater degree, and in deeper ways.

And with organizations being geographically and culturally dispersed, managers frequently lead people whom they rarely see face-to-face. They need to let their teams know their priorities, motivate behavior, and inspire commitment - all from a distance. Audiences need to clearly see what emotion the leader is trying to convey.

One last point: There's an important distinction between true and false emotion. Inauthenticity is easy to suss out, so doing any of the above in a false way is likely to backfire. The best way to connect on a deeper level is to be transparent about the emotions you're currently feeling. You're not acting - you're emoting.

Kristi Hedges is a senior leadership coach who specializes in executive communications and the author of *The Inspiration Code: How the Best Leaders Energize People Every Day* and *The Power of Presence: Unlock Your* Potential to *Influence and Engage Others* . She's the president of The Hedges Company and a faculty member in Georgetown University's Institute for Transformational Leadership.

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Business Communication

Tips for Reading the Room Before a Meeting or Presentation

by Rebecca Knight

May 10, 2018

beastfromeast/Getty Images

Summary. Knowing how to read between the lines and pick up on colleagues' subtle social cues is a critical skill. After all, there's often an explicit conversation happening in a meeting or around the water cooler — and a tacit one. The best way to take the temperature of a... **more**

In every conversation at work, there's the explicit discussion happening — the words being spoken out loud — and the tacit one. To be successful in most organizations, it's important to

understand the underlying conversations and reactions that people in the room are having. But if you aren't picking up on those subtle cues, how can you learn to do so? What signals should you be looking for? And what can you do to influence the unspoken dynamics?

What the Experts Say

"Knowing how to read between the lines is a critical workplace skill," says Annie McKee, a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, and the author of *How to Be Happy at Work*. "You need to understand other people — what they want, what they don't want, their fears, hopes, dreams, and motivations," she says. "This builds trust. And trust is fundamental to getting things done." In addition, you must be aware of your effect on others, according to Karen Dillon, coauthor of *How Will You Measure Your Life?* "You need to be constantly assessing how other people are responding to you," she says. "Some people find this easy and intuitive. For others, it's a challenge." The good news is that this skill can be learned. Here are some ways how.

Observe

The best way to read a room is to pay close attention to people — and not just what they're saying. "If you're relying [solely] on their words, you're only getting half the picture," McKee says. Upon entering a meeting, she recommends, do "a quick scan of the individuals," noting "who's next to whom, who's smiling, who's not, who's standing, who's sitting, and how much space is between people." Next, try to pick up on "the almost invisible clues on how people are feeling" by looking carefully at "their facial expressions, posture, and body language." Be on the lookout for "quick microexpressions" such as "fleeting smiles, raised eyebrows, or even tiny frowns." Vigilant observation will give you the information you need to interpret group dynamics. Dillon recommends identifying role models to further improve your social awareness. "Think of people you admire who are great at reading the room," she says. "Isolate the things they do and try to emulate those."

Control how much you talk

You can't observe if you're spending most of your time talking. You need to listen, Dillon says. "Be conscious of how much you are saying." Whether you're in a room with a large group of people, a small group, or you're speaking with a colleague one-on-one, she advises taking frequent pauses "to really think about what the other person is saying" and watching out for the nonverbal cues. Don't just wait for your turn to talk; there is "no shame" in silence. When the conversation is more intimate, Dillon says, you must strive to "make the other person feel heard." Be present. Be engaged. Make eye contact. "Position yourself so that you're not inviting others to butt into your conversation. Help the other people feel confident that you are all in the moment together." After the other person says something, paraphrase what they said to indicate that you're paying attention. Similarly, "if the other person doesn't seem to be hearing what you're saying, and you start to realize that you're talking at them, you should ask a question," she adds. Try open-ended questions such as "What do you think about…?" or, "What are the consequences of…?" or, "Have you experienced this?" The answers to these questions help you uncover what's really going on.

Interpret your observations

Once you've "tuned into the emotions and energy in the room," you can "try to make sense of what you think you know," McKee says. She recommends "generating multiple hypotheses about what's going on." Consider the people in the group more broadly and reflect on the possible reasons for their individual and collective emotional states. "What's happening in their lives? What's going on in their jobs? What do you know about these people?" If you don't know much, this can be tricky, but you can still come up with hypotheses for what's motivating people. At the same time, you shouldn't project your feelings onto the group. "Keep your emotions in check," McKee says, adding that this is a feat that "takes tremendous skill and self-control." If, say, the room is reverberating tension, don't let yourself "be hijacked by negative energy, and don't give in to your natural inclination to be

frightened and angry." Remember, too, that the emotions you perceive are not personal. "It probably doesn't have anything to do with you."

Check your hypotheses

When you've developed a few explanations for what's going on in the room, check your understanding. You can do this by continuing to gather further information — though you should continue to be open to what you're seeing and sensing so that you don't fall prey to confirmation bias. You can also ask people directly, in private, McKee says. When you're in one-on-one conversations, you might say something like, "In the meeting I saw you furrow your brow when discussion turned to the xyz project — how do you feel about it?" Most likely, your colleagues will be pleased you noticed, she says. When you make note of people's feelings and reactions, they "feel attended to." Another tactic McKee suggests is talking with a trusted colleague, mentor, or coach. "Talk about what you've observed — not in a gossipy way, but as a learning opportunity," she says. "You want someone else to check ideas with" so that you can say, "What do you think is going on with that colleague? Or that coalition?"

Put your perceptions into practice

If in the midst of a meeting or interaction, you notice that things are getting tense or heated, you can "take the opportunity to shift the emotional reality of the room," McKee says. "Use humor," she adds. "Or empathize with the group — make them feel okay." She recommends determining who in the room has "the most social or hierarchical capital" and then focusing on getting that person on your side. "It could be a person who has the most seniority, or the person who others are sitting closest to. It could be the person who's telling jokes and has the ability to lighten the mood." Keep an eye out "for any positive signals" — the executive in the corner who's smiling, for instance — and concentrate on those. Importantly, continue to pay attention to what's not being said. "Most people are just waiting to talk," she says. As a result, "we may catch most of the words, but we miss the music."

Principles to Remember

Do:

- Consider the people in the room more broadly and reflect on the possible reasons for their individual and collective emotional states.
- Look for microexpressions such as fleeting smiles or raised eyebrows. These offer clues to group dynamics and individual emotions.
- Isolate the behaviors that your socially aware role model exhibits and try to emulate them.

Don't:

- Be distracted. Maintain eye contact and be present and engaged in conversations with others.
- Make it all about you. Ask open-ended questions to help you uncover what's really going on.
- Allow yourself to be hijacked by a room's negative energy. Keep your emotions in check and do what you can to shift the emotional reality of the room.

Case Study #1: Pay attention to people's body language and facial expressions

As the chief human resources officer at Prosek Partners, the global PR company, Karen Niovitch Davis has a good deal of experience reading rooms. "I've had a 20+ year career in HR," she says. "A lot of what I do is about trying to really understand what people are saying when they are not actually saying it."

Every week, she attends a management meeting at Prosek for senior vice presidents, managing directors, and partners. The company's CEO leads the meeting, and Karen, because of her role, is often aware of what's on the agenda.

“Since some of the things that we discuss are sensitive or controversial, I am often prepping for how my colleagues will react,” Karen says.

Recently, for instance, the CEO announced that the company would be expanding and that it had signed a lease for more space in the building. Certain employees and teams would be moving to another floor.

Karen paid close attention to her colleagues’ body language and facial expressions to gauge their reactions. She was prepared for a mixed bag. “I knew everyone in the room was thinking: What does this mean for me? What does this mean for my team? Are we all going to have to move?” she says. “That’s human nature.”

Many of her colleagues seemed “genuinely pleased” by the news, she recalls. “They were excited because the move means we are growing.”

Others, however, gave off a decidedly different vibe. Some people’s faces went blank; others visibly frowned. One — we’ll call her Jane — looked down and scribbled a note to a colleague sitting next to her.

Karen assumed that Jane wasn’t looking forward to the prospect of moving. She thought about what she already knew about Jane. “She does not like to change her routine,” Karen notes.

Shortly after the meeting ended, Karen approached Jane. She told her that it seemed that she was unhappy about the move. “I wanted to make sure she knew I noticed her,” Karen says.

Jane appreciated that Karen noticed. “She said, ‘I don’t want to move because I like where my desk is now,’” Karen says. “She told me that she didn’t want to say anything in the meeting because she didn’t want to come off as not a team player.”

Karen listened attentively to Jane's reasoning. She empathized with her and asked her open-ended questions about her concerns. She wanted to make sure Jane felt heard. "I told her that the office would be an exact replica of our current space and that the views would be better," she says.

But Jane was not swayed by the argument. "I told her we would work something out so she would not have to move," Karen says.

Case Study #2: Don't assume you know how other people feel — ask them

Heather Anderson, an executive mentor at Vistage International, the San Diego–based advisory and executive coaching organization, says that she often speaks to her clients about the importance of social intelligence. "Emotions contain data," she says. "I tell them that the emotional data they receive in their team meetings, their one-on-ones, and their client calls are just as important to their end game as anything else."

She speaks from experience. Recently, Heather ran a meeting for one of her peer-to-peer coaching groups at Vistage. One of the agenda items was to provide feedback to one of the newer members — we'll call her Susan. These meetings happen regularly; their purpose "is to challenge each other to be better leaders."

"People are candid in these meetings and it can feel harsh if you're on the receiving end — particularly when it's your first time," Heather says. "It's intimidating."

Heather first scanned the room to gauge the temperature; it wasn't particularly tense, but she could tell that Susan was nervous. Next, she listened carefully to what others said. The comments were "frank," and it wasn't particularly positive.

She paid close attention to Susan's body language. "I could see the look of surprise and fear on Susan's face," she says. "She shrunk in her chair and her shoulders dropped."

Heather empathized with Susan's emotions and reflected on what was happening. "I thought she felt threatened," Heather says. "I wondered, 'Should we soften our words?'"

To be sure, she asked Susan how she felt. "I said, 'How are you feeling? What is it like to get this feedback?'"

Susan surprised her. "She said, 'Wow. This is intense, but this is exactly what I signed up for.'"

Heather realized that she had projected some of her own feelings onto Susan. "I expected her to feel a certain way," she says, "but you can't assume you know."

Later, Heather asked Susan how she planned to use the feedback she received during the meeting. "Susan was able to recite very specific action items, and she talked enthusiastically about the things she wanted to do and changes she wanted to make," Heather says.

Heather plans to follow up with Susan in a few weeks.

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Rebecca Knight is currently a senior correspondent at Insider covering careers and the workplace. Previously she was a freelance journalist and a lecturer at Wesleyan University. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Financial Times*.