

MAXWELL MOMENT**Charismatic Leadership**

by Dr. John C. Maxwell

William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli were two of the fiercest political rivals of the 19th century. Their epic battles for control of the British Empire were marked by intense animosity that spilled over from the public arena into their personal lives. Ambitious, powerful, and politically astute, both men were spirited competitors and masterful politicians.

Though each man achieved impressive accomplishments for Britain, the quality that separated them as leaders was their approach to people. The difference is best illustrated by the account of a young woman who dined with the men on consecutive nights. When asked about her impression of the rival statesmen, she said, "When I left the dining room after sitting next to Mr. Gladstone, I thought he was the cleverest man in England. But after sitting next to Mr. Disraeli, I thought I was the cleverest woman in England."

What distinguished Disraeli from Gladstone was charisma. Disraeli possessed a personal charm sorely lacking in the leadership style of his rival. His personal appeal attracted friends and created favorable impressions among acquaintances. Throughout his career, Disraeli's charisma gave him an edge over Gladstone.

UNDERSTANDING CHARISMA

Of all leadership attributes, charisma is perhaps the least understood. At first glance, charisma appears to be an invisible energy or magnetism. There's no denying its presence, but it's hard to put a finger on its source. Some mistakenly believe charisma is a birth trait—embedded in certain personalities, but completely absent in others.

I believe charisma is both explainable and learnable. I also believe charisma helps to boost a leader's influence. That's why I included it in my book, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. In this lesson, I'd like to examine the causes of charisma and teach you how to increase the charisma you display as a leader.

THE QUALITIES OF A CHARISMATIC LEADER

Charisma is defined as, "The ability to inspire enthusiasm, interest, or affection in others by means of personal charm or influence." Leaders who have this special ability share four things in common:

1) They Love Life

Leaders who attract a following are passionate about life. They are celebrators, not complainers. They're characterized by joy and warmth. They're energetic and radiant in an infectious way.

Look no further than the smile to illustrate the power of charisma. When people see a smile, they respond with a smile. If you're skeptical, try it. Smile at cashiers, waiters, co-workers, etc. You'll find your smile earns a reciprocal smile almost every time. We are hardwired to take on the energy of those around us. Leaders who love life have charisma because they fill the room with positive energy.

2) They Value the Potential in People

To become an attractive leader, expect the best from your people. I describe this behavior as "putting a 10 on everyone's head." Leaders see people, not as they are, but as they could be. From this vantage point, they help others to build a bridge from the present to a preferred future.

Benjamin Disraeli understood and practiced this concept, and it was one of the secrets to his charisma. He once said, "The greatest good you can do for another is not to share your riches but to reveal to him his own." When you invest in people and lift them toward their potential, they will love you for it.

3) They Give Hope

People have an inner longing to improve their future and their fortunes. Charismatic leaders connect with people by painting tomorrow brighter than today. To them, the future is full of amazing opportunities and unrealized dreams.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Leaders are dealers in hope." They infuse optimism into the culture around them, and they boost morale. While attentive to the current reality, they do not resign themselves to present circumstance.

4) They Share Themselves

Leaders with charisma add value to people by sharing wisdom, resources, and even special occasions. They embrace the power of inclusion, inviting others to join them for learning experiences, brainstorming sessions, or simply a cup of coffee. Such leaders embrace team spirit and value togetherness. As a result, charismatic leaders are not lonely at the top.

When it comes to charisma, the bottom line is othermindedness. For leaders, the greatest satisfaction is found by serving. They find great pleasure celebrating the successes of those around them, and the victory they enjoy the most is a team triumph.

SUMMARY

In closing, charisma has substance. It's not manipulative energy or a magical gift endowed upon select personalities. Rather, it's an attractive blend of learnable qualities.

Furthermore, charisma compounds a leader's influence. Without it, leaders have trouble inspiring passion and energizing their teams. With it, leaders draw out the best in their people, give the best of themselves, and find the greatest fulfillment.

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LEADERSHIP@LARGE

Finding Your Voice

"One word expresses the pathway to greatness: voice. Those on this path find their voice and inspire others to find theirs. The rest never do." ~ Steven Covey

One of the expressions bandied about by political commentators this season has been of a candidate "finding a voice." In fact, in the space of about two months, seemingly every candidate found his or hers.

- On November 11, 2007, *TIME* contributor, Ana Marie Cox, wrote about Senator Barack Obama "finding his voice," at a Democratic dinner party in Iowa.
- During post-debate coverage on November 28, 2007, CNN's David Gergen asserted, "I think that the most presidential tonight was John McCain, who's found his voice again."
- On January 9th 2008, Jack Horowitz of the *New York Observer* wrote about Hillary Clinton's primary election victory in New Hampshire. The headline? "Hillary, Triumphant, Finds Her Voice."
- On January 16, 2008, Ana Marie Cox raised the question, "Has Romney Found His Voice?" in her article on Mitt Romney's first-place finish in the Michigan presidential primary.

In an April blog post, Stephen Covey tackles the nebulous concept of a leader's "voice." He feels that leaders "find a voice" when they 1) Tap into Talent 2) Find What Fuels Their Passion 3) Are Burdened with a Need 4) Take Action to Meet the Need.

Step 1: Tapping into Your Talent

Tapping into your talents starts with understanding where you excel. It involves recognizing your strengths and positioning yourself to leverage them. To tap into your talent consider the question: What am I good at doing?

Step 2: Fueling Your Passion

When you take part in activities that fill you with positive emotion, you are fueling your passion. Pursuits that spark your passion bring excitement, enthusiasm, joy, and fun. To fuel your passion, ask yourself: What do I love doing?

Step 3: Being Burdened with a Need

When a problem in society lodges itself in your heart and won't let go, then you have been burdened with a need. Perhaps, the need is an injustice you wish to remedy. Maybe it's a disease you would love to cure. Whatever the case, a burden gnaws at your conscience. To take stock of your biggest burden, wrestle with the question: What need must I serve?

Step 4: Meeting the Need

Once a need has arrested your attention, then you can find your voice by taking action. A need compels you to do something besides criticize from the sidelines. To meet the need, think about this question: How can I align my talent with my passion in order to meet the need that burdens me?

For more discussion about finding your voice, visit [Stephen Covey's blog](#)

Five Questions for Leaders With Newfound Authority

The most revealing chapter of a leader's journey begins when they ascend to their first position of influence. Much can be deciphered about a person's character by observing how they wield authority.

Don't misinterpret me; leadership transcends titles, and influence cannot be confined to positions of rank or seniority. Nonetheless, newfound authority carries the weight of responsibility. How a leader responds to that responsibility can be a measuring stick of their overall fitness to lead.

When leaders are handed authority, they enjoy broader latitude to exercise their leadership style. As positional leaders, they are able to implement their ideas more freely and instill their values more directly. The decisions they make at this critical juncture may either launch their careers or stunt their development.

In his blog for Harvard Business Publishing, Bill Taylor poses five questions aspiring leaders should consider as they assume the reigns of authority. For rising leaders, or those mentoring a leadership rookie, his material will be particularly beneficial.

Five Make-or-Break Questions for Aspiring Leaders

1) Why should great people want to work with you?

Money without mission attracts mercenaries. Talent "for-hire" flows to the highest bidder, and refuses to drop anchor. In the absence of a compelling vision, leaders find themselves presiding over a collection of individuals rather than leading a team.

As Bill Taylor writes, "great people want to feel like they're part of something greater than themselves." By offering more than a paycheck, an aspiring leader attracts values-based performers. Such employees are likely to forge emotional ties to the

organization, take ownership of its mission, and invest themselves to accomplish its vision.

2) Do you know a great person when you see one?

"When it comes to evaluating talent, character counts for as much as credentials," writes Taylor. Aspiring leaders are wise to hire people who, in addition to being competent, fit smoothly into the company's culture. To do so, it may be necessary to endure the inconvenience (and extra work) of a longstanding opening until a suitable candidate surfaces.

3) Can you find great people who aren't working for you?

Aspiring leaders may want to polish their sales pitch to attract star performers from outside the organization. According to Taylor, "Leaders who are content to fill their organizations with people actively looking for jobs risk attracting malcontents and mediocre performers."

Talent will not beat a path to your door. The best leaders are actively on the lookout for key contributors. They look to hire, not when the need arises, but whenever they locate peak performers.

4) Are you teaching great people how your company works and wins?

In an effort to showcase their leadership skills, insecure leaders may rally their team to outperform others within the organization. The result: a counterproductive spirit of competition instead of togetherness.

Smart leaders are wary of silos. They define the win for their team and connect that win to the company's overarching strategy. They recognize the power of a "we" mentality. As such, they prioritize connecting the performance of their people to the overall success of the company.

5) Are you as tough on yourself as you are on your people?

Bleed your creed. Undemonstrated or uncertain commitment on the part of a leader has a corrosive effect on that leader's influence. Followers resent leaders who are unwilling to make the investment they demand of those they supervise.

Oppositely, leaders who pay the price to fulfill lofty self-expectations earn the right to place high standards on their people. By doing so, they are imbuing their authority with authentic influence.

For more content from Bill Taylor, browse his blogs on the [Harvard Business School's publishing website](#).

BOOK REVIEW

The Breakthrough Company: How Everyday Companies Become Extraordinary Performers

by Keith R. McFarland (Crown Business, 2008)

As a newcomer to Hollywood, Brad Pitt spent his days in a giant chicken costume, not as an actor, but as an employee of El Pollo Loco.

Jerry Seinfeld worked as a light-bulb salesman and peddled jewelry on the streets of New York before making his breakthrough as a comedian.

Prior to gaining celebrity status, Whoopi Goldberg worked for a mortuary, giving cosmetic treatment to prepare bodies for open-casket funerals.

BREAKTHROUGH

Breakthrough is the bridge from anonymity to stardom. It's the pathway from average to highly-acclaimed. In *The Breakthrough Company*, author Keith R. McFarland explores how businesses transition from ordinary to extraordinary.

An endorsement on the book's dust jacket, "*Good to Great* for those small enough to think big," accurately sums up of the book. Indeed, McFarland shares Jim Collins' passion for research and penchant for extracting pearls of wisdom from a sea of data. In fact, McFarland cites a conversation with Collins as a major inspiration for his decision to write *The Breakthrough Company*.

As the basis for the book, McFarland conducted an exhaustive study on small, unknown companies that made big leaps to become industry leaders and Wall Street darlings. Along the way, he identified several commonalities of breakthrough performers, and he spends the bulk of the book expounding on those qualities.

McFarland posits that small companies can learn behaviors to increase their odds of achieving breakthrough. In the brevity of this review, it isn't possible to flesh out the many rich concepts he offers. However, here's the shortlist of his brightest ideas:

Crowning the Company (Chapter 3)

Entrepreneurs inhibit breakthrough when they crown themselves as the sovereign leader of the company. Instead, leaders who inspire breakthrough, "Serve their companies instead of having their companies serve them."

Building Company Character (Chapter 5)

A statement of values is worthless unless the values are put into practice. A company's habits of behavior are what count. "Everything else is just PR."

Navigating The Business Bermuda Triangle (Chapter 6)

Like the famed Bermuda Triangle, startups have a danger zone in which they may lose their way and never be heard from again. This area is the stage of growth at

which the benefits of being small must be scaled into sustainable advantages - regardless of size.

SUMMARY

It's worth restating how the meticulous research undertaken by McFarland contributes to the force of his ideas. His leadership observations rest on a bedrock of in-depth analysis rather than personal opinion or popular theory. Keen insights, at times counterintuitive and surprising, spring forth from his incisive investigation of breakthrough companies.

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QUOTES

Charisma

"How can you have charisma? Be more concerned about making others feel good about themselves than you are making them feel good about you." ~ Dan Reiland

"There is no personal charm so great as the charm of a cheerful temperament."
~Henry Van Dyke

"Charisma is a sparkle in people that money can't buy. It's an invisible energy with visible effects." ~ Marianne Williamson

For more information on Dr. John C. Maxwell, please [visit our website](#). In our effort to become your new content provider, portions of *Leadership Wired* are often written by editors other than John C. Maxwell and do not necessarily reflect his opinions.

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