



Charismatic leadership

Stamping a presence on the business

Nikki Owen, a regular contributor to television and radio on the topic of charisma, reveals how the personal charisma of a leader can enrich the lives of the people that work for them



Key learning points

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| 1. Charismatic leaders inspire loyalty and higher performing teams | 3. Charismatic leaders want to make a difference |
| 2. Authenticity is essential | 4. Ego-centrics can turn into bullies |

Was Gordon Brown's demise accelerated by his lack of charisma, made glaringly obvious from the historic live TV debates? As part of the official political commentary team for Aljazeera News and SunTalk Radio I was asked to analyse the charisma, confidence and body language of all three political leaders and I can give you a categorical answer – absolutely.

Charisma has a real affect on a leader's ability to lead, as evidenced by the Trice and Beyer's studies (1996), and according to the Cremer and Knippenberg report published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (2002), charismatic leaders have a stronger effect on workforce cooperation when compared with their non-charismatic peers. Nick Clegg, the surprise 'Boy Wonder', demonstrated the tangible link between charisma and career progression when he landed himself the prestigious job of deputy prime minister. In the corporate world, would the beleaguered BP CEO Tony Hayward have fared any better if he had developed greater presence, charisma and impact in front of the cameras?

Charismatic people possess a potent blend of attractiveness and presence that commands attention with an irresistible magnetic force. They attract others with apparent ease – and it is important to note that a charismatic person doesn't have to be physically attractive to possess the power to attract. When we meet or observe a charismatic person, we are attracted to their aura of 'specialness', believing

such specialness could overflow into our own personality, infecting us as if by osmosis with a magical presence.

According to personal development guru, Brian Tracy, there is a close association between personal charisma and success in life. Probably 85 per cent of your success and happiness will come from your relationships and interactions with others. The more positively others respond to you, the easier it will be for you to get the things you want.

That's why charismatic leaders exhibit the tendency to inspire greater levels of support and loyalty from others, resulting in an ability to create higher performing teams, stronger relationships with customers and shareholders, and an increased probability they will be able to lead successful change projects. Although being charismatic is not sufficient to guarantee success in business, it does provide an advantage.

If a leader lacks authenticity, if they don't mean what they say, they will dilute the strength of their character and consequently the strength of their charisma. Yet many famous charismatic leaders with strong characters have lied without any apparent dent to their charisma. Robert Maxwell is a prime example of this. He was rumoured to have opened his children's Christmas presents with the same lack of guilt he showed when helping himself to the pension fund. Yet how could he have lied and acted so dishonestly without tarnishing his magnetic personality?

The answer lies with the charismatic individual having complete and utter belief that even if they choose to lie to

others, ultimately they are true to themselves. Their belief system leads them to believe their power gives them an insight that is exclusively theirs and they are the ultimate judge in what is morally right or wrong.

Yet can charisma and confidence in potential talent be perceived as arrogance and cockiness?

Take a moment to reflect on one of the most sought-after club managers in European football, José Mourinho. His supreme self-confidence was immortalised in the media when he gave himself the title 'The Special One'. Often perceived as arrogant, he does not know the meaning of humility. "If I wanted to have an easy job... I would have stayed at Porto – beautiful blue chair, the UEFA Champions League Trophy, God and, after God, me." While Mourinho is a showman he appears to truly speak from his heart. He can't hide his emotions and despite all his arrogance he is one of Europe's most respected and loved managers – undoubtedly due to his authenticity.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the founders of the Transcendental Club, was known as one of the best public speakers of his time. He believed passionately that slavery should be abolished, despite overwhelming hostility. His charismatic presence was heightened because he spoke from his heart, never compromising his beliefs for popularity. Emerson wisely said, "Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you."

Charismatic people speak from their hearts. If you try to emulate Barack Obama, Joanna Lumley or any other charismatic individual, you effectively

'act', putting on a mask of charisma. You start modelling external characteristics that may or may not reflect your own internal characteristics. This immediately blocks the flow of your own authentic persona, consequently diluting the emotional intensity of your communication.

Whatever external mask you choose to wear, if it doesn't reflect the genuine authentic 'you', this will create a feeling in others that 'something just isn't right about this person'. By connecting with the core elements that shape our character, we create the opportunity to develop a charismatic presence.

Charismatic leaders simultaneously

quantum physics have demonstrated that each of us is a packet of pulsating energy that constantly interacts with the universe. In Eastern philosophies, the yin/yang symbol provides a graphic representation of male and female energies inherent within us. Yin, or female, energy is the intuitive receptive nurturing part of us. Yang, or male, energy is the strong action-orientated forceful side that gets things accomplished. When these energies are balanced, we ignite an internal emotional intensity that other people experience as magnetism or charisma.

Nelson Mandela's life is a story of huge courage. He endured a 23-year imprisonment for his dream of a better

expedition include teamwork, courage, determination, resilience and the ability to perform under extreme pressure. These same qualities are all crucial to success in the business world.

For a charismatic leader working within a corporate environment, the very nature of their character and personality gives rise to a plethora of situations in which they require courage and steely nerves to pursue what they believe to be right.

A charismatic leader not only requires personal courage but can also benefit from actively promoting an environment within which people are encouraged to be courageous. They possess the ability to engage in

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radiate and absorb extremely high levels of energy because they can balance their attention equally on the needs of others as well as themselves. As the charismatic leader takes in more energy, they are able to radiate even higher levels of energy that continues to build between themselves and the person or people to whom they are paying attention. When a leader's attention is predominantly focused internally they absorb energy for themselves, yet drain the energy of their workforce. If a leader's attention is predominantly externally focused, they radiate high levels of energy for others, yet drain their own energy reserves.

Scientists at the frontiers of research that involve re-examining

and equal South Africa. Mandela said: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." This man's vision was so completely and utterly compelling for him that he had no other choice except to stand by his beliefs in the face of devastating personal adversity.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes has been described as the world's greatest living explorer and was awarded an OBE for human endeavour and charitable services. His courage when faced with nature's most dangerous and difficult challenges is a great analogy for leaders in the business world. The elements vital to the success of an

courageous conversations. This requires courageous listening, courageous decision-making, courageous action, the courage to set and enforce standards of behaviour, and the courage to do what it takes to change destructive existing habits. Courageous leadership requires people to see what others don't want to see, and do what others don't want to do.

An organisation may have the ability to make the necessary changes, but it requires courageous charismatic leaders who possess strength, conviction and the stamina to hold on through the inevitable resistance.

Charismatic people have a strong need within them to make a difference to the world within which they operate.

This wider focus expands their energy flow and this is then interpreted as 'presence'. Charismatic leaders affect both their followers and the organisational culture. They are capable of altering workforce attitudes, beliefs and motivation, making changes that are not easily implemented through conventional leadership approaches alone. It's little wonder that the leader who possesses charisma also has a tendency to attract followers who are the crème de la crème.

Charismatic leaders working in a corporate environment have an immense power to enrich the lives of the people that work for them. This

leads to greater job satisfaction and ultimately improves performance and productivity.

Sadly, one of the less attractive traits of many charismatic leaders, such as Sir Alan Sugar, is a monstrous ego that can make them very self-centred. Rather than empower and persuade their people to do what they want they sometimes use the strength of their personality to force and bully others into submission. That's why the leader with charisma automatically has a mantle of responsibility; a duty of care towards those who are affected by their leader's vision and actions. ■

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