

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEADER'S PASSION AND POISE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

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DOI: 10.19062/1842-9238.2024.22.1.4

Abstract: *The study tackles the issue of the essential behaviours that directly affect the impression that a leader leaves upon the others. Passion and poise are the most explicit forms of manifestation of leadership and, at the same time, the chance to be efficient in having successful interactions between the leaders and other people.*

Keywords: *leader / leadership / charisma / passion / poise*

1. THE ROLE OF PASSION IN LEADERSHIP

Leaders are passionate about what they do. They impress others through their joy and the enthusiasm with which they get actively involved in everything that matters to them. Their passion not only refers to their profession and their family, but it also concerns less ardent daily matters, which is why they get to be admired by the people in their entourage and they become a source of inspiration for those who are influenced by their emotions, way of thinking, manner of communication and magnetism.

The leader's passionate way of communicating (J.P. Kotter, *What leaders really do*, 2001) is characterized by:

- a particular persistence in transmitting a message very energetically, by replacing the preoccupation for the preparation of the manner of communication with the authentic strife to share one's own beliefs and opinions with the audience in the best possible way;
- a joyful acceptance of the fact that it is a normal thing not to be taken on faith and that the audience might have their own opinions in contesting any belief, the dialogue thus becoming interesting to the extent to which one postpones the instantaneous attaining of the goal to convince while using their passion only as a starting point for communicating their opinions and tenaciously arguing for any counterargument;
- the satisfaction of not having to make any compromise because one knows what one wants and is capable of stimulating the others with their enthusiasm.

People will perceive passionate communicators as people who are capable of leadership, in other words as leaders, or individuals who are ready to take on any challenge, who have a purpose, who are authentic, full-hearted, self-asserted, energetic, soulful, cheerful and with a sense of humour. The effect of leadership finally resides in the magnetic force that determines the influencing of one's peers through contagion/mirroring. This so-called mirroring phenomenon exists because leaders like to talk about what preoccupies them and they love what they do, this being the reason why

they manage to generate an entirely new approach whenever they get involved, making a very powerful positive impression upon the audience.

The effect of the leaders' enthusiasm is all the more contagious as they are less preoccupied with their person, uninhibited in sharing what really is most important to them, leaving little space for uncertainty and that is also their specific manner of consolidating self-confidence. Leaders act openly, spontaneously and that makes it highly probable for them to create an atmosphere in which people are treated respectfully, in an equal and honest manner. The leaders' spontaneity comes from the fact that they dare to stay connected to what they are most passionate about, which allows them to access their internal resources without any restrictions, by way of:

- anticipation (training oneself for challenging situations that require action without a guiding map, such as speaking one's mind freely, without a pre-set narrative);
- listening (collecting information and clues related to what other people think and feel by listening empathetically and watching carefully, to be able to answer whenever it is required);
- overall thinking (the effort to expand thinking by changing the perspective from which one approaches topics of discussion, either by focusing on their essence, or by focusing on what the current approach might really be lacking, or by starting from what the topic of discussion might remind one of, or by starting from how it relates to one's personal experiences or what the current context brings to the topic etc.);
- gaining time to think (listening patiently and waiting for the interlocutors to finish what they have to say, before asking questions, taking time to think when lacking an answer to an open-ended question, returning to what the interlocutor said to ask for further explanations, telling a story related to the issue in question in order to postpone an answer).

The leaders' power of engagement makes them question conventional approaches, express strong opinions, claim facts and not words, and show an uncomfortable willingness to change radically. Their passion makes them have the courage to raise uncomfortable issues or to question what is happening and, behind these manifestations, they, the leaders, may paradoxically be anxious or insecure about themselves. The more passionate the leaders are, the more uninhibited they are, risking, to a greater extent, to lose their temper, as well as their integrity, depending on the correctness of their choice of challenges; however, in the positive register, the need to be defensive is excluded, out of lack of confidence or the desire to paint someone else black.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF POISE IN LEADERSHIP

Poise is the attitude of caring about one's image in general, with a view to revealing the best version of oneself to those around. Even though a person's inner self matters more than their exterior appearance, first impressions are still important when people interact with their peers, since the general appearance can be very important in intuiting whether a person is elegant, sober, conventional, balanced, bold, optimistic, conscientious, meticulous, creative, relaxed or, on the contrary, original, depressed, pessimistic, shy, disorganised, inattentive, unimaginative, tense and rigid. Such prejudices can occur in a matter of seconds, which is why poise is very important.

People tend to make assumptions about other people:

- Economic status (wealthy, poor, of average station, successful);
- Level of education (academic, average education, incomplete education);
- Credibility (honest, trustworthy, dependable);

- Social status (high, successful, well-integrated, lonely, declining, growing);
- Relationship (attractive, confident, anxious, relaxed);
- Attitude (aggressive, friendly, unpretentious, hard to get to know).

To improve one's impact is to invest time and resources in order to develop various aspects of one's appearance in general, which could include one's apparel, stance, care, handshake, manners, image, etc. (J. Kotterman, *Leadership vs. Management: What's the difference?* 2006).

Apparel is the most obvious area in which rapid changes can be made and to ignore the power of clothes is a form of arrogance or a sign that one has lost the sense of reality. Some of the most common mistakes that people make when it comes to clothing are the following:

- choosing cheap and cheerful-looking clothes
- ignoring the classical outfit in order to be trendy
- disregarding what is most suitable for one
- not matching colours
- excessive use of accessories
- wearing dowdy clothes:
 - worn cuffs/collars,
 - poorly ironed clothes,
 - stains on the ties, suits, dresses, etc.,
 - missing or unbuttoned buttons,
 - too long or too short sleeves or trousers,
 - old, dirty or torn shoes,
 - ragged belts, bags,
- being ostentatiously well-dressed.

Manners remain an important factor that influence the presence of leaders, and their powerful poise is due to the fact that they approach other people without treating them differently, being equally polite and adapted to the context both with people they admire and with those they consider unimportant. What matters in the case of good manners is that when they are adapted to the context, they represent an indication of a person showing the same respect to everyone around and they help avoid blunders such as:

- not thanking those who have shown kindness;
- swinging forward and backward in one's chair;
- being openly familiar towards someone without their permission;
- not treating people around with respect;
- touching objects and people without being invited to do so;
- interrupting other people repeatedly or making noises constantly;
- insulting someone privately or publicly.

3. THE P-BY-A TECHNIQUE

The Purpose – Be Yourself – Attractiveness Model (Andrew Leigh, *Charisma*, 2010) considers charismatic effect to be a useful tool in the development of leadership, following the constant progress in becoming aware of what generates a good and lasting impression, starting from a gentle approach of three basic elements:

- the PURPOSE of your communication;
- BEING YOURSELF, through fluency, self-confidence, mindfulness, authenticity, courage, passion and poise;
- being a pleasant person (ATTRACTIVENESS), by capturing the interlocutor's attention, by interdependence and by establishing personal relations.

Two possible strategies can be adopted when using the P-BY-A technique:

- focusing on the known strengths and improving them;
- tackling weaknesses in order to work with them and to achieve personal development.

There are usually certain combinations of the two strategies that work best, particularly when a four-step approach is used:

1. preparing communications based on the three steps: the reason why one communicates, remaining authentic, capturing the attention of the audience;
2. selecting one of the areas of development that one wishes to perfect: trust, passion, building a relationship, catching the attention, etc.;
3. experimenting with the new modes of interaction, such as the use of open-ended questions, careful listening, the avoidance of self-victimization language;
4. reviewing the results and thinking about the actions that should be taken.

One should avoid haste and should try to clarify various issues piece by piece, but one should work continuously, without leaving any gaps between the different experiences in daily interactions, always being aware of what is happening, of the effect one has on the audience, of how the audience seems to think, feel or behave and review the dynamics of one's relationship with the group on a case-by-case basis. One should avoid setting unrealistic goals because they will soon be abandoned anyway, for they do not rely on the resources that are actually available. Instead, one should move forward step by step, constantly experimenting, to review things along the way, starting from the things that have improved. In this endeavour, true leaders have a strong spontaneous impact, being unaware that they are in fact applying the P-BY-A technique, which works for them automatically, as it is rooted in their way of relating to the people around them.

The creation of a leadership development plan should include the training of one's poise by applying alternative ways of working on a weekly basis, which will be carried out in rotation. In the first week, one should focus on the purpose of the communication, in the second on improving the ability to be authentic by practicing the ways of being oneself and in the third week, one should dedicate oneself to the awareness and practice of the means of capturing the attention of the audience.

4. CONCLUSION: THE PRESENTATIONS AND SESSIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE P-BY-A TECHNIQUE

In conclusion, the optimized improvement of the charismatic effect is one of the stages of leadership training, in which it is advisable to apply the P-BY-A technique, through awareness, with the help of some algorithms consisting of:

- some sets of open-ended questions about the intended purpose,
- questions about what it means to be oneself,
- questions about how to make oneself liked by the audience.

For example:

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?
- How exactly will you know that you've accomplished what you set out to do?
- Can you express the intended purpose in a slogan?
- Who are you?
- How do you want the people around you to perceive you?
- What could prevent you from being yourself?
- How could you overcome obstacles in being yourself?
- What was your path to success this time?
- What is there to learn for next time?

- lapidary formulas expressing topical political/ economic/ personal/ ethnical/ organisational goals/issues in a full/convincing manner.

For example:

- "I treat the tasks in the job description as if it were a surprise party for myself"
- "I look for opportunities to actively promote the achieved results "
- "I live every day as if it were my last."
- "I accept and build arguments, based on what the interlocutor claims."
- "I listen empathetically to the interlocutor and find out what is not explicitly said."

PRESENTATIONS can be optimized from the perspective of the P-BY-A technique, by applying a 4-stage strategy as follows:

1. The **preparation** must start with the author's strengths and main goal, i.e. what he/she wants the audience to remember from the information presented. His/her slogan should be: "Speak clearly about achievable and necessary things, which will be analysed piece by piece so that they can be explained one by one, finally clarifying the effectiveness of the process through a dialogue with the audience". At this stage, it is also important that the author of the presentation finds out what might make him/her succeed in terms of the goal he/she has set for him/herself and how he/she might overcome any potential obstacles in expressing the opinions and information to be brought to the attention of the audience.
2. The selection of the behaviours of the person giving a presentation will be made so that he/she remains spontaneous. He/she may be him/herself insofar as he/she chooses to focus, for example, either on his/her own presence/personal attire, or on the authenticity of the presented opinions, or his/her eruditeness, or on the commitment to support his/her views, or his/her passion for the field in question, or his/her self-confidence arising from the experience in the field.
3. Experimentation is the very time interval of the trial by fire, when the author gives his/her presentation, taking the test of assuming the risk of his/her possible inability to influence/capture the attention of the audience, this being the only way to gain experience and self-confidence by learning from the joy of success and the bitterness of failure in an equal manner.
4. The review is the time spent by the person delivering the presentation to review what has worked out fine and what has not, thus completing the experiments he/she had intended to conduct, drawing conclusions about how these experiments have contributed to his/her evolution and what he/she has to learn in order to improve his/her impact.

The SESSIONS may be optimized from the perspective of the P-BY-A technique by also applying a 4-stage strategy as follows:

1. The **preparation** must start with the passion of the organisers' team for the preparation of the materials of the meeting and should pursue the main goal of any meeting, i.e. making the participants really listen to their suggestions, laying the basis for a constructive dialogue and collecting any useful information in relation thereof. The organisers' slogan should be: "Speak clearly about things that are achievable and necessary in the near future, that will inform, inspire and mobilise the audience, thus laying the basis for a constructive dialogue and creating the opportunity for the collection of valuable new ideas/opinions about the topic and more". At this stage, it is also important for the organisers to find out what they could do to achieve the goal of the meeting and how they might overcome the potential obstacles.
2. The **selection** is the time interval of the meeting, in which the organisers will promote a relaxed climate by supporting only those behaviours of the participants

that generate a relaxed atmosphere, requiring them to only focus on the goal of the meeting and on trying to capture the attention of the participants through video presentations on the proposed topic, stopping the perorations outside the topic of the meeting and encouraging those speeches that give rise to valuable feedback. The members of the organising team will avoid dissipating their effort by trying to impress the audience through the charismatic effect they might create by simultaneously displaying two or three of the required behaviours (fluency, self-confidence, appearance, authenticity, courage, passion and poise).

3. **Experimentation** is the stage in which the organisers of the meeting take the risk of using an approach they have never tried before, using new moods to make the participants approach the meeting as a positive event. If, for example, they choose to focus on a type of behaviour such as fluency, then they will focus on the most important ideas, limiting the possibility of getting lost in the details.
4. The **review** is the stage in which the organisers of the meeting will spend time reviewing what has worked and what has not worked at the meetings held during a certain period of time, completing the chosen experiments by drawing conclusions about their impact on the participants based on the participants' reactions, in order to make a connection with future actions that should be taken.

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