



Emerging Leaders Insights

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What is your leadership superpower?

By Wally Schmader

A leader's "superpower" is their most positive and impactful personality asset. It is the part of them that is most influential to their followers. It can be a learned aspect of their personality, or something they were born with. Every developed leader has at least one superpower. For most of us, leveraging that "super" asset is the best way to influence our teams and get the results we want.

The best way to really understand leadership superpowers is to see them as specific combinations of two crucial leadership personality assets: influence and reputation.

The study of leadership personality types is worthwhile and valuable because it can help us understand how we are perceived and make changes if we decide we should. Unlike your temperament, your superpower is made up of decisions and predispositions.

Leadership superpowers can be organized into six main categories. Every leader is a combination of all of them, with your Superpower being the one of the six that drives the best relationships and results in your life. Here they are:

- Ambition;
- Credibility;
- Competency;
- Expressiveness;
- Sensitivity; and
- Self-Awareness.

Think of these six factors as the "recipe" for your leadership personality. If they were going to make another You, they would have to sprinkle in different amounts of the ingredients above. They are the pieces that come together to form your leadership personality. One of them will be your foundational leadership asset, your superpower. You can remember them with the acrostic A.C.C.E.S.S.

Ambition

Ambition gets a bad rap sometimes. People are often described as being too ambitious, and it can lead to distrust. That is not a true or fair understanding of ambition. Ambition is fuel, and it's as simple as that. Does a leader have enough ambitious fuel to do the things that need to be done? Does the leader have enough ambition to learn new things so he can improve his performance?

Ambition makes people go. It's an extension of a person's self-esteem and answers the question, "What does this leader expect from himself or herself?" Think for a moment on these questions:

What is your level of ambition?

- Do you consider it a strength?
- Does it fuel you?
- Would people describe you as ambitious?
- Do you like being called ambitious?
- Do you consider it a compliment?
- Is Ambition your Superpower?

Credibility

This word seems to be misused a lot in business. Credibility is not how well you do your job or know your stuff; that's competence. Credibility is how well people think you know your stuff. Credibility is built on perception and reputation, while competence is built on actual ability. How would you score yourself on credibility? Are you seen as an expert? Do your ideas influence decisions? Some leaders actually perceive that they have more credibility than they deserve. How would you rate your overall level of credibility in the eyes of the people you care about?

Is credibility your superpower?

Competence

This is straight-up "know how". Someone's level of competence is exactly equal to her ability to know or do a certain thing. Competence is a fascinating concept because we are all highly competent in some areas and completely incompetent in others.

We are all constructed with a particular mix of competency levels in every area of our life. This gives us an objective sensitivity to people who don't know how to do things. It also allows us to recognize false competence almost immediately.

You can fake credibility, but you can't fake competence. How would you rate your competence in the important areas of your job as a leader?

Is competence your superpower?

Expressiveness

Here is where many leaders are drastically under-developed. They are competent leaders, they know what needs to be happening with the

people on their teams, but they just don't know the most effective ways to get their messages across. Because of this, whatever level of competence they have achieved is blunted and muted. Expressiveness covers a lot of bases. It includes communication skills (verbal and written), body language and leadership vocabulary.

For some leaders, very specific kinds of expressiveness become crucially important to their success. This could be conference call skills, public speaking skills, webinar expressiveness or boardroom communication skills.

I worked at a company where nearly every important decision was made on conference calls with different groups of people on each one. What if you were a highly skilled and highly ambitious person working at the company and you were just not good at conference calls? Maybe you had a weak voice, you interrupted a lot, or you had a poor vocabulary. What if you were an extrovert and developed a reputation for just blurting ideas out on calls without the necessary forethought? What if you were an introvert and people thought that you were not confident or opinionated? This would severely detract from your ability to impact important business decisions, maybe for your whole career. This could explain a lack of career momentum for a person who was completely unaware of this deficit in her overall leadership persona.

Whatever kind of expressiveness is important in your leadership role, you must master it to be able to optimize the other five parts of your leadership personality.

Is expressiveness your superpower?

Sensitivity

This may be the least learnable of the six parts of a leader's personality. Sensitivity is the leader's ability to feel what is happening with a person or a group. The most effective leaders can sense the energy in people and know when it's the right time to say and do certain things. Sometimes it's time sympathy, sometimes it can be the moment for an empathetic response, most of the time it's just having the sense of good timing.

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Sensitivity to others' temperaments is also crucial to a leader's success. So much so, that we will tackle that big topic in a dedicated section of the book.

We have all experienced the cringe that comes when a leader says the wrong thing (competence) at the wrong time (sensitivity) in the wrong way (expressiveness). We have all seen a leader "lose the room" with an insensitive remark or a topic that is not suited to the audience. The main problem with the insensitive leader is that he almost always thinks that the problem is the audience. It's a classic "they don't know what they don't know" scenario.

Is sensitivity your superpower?

Self-Awareness

Nothing will neuter a leader's overall effectiveness faster than a lack of self-awareness. This particular part of the leader's personality changes more over time than any other of the six parts. Most of us probably start our careers with too much self-awareness. We ponder how we look, how we sound, how we are being perceived. As a young leader, I probably thought more about these things than I did about the actual coaching and leading I was doing. It's possible to think about perception more than content, and some of us are guilty of it. Usually this is just a temporary development stage for new leaders.

What happens with a lot of leaders is just the opposite of that. As they succeed in their roles and rise in their companies, their self-awareness continues to recede. Leaders can convince themselves that their ideas are best and that the care they once took in their communications and relationships does not matter as much now that they're the big boss. It's almost a

business cliché, the president or CEO with little or no self-awareness. They can get to the point where they can no longer learn and no longer be coached.

This is how the "Peter Principle" plays out even at the top of many companies. The ego-driven leaders, who were once very good at accepting coaching and other people's ideas, become autocrats. The abject lack of self-awareness will often keep them from understanding that they're not effectively leading. Leaders with that level of self-awareness would not buy a lot of books on leadership because they already believe they know everything.

As we discussed in another chapter, the bottom line is all learning leaders need to actively maintain their humility. Amazingly, the personality trait of humility and a healthy level of self-awareness will make you the most effective leader you can be. You will see what people need and what they expect, and you will know exactly how you can get better.

How do you feel about your level of self-awareness, is it your superpower?

Conclusion

Those are the six pieces of the leadership personality puzzle. How they come together forms your leadership personality. Your strongest personality asset is your Superpower. This is the asset you can use to move people and to influence results. Every one of us is original and unique based on the strong and weak parts of our personality, and we all have a superpower. Use it!

This article originally published on LinkedIn.com. Copyright © 2014 Excerpt from What Exceptional Leaders Know co-authored with Tracy Spears.

Sign up for an OBA committee

Being a member of Emerging Leaders is just the first step in developing into an industry leader. There is no better way to further your career or to serve your profession than to become involved with one of the OBA's committees. Everything the OBA does is intended to make you a better banker which makes you more relevant to your bank. Find more information at http://www.oba.com/bankers/oba_committees.php. If you have questions, contact Janis at janisr@oba.com.



Theresa Asbury

Everyone needs to escape the stress of work and Theresa Asbury, senior consultant II at BKD in Oklahoma City, has two great ways for doing that: traveling and reality TV.

As a self-proclaimed reality TV junkie, chances are you can strike up a conversation with Theresa about any reality show, not just her favorite of Big Brother.

While consuming reality TV can be a quick, easy

escape from stress, Theresa also enjoys traveling to see her friends and family. This past year she visited New Orleans, Florida, Houston, Ohio, Puerto Rico and California. As you begin planning your next vacation, take a moment to connect with Theresa. She is sure to have tips to share to make your vacation an excellent one.

Each month in this section we'll highlight a member of Emerging Leaders. Would you like to be spotlighted? Do you know someone that should be spotlighted? Let us know at kristin@oba.com.

Industry updates

The banking industry is always changing, here are some brief updates for you:

- Bankers should be alert to concentration and correlation risks while ensuring past performance don't determine future activities, OCC deputy comptroller for risk management supervision Darrin Benhart said recently. Read his speech at <http://occ.gov/news-issuances/speeches/2015/pub-speech-2015-28.pdf>;
- For the first time in five years, bank earnings dipped in 2014. Read the fourth quarter banking profile at <https://www2.fdic.gov/qbp/2014dec/qbp.pdf>; and
- In 2014, Oklahoma banks had a record year and boosted profits by 10 percent. Read more in the March Oklahoma Banker.

Emerging Leaders notes

- If you are in the Oklahoma City area on Tuesday, March 10, swing by the Belle Isle Brewery (1900 NW Expressway) for an Emerging Leaders Happy Hour from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and
- With the OBA Convention in May, there will be no spring luncheon. Make plans today to attend. Emerging Leaders has a community service project planned with the Regional Food Bank for the Monday of convention. Look for more information in the coming weeks.

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