

Putting Leadership Presence into Practice

An Action Planner

BALDONI CONSULTING L.L.C.

LEADERSHIP/CONSULTING • COACHING • COMMUNICATIONS

www.johnbaldoni.com john@johnbaldoni.com

How to Demonstrate Leadership Presence

Listening

Listening is a demonstration of interest in another person. Leaders need to make a habit of listening as a means of discovery as well as showing solidarity with others. To improve your leadership listening, consider:

- Spend more time listening than speaking.
- When important issues arise, do not be the first to speak up. Allow your direct reports to state their views.
- Be open to alternative points of view; not everyone will agree with you.
- Listen for understanding; i.e., follow up to ensure that you understand what others are saying.

Speaking

Speaking is the outward expression of a point of view. Leaders need to ensure that their messages are consistent with the vision and values of the organization as well as a reflection of their personal authenticity. To improve your leadership speaking, consider:

- Align what you *say* with what you *do*. Remember people watch what you do more than what you say.
- Develop a series of concise leadership messages that reflect your point of view on key issues
- Refresh your messages with stories about people who are doing good work for your organization.
- When trouble strikes, make certain you put it into perspective. Be honest but do not adopt the “woe is me” attitude. Speak up for your team by being present and accounted for.

Creating Alignment

Alignment is translation of vision into action. Developing strong alignment between strategic intention and purposeful execution is how leaders demonstrate their ability to get things done. To improve your leadership alignment skills, consider:

- Find ways to create buy-in among your team by relating organizational goals to team goals.
- Encourage direct reports to figure out the best ways to align what the team does to what the organization needs to do.
- Allow people to disagree with you before important decisions are made. But once the decision is made, hold people accountable for following through on the decision.
- When you disagree with a decision made by your boss, keep your disappointment to yourself. Do not allow your point of view to interfere with your team's ability to accomplish their tasks.

Demonstrating Confidence

Self-confidence is the belief in self that says you can do the job. Credibility is the belief that others hold about your ability to do the job. Leaders need to balance confidence with credibility. To improve your leadership confidence, consider:

- Make a habit of talking up the good things the team has achieved.
- Ground your point of view in current reality. Address challenges realistically but never lose hope in the outcome.
- Adopt a “glass is half-full” mindset when approaching new challenges.
- Find ways to bolster the confidence of others by acknowledging their achievements.

Exerting Influence

Influence is the measure of a leader's ability to bring others to a common sense of purpose. A leader's influence is based upon competence as well as credibility.

To improve your ability to influence others, consider:

- Foster trust by following through on what you say you will do. [No one likes the person who overpromises and under-delivers.]
- Respect the rights of others to disagree with you, but keep your composure when conversations become heated. Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Walk the high road. When your ideas are rejected, or people disagree with you, act like an adult. Reveal your character as one who can accept disagreement (and even defeat) without coming unglued.
- Position your ideas as something that will benefit the organization not simply yourself.

Being Decisive

Leaders are put in charge to make decisions. Their legacy depends upon their ability to balance deliberation with decisiveness as a means of making decisions that help the team and the organization achieve its goals. To improve your decisiveness, consider:

- Seek input from others before making an important decision. Allow others to express views contrary to your own.
- Take your time with decisions that require deliberation but once the decision is made communicate it rapidly and with conviction.
- Avoid inconsistency. Once you make a decision, live with the consequences.
- Be confident in your decision. Your confidence will encourage others to support it.

Thinking Strategically

A leader must know the “big picture.” Contained in the picture are vision and goals as well as current realities affecting the organization’s ability to execute its mission. To improve your ability to think strategically, consider:

- Adopt the mindset of a CEO; that is, think about how what you and your team do complements the mission.
- Make time to relate the purpose of your organization to the actions of your team. That is, connect the dots between what the company does and what you and your direct reports do.
- Consider ways to challenge the status quo as a means of finding new ways to serve your customers.
- Find ways to remove complexity as a means of adding clarity. This will help your direct reports focus on what they can do rather than what they cannot do.

Acting Strategically

A leader’s knowledge of the “big picture” will enable him or her to make decisions that are consistent with the organization’s purpose. Very importantly a leader must align his or her actions with the organization’s mission. To improve your ability to act strategically, consider:

- Find ways to help your direct reports be comfortable with ambiguity. You do this by reminding them of the mission as well as their own capabilities. You also make it known that change is inevitable and how important it is to make it work for you, not against you.
- Look for ways to improve processes by removing value-detractors, that is, tasks that “feed the bureaucracy” but do not add value to the organization.
- Demonstrate initiative when it comes to putting plans into action. Be prepared for problems by thinking ahead and developing contingencies.
- Affirm the ability of your team to do things right.

Additional resources:

John Baldoni *12 Steps to Power Presence: How to Assert Your Authority to Lead* New York: Amacom 2010

John Baldoni "Self-Assessment Leadership Presence" Baldoni Consulting LLC 2011
www.johnbaldoni.com/assessment

