



Charismatic Leadership

The Skills You Can Learn to Motivate High Performance in Others

By Kevin Murray

12-minute read

Synopsis

Charismatic Leadership (2020) is a practical guide to becoming a more effective leader through the power of charisma. We've all had a favorite boss or mentor – someone who inspires and motivates with their words, energy, and conviction. *Charismatic Leadership* teaches you how to be that person.

Who is it for?

- Leaders and managers who want to boost their charisma
- Ambitious employees looking to improve their workplace communication skills
- Business students preparing to join the workforce

About the author

Kevin Murray is a leadership coach, speaker, and author of best-selling books *The Language of Leaders* and *Communicate to Inspire*. Prior to his advisory role, he was a successful businessman in his own right, holding positions as director of communications for British Airways and director of corporate affairs for the UK Atomic Energy Authority.

What's in it for me? Inspire your team by becoming the leader every employee wants.

How charismatic do you think you are?

Do you inspire your employees and make them feel good? Are you self-aware and sincere? Do you frequently set goals, and are you able to persuade your team to achieve them?

You probably answered positively to most or all of these questions. But here's the real question – would your subordinates agree with your answers?

The truth is, employees consistently rate their bosses far lower on all facets of charisma than bosses rate themselves.

But why is the boss's charisma so important? Well, to put it simply, people need to be inspired by their boss. Charismatic leaders build trust, motivation, and positivity among their employees – and at the end of the day, that's good for business.

To identify the traits of charismatic leaders, the author collected information from surveys of managers and employees, interviews with CEOs, and his own work experience. In the blinks that follow, you'll meet a few of the people he connected with.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- about the trust gap between employees and their bosses;
- why you should obey the listening contract; and
- how to stop having nightmares about public speaking.

Charisma is crucial – and its importance is only growing.

Take a second to think of the most inspirational leaders in the world, past or present. Who's on your list? Perhaps people like Steve Jobs, Nelson Mandela, or Winston Churchill. But what exactly makes these figures so magnetic and inspiring? In a word: charisma. Charisma is a must for leaders, and its importance is on the rise.

The key message here is: Charisma is crucial – and its importance is only growing.

All charismatic leaders have one thing in common: an *affective* presence. Affective presence means that the strength of your character has a positive effect on other people's emotions. Affective presence makes your employees feel good about you, which, in turn, makes them more committed to your organization and their place within it.

Charismatic leaders cultivate affective presence through a mixture of five distinct traits: *authenticity*, *personal power*, *warmth*, *drive*, and *persuasiveness*. But don't

be deceived – you don't have to ooze these qualities in order to be truly charismatic. Excessive amounts of any of the five traits may even have a net *negative* effect on your business! Instead, it's much better to possess each of the five in balance.

According to the author's research, leaders with moderate levels of charisma can make employees feel 65 percent more respected, 56 percent more motivated, and 24 percent happier to go above and beyond in their work. That extra engagement and productivity translate to a host of other benefits, including greater profit. In fact, companies with highly engaged employees have twice the annual net profit of companies whose employees are not very engaged.

Numbers aside, charisma is only becoming more important given today's increasingly automated workforce. The McKinsey Global Institute reports that by 2030, up to 375 million people globally will need to change their occupation and acquire new skills. Additionally, technology will lead to a much stronger remote working culture. With ever-smaller teams of full-time employees working in offices, the kind of charisma that inspires a team will be more important than ever before.

To top it all off, business forecasters believe that workforces will soon be split into two distinct groups. On the one hand, you'll have tech-oriented folks working with advanced digital technologies. On the other, you'll have charismatic, innovative individuals leading the charge to implement the changes and ensure company success.

All of these factors mean that strong leaders who inspire their teams and encourage creativity and innovation will be more necessary than ever. Organizations without such leaders may find themselves left in the dust.

Authenticity leads to trust, and trust can grant major boons to your organization.

Time is money. Or is it? According to an engineer the author worked with, *trust* is money. Trust, he argued, is the building block for everything else in an organization. If your employees trust you, you can effect sweeping changes with little blowback. You can innovate faster. And customers, suppliers, and partners will feel more comfortable working with you.

To earn people's trust, it's essential to project *authenticity*, the first component of charismatic leadership.

The key message here is: Authenticity leads to trust, and trust can grant major boons to your organization.

To project authenticity, you need to know yourself well. In other words, you need to know what exactly makes you *you*.

Start by setting aside some time for personal reflection. You could try taking personality tests to understand yourself better or making videos so you can scrutinize the impression you make. Finally, try asking others for feedback, which will help you understand how you come across.

As part of your personal reflection, you should also be thinking about your core values and beliefs. Consider everything that has led you to where you are in your career. What did you learn from each important moment, and how has your behavior changed as a result? Your values are anything that genuinely motivates your behavior now.

Once you've articulated your values, it's time to start living them with conviction. For instance, if one of your most important values is respect, you need to ensure that respect is the norm around the office. Don't be shy about enforcing this – to embody your most authentic self, you need to be visibly committed to the things you believe in.

The need to behave with conviction doesn't just go away when things get rough, either. Yet far too many managers hide behind closed doors after implementing difficult decisions. Instead, own up to the decisions you've made. If it turns out you've acted in error, own that too – publicly. Even in a total disaster, your employees' respect for you will skyrocket if you admit to your mistakes.

Employees are happy to stand by leaders who display personal power.

In business, the word *power* tends to conjure up images of ruthless CEOs who don't care whose toes they step on so long as they get to the top. But that sort of power is very different from *personal power* – the strength of character and personality that makes people believe in and want to follow you.

The key message here is: Employees are happy to stand by leaders who display personal power.

To display personal power, the second component of charisma, you need to look the part. After all, your team takes its cues from your body language and appearance; if you walk through the office with a scowl on your face, your hands in your pockets, and a disheveled outfit, it doesn't look good. So smile frequently instead – that fosters positivity and trust. And be sure not to neglect your personal grooming.

Once you've got the look and body language of a strong and charismatic leader, you can adopt a *leadership mindset*. This is about solving problems proactively, taking responsibility for your actions, and thinking, "I'll find a way" rather than "I can't do anything about this."

That kind of optimism is another huge component of personal power. Sadly, our own brains are often

working against us in this regard. We're naturally wired to look for and focus on threats, which often leads to anxiety and pessimism.

That's why *reframing* is so important. Reframing is a powerful way to look for positives in a difficult situation. It means thinking of problems as challenges to be overcome. Say you're about to have an uncomfortable but necessary meeting with an unhappy client. It would be all too easy to dread this situation, seeing it as a potential disaster. But instead, why not reframe it as an opportunity to better understand the client's needs and improve performance in the future?

Finally, personal power means always having energy and passion. Bosses who are energetic and positive invigorate their teams with the same spirit.

Now, you may already radiate high energy, but it's equally important that your employees do too. To gauge their energy levels, try conducting an *energy audit*. Ask everyone in your office how energetic they feel, on a scale of one to ten. Follow up with questions about why they feel that way or what might help them feel more energized. Once that's done, you can get to work looking for ways to recharge your team's batteries and keep their motivation high.

A warm emotional signature leaves a lasting impression.

Agency manager Lois is naturally introverted, so casual conversation doesn't come easily to her. But she doesn't let that stop her, and every morning at 8:15 a.m., she comes into the office to chat with her staff for 45 minutes. Friendly and anything but aloof, she's learned to turn on the charm and project *warmth*, the third component of charisma.

The key message here is: A warm emotional signature leaves a lasting impression.

Next time you're in the office, look around the room. Choose someone at random and consider how that person makes you feel. Then ask yourself why that's the case.

You'll soon realize that each person has their own distinct *emotional signature*. This is the impression you're left with after engaging with them. It could be positive, leaving you happy and invigorated. Or it could be negative, sapping your energy and making you feel frustrated. Once you've started noticing other people's emotional signatures, ask yourself: what's your emotional signature like?

If it's disrespectful, aloof, or critical, your employees are at risk for low morale and burnout. But even if it's positive, there's no downside to making it even better! So follow Lois's example and start engaging with your staff. Get interested in them and their lives and find out

what's important to them. Ask them personal questions and let them ask you questions in return.

A few tricks can improve your emotional signature even faster. For starters, be sure to always address people by their names – this will make them feel recognized and remembered. Also, try asking people for help – everyone likes to be reminded that managers are human too. Try asking which way the restroom is, or what format a conference will take.

Of course, no trick will work if you don't actually take your staff and others seriously. You'll need to carefully hone your listening skills and make people feel that you're addressing their concerns.

When speaking to someone, do your best to keep the *listening contract* in mind. This means that you have to listen to and understand the person you're talking to before you're allowed to respond and be understood yourself.

You should also practice a little empathy. Make an effort to understand the other person's emotional perspective, and when you do, verbally acknowledge it with a comment like, "I can see you're upset about what happened." Then commit to action to prove you take their concerns seriously.

By cultivating a warm emotional signature, you'll inspire loyalty, commitment, and positivity among your staff.

Leaders radiate charisma when they're driven by a cause.

Let's face it – a lot of the time, it can be a struggle to wake up and head into the office early in the morning. If this is true for you, it's almost certainly true for your staff as well. Employees and managers alike need a reason to get out of bed and work every day, something more than just a salary. To get revved up, people need a cause they can believe in and fight for relentlessly. In other words, they need *drive*, the fourth component of charismatic leadership.

The key message here is: Leaders radiate charisma when they're driven by a cause.

Many top managers are very logical, staying focused on the bottom line at all times. When it comes to motivation, however, there's a huge problem with that: financial metrics, as useful as they are, aren't very engaging for employees.

That's why, as a team and as a company, you should always have a clearly defined *purpose* that motivates everything you do. Articulate this with a short and sweet statement, similar to a company's mission statement – TED's "To spread ideas," for example, or Tesla's "To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy."

Drive isn't just about what you're doing, though – it's also about how you do it. That means continuously improving the way your team operates.

One way to motivate and inspire staff is with the power of praise. Leaders are often stingy with positive words, or worse, they take all the credit when things are going well. A leader who wants to be charismatic could hardly make a worse mistake!

That's something Sally understood. Her division of a consulting services business had faced some issues, and they found themselves suddenly needing to vastly increase the number of new customers they acquired.

The endeavor seemed monumental at first, but every day, Sally visited her team members' desks and asked what they were doing to generate new meetings with clients. Every time she heard a good new idea, she broadcast it to the rest of the team. On top of that, good ideas were immediately integrated into the team's regular processes. The team was laser-focused on improvement.

Astonishingly, within 18 months, Sally's team had become the best-performing part of the business. The icing on the cake? Sally's staff were more motivated than those in any other division!

Persuasion inspires your employees to turn strategy into action.

Public speaking is easily one of the world's most common phobias. Some people actually fear it more than they fear death!

Unfortunately, public speaking is an essential and unavoidable part of most people's careers. The good news is, with practice, you can greatly increase your skill in *persuasion*, the fifth and final component of charismatic leadership.

The key message here is: Persuasion inspires your employees to turn strategy into action.

If you want to become a better public speaker, there are plenty of tips and tricks you can master – things like controlling your breathing, outlining your key points on a notecard, and crafting a powerful opener. But above all, you've got to be charismatic.

That means having an emotional impact on your audience, and one of the best ways to do that is through the power of stories. Your audience needs to feel connected to you and your speech, and a story that tugs at people's heartstrings creates that connection.

So how can you tell the most impactful story? Start by connecting it to your values. Let's say one of your values is boldness. To illustrate that, tell a story about an employee who took bold steps to win over a client, or one about bold action leading to a turning point in your career.

Now, the power of persuasion goes way beyond public speaking; persuasion is also essential to conversations with your team and clients. Despite that, almost 70 percent of managers in the United States said they were often uncomfortable communicating with their employees. Likewise, more than half of British managers would do anything to avoid a negative conversation with an employee.

When anticipating a conversation, difficult or otherwise, it helps to have a general idea of the outcome you want to achieve. Are you trying to *inform* your team about changes, developments, or processes? Is the conversation more about *solving* a problem, or are you trying to *improve* an existing approach?

With that in mind, you can guide the conversation exactly where you want it to go without being too pushy. Ask questions to guide the other person toward a solution, and you'll often find that they get there on their own. Even better, feeling like they've had a say in things will make them far more committed to the plan of action.

With your newly revved-up power of persuasion, combined with the other building blocks of charisma, you'll be well on your way to becoming a truly inspiring leader. Not only will you be able to motivate and encourage your employees to do great things, but you'll also be bringing tangible benefits to your business in the form of increased profits, innovation, and productivity.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

Many people think that charisma is something you're born with or something that only very special individuals possess. But on the contrary – it's definitely possible to improve your charisma. By cultivating authenticity, personal power, warmth, drive, and persuasion, you'll have a host of new ways to inspire and motivate your employees. It's time to become the leader your team expects and deserves!

Actionable advice:

Give your employees stretching goals.

In his research, the author found that for employees, the need to feel valued and important is stronger than pay, work environment, and even the vision of the organization. One thing that can really lead to a sense of accomplishment for your employees is stretching goals, targets that are difficult to hit but still within reach. When employees do successfully achieve their stretching goals, celebrate their hard work. This will flood their brains with feel-good chemicals like dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin, which will boost their trust in you and increase their motivation to work even harder.

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We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to remember@blinkist.com with the title of this book as the subject line and share your thoughts!

What to read next: *Attitude Reflects Leadership* by Leo Hamblin

In these blinks, we've covered the five major traits you'll need if you want to be a charismatic leader. You now know that being a great leader isn't about your title or position – it's about your mind-set.

The leadership mind-set is exactly what author Leo Hamblin focuses on in *Attitude Reflects Leadership*. Check out our blinks to this title and learn exactly what separates a mere manager from an inspiring leader and how you can unlock your – and your team's – greatest potential.