

LEADERSHIP INC.

THE MAGAZINE FOR LEADERS BY
LEADING CORPORATE EXECUTIVE COACHES

A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERS PERCEIVED AS ABRASIVE

By Jordan Goldrich, MCEC

INSPIRING LEADERS: BEHAVIOURS BUILD THE BRAND

By Ross Roxburgh

I DON'T SEE WHY I NEED A COACH

By John Sigmon, MCEC



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Inaugural Edition

JULY
2024 Produced Quarterly

www.acec-association.com

Editorial from the CEO of the Association of Corporate Executive Coaches

Welcome to the inaugural issue of “The Magazine for Leaders by Leading Corporate Executive Coaches.” I am immensely proud and excited to introduce you to this groundbreaking publication, designed to serve as an invaluable resource for leaders navigating the complexities of today’s corporate landscape.

As the CEO of the Association of Corporate Executive Coaches, I have witnessed the profound impact that executive coaching can have on leaders, their teams, and their organizations. In a world where change is the only constant, the role of a coach becomes ever more critical. Our mission with this magazine is to provide insights, strategies, and inspiration that will empower you to lead with confidence and agility.

Navigating Unprecedented Times

The past few years have been a testament to the resilience and adaptability required of leaders. From global pandemics to economic uncertainties, the challenges have been immense. Yet, within these challenges lie growth, innovation, and transformation opportunities. Our magazine will explore these opportunities, offering perspectives from some of the industry’s most experienced and respected coaches.

The Power of Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. It provides leaders with the tools to enhance their self-awareness, develop emotional intelligence, and refine leadership skills. Through personalized coaching, leaders can gain clarity, set strategic goals, and achieve extraordinary results. Our magazine will delve into the nuances of executive coaching, sharing success stories, best practices, and emerging trends.

Fostering a Culture of Continuous Improvement

At the heart of effective leadership is a commitment to continuous improvement. The most successful leaders recognize that learning is a lifelong journey. They seek out feedback, embrace new ideas, and are not afraid to pivot when necessary. “The Magazine for Leaders by Leading Corporate Executive Coaches” will highlight the importance of fostering a culture of continuous improvement within organizations. We will provide actionable insights on creating environments where innovation thrives and employees feel empowered to contribute their best.

Embracing Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords but essential components of a thriving organization. Leaders prioritizing diversity and inclusion create workplaces where different perspectives are valued and creativity is unleashed. Our magazine will feature articles on how to build inclusive cultures, address unconscious biases, and harness the power of diverse teams to drive organizational success.

Leading with Courage and Compassion

In today's world, effective leadership requires a balance of courage and compassion. Leaders must be bold in their decision-making yet empathetic in their interactions. They must be willing to take risks yet also prioritize the well-being of their teams. Our magazine will explore the concept of "micro courage," the small yet significant acts of bravery that can lead to profound change. We will share stories of leaders who have navigated adversity with grace and resilience, offering lessons that can inspire us all.

Your Journey Starts Here

As you embark on this journey with us, please engage with the content, reflect on the insights, and apply what you have learned to your leadership practice. "The Magazine for Leaders by Leading Corporate Executive Coaches" is more than just a publication; it is a community of like-minded individuals committed to excellence in leadership. Together, we can shape the future of corporate leadership and create a lasting impact on our organizations and society.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting adventure. Here's to leading with purpose, passion, and unwavering commitment.

Warm regards,

*CB Bowman, MCEC, BCC, CVP, CVF, CCE, MBA
CEO, Association of Corporate Executive Coaches*



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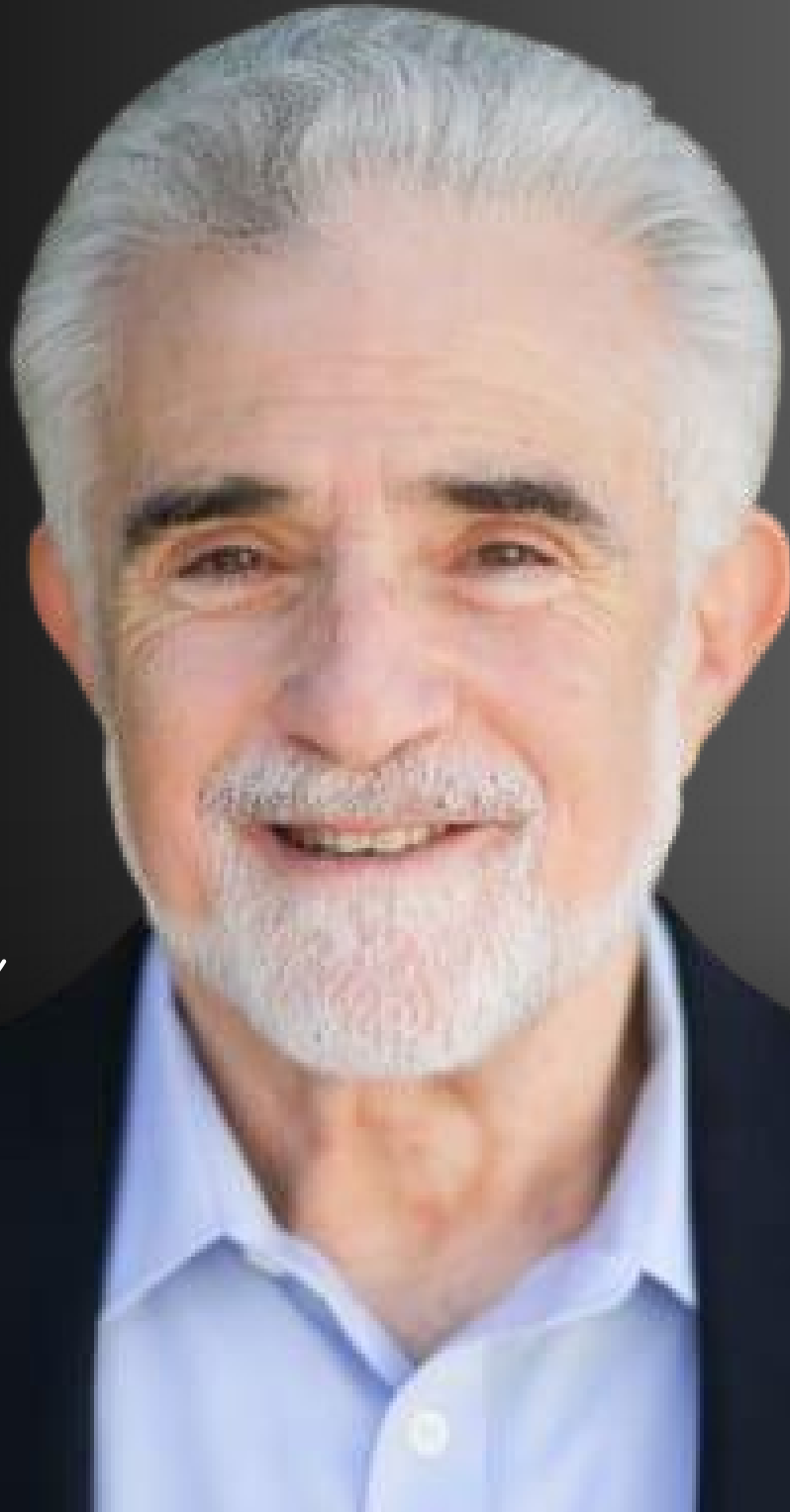
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*Jordan
Goldrich*



AS ABRASIVE

**WORKPLACE
WARRIOR®**

BY: JORDAN GOLDRICH
MCEC, MG100, PCC

A Unique Perspective on Leaders Perceived as Abrasive

By Jordan Goldrich, MCEC, MG100, PCC

Are you frustrated by the pressure you get to change how you talk to people? What if you could be completely authentic and fulfill your mission while you drive results without damaging relationships®?

Do you have an uncommon desire for results? Do you take charge, lead your team, and accomplish the mission? I believe you have a "warrior spirit" that is critical for success in our volatile, uncertain, complex environment.

You may be perceived as abrasive and perhaps called names like bully or jerk. I can relate. I once lost a position because my boss wanted more deference from me. I was not unprofessional. I did not use profanity. In my New York style, I was direct. And, if I thought you hadn't done your research or weren't telling the truth, I had a frustrated, sometimes sarcastic tone.

This article is written with respect for your "warrior spirit." Rather than becoming more politically correct, polite, or overprotective, I want to challenge you to become a better Workplace Warrior®. This is by adopting the commitments which I adapted from the Ethos of the Navy SEALs. (See Workplace Warrior® Self-Assessment below.)

The good news is that it is possible to be 100% authentic and "Drive results without damaging relationships®" To do that you need to find authentic reasons to shift your communication with your stakeholders. It's a 10% - 15% change and you do not need to change who you are.

What is a Workplace Warrior®?

If you are a Workplace Warrior®, you get results in seemingly impossible situations. You accept nothing less than exceeding expectations, on time, and within budget. You drive for results, demand discipline, and hold everyone accountable—relentlessly. I see you as part of an elite group that includes military leaders (literal warriors) committed to completing their mission while protecting their team and noncombatants. As used here, the term warrior includes the top healthcare workers, business executives, nonprofit leaders, and parents raising children in difficult situations.

What Motivates Workplace Warriors®?

If you are similar to most, you have a combination of three motives: winning, achieving great things/solving complicated puzzles, and serving others. Each of us has our own unique mix of these qualities. They are crucial to success.

Your motivation to win makes you want to become CEO, destroy your competitors, and generally kick butt. Your motivation to achieve something great makes you commit to some would say-impossible things. These might be turning around a failing company, achieving unbelievable business results, or designing a disruptive innovation.

Your motivation to serve makes you commit to eradicating poverty, ending oppression, or helping disabled veterans. On the lighter side, it may involve things like making legal or financial information available at a much lower cost. It may also make you committed to understanding and supporting your work colleagues and reports.

How Workplace Warriors® Think About the Pressure to Change

It is likely hard for you to understand how your communication style is more of an issue than the behavior and performance of people who are not as committed as you, not as honest as you, and not producing as much as you.

Many of these executives think they get unfairly criticized because America has become "soft." They ask, "How is it bad that I expect people to perform at a consistently high level? Is it unreasonable to expect the people I work with to be able to deal with being told their performance is not what it could or should be?"

What do you think?



A Unique Perspective About Workplace Warriors®

Today, many thought leaders write books referring to these executives as jerks, snakes, bullies, and other colorful names. I believe it is ironic, if not hypocritical, to call people demeaning names because you want them to be more respectful.

In my experience, most do not want to hurt people. (My non-scientific survey of executive coaches indicates that only 10% to 20% are sociopaths who enjoy or don't care if they damage others.)

You may be experienced as abrasive for two reasons. The first is that you come from a national, ethnic, or family background with a more direct culture and communication style than the people in your company, organization, or team.

The second is that your identity (self-esteem) is highly connected to meeting goals, timelines and budgets.

We now know that when people experience a threat to their identity, their fight-flight response is the same as having a knife held against your throat. Your defensive reaction is experienced as disrespectful.

I believe we need leaders with a "warrior spirit" to be successful in our volatile, uncertain, and complex environment. I have come to understand warriors due to my volunteer work with a nonprofit organization called The Honor Foundation, that helps US Special Operations Forces transition to civilian life. These include Navy SEALs, Marine Raiders, Green Berets, and others(www.honor.org). The point is not to convince you to start accepting bullshit. It's to help you become a better warrior in this environment.

The least you can do

"The Least You Can Do," has two meanings. Either may apply to you.

The first meaning is literal. You may believe that the pressure to be more respectful, to go easier on coworkers, or to get along better with others is a lot of politically correct nonsense. Therefore, you have the dilemma of protecting yourself by changing how you communicate even though you don't believe you should have to. In this case, you may only want to literally do the very least you can do.

The second meaning is pursuing the "right" thing to do. These are changes you would make even if all the pressure disappeared and you received no reward. Why? Because you believe this is the person you should be. I call this being authentic.

For example, if someone in a wheelchair asked for help, you would certainly assist them in crossing the street. If they offered to pay you, you might say, "Absolutely not. This was the least I could do." That would be the Workplace Warrior® response.

How To Drive Results Without Damaging Relationships®

You might ask, "How can I hold my people accountable and not be accused of abrasive or bullying behavior?" Picture, if you will, a report who is receiving complaints because of errors in their reports to other departments. Also- some of their co-workers have mentioned they come in late and miss meetings.

One possibility would be to say angrily, "Shawn, I got another complaint about you missing meetings and not proofreading your reports. What is the matter with you? Don't you listen?"

A second possibility would be to say, "Shawn, I wouldn't be doing my job supporting your success, if I did not tell you I received two more complaints about you missing meetings and errors in your reports. I need to let you know that if this continues, it will lead to a disciplinary process and perhaps losing your job. I don't want this to happen."

This would be done using a concerned tone with the intention of alerting Shawn to take action to avoid negative consequences. (I highly recommend discussing this with Human Resources and/or your boss before having this conversation so you are aligned with them.)

Telling reports that their performance is not up to expectations or they are exhibiting unacceptable behavior is a crucial part of successful leadership. If they, or your peers and superiors, are backing toward a metaphorical cliff, shouldn't you warn them of the danger?

If you do this with the good-faith intention to alert them to danger you are less likely to speak in a way they experience as demeaning. (You don't control how other people react. Any workforce has a percentage of personality and psychiatric disorders that may precipitate a negative response no matter what you say or do.)



Workplace Warrior Self-Assessment

This is a very simple self-assessment based on the commitments in the Ethos of the Navy SEALs, which have been adapted below. In order to determine how your leadership style compares to that of a Workplace Warrior®, simply rate the frequency with which you believe your leadership behavior is an expression of each statement/commitment.

☐ I have an uncommon desire to succeed ☐ I am forged by adversity ☐ I accept the responsibility of my chosen way of life ☐ I take charge, lead my teammates, and accomplish the mission ☐ I demand discipline ☐ I expect innovation ☐ I am never out of the fight ☐ I have uncompromising integrity ☐ My loyalty is beyond reproach ☐ My character and honor are steadfast ☐ My word is my bond	☐ I expect to lead and be led ☐ I lead by example in all situations ☐ I will never quit, I persevere and thrive on adversity ☐ I humbly serve ☐ The ability to control my emotions and my actions, regardless of circumstance, sets me apart ☐ I place the welfare and security of others before my own ☐ I defend those who are unable to defend themselves ☐ I will draw on every remaining ounce of strength to protect my teammates and to accomplish our mission
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Use the ratings: (A) Almost Always, (S) Sometimes, (N) Almost Never.

The (A) ratings are your strengths. The others are areas that are likely contributing to decreases in results and creating your brand as abrasive.

Your success is based on what those around you (your stakeholders) perceive, whether or not they are accurate in their perceptions. This is about your brand and not about objective reality. Great leaders know how to communicate in ways that resonate with their followers.

If you are committed to improving your leadership effectiveness, you might consider running the list by your boss or a colleague you trust. (If you do this, you cannot disagree. You can only say thank you.) Usually, it is safer and more effective to have an objective third party, such as an executive coach, consultant, or internal HR or leadership development specialist, do this.

Intrinsic motivation is the key

Your intrinsic motivation is your deepest values that would make you want to change even if there was no pressure to change. For instance, the example above is about responding to a request from a disabled person to help them cross the street.

Many abrasive executives I have worked with are religious or spiritual. They believe their higher power is active in their life. If that is true for you, you have to consider whether your higher power has put you in the middle of all these lazy, undisciplined, and dishonest people to give you the opportunity to develop forgiveness, compassion, and respect.

Another intrinsic reason to change is realizing that everyone around you has information you do not have that could result in failure. To be a great leader, you must communicate with everyone to get that information. This is consistent with Lean, Six Sigma, and Agile. If you do not speak to them in their language, you greatly increase the potential for failure of your team, organization, or business.



Recommended Process For Ongoing Leadership Development

- 1) Make a commitment to improve your leadership and/or results
- 2) Using a 360-degree survey or interviews, survey your key stakeholders about their perception of your strengths and opportunities for development. Usually, this is done by an objective outside party such as an executive coach or a leadership consultant.
- 3) Optional and recommended: Take one to three self-assessments in leadership, personality, behavior, and/or communication style. (This administrative process and the coaching/interpretation are often managed by an executive coach or consultant but may be done by someone in Human Resources or Training and Development.)
- 4) Develop an initial goal based on the themes of your stakeholders and self-assessments, if taken. As mentioned above, your goal needs to be authentic.
- 5) Engage in "Feedforward," a process developed by Marshall Goldsmith. Ask your key stakeholders if you are working on the right goal. If yes, ask, "What would you want to see me say or do to rate me as improved?" If no, "What should I work on?" (Note: You are not allowed to disagree or try to convince them they are wrong. You may ask one or two clarifying "what would you say/do" questions. I call this internal marketing. You can only say thank you.)

6) Identify your triggers for dysfunctional behavior and work to rewire your brain so these are replaced by more effective behaviors. (Usually requires a mentor, executive coach, or counselor/ therapist.)

7) Follow up on a monthly basis (5 minute conversation) with each stakeholder to get "feedback" on how you performed on your goals in the last 30 days and "FeedForward"

regarding other recommendations going forward.

8) Ultimately, evaluate your progress based on stakeholder ratings. These can be obtained with an anonymous mini-survey conducted by your executive coach, consultant or internal HR/leadership development person.

9) Celebrate small steps. Developing alternative responses can be seen as "developing psychological muscle. (It's a journey – trust me on this.)

Conclusion

Success as a leader requires continued learning and development. This is about developing your already impressive abilities and strengths to become an even better Workplace Warrior®.

If you decide to partner with an executive coach, I highly recommend a Master Corporate Executive Coach (MCEC) listed in the Association of Corporate Executive Coaches (ACEC).

The traditional definition of coaching focuses on asking powerful questions while downplaying the sharing of business and leadership knowledge, models, processes, etc. ACEC believes that the top tier of executive coaches are "enterprise-wide business partners™". As consummate professionals, they require business and coaching experience to take several roles, including coach, consultant, and mentor, as appropriate for you. You can check them out at <https://acec-association.org/directory/>

JULY 2024

LEADERSHIP INC.

I DON'T SEE WHY I NEED A COACH

BY: JOHN SIGMON
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I Don't See Why I Need A Coach

By John Sigmon, MCEC

When I first met Kelly she was a rising star, outperforming all of her peers and consistently receiving the highest accolades from the leadership of her firm. When she learned I was a coach, she was intrigued. "I can see how coaching could help, but I'm not so sure it would be beneficial to me at this stage of my career," she mentioned, in a questioning tone. This is a common start to many conversations I have. Each time I have a conversation like this I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes about coaching. Dr. Joe Baker is head of Lifespan Performance Laboratory at York University in Toronto, Canada and his research focuses on optimal human development.

"Coaches need to stop seeing themselves as transmitters of information and start seeing themselves as architects of an optimal learning environment."



While Dr. Baker's expertise focuses on athletics, his perspective resonates with me. A key to creating an optimal learning environment is to approach engagements with a systemic lens, operating at the intersection of coaching, consulting, and mentoring with a focus on the individual and their learning agenda. This holistic framework allows clients to explore a more expansive view of themselves and their world.

In my interactions with Kelly she learned that coaching benefits not only the individual, but the people around that individual. As a Master Corporate Executive Coach with the Association of Corporate Executive Coaches, I know the impact of coaching is exponential and has systemic impact.

Her intrigue grew and as our relationship developed further she made a decision to engage me as her coach and Enterprise Wide Business Partner™.

As a coach, a foundation of my approach is using the principles of Zen Leadership to build individual resilience and to expand organizational capacity. A simple example is building insight and awareness of "and" leadership rather than "either/or" leadership. The simple learned insight of multiple paths (and) rather than a single path (either/or) is a powerful leadership lever and enables leaders to gain confidence in managing healthy tension which is a critical leadership competency. As an enterprise focused coach I never shy away from the messiness of helping my clients navigate tensions and in doing so, they discover new ways forward and expand their capabilities.

As our world continues to move at an ever frenetic pace, it is essential to cultivate individual and collective awareness. Understanding ourselves, our stakeholders and our environment has never been more critical. Bringing more consciousness into our lives helps us think differently, more deeply, learn faster and collaborate more fully. Elevated levels of awareness (dare I say, consciousness) improves agility and can lead to higher levels of performance. Practicing the principles of Zen Leadership allows leaders to bring their best selves forward and encourages others to do the same.

When Kelly decided to hire me as her coach, she made a commitment to lifelong learning, exploration and embracing multiple ways to lead. When the economy turned to recession and her firm was on the brink, Kelly was able to adapt and lead her team through a significant organizational redesign in the midst of turmoil.

When the dust settled, her's was the only team in the entire organization to remain intact and to exceed their annual targets. Her success and the success of her team resulted in her promotion to the C Suite. Within one year, every member of her team had either been promoted, or had left for opportunities outside the firm. During a review of her progress, I asked "What has made the biggest difference for you?" Her response was a simple, yet powerful message.



"Without knowing it, I always saw myself as small. I didn't see beyond what was in front of me and I often regretted not speaking up. Now, I see how staying cautious never served me or anyone else. I have choices."

Our world is changing faster than our ability to adapt and this creates a sense of losing control and disorientation. Zen Leadership with its powerful focus on awareness, resilience and embracing/being with conflict is the new leadership superpower.

LEADERSHIP INC.

JULY 2024

INSPIRING
LEADERS:

BEHAVIORS
BUILD
THE
BRAND

BY:
ROSS

ROXBURGH



Inspiring Leaders: Behaviours Build the Brand

By Ross Roxburgh

Our discussion starts with some basic thinking about 'inspiration', informed in part by a currently focused survey of a range of senior leaders, coaches, consultants, and clients. In addition, I identify some shared behaviors which I have experienced directly from among those I work with. Along with the research findings, these become, for our purposes, a 'baseline' for the balance of the article.

From there, I highlight some of the challenges leaders face as they manage their own resilience and, at the same time, remain supportive of colleagues. The 'work' of the leader – and the leader's organization in supporting their leaders – as they remain strongly inspirational is discussed. Finally, I conclude the article with a few key practical action steps for leaders to consider as they continue to maintain a high degree of effectiveness which balances their own well-being with continuing inspiration, engagement, and commitment of colleagues.

What Do We Mean by "Inspirational," and What Do We Notice?

There are many definitions of what is evident when we refer to a leader as being 'inspiring'. There is clearly a vitality suggested by the root of inspiration – 'inspire' as to breathe in – as there is also a sense of the 'composite'. By that, I mean that no single attribute or behavior generally defines what it is to inspire. Courage may come close, as might attributes such as integrity, decisiveness, humility, mastery of subject matter, and the ability to create a compelling vision.

But generally, one can point to a number of behaviors that, taken together, constitute 'inspiration' for others. And the definition of what is inspiring is as it should be in the hands of those who are led. As well, the opportunity to provide feedback to the leader is a key component of ensuring that inspiration has the impact people expect.

My quick 'pop-up' research question generated some very interesting responses from a varied group of thoughtful, senior individuals; many of those to whom I looked for input might be described as inspirational in their own right.

A single question was posed to the survey group: "When you think of a leader who is 'inspiring', what are the two behaviors or attributes of that individual that immediately come to mind?"

There was a very good response rate – over 60% – perhaps because of both the topic and the very focused request.

As a way to think about the research input, we can consider looking at responses falling roughly into three areas:

1. The characteristics, values, mindset, and emotional intelligence of the leader; in other words, behaviors and qualities that define 'presence';
2. How leaders actually show up, i.e., what do they say and do?; and
3. The impact of inspiring leaders on their teams, colleagues, and the wider Organization.

As to what leaders carry with them through characteristics and values, it is fair to say that many of the responses converge on the central fact that inspirational leaders are highly self-aware individuals. Their emotional intelligence is well-developed, with empathy, healthy self-regard, and an ability to manage stress, among key defining elements. Inspirational leaders are ethical, selfless, trustworthy, and clear in their thinking and have an inner sense of integrity. On the thinking dimension, one participant expanded by saying that inspiring leaders have “exceptional critical thinking” in their makeup.

Of great interest is how inspiring leaders actually ‘show up’, as perceived by colleagues. “Presence” is often cited as an obvious ‘can do’ attitude. This latter descriptor emerges from the responses in wording such as “positivity”, “optimism”, and “approachability”, which can imply compassion for others and “passion” for their beliefs and stand for. They are able to articulate a “vision” and bring a “strategic” outlook to their leadership style. The manifestation of the earlier comments on self-awareness is revealed through “ideas that engage and motivate”, high levels of “energy” and “enthusiasm”, “bold and practical” approaches, and ‘grit’ as it emerges in examples of “perseverance” and “determination”. These behaviors are major contributors to what one might expect in a role model.

In ‘showing up’, those who inspire are also able to balance the above with always being viewed as “authentic”, “humble,” and “approachable”.



That balance is also revealed in an openness to “adapting” and “adjusting” in the face of new factors, of being “open to be influenced” and, in essence, “always looking for the better way”. That is viewed as a facet of “courage”, one of the principal aspects of being an inspiring individual. Finally, there is an obvious “demonstrated commitment to values and convictions”. And quite often, the inspiring leader brings a “sense of humor” and knows when and how to apply it positively.

When we look at the impact of inspiring leaders on their teams and colleagues, a few insights comprised the major themes across the research findings. Inspiring leaders develop followers, often individuals who, as a consequence of being inspired, go ‘above and beyond’ strict role descriptions. They deliver at a higher level by applying ‘discretionary effort’ to the challenges and tasks that are associated with building a desired future. People gravitate to these leaders because they are superb communicators, very often enhanced by their abilities as “storytellers”.



3 To complement the research generated, I immediately think about my direct experience as a leadership coach and consultant to clients over the years. That experience converges on many dimensions with what participants have shared in their responses.

The points below are more numerous than might be the case under a different topic; I have deliberately made the list longer as a reflection of the many facets of leading in an inspiring way as well as a prompt to readers to add their own experience:

- A commitment to a tough-minded approach to outcomes and priorities, along with a genuine and visible concern for relationships and the well-being of colleagues; leaders pay attention to both outcomes and processes;
- ‘Showing up’ fully, with all of the significant strengths the leader has in balance with the view that leadership is ‘shared’, solutions are co-created, and that the leader is not ‘all-knowing’;
- Courage and decisiveness alongside openness, a listener’s mindset, humility and vulnerability;
- A strong commitment to learning and growth with no sense that what has to be learned (and ‘unlearned’) is solely the leader’s decision, i.e., ‘what’ to learn and ‘how’ to learn (e.g. digital enablement)
- The ability to consider quantitative/hard data and qualitative or soft data, all in the service of generating good information from which to make decisions or create solutions;

Their clear thinking and masterful sense of how to create a future that people can see and choose to be part of was an important insight that several participants identified. In addition, inspiring leaders attract those who want to learn with and from them. They value “interactions” with leaders and draw closer as they realize that leaders don’t pretend to have all the answers but are open to learning together and learning more quickly than might otherwise be possible. If we were, to sum up the impact in as concise a manner as possible, it is that inspiring leaders are the very definition of “role models” through their obvious behaviors and their core values. One final thought as we conclude our look at the research findings: the high degree of agreement on what behaviors and attributes are most closely aligned with inspiring leadership suggests that all participants ‘know it when they see and hear it’.

From the research themes just discussed, I want to highlight one very important aspect for the purpose of this paper: there is an evident sense of balance in all that an inspiring leader does and says. The most effective and inspiring leaders wisely commit to a ‘Both / And’ approach versus an ‘Either / Or’ stance.

- A 'coaching mindset' with a corresponding willingness to take informed but nonetheless tough-minded decisions; inspiring leaders challenge respectfully and clearly in the service of clarity and better approaches;
- The ability to hold strategic objectives in mind at the same time as tactical and operational approaches are modified based on circumstance;
- A high degree of self-awareness, confidence, and trust in self but without any hint of arrogance or hubris and a tacit recognition that there may be 'blind spots' that impact the leader's decisions; and
- An effective communicator and collaborator combined with an ability to establish and honor clear boundaries, including the will to stand firmly with a considered approach when required. Again, the larger objective is to balance the individual with the organization priorities. So with the above as something of a 'baseline' to what comprises a wide-ranging – albeit incomplete – list of behaviors considered to be inspiring; let's now look at what inspiring leaders have lived through these past couple of years.

What Have Inspirational Leaders Experienced Over the Last Two Years?

The pandemic has changed our lives in countless ways, most importantly in the devastating impact on individuals and families. Losses are incalculable and will leave voids and sorrows for a lifetime.

In the world of organizations and work, thoughtful overall strategies have been shattered, business models shaken if not broken, and related HR and workforce strategies and tactics altered in ways we could not have predicted.



Sometimes we seem to forget that leaders are not 'super-human' or immune to the challenges we have all lived through in the virtual world. Even the most inspiring of leaders have had to deal with expectations that have emerged or needs and wants that have become 'even more vivid' as a result of a virtual workplace.

Their own resilience and care for their overall well-being have often taken a 'backseat' to the wants and needs of those they lead. Leaders experience compromised health in both physical and mental dimensions, along with diminished 'reserves' of energy and resilience. Courageous clients have shared their feelings of being exhausted and struggling to summon the necessary energy to support their colleagues and teams in ways that they want to. The energy required to support self and others is not infinite and needs attention from time to time.

Most thoughtful leaders do pay some level of attention to their own good health and well-being. This may take the form of a 'check-in' with self or taking a brief pause from the day-to-day demands and expectations inherent in their roles. Still, the pace of organizational change can distract or lead to focusing on the most urgent and not necessarily the most important; in a real sense, care for self takes a backseat. And leaders, not only those in military and para-military settings are, to a great extent, defined by their commitment to putting the needs of others ahead of their own. "Know your people and look after their welfare" is one often-quoted principle.⁶ For leaders who recognize that they are able to bring their most effective gifts to inspire to their teams, colleagues, and the wider organization, we think that there is work that is individual i.e. the leader's work alone, and then there is work that requires the participation and focused attention not only of the leader but also that of other parts of the organization. Each of these is discussed below with some practical suggestions in each instance, which leaders might find useful as they continue to grow, learn and remain inspirations to others.

The Individual Work of the Inspiring Leader

Many leaders have recognized the importance of being as self-aware as possible in order to align intended with actual outcomes. Self-reflection, application of mindfulness principles and processes, and feedback from trusted colleagues can be very helpful. These leaders readily admit that there are 'blind spots' which can impact their effectiveness and/or limit their ability to consistently inspire others.

As a leader, individual development and actions that build reserves of energy and resilience can be enhanced by paying attention to a number of sources of information and then deciding what the useful insights might be and how one might build these into their leadership style. Based on experience, there are a few ways that seem to yield good information for the leader to consider:

1. Applied Emotional Intelligence

Over the last few years, we have seen organizations and individuals recognize that Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is a distinct way to ensure that leaders recognize where personal biases and ingrained (often unconscious) habits and beliefs may be 'getting in the leaders' way'. With the science which is available to look at approaches in a rigorous way, a number of tools and instruments are available, which are both valid and reliable.

With one client, a decision was made a few years ago to modify how they gathered data and information for use by their next generation of senior leaders. A very good 360 instrument was replaced by EQ-i 2.0, a respected emotional intelligence instrument that meets the criteria of being both valid and reliable. (As noted earlier, there are relevant discussions on the Queen's IRC website by Linda Allen-Hardisty, a foremost EQ-I 2.0 practitioner. Her insights are valuable in understanding the potential represented by tools such as this).

The 360 processes were retained alongside the EQ instrument but changed to a focused qualitative approach where coaches could engage in gathering precise perspectives on developmental needs for those moving to more senior roles. The value of this approach is that the individual can bring a curious and learning-focused mindset to how intention is aligned – or not – with actual outcomes. For some of my clients, the information generated by the EQ tool has been key to them integrating some more positive behaviors into their leadership styles. As a final observation, in my experience, leaders who inspire do not always recognize or admit that they run the risk of burnout. Support for others, taking empathy for the situation of others to heroic levels, and not balancing self-care with ‘other-care’ can be cumulative and result in burnout which seems to ‘creep up’. A recent example from my work involved a most-effective and intelligent client in a recent leadership development program. She attended to both the needs of team members and those of clients in a masterful way. But her level of commitment left little energy for self-care, and she needed to stand back at one point in order to pay attention to critical stress issues in order to re-establish balance. Again, this is an area where sound EQ insights and the application of such techniques as mindfulness can help both individuals and their colleagues mitigate the potential risks of extreme, unmanaged, and perhaps unacknowledged stress.

2. Learning Through Upward Feedback

Upward feedback has been a mainstay in many organizations as leaders look to perceptions from those they lead and guide, whether as individuals or in teams. Again, the curious – and courageous – leader can derive significant insights on where their ability to inspire stands out and where it might be made more consistent and effective.

In my experience, some leaders, while protecting confidentiality, probe further as to the information they are provided. They convene conversations to first share the unattributed information and then talk about what they understand and what changes or modifications might look like. While some see an element of risk in such a process, others have recognized that a strong open, trusting relationship will support a deeper dive and ensure the understanding by both parties of what works and what might work even better.



3. Working on Making Work 'Meaningful'

A third initiative again speaks to the building of trust (and inspiration) and links directly to the learnings of individuals and teams. Determining what employees need and want is not overly difficult; delivering consistently on those expectations is where the challenge lies. I enjoy the often-provocative Bartleby columns on work-life from The Economist. They spur further thinking, and over the past couple of years, they have been written in the context of work that is largely virtual in nature. Recently I re-read two of the columns, the first from June 5, 2021, and the second from January 15, 2022. In the first, the author reflects on the work of David Graeber, who believed that people "feel, from time-to-time, that their work is meaningless". The column continues: "Alienation depends on how the workers are treated by those in charge. If managers are respectful, supportive and listen to workers, and if the workers have the opportunities for participation, to use their own ideas and have time to do a good job, they are less likely to feel that their work is useless."⁷



The second column is what triggers this last thought as to how leaders can carry out their individual work, 're-charge' while also inspiring followers and colleagues and focusing on work that holds meaning.

Of Remote Work and Writing', the author admits that writing may seem counterintuitive in a world of virtual work: "Writing is not always the best way to communicate in the Workplace. Video is more memorable; a phone call is quicker; even PowerPoint has its place". And then the author continues: "But for the structured thought it demands, and the ease with which it can be shared and edited, the written word is made for remote work"⁸.

From my own experience, writing allows me to arrive at greater clarity in communicating ideas; further, it supports a lesson from days past when a mentor impressed on me that clear writing generally reveals clear thinking as the two often go 'hand-in-hand'. More to the point, sharing clear ideas with others also models what inspiring leaders do as they, in fact, set a standard of quality for communicating effectively and consistently while also revealing their current thinking for challenges and pursuit of 'better ways'. And writing invites engagement and exchange in the service of shared leadership thinking.

The Broader Work of the Inspiring Leader

By 'broader work', I mean that this work of enhancing the leader's ability to inspire happens in the company of and with the support of others; again, self-reflection is made possible through the wider exchange. Some of the suggested approaches that leaders can consider will link, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, with the personal work discussed above. What is different is the level of engagement with colleagues and teams and the explicit engagement by the leader in continuing to learn how to most effectively bring inspiration to the work of the organization and its people.

A few assumptions are foundational to the ideas in this section:

1. First, the leader is confident, has a learning and development mindset, and believes that better ideas emerge when initial thinking is shared, challenge follows, and refinement occurs. And, of course, refinement and participation in that process feeds directly into strengthened commitment by all;
2. Second, the leader recognizes that modeling behaviors are stronger than listing or telling what is desired. People believe what they see much more than what they hear, and the wise leader will ask if what is modeled is helpful and what might be more helpful?; and
3. In a fast-paced world, the inspiring leader knows when to take the time necessary to ensure engagement and commitment

Practical Examples of Inspiring Leadership

I want to highlight two practical actions which inspiring leaders might explore with a view to adding to their own 'brand' as being inspirational. In each example, inspiration is modeled through engaging others in co-creating solutions.

The approaches and processes I describe have the effect of tapping into the 'discretionary effort' each of us has to contribute more than what is expected. As Simon Sinek reminded us earlier in this article, if I know 'why' you are doing something, I can decide if that is something I want to buy into.

1. The Discovery Exercise

This initial action option is simple, clear, and a real example from a coaching client I recently worked with. She is perhaps the most emotionally intelligent individual I know, respected for her subject matter knowledge and admired for her leadership style. And I would add from my direct experience embodies the courage one looks for in a leader. Without any guarantee of success, she was clear that her team was ready to begin to shape their careers in a more direct way. She developed a set of "discovery" questions, which probed what might drive efficiencies and greater satisfaction from the actual work of the unit. Inspiring leaders can lay out ideas in a succinct and meaningful way: a simple one-pager captured the 'Discovery' exercise.

The exercise was very successful largely because it reflected her genuine and clear approach to all that she did, it was perceived as a true inquiry where perspectives would impact direction both in careers and in work design, and it was viewed as respectful of each team member, no matter their tenure. They knew that she cared about them and their ideas and would follow through on agreed changes.

There was never any sense of "look at me and how inspiring I am" because inspiration does not need a megaphone. She was known as a leader who knew how to balance tasks and relationships and had an established reputation for caring for the well-being of her team. Towards the end of our work together, she was advised of a promotion to a more senior leadership role, and this came as a surprise to no one who knows her and her leadership style!

2. The Personal Mission Statement

The second approach requires a little more thought and relies on the sharing of ideas in thoughtful draft form, but with allowance for some 'raggedy' aspects to prompt discussion, generate better ideas, and ensure engagement by colleagues. As a first step, the leader explains that they have a view, probably incomplete, of what it is in their leadership role that actually inspires followers and creates stronger teams. They want to share their perspective with others and are open to hearing how closely—or not—their perceptions meet those of the team as defining inspirational behaviors. The 'platform' for the conversation is a short, focused personal Mission Statement. The leader outlines to team and colleagues why he or she does what they do and what they consider the main behaviors which define them as 'inspirational'.

At this point, they solicit individual views as to where there is alignment around the needs and wants of individuals from an inspiring leader and where something different is desired. Those views are gathered, synthesized without attribution, then shared in a meeting with the team.

In thanking the team for their thoughtful input, the leader might then comment on any surprises and/or areas where they don't fully understand the input. This step requires that, to the extent possible, all can identify concrete examples of what behaviors would look like and why they would be valuable to enhance the leader's ability to inspire. The emphasis is on learning what the team thinks, sees, wants, and needs. Following this step, the leader can then re-visit the personal Mission Statement, revise as necessary from the initial draft, and circulate it to the team.

The next step in the process is to re-convene, to become familiar with the revised statement, agree on how the leader might gauge success across the principal behaviors, and discuss what the leader might 'count on the team for' as he or she continues to lead with inspiration. This could be as simple as using an 'inspiration lens', asking a trusted colleague to observe and look for moments of inspiration in meetings, or conversely, what appeared to be 'missed moments'. No judgment is rendered; rather, it is simply a perception for the leader to think about.

The confident and inspiring leader will no doubt ask for ideas as to other areas in which team members can be supportive as 'coaches' around inspiring behaviors.

The Larger Organization and Its Role in Supporting Inspiring Leaders

Increasingly we have seen that the accomplishment of work priorities in a virtual world depends on a 'one-system' approach to ensuring alignment and engagement. This is no less important when it comes to the support leaders might expect from their leaders and the broader organization as they commit to growing in their work of inspiring others.

Ian Cullwick notes that "an organization's performance platform for management philosophy and related program elements are key to delivering on leadership intentions and behaviours. They provide a platform for engaging front-line staff in a consistent way and mitigating 'strategy and leadership dilution'."



As a practical example, a leader who has developed a personal Mission Statement around inspiring behaviors, and tested it with teams and other colleagues, might consider sharing it with his or her direct leader(s) and peers. The sharing of the personal Mission Statement opens the door to the leader asking of his or her direct 'boss' as well as trusted peers what the leader might 'count on' in support of continuing to strengthen their inspiring behaviors.

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1 Sinek, S., D. Mead and P. Docker. (2017) Find Your Why. London: Penguin Books Limited; Sinek, S. (2010) TED Talk entitled How Great Leaders Inspire Action.

2 See the following HBR articles: Kaufman, S. (2011, November 8th). Why Inspiration Matters; Zenger, J. and J. Folkman. (2013, June 20th). What Inspiring Leaders Do; and Garton, E. (2017, April 25th). How to be an Inspiring Leader.

3 Arnold, T. (2022) Lead With And. An Amazon Publication. [This book is the single best work on a 'Both / And' the mindset of which I am aware. I would recommend it for leaders seeking to inspire while balancing natural tensions].

4 For example, see Allen-Hardisty, L. (2021, August 18). Trust yourself first: Addressing DEI using emotional intelligence. Queen's University IRC. <https://irc.queensu.ca/trust-yourself-first-addressing-dei-using-emotional-intelligence/>.

5 Kingwell, M. (2020) On Risk. Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis

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7 Bartleby (2021, June 5th). Detecting the Real BS. The Economist Bartleby. (2021, June 5). Retrieved June 8, 2022, from <https://www.economist.com/business/2021/06/05/why-the-bullshit-jobs-thesis-may-be-well-bullshit>.

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Editor's Closed

As we conclude this inaugural issue of “The Magazine for Leaders by Leading Corporate Executive Coaches,” I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to you, our readers, for joining us on this exciting new journey. This magazine is dedicated to providing you with insights and strategies that inform and inspire action in your leadership practice.

Reflecting on Our Themes

In this issue, we've covered various themes critical to understanding and enhancing leadership in today's complex corporate environment. These themes challenge your perspectives, provoke thought, and equip you with the tools needed to lead effectively.



A Unique Perspective on Leaders Perceived as Abrasive

One of the standout articles in this issue, “A Unique Perspective on Leaders Perceived as Abrasive,” delves into the often misunderstood realm of assertive leadership. Their directness and high expectations frequently characterize leaders perceived as abrasive. While these traits can be misconstrued as harsh, they usually stem from a deep-seated passion for excellence and a commitment to organizational success.

This article highlights the importance of understanding the underlying motivations of such leaders and provides strategies for transforming perceived abrasiveness into constructive leadership. It encourages a shift in perspective, urging organizations to recognize the potential within these leaders to drive performance and foster a culture of high achievement when guided by the proper support.

I Don't See Why I Need A Coach

Another compelling theme explored is encapsulated in the article “I Don't See Why I Need A Coach.” This piece addresses a common skepticism among leaders who may feel that coaching is unnecessary or view it as a sign of weakness. However, executive coaching is not about fixing deficits; it is about unlocking potential and enhancing strengths.

The article emphasizes that even the most successful leaders can benefit from an external perspective. Coaching provides a confidential space to explore challenges, gain clarity, and develop strategies aligning with personal and organizational goals. It presents coaching as a proactive investment in continuous improvement, critical for navigating the complexities of leadership in today's fast-paced world.

Inspiring Leaders: Behaviours Build the Brand

The final theme, “Inspiring Leaders: Behaviours Build the Brand,” underscores the profound impact of leadership behaviors on an organization’s brand and culture. It posits that leadership is not just about vision and strategy but also about the everyday behaviors that shape the organizational environment.

The article outlines behaviors that inspire and motivate teams, such as authenticity, transparency, empathy, and resilience. These behaviors build trust and engagement within the team and enhance the organization’s reputation externally. By embodying these traits, leaders can create a positive, high-performing culture that reflects the organization’s values and aspirations.

Call to Action: Take the Next Step

As we wrap up this issue, I want to extend a personal invitation to take the next step in your leadership journey. Whether you’ve been inspired by the articles or recognize the need for a new perspective, engaging with an executive coach can be a transformative experience.

The Association of Corporate Executive Coaches (ACEC) is here to support you. Our network of experienced coaches is dedicated to helping leaders like you navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and achieve your fullest potential. If you’re ready to elevate your leadership, I encourage you to contact us.

For more information on hiring your next corporate executive coach, please get in touch with us at info@acec-association.org or cb@acec-association.org. Our team is ready to assist you in finding the right coach who can provide tailored support and insights aligned with your unique needs and goals.

Join Our Community

“The Magazine for Leaders by Leading Corporate Executive Coaches” is more than just a publication; it is a community of leaders committed to excellence. We invite you to join this community, engage with the content, and share your experiences and feedback. Together, we can learn, grow, and shape the future of leadership.

Please stay connected with us for future issues, where we will continue to explore critical themes, share cutting-edge research, and highlight inspiring stories from leaders across the globe. Your journey to exceptional leadership starts here, and we are honored to be a part of it.

Thank you for being a part of our inaugural issue. Here’s to leading with purpose, passion, and unwavering commitment.

Warm regards,
CB Bowman, MCEC, BCC, CVP, CVF, CCE, MBA

Editor-in-Chief
“The Magazine for Leaders by Leading Corporate Executive Coaches”



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