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## Are You A Charismatic Leader?

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# Academic Leadership Journal

## [Are You A Charismatic Leader?](#)

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“Charisma is the result of effective leadership, not the other way around.” – Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus

When you look at leaders like Alexander the Great, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, John F. Kennedy, Vladimir Lenin and Barrack Obama they all have one common style of leadership – charismatic leadership. They stand out from the pack of leaders because of their extraordinary qualities that are rarely found among leaders. For instance, the soldiers of Alexander blindly followed him because of his charismatic leadership. The soldiers marched towards victory during Second World War under the charismatic leadership of Winston Churchill. Similarly the Germans were inspired with the vision of Adolf Hitler. The Americans were influenced with the charismatic leadership of John F. Kennedy who gave a clarion call ‘don’t ask what the nation gave you; rather ask yourself what you will give back to your nation’. Although Barrack Obama is relatively young, people trusted and voted him as the President of America because of his charismatic leadership.

What is Charismatic Leadership?

In 1947 Max Weber came out with three leadership styles such as bureaucratic, traditional and charismatic leadership. Weber defines charismatic authority as: “resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.” (Reference) Charisma is something related to extraordinary powers bestowed through divine means. It is rarest of the rare qualities which are usually acquired through birth. However the research reveals that charisma is a skill that can be honed by training, experience and practice.

Charismatic leaders are treated having supernatural powers and abilities by their followers. They are good at body language and communication skills as well. They impress people through usage of eye contact and hand shake.

Robert J. House contributed for the theory of charismatic leadership. Charisma is a Greek word meaning “divinely inspired gift.” Charismatic personalities are charming and colorful. They have magnetic personality and appeal their people. They know the pulse of their people. It is basically a trait supported by certain skills that can be honed. For instance, communication skills and the knowledge of the domain they can acquire.

Both charismatic and transformational leadership appears to be similar. However they are different although charisma helps to transform average individuals as extraordinary individuals.

## Categories of Charisma:

Charismatic leaders are categorized into five types. They are briefly socialized, personalized, office-holder, personal and divine charismatic leaders. The socialized charismatic leaders utilize their powers for the benefit of others. The personalized charismatic leaders utilize their powers for the personal benefits. The office-holder charismatic leaders are powerful as long as they occupy the office. Once they resign, they lose their charisma. In contrast, the personal charismatic leaders are powerful forever whether they are in office or out of office because of their extraordinary qualities. Finally the divine charismatic leaders are the ones where people think that they are god sent.

Jane A. Halpert based charisma into referent power, expert power and job involvement. Referent power is the ability to influence others because of one's desirable traits and characteristics. Expert power is the ability to influence others because of one's specialized knowledge, competencies, skills or abilities. Therefore to excel as a charismatic leader, the leader must have expert and referent power and involve in job briskly.

Charismatic leaders help tackle crises effectively. Once the crisis is blown these leaders may not be required. These leaders energize their followers and excite them through their rhetoric and bring them close to organizational goals and objectives.

## Characteristics of Charismatic Leaders:

“Charisma is a sparkle in people that money can't buy. It's an invisible energy with visible effects.” – Marianne Williamson

- They are change agents and status quo ante. They are visionaries.
- They are magnetic personalities with lot of energy and enthusiasm.
- They project an exciting and colorful picture to their followers.
- They are great communicators and good at emotional intelligence.
- They love to live on edge and they are risk takers and thrive in risk.
- They are self-promoters. They boost and boast about themselves without which they don't get excitement.
- They don't bother for fear of failure and fear of death.
- They are highly emotional but balance themselves.
- They are good at storytelling and believe in the concept of management by anecdote. They start their speeches with anecdotes to connect with their audience quickly and effectively.
- They follow their heart.
- They develop vision for others and are highly confident and optimist.
- They network with people and build bridges.
- They are honest and help others.

- Finally they never give up.

## How to Become a Charismatic Leader?

“Throw away those books and cassettes on inspirational leadership. Send those consultants packing. Know your job, set a good example for the people under you and put results over politics. That’s all the charisma you’ll really need to succeed.” – Dyan Machan

- Smile cheerfully from your heart.
- Praise liberally and criticize sparingly.
- Maintain eye contact and shake hand firmly.
- Demonstrate positive body language.
- Treat others with respect.
- Remember the names.
- Improve your communication skills and acquire domain competency. That means master both soft and hard skills.

## Criticism:

Although charismatic leaders drive others with their energy and enthusiasm, they believe more in themselves rather than others. They treat themselves as puppeteers and followers as puppets. Once the charismatic leaders depart the work comes to a grinding halt leading to leadership vacuum. They make their absence felt more.

The charismatic leaders could not deliver the goods properly when viewed from historical leaders. They come, conquer and leave the world without any takeaways except showing colorful and magical world to their followers.

There are few charismatic leaders who let down their followers and hit the rock bottom. They were forced to oblivion. They were thrown into the dustbins of history. For instance, Garry Winnick, the former chairman of Global Crossing Ltd is an example who let down his followers.

Both Obama and Osama are charismatic leaders while the former is using for a great cause the latter is using for evil activities. Churchill was a charismatic leader with complex personality. His leadership traits are blend of intuition, invention, and emotion, hedonism, nationalism, humor, reformist with strong internal locus of control.

Charismatic leaders like Stalin and Hitler elevated themselves above criticism. It proved counter productive for them as well as for their people. Therefore, there is danger involved in charismatic leadership. However it all depends on the mindset of the leader.

## Conclusion:

“How can you have charisma? Be more concerned about making others feel good about themselves than you are making them feel good about you.” – Dan Reiland

Charisma needs substance than style. Have knowledge and content to speak and connect with others. Charismatic leaders are known for walking the talk. They go to any extent to please their followers. They have passion to serve their people. Therefore, the world needs charismatic leaders to address several leadership challenges globally.

The End

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