
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----
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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: THE ABC'S OF PERSUASIVE POWER

"Charisma" gets a bad rap, because we've often come to associate it with dishonesty. But some people have that special power of personal presence, and they don't have to be dishonest, or to misuse their natural power to harm others. Even when these people are not tall, they fill the room when they enter, not because they are loud or because they grab attention, but because . . . they just have "it." What is "it?" This month's issue will spell it out for you – at least, my version of it. Enjoy, and please forward this issue to friends!

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." -- Helen Keller

"What is to give light must endure burning." -- Viktor Frankl

"Daring ideas are like chessmen moved forward. They may be beaten, but they may start a winning game." -- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

1. THE ABC'S OF PERSUASIVE POWER

A IS FOR ATTITUDE

Specifically, a positive attitude. Powerful, persuasive people see setbacks or misfortunes as temporary, or even as opportunities. From my clinical training, I know that some form of depression is the "common cold" of mental health: everyone gets a bit of it from time to time, and it's usually not severe or lasting. But the most persuasive people have higher immunity to negativity, and that alone makes them attractive to others. Couple that higher level of mental immunity with a genuine, persistent "can do" approach, and you have one of the defining characteristics of the persuasive person. You can improve your own attitude with regular "exercise." One place to start would be to review my free, online article on the "Ten Rules for Working and Living" here.

B IS FOR BODY

Fat, skinny, tall or thin: powerful, persuasive people are comfortable with their bodies and move with purpose. They groom themselves well and tend to their appearances without self-absorption. They make eye contact more than other people do. For many of them, their comfort with, and awareness of, their bodies come from regular exercise and activity, though this is not the case for all persuasive people. Persuasive people tend to have good posture, to walk with a confident gait and to keep their heads up and their shoulders back. To improve these aspects of your own physical presence, have someone videotape you when you make a presentation, or simply when you are with family and friends. You may cringe to see the initial results, but improvement begins with awareness. You can make improvements in this area from the inside out or from the outside-in. In other words, if you improve your internal modes of thinking in ways that increase your confidence, the evidence will show in your physical presence. On the other hand, you can also learn to shape your own physical mannerisms, and practice new ones to develop a kind of muscle memory, and over time, by walking and holding yourself differently, you will develop the internal confidence that backs it up. In America, actors typically "find" their characters by imagining how they feel and think. But in Britain, actors are often taught to move the way their characters would, and then they begin to find the character on the inside. Either approach works, but both take discipline and practice. In this case, as a persuasive person, the character you will want to find is yourself – or your improved self.

C IS FOR CARING

Persuasive people engender trust from others because they genuinely have the interests of the other person in mind. Some smoke-and-mirrors salespeople fake this – and they tend to fail over the long haul. But the most consistently persuasive people, the people whose presence is most powerful, have an ability to make others around them feel safe and understood. In short, they care for others. Of course, you need not be

Mother Teresa to be a persuasive person, but come to think of it, she was a pretty persuasive little lady! Persuasive people need not be self-sacrificing, or act like martyrs, to have genuine interest in the wellbeing of others. But they do seek to advance their own interests by helping other people maximize their own interests, and in that sense, they are caring people. Persuasive people must have enough empathy for others – an active ability to imagine the world from the other person’s unique point of view – to be able to take actions and make suggestions that are genuinely in the other person’s interests. This does not mean simply saying what the other person wants to hear: that is often the least caring thing one can do. But persuasive people are unique, and different from merely well intentioned listeners, in that they can prompt others to take actions they had not thought of doing, or were afraid to do, or initially did not want to do. . . all in the service of others’ greater needs and aspirations. Now that’s caring! In upcoming publications, I’ll have some tips and exercises for those of you who want to improve your abilities to understand others, including questions you can ask, and self-inventory questions you can ask yourself. No one can teach you to be altruistic if you don’t want to be, but you can at least learn how better to understand others.

D IS FOR DIRECTION

As the old saying goes, if you don’t know where you’re going, any road will do. Let me add another idea: no one follows a squiggly line. Powerful, persuasive people have a sense of direction. They know where they are going. They have a plan. Of course, their plans can change and adjust, but they have a sense of where they are going and what they want to accomplish, and their firm sense of direction comes through in their words, movements and deeds. I’ve had people say to me, “You know, AJ, I would like to have a sense of ambition or direction, but I just don’t seem to have it.” I can’t find it for them, and for some people, a strong sense of direction or ambition is really not necessary. Not everyone has to be a persuasive person, or a leader, or what have you. That is as it should be. For those who still seek to understand their own directions, in spite of what others may tell you, I don’t believe there are any shortcuts. The best thing to do is to find mentors and build relationships with people you trust and who have your growth in mind. If you cultivate and keep such relationships, and are willing to hear things you don’t want to hear from time to time, you have a much better chance of discovering your own direction, bit by bit and over time.

E IS FOR ENERGY

The most powerfully persuasive people tend to have more energy - more fuel in the tank – than most other people do. If and when they don’t, they certainly have the ability to direct their energy more effectively than

others do. There's a line from the play "A Man for All Seasons" where the king of England remarks that there is a mass of people who follow his lead because they'll follow "anything that moves." People notice motion. Motion gets attention. By having more energy than others do, highly persuasive people get more attention than others do, and they can sustain the interest of others by how well they keep moving. Of course, having lots of energy allows people do get more done than others do, and that certainly helps highly persuasive people retain more influence over others. From my experience, there's not much you can do about your energy level – anyone can sprint for a short period of time, but your energy level, for the most part, is what it is. If you want to improve your persuasive power, there's not a whole lot you'll be able to do to increase your energy level, other than zip it up on the margins by regular exercise, a healthy diet and a consistently positive outlook. To improve your persuasive power, you'll probably want to concentrate on some other potential areas for self-improvement covered under some of the other ABC's listed here.

F IS FOR FUN

When I consult in negotiations or teach negotiation, I always tell people and notice that, all other things being equal, the person with the best sense of humor comes out ahead. Persuasive people see life s fun and they implicitly help others to do the same. Do you believe life is pointlessly absurd? Well, it may be, if you think so, but so what? Even if you think life is, as Hobbes once said, nasty, brutish and short, why not enjoy the ride as much as possible? If life is absurd, well, absurdity is funny. It's very funny. There's another way that humor adds to persuasive power: laughing is an involuntary response. If you tickle someone who is ticklish, they cannot help but laugh. I can remember in my youth, when I was an altar boy, I would sometimes fight to hold back laughter when laughter would have been anything but appropriate (have you ever noticed that the dumbest things are hysterically funny when you're in a social situation that forbids laughter?). If you can make people laugh – not even belly laughs, but little laughs – the odds are you are in control of the conversation and its direction, since you are able to provoke involuntary responses in your listeners. I can't teach anyone to be funny, but I can tell you this: the more you cultivate the side of yourself that has fun, and makes situations fun for others, the more persuasive you will be, as long as your fun welcomes others, and does not belittle or alienate them.

G IS FOR GUTS

For those of you who are not from the United States, "guts" is slang for "courage." Powerful, persuasive people have courage. They are willing to take risks – calculated risks – and go out on a limb to accomplish something they have never done, or even seen done, before. Those who dare to attain what others have deemed impossible are very powerful people indeed. Others can sense their courage and will be drawn to it –

since we all lack courage at times and give in to our own fears and nagging doubts. The most persuasive people, having once defied the odds and come out ahead, are often most powerful because they never take conventional wisdom at face value again. They know from experience that the collective blindness of the herd can often mask a wealth of opportunity to be exploited. Sometimes they may fail, and not all risks are worth taking (see the letter “J” below), but persuasive people have courage and even know how to cultivate it. I understand John McCain has a new book about how to nurture and cultivate one’s courage, and I’ll review it in a future issue after I’ve had time to check it out for myself. But based on his past work, I think the odds are good that the book is worth reading for those of you who want to cultivate your own “guts,” or courage.

H IS FOR HONESTY

The most persuasive people are honest. Sure, some people are pathological, and their lies seem so much like the truth, even to professional interrogators or to lie detection technologies. But most people are not pathological, and for the majority who are not, honest conviction is far more persuasive than attempts to fake it. What’s more, honesty wears well over time, whereas lies tend to have short shelf lives. They get discovered, and they often require added layers of deception to maintain. That can be a lot to keep track of, all those versions of the “truth.” But honesty protects and amplifies the reputation, and very often, persuasion is not so much a matter of what is said, but who is saying it. Reputations matter. Why do you think politicians seek endorsements? Because those who endorse carry credibility with some constituency. Why do we tend to do business with friends, or at least, with friends of friends? For the same reason: trust is not automatically earned, and when we don’t know people, references matter. And since reputations are founded on honesty, the most persuasive people know enough to be honest if they want to remain persuasive over time. That’s what personal power is about. The most persuasive people protect their integrity and their reputations, and the best way to do that is to remain honest.

I IS FOR IMAGINATION

Powerfully persuasive people value the magic of “what if. . .?” Asking “what if. . .?” is a way of life that leads to new options, new directions, new paths, and an appreciation of the fact that the reality we see does not reflect all that is possible. What’s more, highly persuasive people challenge others to ask “what if. . .,” and by doing so, they fire the imaginations of others. Imagination without direction and some of the other ABC’s outlined here does not add up to persuasion, but the other attributes here are also insufficient without imagination. It’s not exaggeration to say that highly persuasive people use their imaginations more, and direct their imaginations more effectively, than other people do. To cultivate your own imagination, you have to concentrate on more than

just creativity: creativity involves the use of undirected imagination, and that can be very useful. But the persuasive imagination is of a more particular sort, and if you want to cultivate that, you should associate yourself with the more effective salespeople and persuaders you can. Habits of mind can be contagious. Can you imagine catching some?

J IS FOR JUDGMENT

Persuasive people exercise good judgment. The best ones have enough experience and wisdom to know what lines of inquiry or modes of action promise only to waste time and effort. As a result, part of the power that persuasive people project is the ability to cut through nonsense quickly either to redirect the conversation or prompt others to target their own efforts productively. With this ability to be a bit blunt at times, powerfully persuasive people can even be a little intimidating to others, if only through their ability to wound egos and take charge. Persuasive people don't do this cruelly, and they can do it and get away with it because, more often than not, they are right, and because those who might otherwise feel bruised understand that the persuasive person has their best interests at heart. But honesty, direction, caring, imagination, guts and all the other attributes that make up powerful persuasive ability are not enough without sound judgment. The kind of judgment I'm talking about comes with experience, but it also comes from surrounding yourself with people who are willing to question and challenge you, and not merely function as your devoted cheerleaders. When you select your mentors, be clear about what you want from them: if all you want is nurturing encouragement, then you may feel better in the immediate term, but you won't necessarily be happier, or more effective, or highly persuasive. Good judgment comes from making mistakes and evaluating them, and it also comes from having mentors who will do more than tell you how wonderful you are!

2. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOK: "Don't Oil the Squeaky Wheel: And 19 Other Contrarian Ways to Improve Your Leadership Effectiveness," by Wolf Rinke, Ph. D.; McGraw Hill; New York; 2004.

You know, I don't recommend many leadership books. They are way too often way too full of too much fluff. But I do like this one. Dr. Rinke slaughters some sacred cows among the platitudes that pass for leadership advice and for that reason alone, his book gets my endorsement. Check it out [here](#). (This is a new thing for me – providing an Amazon link. Let me disclose that I have no financial interest in the sale of this book, though

Wolf is a friend of mine. Our friendship put his book on my radar, but the book itself earned my recommendation. Regular “What’s Up, Doc?” subscribers know that I do write lukewarm book reviews, but this is a book I like and recommend. I’ve seen books by other friends that I have not chosen to recommend.)

FILM: “Shrek 2,” in wide release

Okay, okay, I know it’s a kids’ movie. I know that everyone is writing about it. But I had a really good time seeing it. I laughed a lot. For me that’s good enough. (My only bad experience was sitting next to a rather burly ten year old who had no qualms about pushing my elbow off the arm rest in the theater. There is no truth to the rumor that, by the end of the movie, he and I were playing dueling elbows, vying for space. Neither were there any flying milk duds involved, at any time. That was somebody else!) Find out more about Shrek 2 [here](#).

3. CHUCKLES

We’ve just celebrated Memorial Day here in the U. S., a national holiday to remember our war dead and the sacrifices they made, and also to honor our living veterans and former members of our military. This year was a bit special, since we dedicated a new memorial to our World War II service members on the National Mall here in Washington D. C., and I was fortunate enough to attend.

There’s nothing funny – ever – about war. But military life can be quite funny, in an absurd way, for anyone who has ever served, in most places around the world. So, in a lighter spirit, and with full respect to those who have served in wars and on behalf of freedom anywhere, I offer the following little joke:

THE CAPTAIN AND YOUNG LIEUTENANT

A young lieutenant was being put through the paces by an old sea captain.

"What would you do if a sudden storm sprang up on the starboard?"

"Throw out an anchor, sir," the student replied.

"What would you do if another storm sprang up aft?"

"Throw out another anchor, sir."

"And if another terrific storm sprang up forward, what would you do then?" asked the captain.

"Throw out another anchor, sir."

"Hold on," said the captain. "Where are you getting all those anchors from?"

"From the same place you're getting your storms, sir."

4. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

You don't have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

5. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

6. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

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7. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

NEWSLETTER ETHICS: This e-Newsletter will be sent to subscribers only upon REQUEST, though subscribers may forward this letter to anyone they wish. Subscriber identities or contact information will NOT BE DISCLOSED to any other persons or entities under any circumstances. (An attorney friend recently pointed out that, technically, I'd have to give up my list if compelled to do so by a court of law. He's technically right, of course, but let's face it: that won't happen!)

Have a great month. . .

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“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend! Thanks . . . AJS