

Is Charisma Necessary for LPM Leaders?

By [Carla Landry](#) on November 28, 2023

Charisma, like extroversion, may be highly overrated. You don't need to be charismatic to inspire people, at least according to leadership consultant [Simon Sinek](#), one of my favorite authors and speakers.

I think he's right. For me, Sam Bankman-Fried and Mark Zuckerberg immediately spring to mind. Your mileage may vary, but I consider these two tech founders equal parts socially awkward and engagingly geeky. Where they diverge (other than that whole conviction thing) is in the area of charisma. One has it and the other does not. I'll leave that to you to decide which is which.

The point is that charisma is something that, whether you're SBF or Zuckerberg, isn't necessary. Both led obscenely wealthy—or seemingly wealthy—enterprises and thousands of followers. Sinek says that when you devote all of your energy to the cause, it creates the charisma that many mistakenly believe introverts don't have. What you do need—and this is particularly true for your legal project management (LPM) initiative—is undying belief in your cause. How do you get that?

Recommendations for “Charisma”

[Sinek](#) has 10 recommendations. He covers them in a 48-minute YouTube video, which I will distill in a three-part article focused on LPM. However, if you have time, the video is well worth a look. The 10 recommendations are:

1. Stand together: Make the group feel safe.
2. Be a giver: It's all about them.
3. Find courage: Stand up against outside forces.
4. Create an amazing work environment: Put effort into the journey.
5. Be the last to speak: Don't taint the jury pool.
6. Have balance: Implement metrics that matter.
7. Commit to consistency: Do the little things all the time.
8. Just be yourself: Practice authenticity to attract like minds.
9. Communicate your why: Lead people to want to be a part of it.
10. Take action: Do the things, walk the talk.

There are a lot of gems in these recommendations, so I want to cover them thoroughly. In part one of this three-part article, I'll cover the first three.

Stand Together

People love to feel as though they belong. One of the greatest responsibilities of leaders is to foster that feeling. In an LPM initiative, you will have the best success when you create an environment of shared values and beliefs where everyone is free to contribute. It's not difficult to do by modeling certain behaviors. But it's also easy to forget, particularly if you are introverted and many of the behaviors you think you're exhibiting are playing out in your rich world of inner thoughts. Be deliberate about the behaviors you want to model, reminding yourself before every conversation and every meeting.

These behaviors include the following:

- Encourage interaction and conversations.
- Demonstrate that you are listening by paraphrasing or asking clarifying questions.
- Acknowledge your own mistakes or admit your oversights.
- Create learning opportunities for mistakes and avoid assigning blame.
- Celebrate wins, both large and small.

Trust can be easily destroyed by a careless misstep by the leader. If this happens, group members may believe that you aren't standing up for the group's shared values and beliefs. Regroup, acknowledge, and own the issues that arise. When group members see how you handle controversy, your group becomes even stronger. If you ignore problems, members may not believe that the group is a safe place to belong. This undermines unity.

Also, remember that the group extends beyond the people on your LPM team. Your champions, stakeholders, and sponsors are all part of the extended group and they should feel a sense of ownership and support. Everyone is a part of the group's success.

Be a Giver

Sinek tells a story about an experiment he conducted with the cooperation of a homeless woman. As many people do, she had a sign describing her plight hoping to get contributions from passersby. The sign, however, was all about her. It's the same strategy deployed by others who get by on spare change in cities around the world.

So, for example, if she was a widow with children who lost her factory job, one or another of these facts listed on her sign might tug at your heartstrings and prompt you to toss some coins in her cup. She revealed to Sinek that she took in \$20 to \$30 a day with her advertising. In her mind, this was sufficient. With her cooperation, Sinek made her a new sign. This sign read: If you only give once a month, please think of me next time.

According to Sinek, she collected \$40 in two hours. How is this possible? It's simple. The new sign was not about her; rather it was about the giver who wants to help but thinks, not irrationally, "I can't help everyone and, besides, how do I know this is legit?" The woman's sign acknowledged that she understood that contributors couldn't give to everyone (the emotional connection) but said that she would still be there—and still be in need—when they decided to give (the legitimacy of her cause). Unfortunately, he doesn't know how much she would have collected had she put in her normal 8-hour day. She left after surpassing her self-limiting goal!

Pull, don't push. LPM is a giving strategy. It's not about how effectively you can broadcast your worth. LPM lends structure to managing legal matters, helping lawyers achieve greater efficiencies to save time and money. Remember that behind the processes and the workflows are real people. As an LPM leader, your job is to support group members. Make it about the human beings behind the approach. You will never build the trust and cooperation that breeds success by pushing people. You are in the shoes of the giver. The simple act of asking people how they are doing and what you can do to help can make a big difference.

Find Courage

There are six different types of courage. I won't bore you with the details but perhaps the most celebrated kind is physical courage where someone risks their life by putting themselves in harm's way, like the 911 first responders. There's Captain

Sully who landed flight 1549 on the Hudson River, there's [Luis Urzúa](#) of the Chilean mine disaster, and many, many more. Then, there are examples of courage that go largely unnoticed like women marching in the streets of Iran, or even women giving birth, often risking their own lives to do so. Rosa Parks, as brave as she was both physically and emotionally, is sometimes dismissed as a woman with tired feet rather than the human rights activist she actually was.

[Jeanne Theoharis](#), historian and author of the book "The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks," puts it this way: "Perhaps the most courageous thing [Parks] did that night is the fact that there's nothing to suggest...that making a stand will do anything different than it had the previous times." Although this was clearly a strategic move by her allies, it obscures the fact that she was a card-carrying member of the NAACP. It was also a deliberate and courageous act, one that spurred the Montgomery bus boycott and other events that underscored advancements in civil rights. It was also dangerous for Mrs. Parks on a personal level to be a Black woman arrested in the Jim Crow state of Alabama, a risk she knowingly took.

Sinek believes that no one is inherently courageous. Courage, he says, comes from the support you have from others. Rosa Parks had the support – and the collective rage – of the NAACP, the Black community, and the entire Civil Rights movement. When you have those supportive relationships, you will find courage.

No Charisma Needed

When it comes to your LPM initiative, you will find courage in the support of those who believe in the cause and understand that the time has come to do things differently or face an uncertain economic outcome. To do so, you need strategies that allow you to cultivate a cohesive group and support its members in every way possible.